



THE EUROPEAN UNION'S DCI PROGRAMME

"Final evaluation of the Civil society Support Programme" in
Samoa

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FINAL REPORT

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

ADRA	Adventist Development and Relief Agency
AusAID	Australian Agency for International Development (currently the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT))
CBO	Community-Based Organisation
CEDAW	Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women
CfP	Call for Proposals
CS	Civil Society
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
CSSP	Civil Society Support Programme
DFAT	Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
EC	European Commission
EU	European Union
EUR	Euro
GoS	Government of Samoa
LAs	Local Authorities
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MoF	Ministry of Finance
MWCSD	Ministry of Women, Community and Social Development
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NAO	National Authorising Officer
NIP	National Indicative Programme
NSA	Non-State Actor
NZAid	New Zealand International Development Agency
OECD-DAC	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development – Development Assistance Committee
PE	Programme Estimate
PMU	Project Management Unit
SC	Steering Committee
SICTP	Samoa In-Country Training Programme
SUNGO	Samoa Umbrella for Non-Governmental Organisations
TA	Technical Assistance
TAPs	Technical and Administrative Provisions
ToR	Terms of Reference

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This document is the final report of the Final Evaluation of the Civil Society Support Programme (CSSP), a joint initiative supporting the active engagement of civil society in Samoan development, funded by the Australian Agency for International Development or AusAID (currently the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT)) and the European Union (EU). The Final Evaluation has been foreseen in the Technical and Administrative Provisions (TAPs) of the project's Financing Agreement between the European Commission and Samoa signed in December 2009 (Agreement N°WS/FED/021-174) and has the objective of providing decision makers in the Government of Samoa (GoS), the relevant external co-operation services of the European Commission and the wider public with the information to:

- a. Make an overall independent **assessment about the past performance** of the project/programme, paying particular attention to the **impact of project actions against its objectives** stated in the Financing Agreement;
- b. Identify **key lessons to propose practical recommendations for follow-up actions** to improve future delivery.

To this purpose, the evaluation focused on the criteria endorsed by the Development Assistance Committee of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD-DAC), i.e. **relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability and impact**, and on the additional EC-specific evaluation criteria of **EC value added and coherence**. Moreover, the evaluation analysed and assessed whether and how cross-cutting issues (including **environmental sustainability, gender, disability, good governance and human rights**) have been integrated into the programme. An important reference in the evaluation process consisted of the recent EU policy documents regarding civil society engagement in development processes.

Development processes and policies require that civil society organisations (CSOs) in Samoa assume a stronger and more proactive role. This will entail a shift from a relatively exclusive engagement in service delivery – in complementarity with Government – to a stronger engagement in policy dialogue and governance mechanisms in order to increase the relevance and effectiveness of public policies. This is even more important considering the aim of donors and partner countries to make the transition from project-based aid to budget support and to other aid modalities in which accountability to citizens and public authorities plays a major role.

Sharing the vision of a stronger and more active civil society, the Government of Samoa – with the support of the EU and DFAT – engaged in the launching and implementation of the CSSP as a “One-Stop Shop” for CSOs. 3 main roles were identified for the CSSP: i) offering opportunities and support to increase institutional and technical capacities; ii) playing a stronger role in local development and service delivery to the public (particularly at grassroots level); and iii) increasing the capacity of CSOs to participate in policy dialogue and governance and in so doing, influencing public policies and their implementation.

The general aim of the CSSP proved not only to be coherent with Government, EU and DFAT policies, but also to be highly relevant to the processes and dynamics in which Samoan CSOs are involved. However, the relevance of the project has been affected by an interpretation of the project as direct follow-up to previous “micro-project” initiatives to involve CSOs in supporting local development in Samoa. Operationalisation of the original idea (which is the focus of the Financing Agreement) thus involved a shift from a programme aimed at supporting civil society development to a programme centred on the funding of community initiatives. Within this framework, most of the implemented activities did not ultimately focus on capacity building or on the fostering of CSO engagement in policy dialogue and governance mechanisms.

Despite this shift (which has mainly influenced the impact and sustainability of the programme), the effectiveness of the CSSP has been high, particularly in terms of delivering support to communities. The CSSP has in fact strengthened the capacity of CSOs to manage resources (including funding) as well as to implement projects and provide services. Moreover, it has provided public authorities and stakeholders with evidence of the possibility to engage with CSOs, thus opening avenues to the promotion of stronger engagement with and participation by CSOs in the formulation, monitoring and evaluation of public policies.

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The programme had a wide impact on involved communities in terms of improved living conditions and strengthened community institutions. However, the impact of the actions aimed at strengthening the capacities of CSOs to assume an active role in this framework was seen to be more limited. Therefore, further support to CSOs will be required in the future to ensure that they can assume a stronger role in policy dialogue and local governance.

There are some risks that could potentially undermine the ability of the Samoa Umbrella for Non-Governmental Organisations (SUNGO) to act as a platform for CSOs. The SUNGO was defined by several interviewed CSOs as a CSSP implementation agency rather than as a functioning platform for the strengthening of citizens' organisations. SUNGO staff themselves observed that the sector groups through which CSOs' perspectives should be defined are not properly working. It will therefore be important to implement future actions to clarify SUNGO's position and strengthen its link with member organisations.

CSSP efficiency has been progressively improving throughout programme implementation and is still improving at time of writing. Shortcomings and inefficiencies that have emerged during programme implementation are very much related to the interpretation of the CSSP as a grant management mechanism and to the limited access by the CSSP Management Unit to knowledge, information and Technical Assistance (TA) regarding international and regional experiences in fostering civil society development. The TA activities that supported the programme, which mainly involved monitoring and evaluation (M&E) and information management, proved that this can have a positive impact on the functioning of the Project Management Unit (PMU) and on the efficiency and effectiveness of the programme.

Despite some shortcomings, the CSSP in general has demonstrated the effectiveness of harmonised funding to support CSOs. As a "One-Stop Shop" the CSSP simplified and facilitated the activities of CSOs, increasing their potential efficiency while also helping donors to increase the cumulative effects of their support. More generally, it has reduced overlap among funded actions and avoided potential incoherence between policies. The GoS strongly advocates for aid effectiveness and harmonisation and is currently promoting CSSP continuity through new funding opportunities to engage CSOs in development.

Sustainability is weak, particularly regarding programme outputs and management structure. While the Government of Samoa considers the CSSP to be an important initiative toward the improvement of co-operation between Government and citizens, it has not committed to funding either the programme or its management structure. Sustainability of the smaller infrastructures built through the programme however seems more promising.

The programme considered cross-cutting issues. However, the "demand-driven" approach resulted in limited relevance and effectiveness of actions involving such issues, as CSOs rarely have the capacity to identify effective long-term solutions to emerging problems relating to poverty, environment, gender and disability.

Coherence and EU value added are also relatively limited. While the programme has *de facto* been complementary to other co-operation initiatives, it did not include a strategy for the replication of their impact or effectiveness. Knowledge generation has been limited in the area of innovation and best practices that could be replicated, reducing possible impact in terms of improved EU co-operation at national and regional level.

Visibility has been adequate, but mainly relates to donors; the visibility of core project themes (e.g. the engagement of CSOs in development) has been less effective. However, the programme successfully tested the use of different media to reach communities.

Based on CSSP experiences, a number of recommendations have been identified in order to make the most of the final months of programme implementation (under Australian DFAT funding) and to determine future actions for support to CSOs in Samoa.

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INTRODUCTION

This document is the final report of the Final Evaluation of the Civil Society Support Programme (CSSP), a joint initiative supporting the active engagement of civil society in Samoan development, funded by the Australian Agency for International Development or AusAID (currently the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT)) and the European Union (EU). This Final Evaluation has been foreseen in the Technical and Administrative Provisions (TAPs) of the project's Financing Agreement signed between the European Commission and Samoa in December 2009 (Agreement N°WS/FED/021-174). The evaluation was launched in April 2015 and was carried out by Mr. Gianfrancesco Costantini.

The final evaluation was carried out in co-ordination with the Australian DFAT per the provisions of the Direct Funding Agreement between the Governments of Australia and Samoa (AusAID Agreement n° 62281). DFAT contracted Ms. Roina Vavatau to contribute to the evaluation.

The evaluation was facilitated with the support of CSSP staff. Mr. Ollie Reupena, Principal Project Officer of the CSSP, accompanied the evaluators during the field visits.

1 THE CSSP EVALUATION

1.1 Objectives

The objective of this final evaluation is to provide decision makers in the Government of Samoa (GoS), the relevant external co-operation services of the European Commission and the wider public with the information to:

- a. Make an overall independent **assessment about the past performance** of the project/programme, paying particular attention to the **impact of project actions against its objectives** stated in the Financing Agreement;
- b. Identify **key lessons to propose practical recommendations for follow-up actions** to improve future delivery.

To this purpose, the evaluation focused on the criteria endorsed by the Development Assistance Committee of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD-DAC), i.e. **relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability and impact**, and on the additional EC-specific evaluation criteria of **EC value added and coherence**. Moreover, the evaluation analysed and assessed whether and how cross-cutting issues (including **environmental sustainability, gender, disability, good governance and human rights**) have been integrated into the programme.

An important reference in the evaluation process consisted of the recent EU policy documents on civil society engagement in development processes. These include the Communication of the Commission on "Increasing the impact of EU development policy: an agenda for change" (2011)¹, the document on "Engaging Non-State Actors (NSAs) in New Aid Modalities" (2011)² and the Communication of the Commission on "The roots of democracy and sustainable development: Europe's engagement with Civil Society in external relations", endorsed by Council decision in October 2012.

Particularly, the latter communication puts forward 3 priorities for EU support:

- To enhance efforts to promote an enabling environment for CSOs in partner countries;
- To promote meaningful and structured participation by CSOs in the domestic policies of partner countries, in the EU programming cycle and in international processes; and
- To increase the capacity of local CSOs to more effectively perform their roles as independent development actors.

¹Increasing the impact of EU development policy: an agenda for change. Communication from the Commission to the Council, COM 2011, 637 final (13 October 2011).

²Engaging Non-State Actors in New Aid Modalities to Better Use European Resources and Governance, EU, January 2011.

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The main element of the policies formalised in these documents is **as hift from the consideration of CSOs as primarily a partner in the implementation of development policies (through project implementation and service delivery) to recognising them as a key actor in policy dialogue as well as in policy formulation, monitoring and improvement.**

The evaluation therefore aimed to gain understanding of the actual coherence of the CSSP with EU policies and of any possible measures that may be taken to improve future actions. It also aimed to determine how a support action integrating grants, training and capacity building could empower CSOs in a specific environment such as Samoa.

This issue becomes particularly important in the light of current EU co-operation with Samoa, which is mainly based on budget support. The effectiveness and efficiency of this co-operation modality can be partly ascribed to the presence of a strong civil society that is able to influence policy makers and to monitor the implementation of public policies.

While this evaluation focuses on the extent to which EU policies have informed the Programme, it is important to highlight that the Programme also responded to GoS and DFAT³ policies for civil society. Both GoS and DFAT policies focus on the contribution that CSOs can make to development. While both recognise CSOs as partners in policy dialogue, they also see them as service providers that can improve the effectiveness and efficiency of aid.

1.2 Main methodological features

The evaluation process was guided by a set of evaluation questions set out in the table below. Based on the aforementioned reference materials as well as the outcomes of previous evaluation exercises (including the mid-term evaluation (MTE) and the results-orientated monitoring (ROM) reports), some additional issues were also identified to guide the evaluation, notably taking into account the specific features of the Samoan context.

Table 1: Evaluation questions

Evaluation category	Questions and focus of the analysis
Programme relevance	To what extent does the Programme respond to emerging issues in the evolution of CSOs?
	To what extent does the Programme respond to local development needs?
	To what extent is the Programme accountable to stakeholders?
	To what extent is the Programme able to adapt to emerging needs, issues and dynamics (solving emerging problems, making the most of emerging opportunities)?
	To what extent has the Programme been able to take into account the diversity of CSOs?
	To what extent has the Programme been able to take into account the differences among "beneficiaries" (including targeting vulnerable social groups)?
	To what extent has the Programme built on its own experience by following up on the changes produced by its own activities?
	To what extent was Programme targeting relevant to its objectives?
	To what extent have the Programme's institutional setting, approaches and methodologies been relevant to its objectives?
	To what extent have the Programme's institutional setting, approaches and methodologies been relevant to stakeholders and aid effectiveness policies?
Programme effectiveness	To what extent have the expected results of the Programme been achieved and targeted actors benefited?
	To what extent have the Programme activities been carried out?
	To what extent has the Programme influenced the internal dynamics of CSO functioning (governance, transparency, access to resources, effectiveness and relevance of actions, constituency, type of activity, etc.)?
	To what extent has the Programme influenced the dynamics of CSO relationships with their environment (external transparency, partnerships and engagement with other actors, communication, participation in policy dialogue, etc.)?
Programme efficiency	To what extent have the resources mobilised been adequate?
	To what extent has the Programme suffered delays and obstacles related to "bureaucratic" procedures and resource management?

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³ AusAID Civil Society Engagement Framework, 2010, 11

	To what extent have decision-making mechanisms been supportive of programme implementation?
	To what extent have grant delivery mechanisms been functional and supportive to programme implementation?
	To what extent has the PMU been functional and supportive to programme implementation?
	To what extent have TA and other support mechanisms been functional and supportive to programme implementation?
	To what extent have M&E and reporting mechanisms supported programme implementation and management?
Impact	To what extent has the CSSP generated sustainable processes regarding access to services, livelihoods and development at local/village level, thereby reducing vulnerability?
	To what extent has the CSSP generated sustainable mobilisation of CSOs in both service provision and local governance (e.g. the management of common goods)?
	To what extent has the CSSP supported an increase in CSO participation in governance and policy dialogue?
	To what extent (if any) has the CSSP generated unexpected results and unexpected (positive or negative) social, economic, political or environmental) consequences? How have these influenced the programme itself?
Sustainability	To what extent are improvements to the capacity and functioning of CSOs expected to continue after programme finalisation?
	To what extent has the programme been able to produce changes to the CSO environment (including to their structuring, co-ordination, access to information, co-operation both among CSOs and with other actors, etc.) which are expected to continue after programme finalisation?
	To what extent has the programme been able to produce changes in i) Government policies involving CSOs; and ii) Government attitude toward engagement with CSOs in policy dialogue which are expected to continue after programme finalisation?
	To what extent has the programme been able to produce changes in donor policies which are expected to continue after programme finalisation?
	To what extent are the outcomes of the initiatives supported by the programme expected to continue after programme finalisation and to what extent have further opportunities for supporting CSOs and their actions been mobilised?
Coherence	To what extent is the Programme co-ordinated with other EU initiatives and policies (at national and regional level)?
	To what extent has the Programme contributed to these initiatives and policies (with particular focus on coherence between the CSSP and EU initiatives supporting Non-State Actors, Human Rights and Democracy)?
EC value added	To what extent is the Programme co-ordinated with other initiatives by EU member states (at national and regional level)?
	To what extent has the Programme generated mutual reinforcement through the exchange of information, co-ordination of actions, valorisation of inputs, etc.?
	To what extent has the Programme contributed to the reinforcement of EU policies and initiatives fostering innovation, exchange of information, co-ordination of actions, valorisation of inputs, etc.?
Communication and visibility	To what extent has a communication and visibility strategy been defined and implemented?
	To what extent has the programme (including activities) been visible through public communication?
	To what extent have the programme and its results been visible to decision makers?
Best practices	For targeting
	For involving stakeholders
	For supporting CSO development
	For adapting the programme to emerging needs, including through M&E
Cross-cutting issues	To what extent have programme activities and the grants provided focused on gender issues (including women's political/social representation and gender-based violence)?
	To what extent have programme activities and the grants provided focused on environmental issues?
	To what extent have programme activities and the grants provided focused on poverty issues and benefited the poor?
	To what extent have programme activities and the grants provided focused on people with disabilities?
	To what extent have programme activities and the grants provided focused on the private sector and the establishment of partnerships among different development actors?

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From a methodological perspective, the evaluation was characterised by the following main principles (see Table 2):

Table 2: Methodological principles

Diversified approach to civil society organisations	Distinction was made among four main types of organisation: i) community-based organisations (CBOs) and self-help groups; ii) NGOs and other intermediary organisations; iii) sector-based coalitions, co-ordination and umbrella organisations; and iv) national platforms (as SUNGO).
CSO definition based on social functions and organisational features	CSOs have been recognised not only in terms of legal status but also of their basic features. The following specific features of CSOs were considered: voluntary participation, independence from other social actors/institutions and an aim toward common interests and the common good.
Participatory approach	Recognition of stakeholders as providers of not only information but also relevant knowledge and perspectives for consideration at different stages, including when interpreting gathered information.
Use of different kinds of knowledge and information	The evaluation made use of both qualitative and quantitative information from a variety of sources based on both fact and opinion.

As defined in the Inception report, different sources of information have been used and different consultation and data-gathering tools adopted, as summarised in Table 3.

Table 3: Information sources and data-gathering tools

Information sources	Data gathering tools
Documentary sources	Reading Guidelines and framework indicators (including those provided in the CSSP logical framework)
Key informants	In-depth, non-structured interviews
CSO representatives	Structured questionnaire for CSOs (sent to NGOs and to the 24 organisations that participated in focus group meetings) Focus group meetings
CSOs & communities involved in projects	Informal individual and collective interviews Observation/project analysis framework

Lists of persons met, of documents analysed, of participants in focus groups and of observed projects are all annexed to this report.

1.3 Constraints and limitations

The evaluation process took place through a field mission that was launched on 20 April 2015 and ended on 4 May 2015. A total of 17 working days were allocated to the whole evaluation exercise, including the documentary analysis and the drafting of the final report.

The main constraint was the limited time available in which to complete the evaluation exercise. A longer assignment would have permitted the expert to carry out a more comprehensive study and to make better use of certain data-gathering tools, such as the structured questionnaire that was filled in by only 24 organisations, due to the short schedule. Moreover, the preliminary findings could only be presented to the main CSSP stakeholders (the Ministry of Finance of the GoS, the EU Office in Samoa and the DFAT⁴), as there was no time to organise or hold a wider presentation to CSOs.

2 EMERGING ISSUES FOR CIVIL SOCIETY IN SAMOA

In order to enrich the analysis and evaluation of the CSSP it seems relevant to first introduce some of the issues affecting the ability of CSOs in Samoa to contribute to development policies in order to clarify the context in which the CSSP has been identified and implemented. The analysis presented below is not intended to be exhaustive and remains partial to the view of the observer.

- a) **Issues related to small island countries:** A key issue for CSOs and the development of civil society concerns the geographical characteristics and dimensions of Samoa. Some of these are **challenging to development policies** (i.e. vulnerability to environmental and economic

⁴The SUNGO (The Samoa National Umbrella Network of Organisations) is the sole responsibility of the author and can in no way be taken to reflect the views of the European Union.

shocks; limited land resources and the emergence of land use competition; the lack of inputs and markets for industrial production; increasingly difficult access to services by the population outside Upolu; internal migration of better-off people to access services (thus causing further isolation and vulnerability among the population of the other islands); difficulty in achieving economies of scale in service provision; and the need for innovation to maximise benefits from resources, among others). Geographical issues also generate **specific challenges for development actors** (i.e. limited access to information; the importance of “personal” and family linkages; the tendency to avoid conflict and protect vested interests; the limitation of opportunities for social mobility and change; the institutional framework and mechanisms within which governance works and mechanisms of popular participation;

- b) **Growing poverty:** Despite advances in the accessibility of services, the engagement of the GoS in service delivery and development policies and recent improvements in the economic performance of Samoa, poverty rates are not decreasing. Over 26% of the population remains below the poverty line. Factors behind this poverty include (but are not limited to) the small size of the formal labour market and also social exclusion, which reduces the effectiveness of traditional safety nets. Young people are becoming particularly affected by poverty and social exclusion due to the lack of employment opportunities, with the unemployment of qualified young graduates becoming a growing phenomenon;
- c) **A large diaspora:** A similar number of Samoans live abroad as in the country itself. Remittances by migrants constitute a primary component of the Samoan economy and largely influence the livelihoods of families. Diaspora resources also strongly support the presence and activities of Churches, who are an important actor in the provision of some services such as education and pre-school education. Diaspora contribution to CSOs however is still limited and seldom includes the transfer of knowledge and “social innovation”;
- d) **A limited number of NGOs and a wide number of CBOs, with little co-operation among them:** CBOs largely depend on village institutions (such as the Village Councils and the Matai system) and on Churches. Village-based organisations often play the role of “beneficiaries” in NGO activities. CBOs take part in the annual meetings of some structures (such as Churches) to report on their priorities and development. Monthly meetings are carried out in the villages under the auspices of the Ministry of Women, Community and Social Development (MWCSD), the results of which are recorded in the Ministry village profile database and M&E framework;
- e) **Concentration of capacities** within a small number of organisations and particularly within the SUNGO (the umbrella of Samoan CSOs). The concentration of capacities for institutional development, training and policy advocacy within SUNGO creates an asymmetric relationship between the umbrella organisation and its members, which also affects access to information and other resources;
- f) **Similar concentration of community-level capacities** in a limited number of organisations: Churches are often the only organisations that are able to access information or to be involved in networking activities;
- g) **Service delivery as the prevailing activity of CSOs:** A handful of NGOs and their umbrella organisation (SUNGO) are the only CSOs engaged in policy dialogue and governance-related activities. In most cases, NGOs and other kinds of CSOs tend to engage individually in advocacy or lobbying rather than creating coalitions or supporting one another. This is also true of the few existing networks, which tend to function as individual organisations providing services to member organisations, rather than assuming a role in defending and fostering their interests. The discussion of citizens’ rights and human rights which is emerging in international debate and research as regards the participation of CSOs in governance is not yet common among CSOs in Samoa. Despite the limited engagement of CSOs, there are many available avenues to improved public participation in decision making in Samoa, primarily through the Matai and village governance mechanisms;
- h) **Dependency on donors as a main feature of NGOs:** This concerns not only NGO projects, but also the organisational structure of the NGOs and their service delivery activities. The situation is characterised by limited continuity in service delivery and accessibility and a lack of ability to retain staff and human resources. The lack of sustainability of NGOs is linked to i) limited access to other funding sources; ii) limited innovation of activities; iii) high operational costs (including the hiring of staff and chief executive officers (CEOs)); and iv) the reluctance to share resources for joint activities and to collaborate with other actors (as the universities);

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- i) **Frequently limited influence by NGOs and their members** on decision-making processes and organisational programmes: These mainly depend on the membership and activity of the boards and on the personal capacities and attitudes of CEOs. In most cases, board members are elected according to their personal traits (profession, social status, public recognition, etc.), rather than as representatives of the organisational constituency. As they often take part in meetings and visits abroad, they also tend to have higher capacities. Training activities are mainly tailored to existing staff. A threefold process thus emerges: there is an accumulation of knowledge and capacities among a limited number of persons; there is a separation between boards and staff; and there is a separation between the organisation's board and its members.

3 THE CIVIL SOCIETY SUPPORT PROGRAMME

The basis of the Civil Society Support Programme (CSSP), as a **joint initiative supporting the active engagement of civil society in Samoan development**, is constituted by the National Indicative Programme (NIP) signed by the EU and the Government of Samoa in 2007 and the Partnership for Development signed in 2008 between the Governments of Australia and Samoa. The Programme was established as a harmonised funding initiative based on the co-ordinated utilisation of funds.

The Programme was built on the cumulative experience since 1995 of previous EU and Australian programmes that funded micro and small projects. In consideration of these experiences, CSSP was built as a “demand-driven” programme, aimed at supporting initiatives emerging at grassroots level in addition to playing a guiding role in fostering change and development processes involving CSOs.

The CSSP commenced in December 2010, initially using the funds provided by AusAID/DFAT until EU funds also became available in July 2011. The programme as funded by the EU was implemented through 4 Programme Estimates (PEs) and was finalised in March 2015. Of the original EU allocation of EUR 3 million, the total contracted amount is EUR 2,981,008.96 (as of 31 December 2014). The AusAID/DFAT funding will continue until the end of 2015.

The CSSP had the overall objective of “improving the social and economic wellbeing of the people of Samoa” by empowering CSOs at national and local level to contribute to inclusive socio-economic development. In particular, the CSSP was expected to:

- a) Harmonise CSO support with a common programme to improve aid effectiveness and use synergies, as well as increasing transparency, efficiency and local ownership while reducing transaction and management costs; and
- b) Respond to a set of problems relevant to CSOs, including:
 - Lack of access to socio-economic services;
 - Lack of adequate resources to meet basic household needs (with 5% of the population of Samoa living below the food poverty line and 26.7% below the basic needs poverty line⁵);
 - Lack of capacity, resources and opportunities for vulnerable groups to take control of their own development;
 - Limited capacity and a narrow funding basis for CSOs.

To contribute to the identified objectives, the programme was designed to achieve three main results, namely:

- Increased capacity of CSOs to plan and manage socio-economic programmes;
- The successful realisation of relevant projects by CSOs; and
- A strengthened voice of CSOs to enable them to effectively contribute to development policy⁶.

⁵While the Samoan economy has been characterised by an annual growth of between 4 and 5% during the last decade, income differences have simultaneously increased. Factors related to poverty are the low participation of heads of households in formal employment (27% of households, in the lowest income quintile), high participation in informal employment (73% of households), and the low contribution of the formal sector to around 10% of household income.

The following activities were therefore identified in the project financing agreement:

- Grant schemes for supporting CSO initiatives;
- Training for CSOs on project implementation, improved governance, management, fundraising and reporting;
- Development of a code of conduct for improving key aspects of “professionalism” within CSOs and support for CSO research, networking and dialogue on development policy issues;
- Monitoring and evaluation of CSO-implemented projects;
- Strengthened co-ordination among CSOs involved in implementing projects and other relevant actors; and
- Facilitation of the exchange of experience and lessons learnt among CSOs, during and after project implementation.

3.1 CSSP objectives and expected results

Following signature of the funding agreement, AusAID carried out a “Programme Design for a Civil Society Support Programme for Samoa” (Final Report, March 2010), in which the main operational elements of the programme were defined. The programme design also included the formulation of a logical framework, which partially differs from that included in the TAPs of the financing agreement between the EC and Samoa (Financing Agreement N° SW/FED/021-174).

The differences between the two are highlighted in the following table.

Table 4: Objectives and expected results of the CSSP

	Financing Agreement between the EC and Samoa	AusAID, “Programme Design for a Civil Society Support Programme For Samoa” (Final Report, March 2010)
Specific Objective (purpose)	Empowering CSOs to contribute to sustainable socio-economic development	To deliver sustainable and economic benefits to the people of Samoa through strengthened CSOs
Expected Result 1	Increased capacity of CSOs to plan and manage socio-economic programmes	Sustainable social and economic benefits meeting the needs of vulnerable groups in Samoa
Expected Result 2	Successful realisation of relevant projects through CSOs	Well governed civil society organisations with strengthened capacity to manage developmental programmes on a sustainable basis
Expected Result 3	A strengthened voice of CSOs to enable them to effectively contribute to policy making	A strengthened voice of CSOs to enable them to effectively contribute to policy making
Overhead activities		Effective operation of the CSSP through a Steering Committee and a Project Management Unit (PMU)

The above table demonstrates that from the original EU-Samoa Financing Agreement to the AusAID Programme Design”, the focus of the programme shifts from the empowerment of CSOs to the delivery of sustainable and economic benefits.

The objectives defined in the Programme Design went on to be considered in the formulation of the Programme Estimates and subsequently, the implementation of the project.

The adoption of the “Programme Design” objectives and expected results also brought changes to the indicators of achievement, which are presented in the following table:

Table 5: Indicators of achievement in the Financing Agreement and in the Programme Design

	Financing Agreement between the EC and Samoa	AUSAID, Programme Design for a Civil Society Support Programme For Samoa (Final Report, March 2010)
Specific Objective (purpose)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CSOs perceived as effective and accountable development partners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Measurable social and economic benefits from well managed projects • CSOs play an active role in national and community affairs
Expected Result 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 50% of registered CSOs adopt code of conduct • CSOs adopting code of conduct demonstrate diversification of funding sources • Number of CSO staff having benefited from training 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • % of Category 1 projects approved that meet project targets (75% for Category 1 and 80% for Category 2) • % of Category 1 projects that target vulnerable groups (50%) • Level of community satisfaction with the services provided
Expected Result 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of grants awarded that achieve 75% of expected results • Number of grants that specifically target the most vulnerable groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • % of CSOs that meet Good Practice standards • Number of CSO members completing capacity building training • % of community-based contracts successfully completed • Level of CSO satisfaction with the services provided • % of funded NGOs meeting funding criteria and demonstrating sustained viability
Expected Result 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A strengthened voice of CSOs to enable them to effectively contribute to policy making 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • % of CSOs taking part in dialogue on public issues • No evidence of restraint on CSOs to speak out • N° of CSOs active in sector co-ordination • Quality information available to inform the design of programmes
Overhead Activities		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Level of satisfaction of all stakeholders with the performance of the PMU

It is evident that Expected Result 1 of the EU financing agreement is “included” in Objective 2 of the AusAID Programme Design. The same occurs to a certain extent with the related indicators. These have been further modified in the Programme Estimates, but without changes to the overall design.

Expected activities

In the EU-Samoa Financing Agreement the following activities were identified:

- Training for CSOs receiving grants in project implementation skills;
- Training of CSOs in improved governance, management, fundraising and reporting;
- Awarding of grants to CSOs following Calls for Proposals (CfPs);
- Development of a code of conduct to improve key aspects of professionalism within CSOs;
- Support to CSO research, networking and dialogue on development policy issues;
- Monitoring and evaluation of CSO projects by the Project Co-ordination Unit;
- Strengthening of co-ordination both among CSOs and with relevant Government departments; and
- Facilitation of the exchange of experiences and lessons learnt among beneficiaries.

These activities were further developed in the “Programme Design document”. The activities identified in this document are presented in Table 6 (organised according to objectives).

Table 6: CSSP foreseen activities according to the Programme Design

Objective 1	Grant Schemes	Category 1 grants, funding projects to a maximum value of 10,000 EUR (to be used using EU funds)
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		Category 2 grants, funding projects of between 10,000 and 50,000 EUR (financed using AusAID funds)
		Category 3 grants, funding projects of between 50,000 and 100,000 EUR (financed using EU funds)
Objective 2	Development of a code of good practice	
	Hosting of workshops for CSOs to foster networking and good practice	
	Regular and appropriate governance and management of training through SUNGO for CSOs	
	Other capacity building and training provided within CBOs	
	CSOs regularly provided with key information through a range of communication channels	
	Basic operations of selected NGOs supported through capacity building and funding	
	Core funded NGOs receive support and mentoring	
Objective 3	Workshop and related activities to foster advocacy skills	
	Research on cross-cutting issues (e.g. gender and human rights) and the needs of vulnerable groups	
Overhead activities	PMU office established and operational	
	CSSP promoted to CSOs	
	Application secured for Category 1 (over 200) and Category 2 (over 50) grant schemes	
	Recommendations issued to the Steering Committee	
	Monitoring, evaluation and reporting	

Minor differences also exist among the activities identified in the Programme Design document and those formulated in the EU-Samoa Financing Agreement. Further changes to the definition of activities – mainly concerning the way these are implemented – emerge from the formulation of the Programme Estimates.

3.2 CSSP implementation mechanism

In accordance with the guidelines set by the financing agreements and the Programme Design, the CSSP implementation mechanism has been mainly based on a Project Management Unit (PMU) and a Steering Committee.

The Steering Committee (SC) is composed of 2 Government representatives (specifically, from the Ministry of Finance (MoF) and the MWCSO), 1 representative of SUNGO, 2 representatives of CSOs and 1 representative of DFAT. The EU representative participated in SC activities as an observer.

The functions of the SC include: i) the establishment and review of CSSP policies and procedures; ii) the recruitment and selection of the PMU manager; iii) liaison with donors; iv) the review and approval of progress reports; v) the receipt of recommendations for the approval of grants by the PMU and the making of relevant decisions; and vi) monitoring and evaluating the performance of the PMU.

The Project Management Unit comprises a Programme Manager, a group of project officers (originally 2 and later 3), a financial officer and an administration officer. It has been responsible for the overall management of the programme, including the CfPs, the assessment of applications for funding, the delivery of grants (and of assistance to grantees), management of activities and of the contract, and reporting to the SC and subsequently to donors.

The PMU has been supported in certain activities (the assessment of applications and the provision of assistance to grantees) by the SUNGO, as a contracted body. For reporting, the PMU has received support from DFAT.

3.3 CSSP implementation

Since its launch, the CSSP has been implemented through 4 Programme Estimates (PEs), which have been extended in some cases through addenda and riders. Namely:

- PE n°1, from 1 July 2011 to 30 June 2012, extended through addenda N°1 and 2 to 30 July 2012;

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- PE n°2, from September 2012 to June 2013, further extended through “CSSP Rider n°1 and Addendum n°2 to 31 August 2013⁷;
- PE n°3, modified through Addendum n° 1, from 1 September 2013 to 30 June 2014; and
- PE n°4, from 1 June 2014 to 24 March 2015.

Under the various PEs all activities foreseen in the Programme Design document have been carried out using both EU and AusAID funds.

The activities carried out under each PE were reported in the subsequent PE and through the submission of reports to AusAID/DFAT every six months. Different formats were used for the reports (requested by DFAT) and for the Programme Estimates (requested by the EU for the availing of funds through annual instalments) until a common format was defined in 2014 following a proposal by the European Commission. Despite the simplification of reporting procedures and the adoption of a common reporting format agreed on by the EU and DFAT, the last two CSSP reports – relating to the activities carried out in 2014 and 2015 – had not yet been provided by the PMU at the time of the Final Evaluation (April 2015).

Activities implemented by the CSSP

As of March 2015, the implementation of the CSSP has included the following activities:

Under **Objective 1** (*Sustainable social and economic benefits meeting the needs of vulnerable groups in Samoa*), four different Calls for Proposals (CfPs) were launched.

The first three calls included three different funding categories, while the fourth (in 2014) was unified and only applied to projects funded through Australian financing. In fact, due to the date of the fourth call it would not have been possible to include projects funded using EU financing as the activities of such projects would have eventually been implemented after the conclusion of the EU programme.

Through the different Calls for Proposals, the **CSSP received 1,095 applications and funded a total of 327 projects**, as shown in Table 7.

Table7: Projects funded under the CSSP Calls for Proposals (2010-2014)

	Applications	Funded	%
Category 1	574	203	35%
Category 2	346	66	19%
Category 3	17	6	35%
Round 4	158 (*)	52	33%
Total	1095	327	30%

Source: CSSP database

Most of the project proposals were submitted by various types of CBO.NGOs and Trusts (i.e. organisations having a formal legal status) only submitted 76 proposals.

Table8: Organisations that submitted applications under the Calls for Proposals (2010-2014)

Types of organisation (*)	Applications	Funded projects	% of funded applications
NGOs	69	33	48%
CBOs (unspecified)	141	140	99%
Church-based	161	44	27%
District CBOs	7	4	57%
Extended families	15	4	27%

⁷The delay was the result of the fact that the content of the publication is the sole responsibility of the author and can in no way be taken to reflect the views of the European Union.”

CBO societies	63	13	21%
Village CBOs	241	85	35%
Trusts	7	4	57%
No category	392	1	0%
Total	1096	328	30%

(*) Types of organisations are reported according to the terminology of the CSSP database. It is likely that “unspecified CBOs” are simply CBOs that did not provide the information required for their categorisation.

Source: CSSP database

Of the CSSP-funded projects, **about 11% supported organisations having the legal status of NGO or Trust** while **13% supported Church-based organisations**, including both Churches themselves and youth/women’s groups operating within the framework of Church activities. Over **70% supported community-based organisations**, the majority of which were village-based organisations such as Village Councils and Village Women’s Committees⁸. Lastly, a small percentage of projects (about 1%) provided direct support to “extended families”.

Funding was mainly provided to activities involving the procurement of equipment and the building of infrastructure. The majority of funded activities focused on:

- Education (106 projects);
- Water (75 projects); and
- Income-generating activities (IGAs) (55 projects).

No projects or activities could be identified that monitored public services, discussed local priorities for development or focused on the development of organisations (with the sole exception of 1 by SUNGO, funded under the fourth CfP).

Table 9: Activities included in applications and in funded projects

Applications and funded projects according to activity		
	Applications	Funded projects
Climate change	4	2
Crafts	2	2
Culture	6	4
Disaster preparedness	2	-
Education (buildings)	88	46
Education (other) (1)	75	32
Education (resource centre) (2)	9	7
Pre-school building	27	11
Security fence	18	10
Farming (3)	158	16
Farming/gardening(4)	6	1
Fishing (5)	41	10
Gardening	36	11
Health services	14	3
Income generation	76	26
NGO support (6)	19	11
Other (7)	153	11
Research	1	1
Sanitation	29	14

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⁸These projects often involved women, children, the disabled, and people with disabilities.

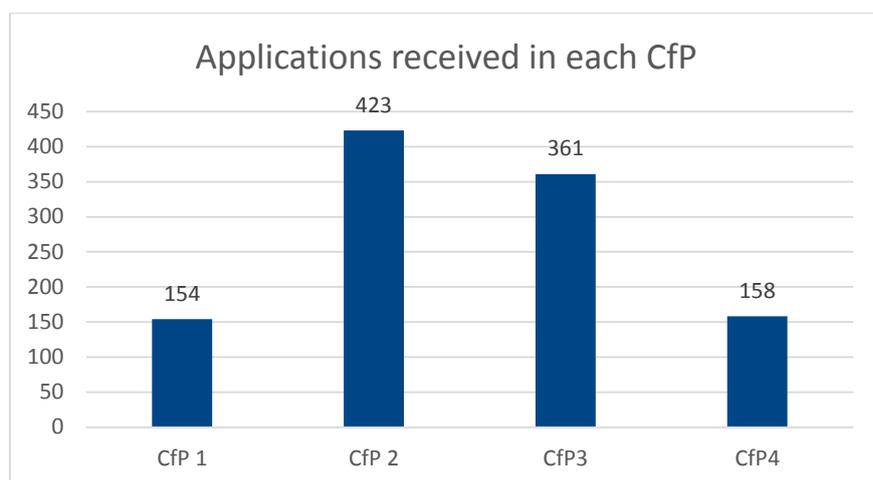
Social services	11	1
Sports (8)	21	6
Training (9)	18	7
Water sources	19	7
Water tanks (10)	157	68
Women Committee Houses (11)	52	20
Women	27	(11)

Notes: (1) furniture, fences and other equipment; (2) building and equipment for study centres; (3) in some cases equipment, in others innovative projects such as those involving pig-keeping, beekeeping and mushroom cultivation; (4) fishing equipment and tilapia ponds; (5) support to NGO activities; (6) some overlapped with others (e.g. animal protection, culture and health), one concerned gender (a documentary on women's roles) and one involved returnees (former convicts from the USA, Australia and New Zealand); (7) these included a grant for PWD, and a Church sport complex; (8) mainly training of women for IGAs (sewing and other handicraft activities);(9) mainly funded through the ICCAI and WSCCA; (10) Among these projects (which were funded under all CfPs), the CSSP contributions varied from around 8,000 to 159,000 Samoantala, with the largest budgets under the 1st and 2nd CfPs; (11) All these applications were made under the 1st and 2nd CfPs and under Category 1 and 2 grants. All were declined, probably due to the absence of adequate information on the project to be carried out.

Source: CSSP database

As shown in the following graph (Figure 1), the CfPs received a varying number of applications.

Figure 1: Applications received in the Calls for Proposals



Source: CSSP database

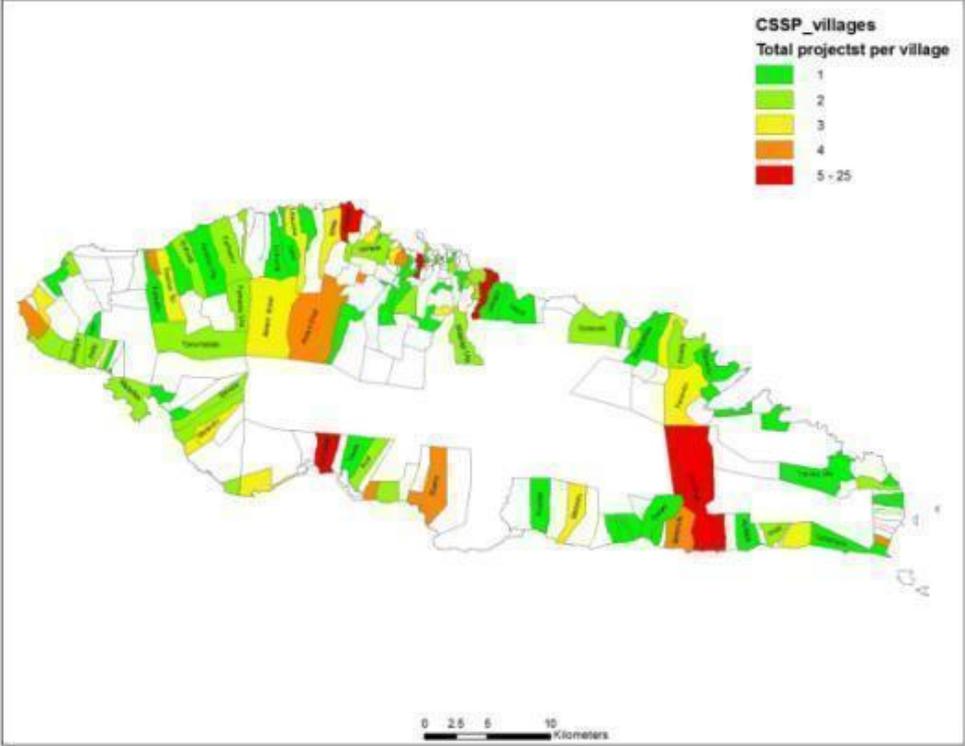
It can be seen from the table above that the highest numbers of applications were collected during the second and third rounds of the CfP, while the number of applications received under the 4th CfP fell back to a total very similar to that collected in the 1st CfP. The success of the second and third CfPs can likely be attributed to the progressive dissemination of knowledge and to increased expectation of receiving funding among the different categories of CSOs. The reduction in the number of applications received by the CSSP in the last CfP is probably due to the following main factors:

- Many organisations were already engaged in the implementation of projects funded under the previous CfPs;
- Many organisations, having participated unsuccessfully in the previous CfP(s), decided not to try again;
- There was a reduction in support activities provided to CSOs to facilitate their participation (i.e. presentation events, capacity building workshops, etc.);
- Since the CfP publication does not follow a permanent/known schedule, by the time the last CfP was launched some organisations were already engaged in other activities and did not have enough time or resources to apply (despite the simplified application form utilised by the programme).

As shown by the following maps (Figures 2 and 3), projects have been funded in a large number of villages in both Upolu and Savaii. In many villages more than one project has been funded. A variety of projects have been funded in each village. The contents of this publication are the sole responsibility of the author and can in no way be taken to reflect the views of the European Union."

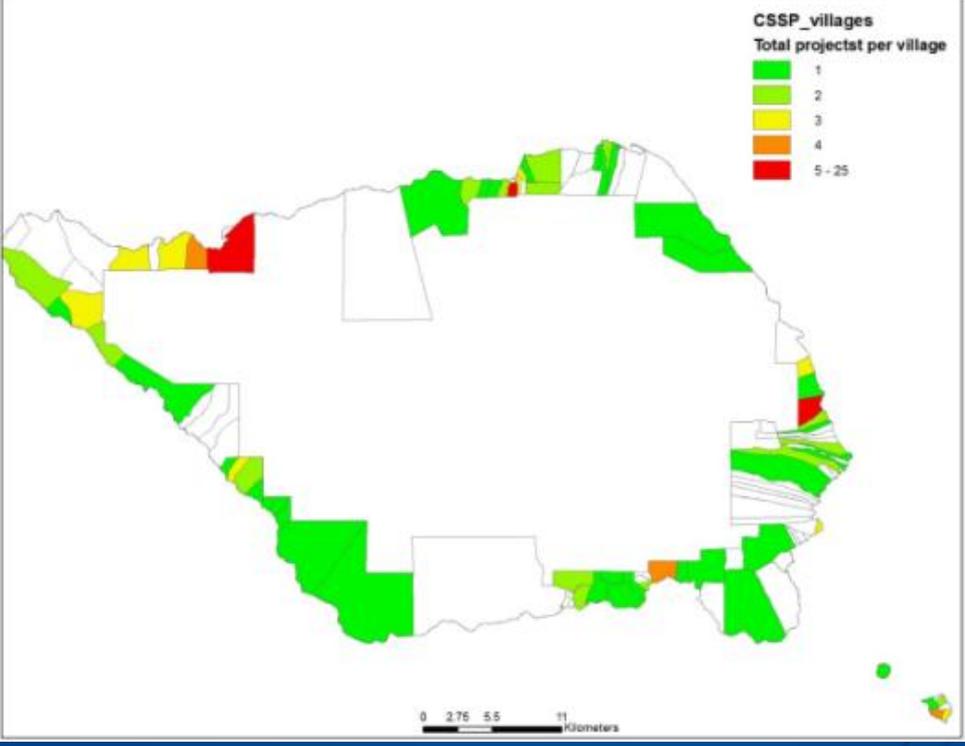
of CBOs submitted applications and it is likely that there is a progressive increase in the capacity to do this. A variety of projects were also funded in the Apia urban area; this most likely being due to the fact that NGOs are mainly based here.

Figure 2: CSSP projects per village in Upolu



(Source: CSSP-GIS Mapping– *Projects per village, Upolu, 2014*)

Figure 3: CSSP projects per village in Savaii



(Source: CSSP-GIS Mapping– *Projects per village, Savaii, 2014*)

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As shown in Figures 4 and 5, a large number of projects were carried out in highly vulnerable villages (measured in terms of access to services, employment rates and education levels).It should however be noted that some of the most vulnerable villages were not involved in any projects. This is mainly due to the fact that CfPs respond to local initiatives and demand. The most vulnerable areas are in some cases also those in which “organised actors” are weaker, along with the capacity to access information and to express needs.

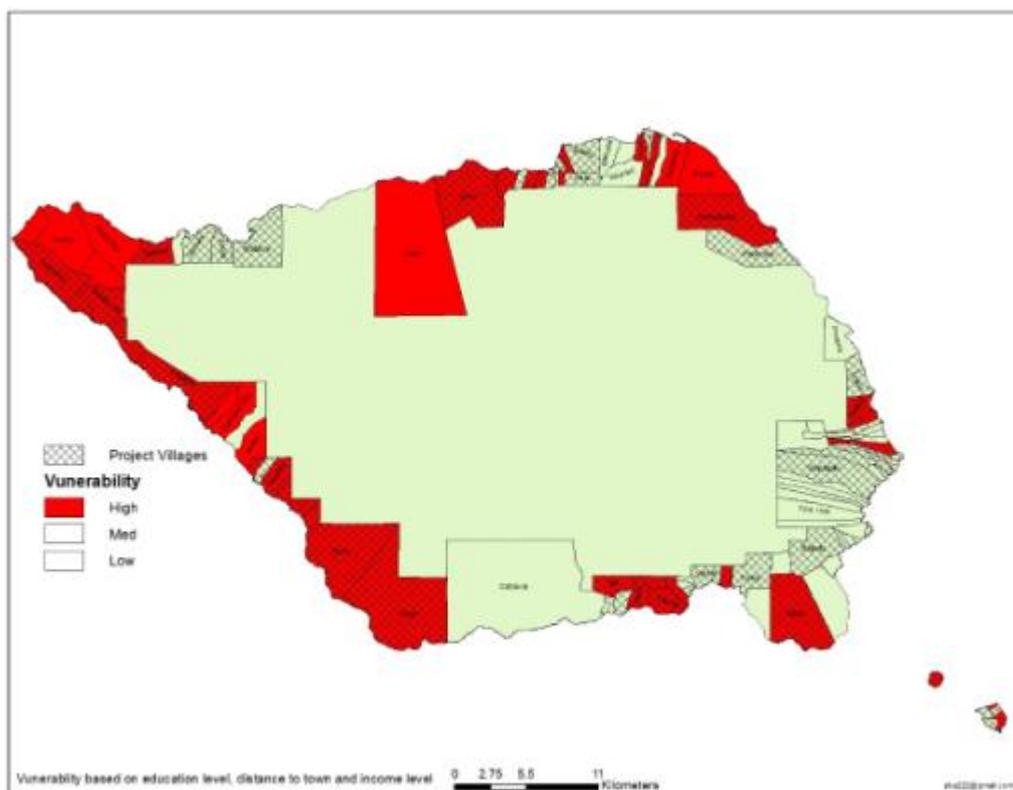
Some very vulnerable areas however have been the specific target of projects carried out by NGOs (such as the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) or the Red Cross) using CSSP funds. These projects are recorded in the CSSP database under the NGO implementing them, and are thus less visible on the maps.

Figure 4: CSSP projects per village, according to vulnerability level in Upolu



(Source: CSSP-GIS Mapping – *Projects per village according to vulnerability, Upolu, 2014*)

Figure 5: CSSP projects per village, according to vulnerability level in Savaii



(Source: CSSP-GIS Mapping – *Projects per village according to vulnerability, Savaii, 2014*)

Some comments on the performance of CSSP funding emerging in the evaluation focus groups

- The processing of CSOs proposals is perceived to take too long;
- There is a need for deeper understanding of the evaluation process and of the selection criteria;
- The application forms for large grants are only available in English, which is perceived as an obstacle;
- The 10% cash contribution is considered an issue, particularly in the case of large grants;
- The criteria for evaluating the in-kind contributions by CSOs are unclear;
- There is a need for better understanding of how to conduct financial reporting;
- The training provided in project formulation is not fully adequate considering the limited qualification of people at village level (particularly among youth groups, women’s committees and village councils);
- Even the simplified grant application form is not completely clear to CSOs (CBOs in particular);
- More materials in Samoan are needed.

Similar remarks emerged at the CSSP stakeholder review meetings carried out in 2014 and 2015.

Under Objective 2 (*Well governed civil society organisations with strengthened capacity to manage developmental programmes on a sustainable basis*), a set of capacity building activities addressed to NGOs and CBOs was carried out through contracts between the CSSP and SUNGO.

The activities carried out include:

- Awareness-raising activities on good practices for CSOs;
- Proposal writing workshops;

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- Project management workshops;
- Proposal writing for NGOs/CBOs wishing to access EU funding;
- NGO assessment and the definition of a tailored institutional development plan for NGOs and CBOs involved in the implementation of large projects; and
- Provision of information and liaison services by the SUNGO Board, staff and volunteers.

Table 10 provides an overview of the training activities in project management carried out by SUNGO. It should be emphasised that SUNGO also proposed (in 2012 and again in 2013) to follow up training workshops on project design and management via mentoring sessions with involved CSOs.

Table 10: Trainees benefiting from SUNGO activities

Year	Trainees
2010	267
2011	527
2012	325
2013	469
2014	171

Source: SUNGO Yearly Report 2013

In 2013, SUNGO carried out 13 training courses involving 135 CBOs and 11 courses involving 90 NGOs (225 CSOs in total). Of these, only 3 training courses involving 27 organisations were funded by the CSSP, while the remainder were funded by the New Zealand-owned Samoa In-Country Training Programme (SICTP). Normally, 3 persons are trained from each organisation.

The **NGO assessment tool**, defined in 2001 by an international expert, was tested in 2012-2013 and continued initially to be applied in 2014 to NGOs engaged in the implementation of large grants and (following the fourth CfP) also to CBOs that were awarded grants larger than 30,000 Samoan tala. In total, 15 organisations were involved in the application of the NGO assessment tool.

As emerged in the meetings held with CSOs during the evaluation process, involvement in the NGO assessment process is not perceived as voluntary, but rather as a requirement to access CSSP funds. Some CSOs considered the application of this tool as an opportunity to define and launch institutional development plans, but others considered it an unwelcome obligation by the CSSP and donors and an undue interference in their functioning. CSSP staff are of the opinion that the NGO assessment helps increase the accountability of organisations and that in many cases this has enabled the stockpiling of resources for project follow-up and facilitated improvement in CSO capacities, as in the cases of SENESE, Pasefika Mana, the Samoan Red Cross and Fairtrade International.

The NGO assessment is based on a set of meetings with NGO staff, CEOs and Boards and aims to verify the existence of policies for internal governance (mainly, the functioning of the Board and the relationship between the Board and the CEO/staff), the administrative and financial system, the management of human resources and the management of activities.

The NGO assessment is not always followed up by institutional capacity building and thus cannot be considered a real measure of organisational sustainability or accountability. The CSSP considers it the responsibility of the NGOs themselves to provide training.

Organisations involved in the NGO assessment process

- APS (Animal Protection Society)
- Goshen Trust
- Cancer Society
- Nuamaua ole Alofa
- O Le Siosiomaga Society Inc.
- SUNGO
- Matua i leoo Environment Trust
- Samoa Victims Support Group

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- Samoan Red Cross
- ADRA Samoa
- Special Olympics
- Pasifika Mana Social Service
- Manumalo Baptist Church
- Samoa National Youth Council

The same “NGO assessment tool ”is applied to all organisations, but had to be adapted in some cases to CBO organisations (e.g. the Manumalo Baptist Church) and to organisations closely related to and dependent on the State (e.g. the Samoa National Youth Council).

Under Objective 3, the CSSP has mainly been supporting the development of SUNGO and its engagement in policy dialogue. CSSP support has focused on the delivery of activities identified by SUNGO itself and integrated into its annual workplan, including:

- **Activities aimed at increasing the associative basis of SUNGO:** During the CSSP implementation period, the number of SUNGO members increased to about 150. On average there were 15 new members (mainly CBOs) per year, with some organisations ceasing to be members every year;
- **Publication of a newsletter** and other communication activities with member associations: 60% of SUNGO members declared in 2013 to be satisfied with communication, while others requested an increase in information and communication by SUNGO;
- **Recruitment and payment of staff:** CSSP covered the cost of 8 staff and the recruitment of new staff for research, with one further SUNGO staff member paid using SICTP funds;
- **Maintenance of a network of certified trainers**, subcontracted to implement the training activities and capacity building workshops (see activities under the 2nd CSSP objective);
- The participation in **meetings and initiatives of different development partners:** In 2013, the SUNGO CEO, staff and Board members participated in 211 meetings, 103 of which were held with Government ministries, 40 with donors and 26 with the CSSP. SUNGO participates in almost all National Sector Committees (but paradoxically, does not participate in those of Health and Agriculture, two sectors in which CSOs are strongly engaged);
- The organisation of **Civil Society Forums** for the discussion of policy issues (such as the Constitutional Bill on 10% of political representation being attributed to women);
- The implementation of **research activities** necessary to advocacy, such as the social accountability study on the four Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) toward which Samoa has shown slow progress, carried out through the distribution of “community scorecards” to a sample of 300 households;
- The implementation of other activities, such as the preparation of the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) shadow report and the organisation of 2014 Small Island Developing States (SIDS) conference activities involving CSOs; and
- Networking with regional organisations, and particularly the re-establishment of relationships with the Pacific Islands Association of NGOs (PIANGO).

Certain research activities by other organisations were supported within this framework, thereby potentially improving the information base for policy advocacy. These included a study on autonomous water schemes and a needs assessment by the Samoa Spinal Network of people with spinal injuries.

Under Objective 4, activities mainly focused on the functioning of the **CSSP Project Management Unit**. Since 2010, such activities have mainly been geared toward the management of the CfPs and related grant schemes. An operational manual as well as other administrative and communication policy manuals were prepared and guided the work of the PMU, but left out some duties:

- M&E mechanisms, which were mainly based on the number of applications received and the number of projects funded and completed (as provided by the logical framework);
- Consultation with stakeholders, which was mainly delegated to SUNGO and its activities; and
- Understanding of the processes related to CSO development.

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At least until the mid-term review, the work of the PMU focused mainly on the grants. Primarily, the PMU prepared and managed the Calls for Proposals and organised (in collaboration with SUNGO) workshops which presented the CfPs to more than 300 CSOs in Upolu and Savaii. The PMU also:

- Assessed the received applications and evaluated them against five main criteria (relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability and impact) in collaboration with SUNGO;
- Presented the proposals evaluated as eligible for funding to the Steering Committee (which made the final decision on funding);
- Prepared and followed up contracts related to the implementation of projects (including, in the case of CBOs, direct engagement of the PMU in the procurement procedures for goods and services and in direct payment to providers); and
- Visited project sites to address emerging problems and verify project finalisation.

In order to carry out these activities each PMU member was made responsible for a specific category of grant.

Following the mid-term review (2013) the PMU underwent a significant change that included the replacement of key staff members, including the Programme Manager (replaced at the end of the three-year mandate). The internal organisation of the PMU was also revised. Funded projects are now divided among staff without consideration of “category”, so that one expert monitors all projects being implemented in a specific territorial area.

Moreover, a wide range of activities was undertaken to:

- Re-organise the M&E framework (although this is still not properly working);
- Re-launch communication with stakeholders (particularly through a stakeholder review of the programme and the organisation of stakeholder meetings involving CSOs and Government ministries);
- Clarify the relationship between the CSSP and SUNGO and their respective roles;
- Modify the criteria for the selection of projects to be funded (and improve the assessment of vulnerability of communities);
- Increase the focus of the Steering Committee on programme governance (thus reducing their role in the selection of projects to be funded); and
- Increase communication with CSOs.

The CSSP is finally becoming a permanent facility for facilitating access to funds and assistance for CSOs through the management of different projects and funding schemes supported by a number of donors. These include the upcoming management of the World Bank-funded Pilot Programme for Climate Resilience (PPCR).

4 EVALUATION QUESTIONS/FINDINGS

4.1 Introductory remarks

Prior to analysing the performance of the CSSP according to the different evaluation criteria, this section will focus on certain features of the Programme to put it into context. The CSSP should be perceived not as a simple project but rather as an on-going process accompanying the evolution and engagement of CSOs.

a) The CSSP follows up previous initiatives supporting community development, such as the EU Micro Projects Programme (EU-MPP)(implemented in several phases since 1995) and the Non-State Actor (NSA) Grant that supported some NGOs (including Women In Business and OLSI)and the development of SUNGO. **The CSSP is thus sometimes perceived as a continuation of these projects.** Lessons learnt from these initiatives have been incorporated into the programme mechanisms, and involved actors consider the programme itself to mainly be a mechanism to support local community-based initiatives. However, the continuity with previous programmes has proven to be an obstacle to the perception of the programme as a means of supporting CSOs in accordance with current international and EU main policies. A key emerging point is the strategic choice of the CSSP to build the capacity of CSOs to formulate and manage projects. As evidenced by the experience of numerous EU CSO programmes under the 9thEuropean Development Fund (EDF)⁹, micro-grants programmes often risk preventing CSOs from engaging in roles related to service delivery and project implementation, substituting the State rather than influencing policies and engaging in governance.

b)Standard concepts of civil society and CSOs are not easily adapted to the Samoan context, which is based on a prominent role of community organisations, extended families and religious institutions. The line between “community organisations” and “state institutions” is thin, since village mayors and village councils directly participate in government mechanisms. Using the internationally recognised concept of CSOs as voluntary collective organisations (autonomous of Government, religious institutions and families)in the case of Samoa would entail the risk of alienating CSOs other than NGOs or NGO-type organisations. On the other hand, flat rejection of the concept would lead to a loss of distinction between “civil society” and “society”, thus removing any usefulness to analytic and strategic objectives or development policies.

c) The CSSP has evolved during its implementation. Until the Mid-Term Review (2013),the CSSP consisted mainly of a set of Calls for Proposals aimed at supporting development activities –largely small infrastructures and the purchase of equipment – and of a set of contracts with SUNGO aimed at fostering the capacity of SUNGO itself and implementing capacity-strengthening activities to enable NGOs and CBOs to apply under the CfPs and manage the awarded grants. Following the Mid-Term Review, findings and recommendations began to be considered and the CSSP launched a set of stakeholder review and consultation mechanisms. The CSSP also continues to undergo operational and organisational changes, which mainly concern closer follow-up of funded projects, the creation of communication channels among stakeholders (including to some extent the clarification of roles and the establishment of partnerships), the assumption of a strategic perspective and the improvement of targeting, project selection, M&E and knowledge management mechanisms. While not all of these engagements have clearly resulted in concrete changes to the functioning of the CSSP, there is evidence of an emerging transformation process. The evaluation of the programme should therefore consider that the CSSP is currently undergoing a transition process that is likely to influence its future functioning as a permanent structure.

d) The CSSP is not just a “programme”. It constitutes a “one-stop shop” for CSOs, simplifies access to funding and other resources for CSOs of different kinds and allows the harmonisation of funding from different donors. **The CSSP itself thus faces the challenging need to consider the policies, strategies and requirements of a large number of stakeholders**, the presence of which has also influenced the interpretation of Programme objectives. As already discussed, certain objectives and expectations of the CSSP differed among the main stakeholders, with consequences for programme implementation. However, harmonisation of funding is not merely administrative and requires strong collaboration among stakeholders toward identifying common goals and defining and developing procedures, implementation mechanisms and common policies. The Government of Samoa (GoS) has

⁹Floridi M. and others, Capitalisation of the Civil Society and the State, European Commission, EC (2009).
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a clearly pivotal role in this framework, and the CSSP itself could be perceived as a pilot programme through which new aid modalities were developed and tested. Recognition of the innovative content of the Programme as a whole is therefore crucial to understanding its meaning and value added.

4.2 Relevance

The relevance of the CSSP must be assessed on a number of levels: relevance to needs, relevance to stakeholders' policy and interests and capacity to respond to emerging needs.

Relevance to needs

CSSP activities have focused mainly on **funding the demands of CBOs and NGOs**, thus answering an important need, particularly in a context where opportunities for funding are limited. Training and mentoring activities have tried to build capacity for project design and to a lesser extent organisational management, **but have scarcely focused on some of the major issues that CSOs currently face**, namely:

- Engagement in governance/policy issues;
- The need for a diversified funding base and for the establishment of appropriate sustainability strategies;
- The relationship with constituencies and the capacity to represent citizens;
- The autonomy of CSOs from other actors;
- The limitations of leadership and the tendency of organisations to depend on their leaders; and
- The lack of technical capacities (including those related to "problem analysis").

Relevance of the CSSP to CBOs' demands was increased by the establishment of different "granting" schemes and adaptation of the application forms. Moreover, the CSSP adopted different approaches to supporting CBOs and NGOs. The same could not be said for capacity building: training in project design and management was the same for all, and the CSO assessment carried out to accompany large projects was based on a single model that paid little attention to variations in capacity building needs. Churches, village councils, women's committees, NGOs and informal local groups all receive the same assistance and no specific activities have supported the capacity development of different kinds of groups or organisations.

A higher level of relevance is observed **to some of the emerging needs in Samoan communities**. The Programme responded to the need for local development in the following specific areas:

- Community infrastructures (meeting places, etc.);
- Income-generating activities (IGAs);
- Education;
- Environment; and
- Access to water.

Particularly since the MTR, a stronger focus has been placed on vulnerable communities, although the capacity of the programme to respond to local development needs was reduced to some extent by i) the general choice not to intervene in areas in which projects could be funded by other actors, in order to avoid duplication; ii) an absence of actions to support the identification of initiatives designed to target emerging issues (meaning that in many cases projects were identified solely as a means of raising money); iii) the fact that the Programme was based on Calls for Proposals (which are usually responded to by "stronger" actors with the capacity to access information); and iv) the request for a cash contribution.

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Moreover, under the first three CfPs there was no reference made to village development plans or to other village/community needs assessment processes¹⁰. In the case of the fourth CfP proposals were selected in consideration of Village Sustainable Plans, the Community Disaster Plans and household surveys conducted by the Community Disaster and Climate Risk Management (CDCRM) programme and the Aiga ma Nuu Manuia Performance Management System (used to identify the most vulnerable villages). Few projects included an analysis of priorities at local level and the lack of CSO capacity to conduct “problem analysis” further limits the relevance of the actions to the challenges generated by the growth of poverty in Samoa.

Relevance to stakeholders’ policies and interests

The Programme has been mainly accountable to its 3 main stakeholders: the Government of Samoa, the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) and the EU (although delays in the submission of reports have been seen as a lack of accountability). The Programme itself is **relevant to Government policies** and is also fostering the **opening of new communication channels** between the GoS and community-based organisations. The CSSP is also highly relevant to DFAT policies on support to community development and to the fostering of Government reform processes under which CSOs feature among the actors involved in service delivery.

The CSSP is less relevant to some key elements of the current EU policies on supporting civil society development, particularly as regards the engagement of CSOs in mechanisms for policy dialogue and governance. This is due less to the design of the Programme than to certain choices in programme implementation, (primarily, the focusing of training activities solely on project design and management and the choice to mainly support SUNGO as regards CSO engagement in policy and advocacy). The limited relevance of the CSSP to EU policies has also been influenced by:

- The lack of an Inception report, which would have analysed the feasibility of the Programme itself and provided more detailed explanation of the approach adopted, the criteria to be used in project definition and selection, etc.;
- The limited knowledge by the PMU of EU policies regarding CSOs and the limited interaction with EU offices and structures (which mainly concerned administrative requirements);
- The lack of TA and capacity building opportunities (aside from those provided by Government) and particularly, the lack of external TA by the EU (aside from the ROM mission and MTR).

Despite the presence of CSO representatives in the Steering Committee, and probably as a result of limited communication with organisations whose proposals were declined, **the accountability of the CSSP to civil society organisations has sometimes been questioned**, both in meetings with key informants and at the focus group meeting. Factors influencing this perception by CSOs include: i) the limitation of direct CSSP communication with CSOs (meeting the CSSP manager was not easy, and the CSSP website is not currently functioning); ii) the fact that funding criteria were changed during the programme’s implementation; and iii) the lack of a defined schedule for CfPs, increasing uncertainty among CSOs about funding opportunities.

In general, CSOs (CBOs and NGOs) **are seen by the CSSP mainly as beneficiaries of funding** and aside from the presence of CSO representatives in the Steering Committee, there is no mechanism that allows CSOs to assume an active position as regards CSSP functioning. The participation of CSOs in the CSSP Steering Committee has a limited influence on the functioning of the Programme (one issue is that CSO representatives are not responding for their activities to the CSOs that elected them, as they have been present for the entire duration of the programme, despite their mandate being just 2 years).

The currently limited accountability to CSOs is however likely to change following the hosting of the “stakeholders’ forum” and meetings in early 2015.

¹⁰ GoS planning the contents of this publication are the sole responsibility of the author and can in no way be taken to reflect the views of the European Union.”

Relevance and capacity to respond to emerging needs

Given that the CSSP mainly functions as a project funding facility and does not have a monitoring system, there was limited capacity to respond to emerging issues not directly related to project implementation. Issues related to project implementation have mainly been solved through interaction with other relevant public authorities. In a few cases, the problems could not be solved and the project was terminated. Capacity has increased since 2014 as a result of activities facilitating communication with stakeholders (such as the CSSP internal MTR, which involved a number of primary stakeholders (including the MWCSD, SUNGO, the Ministry of Natural Resources and the Environment (MNRE), the Ministry of Education, Sports and Culture (MESC), the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries (MAF) and a group of CSOs using CSSP funds).

In addition to the relevance to donors' and Government policies, the CSSP also appears to be a relevant tool to recent international engagements on **Aid Effectiveness**. Notably, the CSSP proved to be a successful test of the model of setting up a single programme for the management of funds provided by different donors and in the framework of different projects (in addition to the original EU and AusAID funds, the CSSP has been managing other Australian funds under the ICCP scheme and is soon to manage some World Bank funding for climate adaptation).

Moreover, the CSSP **enabled a test of how “harmonised funding” can produce advantages for beneficiaries**. In both individual interviews and focus group meetings the consulted CSOs declared that their fundraising and management had been facilitated by the programme. This not only reduced the need to visit different donors individually (thus reducing the cost and effort related to fundraising for most CSOs) but also reduced the need to formulate different reports for each donor (thus reducing the administrative burden on CSOs and improving their operational capacities).

Finally, **the CSSP has been relevant to various degrees on cross-cutting issues:**

- Activities have often focused on women (with the clear potential impact of the progressive empowerment of women's groups) and in some cases on people with disabilities (including through awareness-raising activities) and other vulnerable groups;
- Water-related activities are reducing stress on the local environment. Some activities are also directly focused on the environment (i.e. energy production through biomass digestion);
- The Programme focused only partially on the capacity of CSOs to deal with these issues (no CSO capacity-building activities have been specifically carried out on cross-cutting issues). In many cases however, the CSSP provided funding for complementary activities carried out by other actors, which included capacity building.

CSSP actions appear not to be relevant to the engagement of other actors (the private sector, researchers and academics, the media, etc.) with civil society or their development and engagement in development policies. Moreover, little synergy has been fostered among CSOs of different categories.

Some operational mechanisms directly affected the relevance of the CSSP, namely:

- The design of the budget (which assigned high priority to the CfPs and small funds for other activities);
 - The formulation of performance indicators in the logical framework (which focused on the implementation of activities rather than on their outcomes and impacts);
 - The use of CfP mechanisms regarding the “mobilisation” of CSOs and the selection of projects (i.e. the use of evaluation criteria, the scoring system and the role of the Steering Committee);
 - The M&E mechanisms (which focused on the implementation of actions) and the support mechanisms (which focused on the procurement of goods);
 - The lack of TA and training (other than that offered by the GoS on Geographical Information Systems and M&E) for the PMU. TA was provided for the PMU (e.g. in M&E by the MoF and in project management by SUNGO), but was not utilised;
 - A lack of space to reflect on the programme in a strategic way;
 - A lack of knowledge management mechanisms; and
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- Lack of exposure to international experiences in the provision of support to CSOs.

4.3 Effectiveness

Considered in terms of the indicators identified in the EU and DFAT Logical Frameworks, the effectiveness of the CSSP is high (albeit higher in relation to the latter). As a rule, results exceed those defined by the logical framework indicators; however, these mainly focus on the implementation of activities (rather than on their outcomes and results in terms of strengthening CSOs).

Objective 1

As previously mentioned, throughout its duration the CSSP funded **327 CSO initiatives** and received 1,095 project proposals. Supported projects are largely proposed by Village CBOs (22%) and Church-affiliated groups (15%) and mainly fall into a limited number of categories (education, IGAs, water and community infrastructures (particularly for women's committees)).

NGO project applications constituted just the 6% of the total and mainly focused on service delivery. Only a few projects aimed to support advocacy, capacity building or institutional development (seeing as SUNGO was contracted for capacity building). There was a considerable increase in the number of applications between the first CfP and the second and third CfPs, while for the fourth CfP the number fell sharply back to the level of the first.

As discussed in previous paragraphs, various community needs have been effectively met through the different categories of grant. In most cases, the local effects of grants relate to:

- The strengthening of local community institutions (i.e. village councils and related committees) and community-based social activities;
- Improved social services available at village level (i.e. pre-school and school facilities);
- Improved access to water;
- The creation of IGAs.

Mainly, "tangible" goods have been provided by the programme, with only a few projects focusing on "intangible goods". This applies not just to projects proposed by CBOs, but also to initiatives proposed by NGOs, which mainly focused on service delivery. Few activities concerned the implementation of advocacy/policy activities or the production of inputs for the policy engagement of CSOs. Even fewer concerned the capacity building of CSOs.

Objective 2

In relation to **Objective 2**, activities mainly consisted of the implementation of training workshops and mentoring activities by SUNGO regarding project design and management and later in the application of an "NGO assessment" tool to NGOs and CBOs.

A SUNGO "Development Plan" has been supported which focused on the strengthening of SUNGO as an organisation involved in the delivery of services and the implementation of activities, rather than as a representative body or network. Even when CSSP contracted SUNGO to deliver its annual workplan (which catered for training needs assessment, information sharing and performance evaluation), these were perceived as "tasks" rather than as an institutional development process, supported by the CSSP but autonomous.

A large number of organisations were involved in training workshops and mentoring; however, these activities focused only on management issues and the completion of applications. They brought little added value to the overall functioning of CSOs as "citizens' organisations".

The original expected result of a "CSO code of conduct" defined in the EU financing agreement has not even been explored (as the current NGO assessment tool was defined by an external consultant).

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Influence on internal CSO dynamics was negligible for most projects. The “NGO assessment”, which had the potential to make changes to organisations, has been applied to only 15 organisations in total and only in a few cases were processes activated for the upgrading of organisational structures and policies. The NGO assessment is based on a standard, “one size fits all” model of NGO and does not respond to needs related to the objectives or roles of individual organisations. The assessment model looks at organisations’ policies in terms of their management capacity (with a focus on project implementation and service delivery) and does not address the relevance of their action, their capacity to represent a constituency or even their ability to engage in governance or national policy arenas.

The only organisation that has been involved in an organisational development plan is SUNGO (and even in this case only certain functions of the organisation have been strengthened, while those related to constituency engagement and representation were omitted). It should be highlighted that the engagement of SUNGO as a primary actor in both i) the provision of training in project design and management and ii) the management of the NGO assessment procedure has generated expectations of SUNGO as a service provider, a channel for facilitating access to funding and an agent for CSSP (and therefore the Government) rather than as a “representative body”. Some of the consulted CSOs declared that “SUNGO is there to register organisations” (as if SUNGO were an official body).

Objective 3

In relation to **Objective 3**, SUNGO has been the main target of activities, resulting in its participation in a large number of meetings convened by Government ministries and donors. Some Civil Society Fora were funded as a means of establishing CSO positions on selected topics (including the review in 2012 of CEDAW and the production of the CEDAW Civil Society Shadow Report, which influenced the engagements assumed between the Government of Samoa and the UN).

No further relevant policy outcomes of SUNGO participation could be observed, particularly in the area of sector policies. Moreover the main SUNGO structures that could contribute to effective participation in policy dialogue (i.e. the thematic groups) are not functioning. Participation in policy dialogue is normally delegated to SUNGO officers and Board members, with limited opportunity for participation among SUNGO member organisations.

The SUNGO “Civil Society Forum ”has been hosted only irregularly and there has been no observed increase in the inclination of CSOs to use SUNGO to strengthen their voice or their capacity for advocacy. On the contrary, each organisation advocates and lobbies individually and for its own gain.

Relationships between NGOs and CBOs were not explored by the programme. There is therefore a tendency among NGOs to “use” community institutions as beneficiaries. In both focus group meetings organised during the evaluation, participants did not immediately identify themselves as belonging to a wider organised “civil society” and struggled to specify what the role of civil society could be.

Paradoxically, some of the activities foreseen under Objective 3 in the 4th Programme Estimate are to be carried out by a selected CSO (not defined) in programmes co-ordinated by the MWCSO.

4.4 Efficiency

Resources on the whole would seem to be adequate, although their distribution among activities was a main reason why the Programme became a “factory of projects” (with almost 66% of the global budget expected to support the grant schemes). Despite some shortcomings in the management of the programme, its implementation has been considerably efficient in terms of both spending (the CSSP engaged most of its available resources) and time (the CSSP implemented most activities according to its defined timeframe).

Shortcomings include:

- The limited respect of the duration of Programme Estimates. Extensions were required to all PEs, including the formulation of amendments and riders. The need to extend the duration of PEs owed mainly to the time needed to implement actions and in the case of PE3, to the time required by the PMU to consider the outcomes of the MTR and translate them into decisions and actions.
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- Delays in procedures and reporting in relation to donors, the MoF and CSOs involved in activities: Delays also sometimes involved the transfer of resources to CSOs and related to both the management capacity and the operational activities of the involved organisations;
- Communication between the PMU and other actors, including CSOs. In some cases CSOs disclosed that they had found it difficult to meet with the Programme Manager and staff and that they received no information on the funding of proposed activities. In general, information on CfPs is only diffused through mass media and there does not appear to be a mailing list or a well established communication mechanism between the CSSP and other actors;
- The lack of regularity of Steering Committee meetings (particularly during the last 12 months), primarily due to the lack of a defined responsibility to call such meetings and fit them with a well-defined schedule;
- At least during the first period of programme implementation (i.e. until the MTR), the obligatory engagement of the Steering Committee in micro-management, including the appraisal and approval of all grants (even Category 1);
- Important changes in PMU staff (including the replacement of the Programme Manager and some of the key experts), which resulted in a partial loss of institutional memory and in the reorganisation of PMU working mechanisms. Since staff changes are not easily avoidable and may in some cases be necessary or even beneficial to the functioning of the PMU, what has been lacking are appropriate management policies for ensuring institutional memory and reducing the negative impact of staff changes;
- A lack of adequate knowledge of donors' policies and procedures, civil society dynamics, CSO functioning and development and the issues and challenges related to the participation of civil society in policy dialogue, governance mechanisms and social accountability processes;
- A lack of opportunity for "strategic thinking" and discussion toward improving PMU activities and improving the functioning of CSSP as a programme rather than just a funding mechanism. In fact, staff have mainly been involved in the grant management process and have failed to consider the processes or dynamics of the supported CSO initiatives¹¹;
- An excessive burden on the PMU staff, related to:
 - Micro-grant management (and funding modalities);
 - The need to refer to 3 different administrative regulations;
 - The lack of a system to monitor and evaluate the functioning of the PMU;
- The delay in establishing an M&E mechanism for the programme (a contract was awarded in 2012 and the system was reviewed in 2014, but is still not fully functional and remains in need of endorsement by the Steering Committee);
- The lack of well defined fixed criteria for project selection and the change of project selection criteria during programme implementation, which entailed a waste of time and resources both for CSOs (which in some cases formulated proposals only to then discover that they were not eligible for funding) and for the PMU (which spent time assessing proposals that were later declared invalid);
- The adoption by the PMU of a scoring system for project evaluation that did not manage to effectively reduce arbitrary decisions due to the wide scoring range (0-20 points for each evaluation category). Such a mechanism entails a more time-consuming assessment of each proposal (as attributing scores this way is much more complex than using simpler scales, e.g. A to D) and requires more time for decision making (as discussion of funding decisions will likely be needed). Moreover, the lack of clear motivation behind decisions can lead to conflict, thus disrupting the smooth management of the programme;
- The CSSP PMU tendency to substitute CSOs (particularly CBOs) in some activities, including the procurement of goods and equipment for granted projects¹². This generates extra work for

¹¹According to DFAT, one reason for this was that the Steering Committee did not always meet on time. This led to inadequate co-ordination and collaboration at the higher levels of decision making.

¹²The need to support small or weak CSOs to carry out procurement activities originates mainly from the need to avoid inappropriate contracts in the procurement process. The sole responsibility to manage the processes related to the procurement of goods and equipment was transferred to the PMU after the adoption of a more prominent

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the PMU and risks causing project shortcomings, including i) limited capacity building potential of projects (the CSO does not learn how to manage resources and its autonomy is restricted); ii) negative impact on technology transfer (technology and equipment selection is performed by the CSSP without the involvement of stakeholders, which may have limited capacity in the specific subject); and iii) negative impacts on the project itself (such as delays);

- The lack of clear criteria for the funding of different activities of the same kind, which led to wild variations in the amount of grant attributed to similar projects (e.g. grants for “Women’s committee houses” ranged from less than 10,000 to over 150,000 tala) as well as further work for the PMU and the CSSP Steering Committee, which had to discuss the “relevant cost” of each proposal. This also causes inefficiency since it reduces the relevance of project costs in the light of actual needs.

4.5 Impact

The impact of the programme is not confined to the direct effects of the grants provided or the training and capacity building activities carried out. The opening of Calls for Proposals addressing different categories of organisations, including CBOs, tend to generate wider impact than that directly observed through projects by supported CSOs.

Positive impacts

With **about 1,200 applications for funding, the most apparent impact of the CSSP has been the mobilisation of Civil Society and Community organisations.** Even if only about a quarter of the applications were successful, all involved decision-making and project formulation process. These probably added little to NGOs’ activities and capacities, but are nonetheless important processes at community level that often require co-ordination among different grassroots groups and actors. The engagement of CSOs in the formulation of proposals is an indicator of the growing capacity of CSOs and their increasing mobilisation.

Emulation among organisations is another highly apparent impact. This refers to the tendency of organisations to look at what other organisations have been doing and to do the same. This is not necessarily positive in the short term (as e.g. it confined the majority of the proposals received by the CSSP to just a few categories), but it can lead to the diffusion of innovation in the longer term. In the case of the CSSP, emulation has led to the majority of funded projects involving service delivery and infrastructure, thus risking the negative impact of a tendency among CSOs to engage only in this area. This can lead to ineffective engagement of CSOs in development processes since their contributions are only complementary to those of other actors and cannot influence the relevance, effectiveness or efficiency of public policies.

The improvement of living conditions, including for vulnerable communities, through access to basic services (e.g. clean water) and the improvement of existing services, facilities and/or community infrastructures has been another apparent impact. Through initiatives by some CSOs, access to water, income and pre-school education have all been targeted and in some cases reduced. The impact of CSSP actions is strongest in the most vulnerable villages, as it is here that the activities carried out can make the biggest positive changes to access to services or the capacity to carry out social and economic activities¹³.

Despite this, the impact of the CSSP on vulnerable people risks being limited by cash contributions, which actually prevent those most vulnerable from accessing funding.

Other impacts of the CSSP include the following:

role by the CSSP has been a key factor in the success of the granted project. Nevertheless, substituting CSOs in their functions is likely to produce shortcomings in capacity building processes. Other modalities can be adopted to progressively build capacities in procurement and fund management, including the establishing of “mentoring” agreements among CSOs, the implementation of longer-term capacity building and TA initiatives, etc.

¹³ Since most projects only involve the delivery of goods/building of infrastructure, success is simply identified in terms of implementation. The contents of this publication are the sole responsibility of the author and can in no way be taken to reflect the views of the European Union.”

- **The strengthening of community-based institutions** (such as Village Councils, Women's Committees and Church-based organisations): This does not necessarily improve the capacity of CSOs to contribute to development, but it can strongly reduce community vulnerability to external shocks (both economic and environmental). The failure of CSSP actions to target the strengthening of emerging leaderships at village level however reduces the advantages of the strengthening of CBOs. Indeed, most of these still function under a single leading person on whom they are highly dependent;
- **Strengthened capacity of CSOs to implement/manage projects and make use of funding opportunities:** Only in a few of the (over 300) funded projects have major problems emerged that could not be solved. This indicates that the capacity to manage projects is now present throughout Samoa;
- **Improved trust between public authorities and CSOs:** In most cases, CSOs proved to be trustworthy partners in the implementation of activities (as very few projects had to be closed). Trust in CSOs as implementing partners does not immediately influence their potential to engage in governance and policy mechanisms, but remains an initial step toward opening new avenues;
- **The opening of communication avenues** between CSOs and public authorities: The CSSP has initiated the creation of opportunities for communication and mutual recognition through events such as the stakeholders' meeting, which was recognised by many actors as a point of change in the functioning of the Programme and could be further developed in the future. A narrower opening of communication between CSOs and the public authorities can also be attributed to CSSP actions involving SUNGO, which now participates in many Government meetings thanks to CSSP support¹⁴. However, SUNGO has been said by some CSOs to be unable to report to its constituency (through either newsletters or fora). In addition SUNGO is often consulted only during the latter phases of policy making (meaning it cannot change decisions already taken) and the limited functioning of SUNGO thematic groups leads to the representation of CSOs solely by SUNGO staff and Board members, who do not always have the required capacity or specialised knowledge;
- **Innovation processes:** These have emerged in some cases, particularly from initiatives that focus on economic and environmental activities as well as NGO activities that have introduced "new services" in Samoa (e.g. mental health, returnee inclusion, disaster management plans, mangrove management, etc.). It is not easy to evaluate the actual sustainability and economic advantage of introduced innovation, but it can be declared that the process has started;
- Lastly (although this is difficult to measure), evidence can be seen of **growing co-operation among grassroots organisations and villages** in order to solve problems.

Emerging risks and negative impacts

There are also some negative or **potentially negative impacts or new emerging risks**, which mainly affect civil society development and structuring processes. The following have been identified through meetings, visits to organisations and documentary analysis:

Weakening of networks and of co-operation among NGOs: NGOs have always applied individually and few partnerships have been developed through field work. Participation and engagement in the SUNGO thematic groups has also been decreasing. Lobbying and advocacy are done by individual NGOs for their own purposes and interests. Competition for funding has also been growing, together with the tendency to focus on projects that are more likely to access donor funding.

The reinforcement of SUNGO as a single organisation and "service provider" risks a long list of undesirable impacts (see below). While the EU expert considers these to already be visible (as seen from mission interviews with SUNGO itself, NGOs and focus group participants), their relevance is questionable in the view of the DFAT expert.

- a) Despite increased membership and the publication of newsletters, the **distance between SUNGO and its members looks set to increase**, as members see SUNGO mainly as an

¹⁴In addition to the contents of this publication are the sole responsibility of the author and can in no way be taken to reflect the views of the European Union."

organisation that can provide services (capacity building and information, or just 2 of its 5 original mandates) but not as their network, representative or collective voice. While each year new organisations (particularly CBOs) become SUNGO members, other organisations cease to be so. New members of SUNGO are often organisations that participated in training and applied for funding, and thus expect SUNGO to facilitate access to funds;

- b) Mistrust and confusion among CSOs over SUNGO: **rather than an organisation dependent on its members, many CSOs view SUNGO as an “agent” of the CSSP or donors** (this having been exacerbated by SUNGO’s engagement in the assessment of CSOs funded by the CSSP and in the appraisal of CSO applications for funding);
- c) **SUNGO risks being considered by some NGOs as a “competitor”** for donor funding. As such it risks receiving limited support from member CSOs where this is needed (e.g. during public communication campaigns). The perception of SUNGO as a potential competitor is only partially reduced by the fact that SUNGO does not normally participate in CfPs (although a SUNGO project was funded under the last CfP). Crucially, SUNGO is seen as an autonomous organisation – with its own staff, CEO and Board – supported by donors;
- d) **Over-burdening of SUNGO with operational responsibilities:** SUNGO has been funded to participate in Government ministry meetings, disseminate information, provide contract-based training and capacity building activities and conduct contract-based assessment of CSOs, among others. The requirement to implement all these activities often results in problematic engagement with CSOs and increases dependency on external funding. External funding is currently a basic requirement for maintaining the organisation and its staff, which includes 9 (nine) full-time persons.

4.6 Sustainability

The sustainability of the CSSP also varies according to context.

In most cases, CSSP-funded activities consist of the **building of infrastructure and the purchase of equipment**. In the first case, sustainability is often assured by the engagement of Village Councils or Churches (which in some cases directly applied for the grant, but may also manage the organisation that applied for the grant). In the second case sustainability cannot normally be assured. However, even when sustainability is based on the engagement of Village Councils and Churches it cannot be guaranteed in the long term due to the risk of replacement of leaders, which can heavily affect the continuity of activities (particularly since there has been no investment in the strengthening of “directly interested” actors or their leadership (i.e. women, youth, parents and teachers’ associations, etc.).

Similarly, in the case of **service delivery** (which was the subject of some large grants provided to NGOs, in some cases repetitively under the different CfPs, as with the Goshen Trust), sustainability is not guaranteed. Some NGOs have used numerous methods of application and have received funds several times without having developed an exit strategy or any other funding mechanism. In some cases, the only strategy identified by CSOs is that of asking the Government to assume the burden of funding their activities. Even without considering the intrinsic limits of such a position (which effectively involves the renunciation of CSOs’ autonomy), it is important to consider that lobbying to Government is done by each organisation for its own interest and in some cases, occurs simply through personal relationships and linkages. Further reflection is also needed on the potential risks of **using project funding** (which in principle is related to the production of certain outputs within a defined and limited timeframe) to **support service delivery** (which is in most cases a permanent function that will nearly always suffer as a result of intermittence of funding).

The **sustainability of supported organisations is similarly insecure**, not only concerning the CSOs (particularly NGOs) which benefited from CSSP grants, but also the organisations (such as SUNGO)¹⁵ which were expected to become “structural factors” in the development of an autonomous and strong civil society capable of contributing to national development and policies. It should be

¹⁵While SUNGO’s contents of this publication are the sole responsibility of the author and can in no way be taken to reflect the views of the European Union.”

noted that in many cases, organisations appear over-staffed compared to international standards and their costs seem very high, meaning that local funding opportunities would struggle to match their financial needs. CSSP activities have not managed to reduce donor dependency; on the contrary, some organisations have expanded their activities and infrastructure apparently without consideration of the fact that the CSSP funding mechanism is based on grants resulting from a competitive process in which access to funding can never be assured.

The sustainability of the CSSP itself appears dubious. The Programme and its PMU have been set up as a permanent body, but they have been mainly supported through funding from the two main original donors (the DFAT and the EU). Currently, even if both Australia and the EU were to continue to support CSOs in Samoa, there is no guarantee that they will continue to fund the CSSP. Moreover, in the case of the EU the processes involved in the identification, approval and formulation of any new programme supporting CSOs in Samoa would take a relatively long time.

In the short term, the continuity of the programme has been secured by the channelling through the CSSP of World Bank funds for supporting community disaster preparedness. However, despite the interest expressed by the Government of Samoa in maintaining the CSSP as a permanent structure, the framework and staff of the programme remain entirely dependent on donor funding and so far there have been no Government initiatives to support them.

4.7 Coherence

The CSSP is the only mechanism implemented by either the EU or any of its member countries for supporting CSOs in Samoa. The Non-State Actor (NSA) programme is not currently implemented in Samoa, although it has supported previous initiatives that were proposed by business and enterprise associations, as well as by NGOs.

The programme is also coherent with EU actions in the area of citizen control and monitoring, which derives from the EU's decision to support the Government of Samoa mainly through the modality of "budget support". The active engagement of CSOs in policy dialogue is a basic requirement if budget support is to be an efficient and effective co-operation tool. CSSP actions to reinforce the capacities of CSOs are therefore coherent with the wider actions of the EU. Even if in the short term the effect of these actions on strengthening the "policy" capacity of CSOs has been limited, in the medium term they are likely to result in improved CSO capacity to interact with Government and monitor its actions.

Considering the limitation of a programme involving the Government (such as the CSSP), it would be relevant in the future to use the funds from thematic programmes to support CSO initiatives that could not be easily supported by the GoS. This would also allow for stronger development of organisations which— in order to maintain autonomy and freedom – prefer to avoid linkages with the Government itself. Particularly in a small environment like Samoa, some CSOs consider the receipt of Government funds to be an obstacle to their assumption of critical positions in the framework of policy dialogue and the monitoring of public actions.

In order to increase coherence with EU policies (and particularly with those regarding civil society and governance), future CSSP actions should focus on supporting networks and policy engagement.

4.8 EC Value Added

The added value brought by the CSSP to the EC has been observed to be strong in the field. CSSP activities have extended, continued and complemented actions initiated under previous EU water management programmes as well as the actions of other EU donors on the environment.

However, the EC value added is low in terms of knowledge, primarily due to i) the lack of systematic M&E; ii) the limited efforts made to support research; iii) the absence of any strategic analysis of the role of CSOs and how to support them; and iv) the late commencement of "knowledge management" initiatives. Some activities that were intended to increase EC value added in terms of knowledge (such as the undertaking of a CSO mapping exercise in conjunction with the Commission Communication on "EU engagement with Civil Society") were not implemented. Research activities funded by the CSSP have limited

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There is room for the addition of value to policies for supporting civil society, for instance by reflecting in a more structured manner on how CSOs maybe defined not simply by their legal status, but also by considering their social functions and/or organisational features.

5 VISIBILITY

A CSSP visibility strategy exists and has been applied since 2011. However, it was defined according to EU visibility guidelines and thus mainly relates to donor and Government visibility.

Key elements of the visibility of the CSSP are the media exposure given to the launching of the funded projects and the dissemination of information on the CfPs.

Considering that the CSSP is a joint programme based on harmonised funding, the applied visibility strategy had limited capacity to foster adequate visibility of all donors. The issue of the limited visibility of the EU in some cases was raised in a previous monitoring mission, which highlighted that some published articles had named AusAID as the only source of funding. However, this goes both ways as other newspaper articles have since been found that name the EU as the only funding source.

A more important limitation of the CSSP visibility and communication strategy is its weak capacity to clarify and disseminate EU policies on the role of civil society and the strategies related to EU and DFAT support to the CSSP itself. In fact, there has not been a single CSSP communication action aimed at increasing the visibility of civil society as an important actor in development processes or in the establishment and management of development policies.

Organisations and projects are often “hidden” by the communication and visibility activities. All projects use sign boards showing the name of the Programme and the logos of the donors, but – crucially – not the title of the project or the name of the involved CSO.

While CSSP funding activities have been very visible (both through the CfPs and through the media coverage of projects), other activities that focus more on capacity building or advocacy have been less visible. This can easily lead to the following negative effects:

- Increased expectation of receiving funding, which will not always be satisfied¹⁶;
- A process of emulation, leading to the replication of some projects even where they are not relevant (which has probably already occurred with some “infrastructure” projects); and
- Diffusion of the idea that CSOs are there to implement projects, rather than to identify and resolve issues or give voice to people’s needs.

CSSP visibility has been stronger than CSSP “communication”. In Savaii in particular, CSOs reported difficulties communicating with CSSP and receiving adequate information (a proposal was thus made to install a local branch of the Programme in Savaii).

6 GOOD PRACTICES

Despite limited action by the CSSP toward knowledge management and accumulation, the following “good practices” have been identified among its activities:

- a) **Use of television for CfP dissemination and for the presentation of projects and good practices:** This has proven very effective. In an environment in which the circulation of printed media can be difficult due to the wide dispersion of settlements, the use of TV can bridge distances and reach isolated communities. In some cases, TV has been more effective than “face-to-face” communication among neighbouring villages and can also improve the visibility of projects and activities, thus overcoming the barriers and obstacles to communication that

¹⁶The danger is twofold: on the one hand, the promotion of demand that cannot be satisfied will lead to disillusion among CSOs; on the other hand, the promotion of demand that cannot be satisfied will lead to the weakening of their fundraising capacities.

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exist due to village governance mechanisms (e.g. the social obligations related to visits among villages);

- b) **The joint stakeholder forum and joint stakeholder review:** During the latter stages of its implementation the CSSP engaged (in co-operation with SUNGO) in the launching of a set of events enabling stakeholders to communicate and share knowledge. These events –including a joint stakeholder meeting and a joint stakeholder review, which involved both CSOs and public authorities – can play a key role in enabling the sharing of knowledge and the solving of problems. In many cases, different CSOs and communities face similar problems; however, communication is difficult if not impossible without the intervention of a “facilitator” or an intermediate body (a function that can be relatively easily performed by the CSSP);
- c) **The production of training and capacity building materials adapted to the Samoan context:** With the support of the CSSP, SUNGO has developed and used a CSO assessment tool and a set of training materials in the Samoan language and adapted to Samoan CSOs. A group of trainers has also been trained and qualified to use these tools. They require further development, but nonetheless represent a practice to be replicated and scaled up (for which the range of training topics should be widened to include ,e.g., mechanisms for governance, advocacy, policy and organisational sustainability). It is equally important to engage with other actors, such as regional and national academic and research institutions;
- d) **The introduction of a simplified CfP grant application form in the Samoan language:** The use of a simplified application form for CSOs (and particularly CBOs) in the Samoan language has been a key factor in mobilising local CSOs and enabling them to engage in the identification and formulation of projects. Further development is needed, particularly toward clarifying the concepts on which the application form is based, the purpose of each item and how the application will be evaluated;
- e) **GIS:** The CSSP recently established an M&E system, including a Geographical Information System (GIS) that provides both Programme staff and other users with immediate information on CSSP actions and their distribution throughout Samoa. The GIS is potentially an effective communication tool that can i) enable stakeholders to better understand the programme and ii) facilitate the establishment of strategies based on analysis of territorial differences and the presence of active local actors. A key positive element of the GIS is the use of visual rather than written communication, thus increasing accessibility;
- f) **Support to autonomous initiatives for the development of common goals:** Most activities supported by the CSSP were promoted by organisations based on village institutions (such as Village Councils and the Matai governance mechanism), by Church-based organisations or by NGO-type organisations. A few activities were however also proposed and implemented by “informal groups”, normally involving persons with a common interest around a leader, without formal linkages to better established institutions. While some of these activities had economic goals, others focused on the protection and development of common interests, such as those related to environmental resources. These organisations, while characterised at present by a weak structure and often by limited capacity (or by the focus of capacities on the leader) have the potential to play an important role in civil society governance, since they tend to be the vehicles of the perspectives and interests of newly emerging actors that have little say in the functioning of well-established organisations or village institutions. The provision of support to these groups can therefore result in the development of new grassroots actors, potentially broadening avenues to participation in local governance mechanisms. However, such support may not be effective if it is limited to the funding of initiatives. There is also need to scale up existing experiences and to support the structuring of groups, particularly regarding leadership and functions for problem identification and solving..

The following good practices have also been identified by the CSSP PMU for further consideration:

- The launching of a “Community Page ”in the Samoa Observer that publishes information on funded projects;
- The multi-stakeholder workshop organised to facilitate communication with key line Ministries, which focused on the establishment of procedures and mechanisms to improve the relevance and effectiveness of actions involving numerous stakeholders. Some CSOs participated in the workshop, resulting in increased mutual knowledge and trust and improved awareness among the various stakeholders on the public good problems facing CSSP development initiatives;

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- The hosting of an Orientation Day for the 4th Call for Proposals;
- The provision of procedural training to CSSP staff, carried out after the MTR;
- The implementation of site visits by the Steering Committee, leading to increased knowledge among its members of issues emerging at project level;
- The improvement of assessment procedures by the time of the fourth CfP, involving the use of several data sources for identifying vulnerable villages and prioritising interventions therein.

7 OVERALL ASSESSMENT

Development processes and policies require that civil society organisations (CSOs) in Samoa assume a stronger and more proactive role. This will entail a shift from a relatively exclusive engagement in service delivery – in complementarity with Government – to a stronger engagement in policy dialogue and governance mechanisms in order to increase the relevance and effectiveness of public policies¹⁷. This is even more important considering the aim of donors and partner countries to make the transition from project-based aid to budget support and to other aid modalities in which accountability to citizens and public authorities plays a major role.

Sharing the vision of a stronger and more active civil society, the Government of Samoa – with the support of the EU and DFAT – engaged in the launching and implementation of the CSSP as a “One-Stop Shop” for CSOs. 3 main roles were identified for the CSSP: i) offering opportunities and support to increase institutional and technical capacities; ii) playing a stronger role in local development and service delivery to the public (particularly at grassroots level); and iii) increasing the capacity of CSOs to participate in policy dialogue and governance and in so doing, influencing public policies and their implementation.

The general aim of the CSSP and its focal points of action are not only coherent with GoS, EU and DFAT policies, but are also highly relevant to the processes and dynamics in which Samoan CSOs are involved. However, the relevance of the CSSP’s objectives has been reduced during Programme implementation by an interpretation of the Programme as being in full continuity with previous “micro-project” initiatives for the involvement of CSOs in supporting local development in Samoa. At the time of operationalisation of the original idea (which is the focus of the financing agreement), the CSSP transformed from a programme that supported civil society development to a programme funding community initiatives. Consequently, activities that focused on capacity building and the fostering of CSO engagement in policy dialogue and governance mechanisms became somehow peripheral to the Programme itself.

Despite this important change, which mainly influenced its impact and sustainability, the CSSP has been highly effective in providing support to communities. It has in fact promoted an increase in CSO capacities to manage resources (including funding), implement projects and provide services. It has also presented evidence to public authorities and stakeholders of the possibility to engage with CSOs, thus opening avenues to the promotion of stronger engagement and participation of CSOs in the formulation of public policies, as well as in their monitoring and evaluation.

Due to their limited impact thus far, the CSSP actions that aimed to strengthen CSO capacities to assume an active role in policy dialogue and governance mechanisms will require further support in future and should be considered as the focus of future actions funded by both the EU and DFAT. The risk was observed of weakening SUNGO’s capacity to constitute a legitimate platform for CSOs, as some CSOs consider SUNGO to mainly play the role of an implementing agency for CSSP, donors and Government. Further important issues for future action would therefore be the further clarification of SUNGO’s position and the strengthening of its linkages with member organisations.

Future actions should take advantage of the progressive improvement of CSSP efficiency that occurred during implementation and remains in progress. Shortcomings emerging in programme implementation have been very much related to the interpretation of the CSSP as a simple grant management mechanism and to the limited access by the CSSP PMU to knowledge, information and

¹⁷ Ways in which CSOs can engage in policy dialogue and governance are described in the first part of the report, where the concept of governance is defined. The EU communication on “The roots of democracy and sustainable development: Europe’s engagement with civil society in external relations” outlines a range of possibilities for CSO engagement.

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technical assistance regarding international and regional experiences in the fostering of civil society development. Future actions should thus prioritise CSSP access to both TA and knowledge-sharing opportunities.

Despite some shortcomings, the CSSP has demonstrated the effectiveness of using harmonised funding to support CSOs. Not only (as a “One-Stop Shop”) has the CSSP simplified and facilitated the activities of CSOs (thus increasing their potential efficiency), but it has also allowed donors to increase the cumulative effects of their support and – more generally – reduced overlap among funded actions and incoherence among policies. The Government of Samoa has recognised these advantages and is now promoting CSSP continuity by using the Programme as a conduit for new funding opportunities to engage CSOs in development. However, to further increase the sustainability of the CSSP, donor action is required in order to foster the engagement of the Government of Samoa in establishing the CSSP itself as a permanent, autonomous body.

8 CONCLUDING REMARKS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1 Concluding remarks and recommendations for the CSSP Project Management Unit

The CSSP, a programme funded by the EU and DFAT, is now coming to an end. DFAT is assessing the possibility of extending support until the end of 2015, while activities under EU support have been closed since March 2015. The recommendations addressed below to the CSSP Project Management Unit do not aim to address the current limits of the programme, but rather to make the most of what have proven the most effective and relevant actions of the programme. Valorisation of these actions should generate further positive impact on civil society development processes and dynamics and should also help activate new processes related to CSO engagement in policy and governance. The recommendations below are addressed to the CSSP PMU and Steering Committee.

The following recommendations are not prescriptive, but offer a menu of options for improving programme implementation and future programme identification and formulation.

- To scale up the communication and knowledge-sharing activities launched in the last year through stakeholder review and consultation. Facilitating communication among the actors involved in different activities should improve both the management of individual projects and development processes within involved organisations. To this purpose it is recommended to “cluster” similar projects (i.e. those involved with pre-schools, those involved in study centres, those carrying out similar economic activities, etc.) or create geographical clusters (thereby facilitating meetings among organisations in the same district). Note that it would be important to facilitate meetings among different types of organisation (NGOs, CBOs, Churches);
 - To scale up communication activities involving public authorities and CSOs, to facilitate mutual recognition;
 - To continue to clarify and distinguish the roles played by CSSP staff and those played by SUNGO, thus progressively reducing the engagement of SUNGO in functions that respond to CSSP needs rather than to (SUNGO member) CSOs’ needs and perspectives;
 - To continue the development of the M&E Mechanism and the GIS (including indicators), not only in terms of implementing funded activities, but also the development of local and involved CSOs (organisational changes, leadership development, social functions, funding processes, etc.), social, environmental and vulnerability factors and the activity of the PMU;
 - To review the PMU manuals and policies, defining procedures and standards increasing internal communication and knowledge sharing and increasing the PMU responsiveness to external stakeholders (CSOs, donors, Ministries and other governmental bodies, etc.).
 - To open avenues to strengthening the capacity of PMU staff, mainly concerning donor policies and regional and international experiences in supporting the development of CSOs and their engagement in development policy. This can be done via participation in international events and the fostering of access to TA activities. Considering the current engagement of the CSSP in World Bank activities for increasing village resilience, key issues to be considered in the near future relate to the role of CSOs in the reduction of social vulnerability to disasters and the fostering of social accountability among local authorities, and
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- To reduce the engagement of the CSSP PMU in functions that reduce CSOs' autonomy or substitute them in resource management and encourage it to instead assume a facilitating and accompanying role. This should generate mutual trust between the CSSP and CSOs.

8.2 Concluding remarks and recommendations for the identification of future actions for supporting civil society development in Samoa

The following paragraphs include a set of concluding remarks on the numerous issues emerging from the evaluation process, each of which is accompanied by recommendations for future activities in the provision of support to CSO development. Key reference is made to EU policies on engagement with civil society. It should be noted that the recommendations do not necessarily concern “new actions”; in many cases, recommended actions and activities have already been carried out and tested by the CSSP. In addition, the recommendations represent a menu of possible actions that will need to be adapted to emerging needs, as well as to policy decisions and dialogue among stakeholders.

a) Focus on CSO capacities and capacity building needs

Aside from training in project formulation and management, focus on CSO capacities – particularly as regards their engagement in governance, social accountability and policy dialogue – has been limited (despite such capacities being crucial to potential CSO contribution to Samoa's development). Focus on CSO capacity building needs will require a shift in the focus of capacity building approaches from training workshops to organisational learning, hands-on training and mentoring. Moreover, it requires the use of diversified approaches and models and should strictly avoid the adoption of “one size fits all” methods and activities. The needs and functions of NGOs are different from those of CBOs.

Recommendations

- Reorganisation of the programme budget to include more resources for supporting capacity building and policy dialogue/governance initiatives involving CSOs and public authorities and reduce the share of resources given to “open” calls for proposals;
- The requirement for all projects and grants to include activities for strengthening the capacities of organisations;
- The requirement for all CSOs and CBOs involved in the programme to participate in capacity-building activities in problem analysis, leadership and democracy, the role of civil society, etc.;
- The requirement to include in all projects and grants the identification of one or more supporting organisations (not necessarily NGOs) to accompany the project with mentoring and TA; and
- The clearer definition of activities suitable for funding, excluding those that focus solely on infrastructure or service delivery

b) Development of CSO targeting mechanisms focused on social functions

CSSP mainly targeted Church and Village-based organisations. NGOs and other CSOs were targeted to a lesser extent (despite their potential for better involvement in policy dialogue, monitoring and social accountability activities, among others). Moreover, other kinds of “autonomous” CBOs have not been targeted. This is due partially to the modalities used for application under the CfP (including the requirement for CBOs to be “recognised” by a Church or a Village Committee), but also to the fact that reference was only made to the “legal status” of applying organisations¹⁸, which is not recognised in Samoa a relevant criterion for the identification of an organisation as a “Civil Society Organisation”. It is therefore more relevant to consider the social functions of organisations (as is in fact often done by the CSSP already).

Recommendations

¹⁸ Using only legal status as reference can easily create paradoxes. In a few cases, CSSP-funded organisations are legally NGOs but their members are representatives of ministries (or their board members are representatives of ministries compose their board) or stem directly from ministries and their depend on ecclesial hierarchy.

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Funding of formal and non-formal organisations that play roles specific to civil society:

- Advocacy to public authorities on behalf of communities and other social groups;
- Management and protection of common resources and goods (goods which produce benefits that cannot be divided, such as knowledge, some natural resources and intangible community resources);
- Representation of the interests of social groups;
- “Social innovation”;
- “Social accountability” and monitoring of service delivery;
- The recognition of new actors (including people with disabilities);
- Advocacy and policy dialogue representing communities or specific groups;
- Improved defence of human rights and gender equity;
- Substitution of public action that cannot be driven by the State (because of technical or social reasons);
- The emergence of new leaderships (aside from political institutions); and
- The “initiation” of processes to be continued by other actors.

c) Focus on sustainability mechanisms

Sustainability has been a weak element of most CSSP activities. Support to CSOs (and particularly NGOs) is heavily dependent on donors. In the best cases, the sustainability of activities/infrastructures is tied to the engagement and authority of specific individuals or small groups (e.g. Village chiefs or councils, the Church minister or an individual leader) or to the fact that income is produced (although it is not often considered that the cost of the investment can be greater than the economic benefits that result). It thus seems necessary to increase sustainability mechanisms for both organisations and their activities.

Recommendations

- To include as a requirement for project funding: i) a well defined “exit strategy”, which covers the development of members and staff (institutional development); ii) mechanisms for assuring the continuity of activities should leadership change; and iii) activities that strengthen the structural stability of groups and promote the emergence of new leaders from within the group or organisation; and
- To introduce as a requirement for support to IGAs a basic/simplified economic analysis (including calculation of the time needed to recover the initial investment and considering the share of funding provided by communities or families)¹⁹.

d) Widening of the range of organisations engaged in policy dialogue and capacity building

Despite the objectives and positive intentions of the Programme, the capacity of CSOs to proactively participate in policy dialogue and governance mechanisms did not increase during CSSP activity. Aside from a few exceptions (which in most cases concern organisations that were already engaged in governance/policy dialogue activities prior to the Programme), SUNGO is the only actor engaged at present in policy dialogue mechanisms.

As discussed above, the CSSP has attributed to SUNGO a central role and position, primarily due to the weak capacity of national NGOs. Future actions supporting CSOs should therefore enlarge the range of organisations involved in policy and capacity building functions.

¹⁹This would require that the contents of this publication are the sole responsibility of the author and can in no way be taken to reflect the views of the European Union.”

Recommendations

- Launch aCfP for the implementation of training and capacity-building activities (possibly based on a two-step process, consisting of: i) the pre-qualification of organisations; and ii) the subsequent invitation to present proposals according to well-defined objectives and Terms of Reference), and/or explore the possibility of engaging private and academic organisations in the provision of certain capacity-building services;
- Avoid the involvement of SUNGO in evaluation and assessment activities (such as the evaluation of proposals by CSOs and the assessment of CSO capacities) on behalf of CSSP and establishing independent commissions composed by individuals selected according to their expertise in carrying out such activities;
- Extend the opportunity to participate in meetings to all relevant CSOs (i.e. inviting all NGOs and CBOs engaged in the relevant topics);
- Strengthen “sector groups” both within and outside SUNGO through the implementation of specific activities (CfPs can be issued to this specific aim); and
- Create opportunities for thematic and “geographical” policy dialogue at different levels and be sure to invite relevant public authorities and CSOs (rather than selecting them *ex-ante*).

e) Increased transparency and trust

Limited transparency in decision making (particularly on project selection), the emergence of “conflicts of interest” and the possible influence of personal/family relations and political linkages are all issues that are easily raised in Samoa concern the CSSP. To avoid their emergence it is important to improve both decision-making and transparency mechanisms, particularly as regards project/grant selection, and to assure the participation of all partners in the process.

Recommendations

- Better formulation of the CfPs to more strictly define the initiatives and organisations that are eligible for funding;
- Clarification in the CfP of the criteria and scores to be adopted for project selection;
- Adoption of scoring criteria and mechanisms that limit the space for arbitrary decisions (e.g. adopting scoring mechanisms of a more limited range (A-D) and identifying specific indicators rather than general categories);
- Publication and accessibility of the outcomes of proposal evaluations;
- Reduction of the space for decision making by the “evaluation committee”;
- The establishment of independent “evaluation committees” that change for each CfP and are composed of people chosen on the basis of their technical capacity in the considered issues; and
- Avoidance of changes to the evaluation and eligibility criteria following the launch of CfPs.

f) Cross-fertilisation, knowledge sharing and co-operation

Despite the fact that most funded projects cluster around small areas, there was little cross-fertilisation among CBOs and NGOs. Knowledge sharing can be a key factor both in improving the quality and relevance of development initiatives and in strengthening CSOs, thereby increasing their orientation toward collaboration. Knowledge sharing has increased in the last phase of CSSP implementation, but could still be improved through future actions in support of CSOs.

Recommendations

- Attribution of a share of the programme budget to knowledge-sharing activities;
- Introduction of a requirement for projects/organisations to include knowledge-sharing activities in order to be eligible for funding.

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- Introduction of the possibility to involve external qualified partners to carry out these activities (including universities, other higher education and research organisations);
- Strengthening of mentoring rather than just providing training; and
- The inclusion of “fundraising” as a key element of Institutional capacity building, including the exploration of new avenues.

g) Access to external knowledge by the PMU

Despite existing opportunities made available by both DFAT and Government, an important factor that has weakened the relevance and effectiveness of the CSSP has been the limited access of the PMU to external knowledge, particularly concerning international experiences of CSO support, the emerging issues in this framework and donor policies and experiences. Accessing knowledge and technical assistance for M&E and GIS has positively influenced CSSP performance. Future initiatives should consider as a key component access to knowledge for the strengthening of the PMU.

Recommendations

- Include in the programme budget a facility for accessing knowledge and TA at international level, including through participation in knowledge-sharing opportunities (such as workshops and seminars);
- Include among programme provisions the possibility/need to access external TA in a relatively continuous way (six monthly missions), also through the use of existing facilities (such as the EU framework contract); and
- Establish standards for the work of the PMU based on international norms, adapted through participatory processes involving stakeholders²⁰.

h) Prioritisation of an effective M&E mechanism

Some issues concerning the effectiveness and efficiency (and a to certain extent the relevance) of the CSSP are linked to an inadequate M&E mechanism. Monitoring and evaluation focused on project implementation rather than on the generated processes and impact and the setup of an effective M&E mechanism has been lacking since Programme start-up. Such a mechanism should be based on the one hand on increasing the visibility of the processes related to the functioning of the PMU and the implementation of activities and on the other, on increasing the short-term visibility of the processes being generated by the Programme among the targeted actors.

Recommendations

- Include in the financing agreement a requirement for the inclusion of an implementation phase that focuses on i) the re-assessment of the project document and foreseen activities; ii) the establishment of an M&E mechanism; and iii) the need to make the functioning of such a mechanism a requisite for all Programme Estimates;
- Ensure that the M&E indicators include “intangible” goods and activities (such as the changes in organisational capacity following training) and that the mechanism includes indicators for activities, outcomes and impacts; and
- Provide a specific budget to monitoring activities during programme implementation (including the mobilisation of external expertise where needed)²¹.

i) Harmonisation of administrative and reporting mechanisms

A key requirement for the smooth functioning of a programme based on harmonised funding is the possibility to also harmonise administrative and reporting mechanisms. The CSSP represents a step in

²⁰International standards already form the base of the functioning of the PMU, but the opportunity should be taken to better define working modalities with the participation of development partners.

²¹Despite the programme budget already including resources for evaluation, M&E is often omitted in programme implementation. The contents of this publication are the sole responsibility of the author and can in no way be taken to reflect the views of the European Union.”

this direction; however, regulations are often misunderstood or stereotyped. An updated knowledge of regulations and the formulation of a financial/administrative system that considers them is therefore a basic need for joint programme implementation.

Recommendations

- Adopt a unified reporting template (note this has been done already, as the EU and DFAT agreed on a unified reporting format);
- Ensure that donors define early in the life of the programme (i.e. during the inception phase), an administrative mechanism and basic regulations regarding the administration of funding; and
- Provide access to specific TA concerning administrative and financial requirements at different stages of programme implementation.

j) Adaptation of community contribution/CSO co-funding requirements

Based on previous experience with micro-grants and micro-projects, community contribution was introduced by the CSSP as a requirement for assuring “ownership” by project beneficiaries. Such a mechanism is particularly important when funding concerns small infrastructures that need continuous maintenance, but is less important in the case of initiatives aimed at strengthening the capacities of an organisation. Moreover, in some cases the need to make a “cash contribution” can be an obstacle to the achievement of access to funding by vulnerable actors. A diversified mechanism therefore needs to be introduced (as tested also by the CSSP, which limited the need to deposit a cash contribution in the case of water tank projects) and other ownership mechanisms should be explored.

Recommendations

- Analyse the potential to limit the use of “cash” preliminary contributions (the current request is to deposit a fund equal to 10% of the value of the project) to specific projects in which the commitment of the community is not necessarily clear (e.g. the Women’s Committee House, which produces intangible advantages to involved actors);
- Reduce wherever possible the need to make a preliminary contribution, while maintaining the request to demonstrate the contribution before the last payment;
- Introduce mechanisms in project design to ensure ownership, e.g. adopting different project application forms and requirements for projects seeking different funding (the greater the fund, the stricter the requirements for project design); and
- Define set standards for the funding of specific types of activity or infrastructure (possibly based on international standards, as in the case of administrative costs applied by NGOs to projects).

k) Testing of the use of intermediary organisations to support CBOs

Despite its use of Calls for Proposals (a demand-driven mechanism), the CSSP has been largely based on the direct relation between the Programme itself and CBOs. This facilitates access to funds for CBOs, but also implies some shortcomings:

- An excessive workload for the PMU;
- The risk of undermining the supporting role of NGOs and other intermediary actors, since for CBOs and small organisations it is easier to demand resources for producing simple tangible outputs than for engaging in more complex partnership and planning processes;
- The risk of reducing the Programme to the status of funding channel, without the capacity or possibility to provide strategic support;
- The funding of projects that are not necessarily relevant, since the PMU lacks the capacity to carry out an effective field assessment of each proposal; and

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- The risk of involving the PMU in client-patron relationships (considering the limited dimensions of Samoa and the pressures exerted by social linkages and social obligations).

Moreover, the direct funding of micro-grants is forbidden under the EU Practical Guide to Contract Procedures for EU External Actions (PRAG) and would not be admissible in the next EU CSO support programme. It is thus necessary to explore sub-granting models and opportunities, which should be able to overcome issues of trust²², capacities²³ and the reluctance to collaborate among CSOs²⁴.

Recommendations

- Explore different “bottom-up” and “top-down” sub-granting models (including the possibility to establish projects with the active participation of the PMU in the articulation of demand at grassroots level);
- Explore possibilities for the engagement of regional organisations, some of which already have experience of sub-granting activities²⁵; and
- Provide international TA and monitoring in order to arrive at a functioning adapted mechanism.

l) Partnerships

Even if the occasional collaboration emerged among organisations supported by the CSSP, it did not provide funding to projects based on partnerships among organisations. Such partnership requires a similar status among partners and the exchange of capacities, knowledge and resources, not just for one organisation to provide support to (or “use”) another. The absence of partnerships is equally apparent among the organisations proposing the projects; in fact, all projects were proposed by single organisations²⁶. This owes not to any element of the CSSP guidelines, but rather to the reluctance of CSOs to co-operate on a permanent basis. Partnerships are nonetheless a basic requirement for the introduction of innovation, the fostering of mutual strengthening and capacity transfer, the progressive reinforcement of weak organisations and even the construction of a shared identity among CSOs (such an identity is currently lacking among NGOs and is probably a relevant factor in the weakness of SUNGO, despite CSSP efforts to strengthen it). Fostering the development of partnerships among CSOs and with other actors (particularly the academic and private sectors) must be a priority for future interventions in the provision of support to CSOs. Partnerships should also increase the sustainability of projects and organisations through the mobilisation of additional resources.

Recommendations

- Introduce specific grants to support partnerships (e.g. for the sharing or transfer of knowledge, mutual reinforcement, technology transfer, etc.); and
- Introduce criteria focusing on partnerships into the mechanisms for assessing and scoring proposals.

m) Provision for longer project duration

Most projects funded by the CSSP have a short duration (normally under a year, but in some cases up to 18 months). This duration is suitable for the construction of small infrastructure or the procurement

²²Despite the efforts of the Programme, a deep mistrust still seems to exist among public authorities and CSOs, particularly regarding NGOs’ accountability and their use of funds.

²³Few NGOs seem to already have been involved in actions that actually support local actors rather than simply considering them as beneficiaries of actions defined by the NGO itself.

²⁴During the current CSSP not a single project has been based on a partnership among different organisations.

²⁵Examples include the APWLD (Asia-Pacific forum on Women, Law and Development), ANSA (Affiliated Network for Social Accountability) East Asia Pacific, FSP (Foundation of the Peoples of the South Pacific International), WWF (World Wildlife Fund) and the Pacific Programme.

²⁶In many cases, the CSSP has facilitated the provision of support to CBOs by other actors (as training providers) and in some cases the CSSP has been the sole provider of support to CBOs in order to access markets. None of these cases however included the provision of support to CBOs by other actors.

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of equipment, but is not suitable for capacity-building or institutional strengthening projects. Providing a longer duration for supported projects is thus a requirement for supporting CSO development²⁷.

Recommendations

- Introduce a longer duration for projects (up to 30 months);
- Do not fund short-duration projects (under 12 months) or projects including just one activity²⁸.

n) Increased autonomy of the PMU for fostering trust among CSOs

The CSSP is supported by a Project Management Unit (PMU) that was created by the Government and reports to the Steering Committee and to donors under the financial supervision of the Ministry of Finance (MoF). This has the potential advantage of building local capacity to strengthen links between the GoS and CSOs, as well as of fostering better integration between CSO and Government actions. However, it also has some disadvantages, including:

- The risk of the CSSP becoming more accountable to Government and donors than to CSOs;
- The risk that the CSSP may be perceived as a “Government agent” for influencing CSOs, their positions, choices and actions;
- The risk of exerting an indirect and involuntary pressure on CSOs and particularly on SUNGO, which is entirely dependent on CSSP funding; and
- The risk of perception of the CSSP being a mechanism in which political linkages have an important weight²⁹.

Avoiding these disadvantages is thus a priority for future interventions in support to CSOs in Samoa.

Recommendations

- Increase the rotation of participants in the Project Steering Committee;
- Make greater use of “external committees” in the evaluation of proposals and the decision-making mechanisms related to funding; and
- Publish the minutes of all meetings of the Steering Committee (if only in simplified form) along with the evaluation sheets used for project selection.

o) Increased visibility of CSOs and of their roles

The CSSP fully respected donor visibility rules, resulting in widespread visibility of the Programme. Further effort could nonetheless be made to increase the visibility of the CSOs supported by the CSSP. A specific action for “communication with civil society” should thus play an important role in the framework of future interventions.

Recommendation

- Include specific communication actions for fostering “CSO visibility” and public recognition of CSOs as legitimate actors participating in policy and governance mechanisms (such as by increasing the visibility of CSO activities, their impact and their linkages with communities and other social groups).

²⁷The GoS considers this recommendation inappropriate in the framework of its own outreach patterns related to the provision of support to CSOs.

²⁸Short-duration projects allow the delivery of tangible goods, but not the construction of capacities of CSOs.

²⁹Even if these linkages are not intended, the CSSP should be perceived as a mechanism that could be perceived as a warning.

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