



Climate Action Network

Briefing on Civil Society Engagement in Developing Long-term Strategies

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Climate Action Network International (CAN) is the world's largest network of civil society organizations working together to promote government action to address the climate crisis, with more than 1100 members in over 120 countries. www.climatenetwork.org

The Paris Agreement calls for countries to formulate long-term low-GHG emission development strategies, in line with pursuing efforts to limit global temperature increase to 1.5°C. Developing such long-term strategies gives countries a framework within which to consider both their climate change and sustainable development objectives together. The 2030 Agenda and national development goals enable countries to know *what* their development should look like. Developing a long-term strategy allows countries to set the benchmarks for safe emissions curbs to ascertain *how* this development should take place, within safe climate limits. Long-term planning also provides an opportunity to maximize socio-economic benefits, such as cleaner air and water, improved security for jobs and energy access, and better health.

If devised effectively, long-term strategies can identify opportunities and challenges for sustainable development, open a space for democratic consultation on these implications, and secure a just transition for workers and communities that currently depend on a fossil-based economy. Civil society engagement will be essential in every step of the process to maximize effectiveness and ensure full implementation.

Decision 17/CP.22 paragraph 2 'encourages Parties to continue to promote the systematic integration of gender-sensitive and participatory education, training, public awareness, public participation and public access to information [...] into the formulation of long-term low greenhouse gas emission development strategies.' Not only is greater participation good for reasons of transparency and inclusiveness, but civil society participation has been proven to result in better policy-making, effective and sustainable implementation as well as robust accountability.¹

This paper will identify several benefits of civil society engagement in the process of developing long-term strategies. It will also provide key recommendations on how governments can carry out effective engagement for long-term gains.

Benefits of Civil Society Engagement in the Development of Long-Term Strategies

The development of long-term strategies is a complex challenge. The kind of policies that will be required for successful implementation of strategies will require behavioural change in all levels of societies and transformational change to economic structures.

The long-term advantages and need for such a transition are well documented, but careful planning must take place to ensure that benefits are maximized and potentially detrimental side effects to

¹ OECD, (2009), *Focus on Citizens: Public Engagement for Better Policy and Services* p.13-14. Available at <http://www20.iadb.org/intal/catalogo/pe/2009/03785.pdf>

society limited.² For example, investments in infrastructure will need to shift from carbon-intensive, fossil-fuel based energy systems towards renewable energy sources. This transition can provide many opportunities in terms of new job market creation, improved air quality, and energy security, but it will need to happen in such a way that minimizes the impacts on those currently working in the energy sector, in order to enable a just transition.

Key advantages of civil society engagement

→ Public Ownership of Product and Goal

The costs of implementation in cases where individual behaviour change is crucial to success of the policy are likely to be lower when there is buy-in and consequent willingness from key actors from the outset.³ Long-term strategies will require action from all sectors of society. Government-driven policies can only do so much when citizens demonstrate reluctance to align with these policies and their resulting implications.

Moreover, involving civil society will lead to greater insight on local considerations that will impact policy outcomes. Through local knowledge, innovative solutions may be reached for solving problems. A larger pool of ideas can enable better policy-making and increase the likelihood of successful outcomes.⁴

→ Effective and Sustainable Implementation

Policies that are created with civil society engagement are likely to be more sustainable in the longer-term, beyond individual government legislation periods. Effective implementation of long-term strategies will transcend governments, through multiple administrations. OECD member countries have concluded through experience that “open and inclusive policy-making can improve performance.”⁵ With civil society engagement, governments can develop public support, buy-in, trust, and the resulting legitimacy, which in turn facilitates the implementation of policies and makes successful policy outcomes more likely.

Previously, public consultation was sometimes regarded as an unnecessary and bureaucratic burden, which only meant additional costs for projects in terms of time, money and complexity of transactions. Studies indicate that, apart from cost-saving, consulting with civil society may improve the quality, efficacy, efficiency, equity, sense of belonging and thus, general sustainability of a project.⁶

From the above it can be gathered, and the evidence supports so, that one of the main factors of success for the correct execution of development operations is to get to know improvement opportunities which were not foreseen. Well-planned public consultations represent a possibility of arranging the participation and inclusion of decisive input by civil society. Therefore, getting acquainted with institutions and governability of public consultations, as well as the practical application of its guiding principles and universal best practices, is vital.

→ Robust Monitoring, Evaluation and Accountability

Accountability and follow-up for policies is an important part of open and transparent governance. With public buy-in in long-term strategies, civil society can hold leaders accountable to the long-term goals through targeted review and monitoring.⁷ According to research from the Open Government Partnership (OGP), effective CSO engagement results in trusting partnerships, an informed and active

² CAN Position, (2016). *National Long-term Strategies for Sustainable Development and Decarbonization*. Available at: http://climatenetwork.org/sites/default/files/can_position_-_long-term_strategies_-_august_2016.pdf

³ OECD, (2009) p.13-14

⁴ ibid

⁵ ibid

⁶ ibid

⁷ Global Financing Facility, (2017). *Guidance Notes: Inclusive Multi-stakeholder Country Platforms in Support of Every Woman Every Child*. Available at:

https://www.globalfinancingfacility.org/sites/gff_new/files/documents/GFF%20Country%20Platform%20guidance%20note.pdf

citizenry, and strengthened community ownership in the implementation of projects. The process requires transparency and listening and learning, drawing attention to the importance of legal frameworks for public access to information and public participation. Local communities can help identify barriers to implementation and create a feedback system for information.

Effective Civil Society Engagement

We might define citizen engagement as: “measures and/or institutional arrangements that link citizens more directly into the decision-making process of a State as to enable them to influence the public policies and programmes in a manner that impact positively on their economic and social lives.”⁸

Taken together, civil society engagement can therefore be defined as a systematic collaboration between different governance levels (e.g. government, ministries, sub-national governments etc.), and various members of civil society in decision-making processes to improve developmental impact.

It is important to note that effective citizen engagement should be more than just consultation. The World Bank (2014) and the Open Government Partnership both identify informing, consultation, collaboration and empowerment as levels of participation. Moreover, the African Development Bank Group’s (AfDB) 2012 Framework for Enhanced Engagement with Civil Society Organizations states that the dimensions for engagement should be civil society partaking in the designing, planning, implementation, and evaluation of projects, strategies and policy.⁹ Additionally, the Framework highlights the dimensions of engagement as outreach, dialogue and partnership. Existing activities in the Framework include working with CSO’s in project implementation, forming country strategy papers, channeling resources, and capacity building.¹⁰

The following are common elements of good civil society engagement^{11, 12, 13, 14, 15}

1. Conducting a thorough stakeholder analysis that is updated ahead of each participate process, thereby ensuring that governments/ministries know what branches of civil society there are and who the experts are. This is to ensure that there is a broad array of input to any participative processes, and to inform ministries/governments of the level of existing expertise within their country’s civil society.
2. Identifying priorities and discussing final expectations for the process through scoping meetings between government and civil society, so that both parties are aware of what the others want. Joint research undertaken by the IDDRI & Ecologic research institutes highlights that “stakeholders tend to come to a new process with ready-made positions, dogmas or prejudices about solutions [...which can be addressed by using an] iterative process of listening, quantitative testing by independent experts, and confrontation with the evidence, to move the discussion forward.”¹⁶

⁸ OECD, (2009), p.201

⁹ AfDB, (2012). *Framework for Enhanced Engagement with Civil Society Organizations*. Available at: [https://www.afdb.org/fileadmin/uploads/afdb/Documents/Policy-Documents/Framework for Enhanced Engagement with Civil Society Organizations.pdf](https://www.afdb.org/fileadmin/uploads/afdb/Documents/Policy-Documents/Framework%20for%20Enhanced%20Engagement%20with%20Civil%20Society%20Organizations.pdf)

¹⁰ *ibid* p.4

¹¹ WWF European Policy Office, (2017). *MaxiMiseR, Planning to Succeed: How to build strong 2050 climate and energy development strategies*. Available at: <http://www.maximiser.eu/news/guidance>;

¹² World Resources Institute (2007). *The Electricity Governance Toolkit: Benchmarking Best Practice and Promoting Accountability in the Electricity Sector*. Available at: https://www.wri.org/sites/default/files/pdf/electricity_governance_toolkit_2007.pdf

¹³ Climate Home, (2015). *Around the world in 5 climate change lawsuits*. Available at: www.climatechangenews.com/2015/07/08/around-the-world-in-5-climate-change-lawsuits

¹⁴ ClientEarth, (2011). *Aarhus Centre - What we do*. Available at: www.clientearth.org/aarhus-centre-what-we-do

¹⁵ Council of the European Communities and the Commission of the European Communities, (1992). *Treaty on European Union (TEU)*. Available at: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=OJ:C:2016:202:FULL&from=EN>

¹⁶ IDDRI, (2017). Sartor, O Donat, L, Duwe, M and Umpfenbach, K. *Developing 2050 decarbonization strategies in the EU: Insights on good practice from national experiences*. Available at: <http://www.iddri.org/Publications/Developing-2050-decarbonization-strategies-in-the-EU-Insights-on-good-practice-from-national-experiences>

3. Raising awareness about a process. Ministries that initiate participative processes must inform the broader public, and allow for a long period for responding to a call for participation. Efforts should be made to ensure that the public knows about their rights to participate in strategy development and an outreach strategy to draw in the public and civil society should be created.¹⁷
4. Giving adequate time to provide input to the process thereby allowing contributors to submit well thought-out, detailed and reviewed input and comments.
5. Using more than one participation method for different input levels. For example, the use of technical paper submissions will be best for science experts while the use of public hearings or workshops where local leaders can speak and allow for a discussion will be best for communities.
6. Using existing participative and consultative frameworks in order to facilitate and develop partnership and coordination structures. Setting up new structures to facilitate civil society engagement can be perceived by government officials as burdensome and extra work. As such, existing frameworks, committees and consultation avenues, should be used to host stakeholders and their views.
7. Holding regular meetings: Engagement and participation methods should be repeated a number of times during the development of a 2050 strategy, with the outcomes of each being incorporated into each new iteration.
8. Reporting on the results of the process (including explanations on suggestions not incorporated) to be shared with all participants and made publicly available.
9. Enshrining rights for participation in national legislation as is the case with the Maastricht Treaty and the Aarhus Convention, and ensuring that citizens are aware of these rights.
10. Ensuring public transparency: All of the documents (including full and mid-process reports) related to the process should be publicly available, as should the entire participatory process.

Best Practice Examples

The Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) studied best practices in twenty-six countries of public consultations with civil society. They concluded that successful projects are those “...addressed in a comprehensive manner, with broader development interventions, beyond mere physical assets. The sense of belonging, property and inclusion of the communities which depend on natural resources affected by the project, has the real potential of improving them by reducing social conflicts, contributing significantly to the efficacy and sustainability of an operation.” Furthermore, public consultation also proved “to promote social innovation with the inputs received and which are pertinent during public consultations to allow a more sustainable inclusive development which improves the externalities of the project.”¹⁸

Case studies where the IDB operates show that social conflicts which can be avoided through public engagement are the cause of large financial losses and ultimate failures of projects. For example, in a mining project in Argentina, US\$379 million was reported as a loss in assets after a US\$1.22 billion development was abandoned due to conflicts with the communities involved. Another mining project in Peru was forced to suspend construction by the Government as a result of conflicts between the company and the surrounding communities.¹⁹

¹⁷ United States Environmental Protection Agency, (2017). *Public Participation Guide: Tools*. Available at: <https://www.epa.gov/international-cooperation/public-participation-guide-tools>

¹⁸ Inter-American Development Bank (2016). Milano F. & Sanhueza A. *Public Consultations with Civil Society: Guidelines for Public and Private Executing Agencies*. Available at: <https://publications.iadb.org/bitstream/handle/11319/7499/Public-Consultations-with-Civil-Society-Guidelines-for-Public-and-Private-Executing-Agencies.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>

¹⁹ United Nations Development Programme, (2011). *Executive Summary: Preparing Low-Emission Climate-Resilient Development Strategies - A UNDP Guidebook — Version 1*. Available at: <http://www.undp.org/content/dam/undp/library/Environment%20and%20Energy/Climate%20Strategies/UNDP-LECRDS-Guidebook-v17-web.pdf>