

ICSW 2014

Workshop report:

**What is relevant  
grantmaking practice for  
supporting Civil society?**

**The Case of Multi Donor  
Pooled Funds (MPF)**



Time : Sunday 23rd November 09:00-12:30  
Host : STAR-Ghana, Foundation for Civil Society (Tanzania), Manusher Jonno  
Foundation (Bangladesh), CISU (Denmark)

**Summary:**

The workshop was introduced by a brief introduction to recent development of Multi donor Pooled Funds (MDPF).

The overarching questions asked was: ***seen in a civil society perspective what is the best possible way an MDPF can operate?***

Six core critical questions to this trend was suggested (see below), followed by panel discussions (with representatives from CSO, Donor and MDPFs). Following the panel debates workshop participants contributed with core areas to investigate further or recommendations for best practice on future management of MDPFs.

Core Guiding Questions

- What is the best design process to establish MDPF?
- What are the best Governance and Management structure of an MDPF?
- What are the best MDPF funding modalities for civil society support?
- How should capacity building and learning be a part of a MDPF?
- How best to do M&E and ensure accountability in an MDPF?
- What (if any) role should MDPFs have in policy advocacy?

Some of the key inputs from the participants were (see more in report):

- How to ensure national CS ownership to MDPFs policies and priorities is vital and should be improved.
- MDPF sustainability should be given more focus – some MDPFs should transcend external donor support to continue facilitating CS support.
- Convening is a key role of MDPFs

## Summary of the introduction:

John Ulanga (FCS/TZ), Mary Tobbinosei (Star/Ghana) and Erik Vithner (CISU/Denmark)

### Definition

A MDPF for CS support can be defined as a set of programmes or actions jointly financed by two or more donors on the basis of commonly agreed objectives, criteria for allocations and reporting modalities and with the objective of strengthening the role of Civil Society.

Strengthening of Civil Society is an objective in itself or a key instrument to pursue more general development objectives.

### Introduction

The last decade or so has seen an increasing trend towards creation and supporting of MDPFs in developing countries. The rationale has been for increasing aid effectiveness

- Harmonizing approaches
- Increasing ownership
- Increasing outreach
- Reducing transaction costs

MDPFs can have a sectoral or a thematic focus, or be 'open' funds in support of civil society more generally.

MDPFs can take various forms:

- Donor Controlled Funding Mechanisms
- Government aligned
- Independent Foundations

### Examples of MDPF

- Manusher Jonno Foundation, Bangladesh (<http://www.manusherjonno.org/>)
- STAR Ghana (<http://www.starghana.org/>)
- The Foundation for Civil Society, Tanzanian (<http://www.thefoundation.or.tz>)
- Independent Development Fund, Uganda (<http://www.idf.co.ug/>)
- Zambia Governance Fund (<http://zambiagovernance.org/>)
- Southern Africa Trust, South Africa (<http://www.southernafricatrust.org/>)
- CSSM, Mozambique (<http://www.masc.org.mz>)
- AcT, Tanzania (<http://www.accountability.or.tz/>)

## Additional questions to be considered

During the initial discussions participants suggested that the six core questions should be supplemented by some of the following questions:

- Further investigate what is the motive for donors to form/support MDPFs?
- How can we as Civil Society influence the donor agendas (leading their priorities of MDPFs)
- What is the sustainability of MDPFs?
- Sustainability of MDPFs? What is the long term idea in establishing such institutions?
- Can MDPFs support policy activism?
- Defining MDPF: are private and philanthropic funds considered MDPF's?

## **Suggested areas for civil society recommendations:**

Based on the input from participants we have tried to cluster the input into a number of themes:

### **QUALITY OF FUNDING:**

Spending quality time and money on those aspects of the practice and on those relationships that are most difficult is vital to civil society support . Beware of succumbing to excessive cost reductions/efficiency demands.

### **OUTREACH AND ACCESSABILITY:**

- Finding ways to address (and develop capacity) of small, grassroots NGOs and informal groups →A possible solution could be a call for proposal aimed at improving the sector
- Funding modalities – MDPFs organizations need to develop easy and user friendly funding applications.

### **MDPF AND CAPACITY:**

MDPFs should invest more in capacity development, both technical and institutional, and facilitate the creation of critical mass – especially in fragile contexts.

### **MDPFs MEDIATING ROLE:**

- It is important that donors understand each other's constraints.
- MDPFs should not be 'gatekeepers' for donors → but be 'bridges between Civil Society and the donors (and government when relevant).
- Looking at the future of ODA (= declining) we might need to move away from a 'funding approach' (like MDPFs), but instead debate much more multistakeholder partnerships, including all stakeholders. Now it seems as if MDPFs are a goal in itself, but they should be 'convening platforms', not intermediaries.

### **MDPF APPROACH:**

- The approach of the Fund administrator [MDPF] is essential.
- MDPFs must ensure flexibility and capacity enhancement

### **ALTERNATIVE SOURCING FOR CIVIL SOCIETY:**

Communities can also be donors for small local funds addressing their local needs (eg. Community foundation funds).

### **MDPF SUSTAINABILITY:**

- In whatever you doing, the MDPFs are supporting the CSO. Find ways of making them sustainable.
- MDPFs are good and effective in reaching citizens, however, the continuity of support is questionable.

**MDPFs AND OWNERSHIP:**

- MDPFs can be very effectively to allow joining forces (donor perspective), but the design should allow ownership of intended beneficiaries.
- MDPFs should deliberately work towards national Civil Society ownership of the MDPF approach and priorities.
- any MDPF must have a clear and transparent strategy to involve national/local Civil Society.

**DONOR DIALOGUE:**

Individual donors circles lead to new funding programmes.

**OPEN APPROACH OF MDPFs:**

Idea: MDPfs should try to keep an 'open' approach to support CSOs (enabling environment themes), also when their primary objective is thematic.

**Future action?**

STAR, MJF, FCS and CISU will continue to gather experiences in MDPF practice. Civicus is planning to make "Resourcing for Civil Society" a theme for next years 'State of Civil Society report'. A chapter on the role of MDPFs will be suggested.

**GET RELEVANT DOCUMENTS HERE:**

[www.tinyurl.com/CSgoodgranting](http://www.tinyurl.com/CSgoodgranting)

# Annex 1:

Core questions with suggested subquestions:



