Vietnam Civil Society Facility

Guidelines for Applicant Organisations

March 2012

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1. Civil Society Policy

Irish Aid believes that CSOs (CSOs) allow citizens to come together to act collectively and participate in the development of their own communities whether through demanding better services from the state, holding the government to account or by acting together to respond to their own needs. Civil society should equally be given an opportunity to participate in the planning, implementation and monitoring of the national development plan and poverty reduction programmes. Irish Aid has a long tradition of and is committed to supporting civil society.

Irish Aid will continue to prioritise support for international and local CSOs in Vietnam in the context of national anti-poverty strategies. We will work with government partners and support opportunities for CSOs to participate in the consultation and planning processes that inform these strategies and associated policies. The focus will shift to civil society's role in increasing the effectiveness of government performance in delivery of services and poverty reduction programmes.

Partnership is the cornerstone of Irish Aid's civil society policy. Our existing partnerships with CSOs are a valuable resource and comparative advantage of Irish Aid in Vietnam. Partnership also refers to the relationship between the government, both central and local levels, and the civil society. We will coordinate with other donors and international NGOs to support civil society's capacity needs and to advocate for institutional space for citizen participation in development processes. Partnerships between INGOs and local NGOs are encouraged by Irish Aid with focus on improving the ability of organisations to engage in innovative solutions to accessing services, qualitative research, advocacy and networking.

2. Irish Aid Country Strategy Paper – support for Civil Society in Vietnam

Irish Aid agreed a new Country Strategy Paper (CSP) with the Government of Vietnam for the period 2011-2015 with a total budget of €11m per year. Working with and for civil society in Vietnam is a core element of this strategy.

The Vietnam Civil Society Facility (VCSF) was established in 2007 and is administered by the Embassy of Ireland in Hanoi. The Facility supports grant funding to short and medium term interventions which can demonstrate either a direct poverty impact or an influencing or testing value, and which are compatible with the Irish Aid Country Strategy Paper's objectives. The Civil Society Facility will contribute to the following outcomes and objectives of the Country Strategy Paper 2011-2015 of Irish Aid in Vietnam:

CSP's Outcomes

- ✓ Poverty reduced among the most marginalised groups;
- ✓ Economic growth is more inclusive and resilient to shocks.

CSP's Objectives:

- ✓ To improve local ability to plan and adapt public investment resources to the needs of marginalised groups;
- ✓ To strengthen policy formulation and delivery at central government level in addressing poverty and marginalisation;
- ✓ To strengthen the capacity of central government, research agencies and private sector in economic management.

Budget for Civil Society Facility, 2011-2015 (million €)

2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	Total
1.1	1.5	2.0	2.0	2.0	8.6

The following guidelines set out details about the civil society strategy, eligibility, appraisal and approval process, and accountability.

3. Objectives of the Civil Society Facility

The overall objective of the Civil Society Facility is to strengthen the engagement of CSOs in support of specific poverty issues and policy formulation processes. The Civil Society Facility will support competitive proposals that contribute to the following objectives:

(1) To strengthen the voice of poor communities and community-based organisations in local governance and accountability, oversight of public investment programmes and increased economic integration. Particular attention will be paid to ethnic minority populations;

(2) To promote acceptance and empowerment of people with disability by increasing their social and economic integration;

(3) To promote the development of the civil society sector in Vietnam through capacity building and networking and collective action in research and advocacy and public education.

In applying for support under the Civil Society Facility, organisations should be able to demonstrate a clear logic of intervention by demonstrating a logical link between the problem(s) they have identified, how they are intending to address it and what they hope to achieve. Particular attention should be paid to demonstrating a clear approach to influencing national or provincial policies and strategies. Each applicant should explain how its intervention will make a particular contribution to at least one of the above objectives based on the applicant's relative strengths, experience and expertise. It is not necessary that an intervention contribute to all three objectives.

Organisations previously funded by Irish Aid must show evidence of outcomes from that funding. Organisations that have not previously received funding from Irish Aid must also provide evidence of outcomes of previous work.

A number of strategic partnerships with civil society partners and networks will be developed in support of specific poverty issues and policy formulation processes. A small grant scheme will provide resources to trusted CSO partners to implement projects to serve the needs of marginalised groups. Projects may be funded to support marginalised groups not covered by government programmes. Nonetheless, proposals should demonstrate an approach that supports those groups to directly access to public resources.

Objective 1: To strengthen the voice of poor communities and community-based organisations in local governance and accountability, oversight of public investment programmes and increased economic integration. Particular attention will be paid to ethnic minority populations

More specifically, VCSF supports CSOs' engagement in:

- ✓ Improved civil society engagement in local planning and governance with particular reference to national poverty reduction programmes;
- ✓ Increased capacity of communes in poor ethnic mountainous provinces to assume Commune Investment Ownership;
- ✓ Improved accountability, oversight of public investment programmes, and quality of participatory planning at the commune level.

Irish Aid's programme seeks to build upon its existing areas of comparative advantage. A strong poverty focus should be demonstrated by applicants, interventions should address remote areas and marginalised groups with a particular focus on poor ethnic minority groups. Interventions can focus on the capacity of the administration, elected officials or community members and representatives.

At sub-national level, the focus should be on effective public investment in poverty reduction programmes, attracting economic investment into marginal areas, more space and engagement for civil society and participatory planning.

Support for the implementation of national targeted programmes such as Programme for Socio-Economic Development in Extremely Difficult Communes and Villages (Programme 135), Rapid and Sustainable Poverty Reduction in 62 Poorest Districts in Vietnam (Resolution 30a), national targeted programme on sustainable poverty reduction (NTP-SPR). Programme 135 and NTP-SPR at local level with civil society and local actors is a particular interest of Irish Aid. Proposals should demonstrate partnerships at local level between government, local communities, private sector and civil society to help address capacity constraints, increase the speed and quality of programme implementation and reduce pressure on the administration.

The core of Ireland's intervention and strategies is increased commune capacity. This refers to improved performance at commune level, in their ability to manage finances, take investment decisions and account for resources invested and funds received. This role is referred to as 'investment owner'.

Proposals to improve the quality of participatory planning at commune level should demonstrate greater inclusion of diverse groups, strategies to match national programmes to the needs of local communities and to strengthen the programme's relevance to ethnic minority livelihoods and marginalised groups such as people with disability. Indicators of success include participation in village meetings in Programme 135 and NTP-SPR and satisfaction with selection of projects.

Objective 2: To promote acceptance and empowerment of people with disability by increasing their social and economic integration

More specifically, VCSF supports CSOs' engagement in:

- ✓ Improved access to social and economic opportunities for people with disability;
- ✓ Strengthened voice, representation and networking for people with disability;
- ✓ Increased acceptance and empowerment of people with disability, challenging stigma and highlighting their contribution to society and their rights as full citizens.

Irish Aid will provide funding to CSOs to support innovation in addressing the needs of people with disability. CSOs which are representative of, and preferably staffed by people with disability and other disadvantaged groups will be prioritised.

Irish Aid promotes rights-based approach in its support and interventions to vulnerable groups. Their rights and entitlements should be respected, their preferences explored. People with disability should have access to quality services aligned with their needs, and support from their families and communities. As far as possible, people with disability should be integrated into mainstream service provision programmes.

Objective 3: To promote the development of the civil society sector in Vietnam through capacity building and networking and collective action in research and advocacy and public

More specifically, VCSF supports CSOs' engagement in:

- ✓ Improved applied research and analytical material carried out or commissioned by CSOs and independent research institutions;
- ✓ Strengthened role of Vietnamese civil society to inform targeting and design of effective, sustainable and affordable poverty reduction programmes;
- ✓ Strengthened role of community based organisations in policy formulation and oversight of public investment programmes;
- ✓ Strengthened development effectiveness of CSOs and increased understanding by government and civil society of their respective roles.

Synthesising and disseminating experience with new approaches will be key for evidence-based policy influencing. Dissemination and links to national policy will be primarily the responsibility of the provincial authorities, CSO partners and networks rather than Irish Aid directly.

A strengthened role for Vietnamese civil society and elected representatives in policy formulation and oversight of public investment programmes. This will involve supporting non state actors to generate credible evidence for alternative poverty reduction approaches and well as facilitating a dialogue between government and a broader range of stakeholders.

Local level testing and experience gained from civil society support through the Civil Society Facility will be key inputs for Irish Aid in presenting evidence to influence policy formulation and in advocating for a more conducive enabling environment for civil society.

4. Eligibility

Mass organisations, international and national non-governmental, non-profit organisations, independent research institutions, and social enterprises that have registered legal status in Vietnam are eligible to apply for grants.

Applicants must have the organisation and governance structures necessary to receive, manage, expend and report funding in a manner that is transparent and efficient and have been assessed as satisfactory in the Organisational Capacity Assessment commissioned by Irish Aid.

Applicants must convincingly demonstrate that their own financial sustainability is sound. Funding from Irish Aid to an organisation must not exceed 70% of the overall organisational income. This will be verified using the organisation's annual accounts for the two most recent financial years, which should be submitted along with the application. If the applicant organisation has an annual income

of above €100,000, these accounts should be externally and independently audited, audit reports should be submitted to Irish Aid, accompanied by a management letter with the associated management response.

Applicants, previously in receipt of VCSF funds, must have a record of compliance in terms of the administration and use of such funds. Applicants which have a previous record of non-compliance with the terms and conditions of an Irish Aid fund(s) will not be considered for funding.

CSOs which are eligible for or have already received funds from the Irish Aid Civil Society Fund in Irish Aid HQ are not eligible to apply to the Vietnam Civil Society Facility.

Non-eligible activities/expenditure

The following activities will not be considered for funding support:

- ✓ Interventions that are primarily of a welfare or direct service provision nature;
- ✓ Major infrastructural schemes;
- ✓ Individual or family sponsorship;
- ✓ Evangelisation or proselytisation;
- ✓ Retrospective expenditure (i.e. costs incurred prior to the date of submission of the application).

5. Approaches and Strategies

The approaches and strategies set out below are drawn from Irish Aid's lessons learnt and comparative advantages in working with CSOs.

5.1. **Partnership** is a core value for Irish Aid. Partnership refers to the relationship between Irish Aid, the applicant and relevant authorities, both central and local levels, and community organisations in where they work. Civil society cannot and should not assume the role of the government. It should not build parallel systems that undermine government systems or distort democratic institutions. CSOs have an obligation to apply the highest standards of good governance in their own institutions. All parties should be involved in designing, managing, monitoring and evaluating activities and interventions funded under the VCSF. Programme information and performance should be communicated down to beneficiaries and the applicant should demonstrate accountability to beneficiaries for grants received.

5.2. **The rights-based approach** to development has helped to differentiate the role of civil society from that of the state. In the past, civil organisations often established parallel service delivery functions that as the result may undermine the role of the state in service delivery. Instead, CSOs should seek a complementary role in service delivery, combining service delivery with advocacy for improved responses from the state.

5.3. **Capacity building** CSOs have an obligation to apply the highest standards of good governance in their own institutions. All grant recipients, particularly where onward grants to partners are proposed, should demonstrate their approach to building capacity for partners - both for individual staff and for overall organisational development. Capacity building through partnerships for local civil society should consider the following elements:

- ✓ access to knowledge and skills;
- ✓ resources for organisational development and good governance;
- ✓ financial sustainability and fundraising ;

- ✓ viable technologies (e.g. information and management);
- ✓ opportunities for networking and exchange of lesson learning, and
- ✓ strategies to advocate and engage with government at local and national level.

5.4. **Participation** refers to the right of women and men, girls and boys, to participate in their own development and in the decisions that affect their lives. Applicants should ensure that full consultation has taken place with partner communities on the design and the implementation of the intervention, and that opportunities are built in to enable participation and facilitate feedback during the project cycle.

There should be structures in place at the local level to facilitate decision making and to ensure that the intervention is shaped in a way that meets the needs of the community on an ongoing basis. Attention should be paid to literacy and language preferences of the communities. Special consideration and representation should be given to groups which might otherwise be marginalised. These include women, youth, older people and people with disabilities or those from minority groups.

6. Mainstreaming/Crosscutting issues

Irish Aid attaches priority to a number of cross-cutting themes, which are an integral part of the aid programme. These issues – environmental sustainability, good governance, HIV&AIDS and gender equality - are vital to sustainable poverty reduction and development. Applicants should demonstrate a consideration of all four issues at all stages in their programming cycle.

In Vietnam, Irish Aid has committed to systematically mainstreaming two issues into VCSF grants – gender equality and good governance. This reflects a desire for the cross-cutting issues to be at the centre-stage, influencing:

- the objectives and strategies of an intervention;
- the approaches and methodologies that are used;
- the type of structures established to support implementation, and
- the way budget resources are allocated.

6.1. Gender Equality

Gender equality refers to equality between women and men in all spheres, both public and private. Gender equality means equal access to and control of resources and benefits, equal participation in political decision-making and equality under the law for women and men.

Applicants should identify and understand the different situations of women and men when planning interventions and develop strategies to address inequality. One of these strategies may include mainstreaming gender through the intervention. The following provides some guidance on issues to be considered when mainstreaming gender through proposed interventions:

- Have women and men participated in the consultation process? How have you ensured that women's voices are heard?
- What are women's roles and responsibilities within the household and community in contrast to men's?
- What the difference between men and women in terms of: (i) access and control of resources such as land, credit, employment as well as decision-making and representation; (ii) access to services, especially health, education and agricultural extension?

- What are the implications of the above analysis and how will interventions be designed to ensure that women benefit from them?
- How will the intervention contribute to greater gender equality within community?
- Are there specific strategies for ensuring empowerment of women within intervention?
- Are indicators disaggregated by sex and/or are there gender specific indicators included in the log-frame/results framework?

6.2. Promotion of Good Governance

Building good governance is central to the work of Irish Aid across the development programme. Irish Aid's approach to good governance is informed by the principles of Participation, Partnership, Transparency, Accountability, Efficiency and Effectiveness, and Equality.

There will be a particular emphasis on building the cross-generational capacity of communities, to exercise their rights and gain an understanding of and access to processes and institutions of government. This in turn, should lead to improved access to services and resources such as water, land, education and protection of those rights for vulnerable communities.

The following provides guidance on some issues that might be considered when mainstreaming Governance through proposed interventions:

- In what way does the project promote the principles of participation, partnership, transparency, accountability, efficiency and effectiveness, and equality?
- How well informed is the project by an analysis of the local and national context, including an analysis of possible underlying issues (imbalances of power, incentives at play, interests of the various actors involved)?
- Does the analysis take into consideration the causes of poor governance?
- Does the project overlap with or undermine any existing interventions in the community? How have local governance structures been involved and is coordination taking place (e.g. local authorities, traditional leaders, community groups)?
- Are the governance arrangements in the management of the project appropriate and how will the targeted groups be involved? What grievance procedures have been put in place to address complaints and queries?
- How will the applicant strengthen the governance of partners including transparency, accountability, ethics, integrity and the role of governing boards or steering committees.

7. Application and Approval Process

The VCSF funding rounds will be held twice a year. They will be advertised in national media, posted on the Embassy and NGO Resource Centre websites and circulated widely to interested groups. The Embassy reserves the right to approach any organisation throughout the year to invite concepts.

For full details on the application process including guidance and forms, please visit our website www.embassyofireland.vn.

7.1. Concept note

Any organisation seeking funds from the Civil Society Facility must submit (i) a concept note prior to the full application (see VCSF's concept note guidance); (ii) a completed checklist of eligibility criteria. The concept note (max 3 pages in length and in the prescribed format) should include all aspects of the interventions and will serve as a basis for discussion with Irish Aid. Concept notes will

be appraised and selected based on the quality and relevance to the VCSF's objectives and strategies.

7.2. Full proposal

Once concept notes have been appraised, short-listed applicants will be invited to submit a full proposal which should be structured to address a checklist issued by Irish Aid. The full proposal includes:

(a) pre-qualification form for scrutiny for eligibility and administrative compliance;

(b) technical proposal (max 16 pages in length) for description of project, financial details and the results framework.

Irish Aid may invite applicants to meetings or telephone conversations at any stage in the process to discuss concept notes and proposals.

The concept note, pre-qualification form, and technical proposal must be prepared in English.

Concept notes and full technical proposal with the required attachments should be emailed to: irish.aid@dfanet.ie by the deadlines indicated below.

For the technical proposal, Irish Aid requires one original hardcopy, signed by the legal representative of the organisation, of the pre-qualification form and technical proposal to be sent to the following address:

Irish Aid - Embassy of Ireland
8th Floor, Tower B
Vincom Centre
191 Ba Trieu, Hanoi
Email: irish.aid@dfanet.ie

Please note that only technical proposals submitted by invitation will be considered by Irish Aid.

7.3. Size and Duration of grant

An organisation may submit one or two concept notes for Irish Aid's consideration, but only one technical proposal. These applications may be for short-term or multi-annual programmes (three years maximum) or for core contributions to an outcome area of an organisational strategic plan. The minimum for each proposal is €50,000 per year and the maximum ceiling is €200,000 per year.

7.4. Appraisal and approval timeline for 2012

	Round 1	**Round 2**
Submission of concept note	20 April	10 August
Invitation of technical proposal	11 May	31 August
Submission of technical proposal	3 June	21 September
Organisational Capacity Assessment commissioned by Irish Aid	20 June	12 October
Consideration of applications by Irish Aid and external consultants	20 June	12 October
Notification of funding decisions to applicants	29 June	31 October
Agreement of grant letter with terms and conditions and grant payment	July	November

7.5. Appraisal and Approval Criteria

In line with international best practice, Irish Aid requires that all interventions funded have a strong focus on results for individuals and communities and at national level. Irish Aid will at all times promote transparency and accountability in the use of public monies. There will be a base criterion examining the evidence that the organisation is operating from a reasonably sound strategic, policy and financial basis, relative to its size and capacity. Organisations will be required to satisfy Irish Aid that this is the case before their application can be considered for funding.

Proposals will be assessed under the following headings

- ✓ the relevant context of the intervention;
- ✓ organisational capacity of the applicant to carry out the proposed programme;
- ✓ proven evidence of outcomes from previous projects (Irish Aid funded if applicable);
- ✓ logic of the intervention;
- ✓ the overall objectives, expected results/outcomes (Specific, Measurable, Appropriate, Realistic and Time-bound – SMART);
- ✓ the participatory nature of the planning and implementation;
- ✓ evidence of capacity to track results (the means in place for monitoring and evaluation);
- ✓ the systems in place for sustainability;
- ✓ governance and financial oversight;
- ✓ approaches to advocacy, networking and influencing;
- ✓ the quality of the proposal on the basis of international best practice standards and Irish Aid's experience.

8. Reporting, Monitoring and Evaluation

Organisations receiving grants are responsible for governing the use of and accountability for all funds, including evaluation and audit, financial reporting and monitoring requirements in compliance with the Guidelines for Monitoring and Evaluation and the Terms and Conditions of the Grant (please refer to the template grant letter).

8.1. Reporting

Each organisation is responsible for providing accurate and timely reports on the results/outcomes of its interventions and the impact on the community, the useful lessons for you and your peers, and the influence on policymakers. The Annual Narrative Report must be accompanied by a financial report (in the prescribed format).

8.2. Monitoring, Evaluation and Audit

Irish Aid may commission review meetings and field monitoring visits. These meetings and monitoring visits will be discussed and agreed in advance and will have a focus on monitoring at the level of outcomes and impacts.

Each organisation is responsible for evaluating its work. The result of evaluations, with any policy implications/ conclusions, should be shared with Irish Aid. For grants of over €100,000, an external end-of-project evaluation is required. The cost of the evaluation will be included in the proposed budget.

Irish Aid's funds shall be audited under the recipient's annual organisational audit. The audit fees can be charged to the project costs or on a cost-sharing basis. An organisational audit report and

management letter should be submitted to Irish Aid within one month of the completion date of the audit. To ensure the quality of the audit, the recipient shall seek approval from Irish Aid for the Terms of Reference (ToR) of the audit and selection of the auditor.

Applicants should note the Terms and Conditions of the grant as set out in the template grant letter. Any organisation in receipt of a grant from Irish Aid will be required to:

- Co-operate fully with any external evaluations or audits, which may be commissioned by Irish Aid from time to time and at its complete discretion;
- Respond in a timely manner to ad-hoc requests by Irish Aid for information updates regarding project progress, should they arise. However, it is expected that such requests will be exceptional circumstances and that most information will be sought from annual reports;
- Communicate any suspicions of fraudulent activities and keep Irish Aid informed of any ongoing investigations and outcomes.

9. Publicity and Public information

Applicant organisations are reminded that documents including application forms and annexes, or any report submitted to Irish Aid on foot of a successful funding application, and any other written communications with Irish Aid, automatically become records of Irish Aid and subject to the provision of the Freedom of Information Acts of Ireland.

Applicants should note that if they receive a grant from Irish Aid they will be required to:

- acknowledge Irish Aid funding in its annual report, on its website and on other publications associated with any funded intervention. Such publicity materials and/or reports will include a statement that the views and opinions set out therein do not necessarily represent the position of Irish Aid;
- supply to Irish Aid four high-quality photos of project's activities and/or beneficiaries, and two case-studies. Photos and case-studies will include the names of the persons featured. Applicant is responsible for ensuring informed consent of those featured for the material to be used for publicity or development education purposes.