



Making Sense of the CSSP Results Review Findings

September 2016

An informal paper

For one year, from August 2015 to August 2016, the Results Review multi-disciplinary team comprising seven experts (five independent and two closely associated with CSSP) undertook a three-phase study of the Civil Society Support Programme portfolio. Team expertise comprised: linguistics, communications, anthropology, CSO leadership, agriculture, human rights, political economy, gender and social inclusion.

Phase One identified with Donor Partners the key themes and questions to be covered. Phase Two comprised field visits to all regions of Ethiopia with a specific focus on a) impact for hardest to reach women and men; b) CSO relations with government and with citizens; and c) civil society capacity development. Phase Three focussed on in-depth issue-based reports on six selected areas which emerged from Phase Two as worthy of greater analysis. At the end of July 2016, the RR team met for half a day to make sense of their findings in a structured discussion. The key points from this discussion are included in this note.

Over the course of the year and with over 400 person days of input during the Results Review, the team undertook in-depth discussions and visits with:

- 92 diverse CSOs, with which
- 113 different grants have been invested for
- 46 different clusters of activity
- across all 11 administrative regions/city states in Ethiopia.

Outputs from the Results Review are:

- Assessment of changes in CSOs capacity to be, to do and relate better. This covered five areas of capacity 1) to respond to priorities determined by hard-to-reach people, 2) to manage finances appropriately, 3) to design and deliver people-centred projects, 4) in leadership and governance and 5) in relations with state bodies), conducted using the Capacity Change Scale (CCS), and a summary
- Seven field level reports which considered CSSP's work from the three agreed dimensions or focus areas mentioned above.
- From this, a summary report was provided to DPs in April 2016 and parts of the report were used in the Annual Report and Babogaya Evidence Box dated April 2016.
- Six Issue-Based Reports which dug deeper into five of the Strategic Partnership issues (access to services for minorities / marginalised people, protection of women and girls, prison reform, chat addiction and mental health) and a case study on CSO-government relations. These were delivered in draft to DPs in July 2016.
- From these longer reports, two page summary briefs have been prepared, and more visual powerpoint presentations.

Caveat



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The overall commentary below is presented without citation or reference to individuals. Instead, it is presented more as a conversation between the seven individual members of the Results Review team and with the CSSP main team, around some key questions: how did CSSP tackle the challenge of exclusion? Did anything really change? What was CSSP's added value? And looking ahead, what lessons can be taken forward.

It does not represent the views or opinions of any one individual, or any of the CSSP Development Partners or staff.

Exclusion: the 'hard to reach' challenge CSSP set out to address

Why does Hard To Reach (HTR) matter – for the evolution of Ethiopia and its democracy? One key lesson from deeper investigation of the HTR issues is that it has drawn attention to the level and magnitude of the challenge – how the peripheries have been marginalised one way or another.

Nobody would understand this at this depth. It was already acknowledged that some groups were left out – but no one would see that it is still the same problem (and much bigger and deeper) despite the changes in policies etc. This exclusion has not been substantively addressed despite massive education expansion. Yet when you go into (for example) the case of the Me'enit¹, you see how shocking the inequity is. ***CSSP has sought to make participation a reality and to promote 'radical inclusion', rather than just inclusion on paper.***

CSSP has chosen very strong, tough, deep rooted issues – often also untouched, unreached issues – that need more time, money, commitment. There needs to be much more realism about donor timelines – can you get to anything meaningful within 5 years? Don't we need much longer timelines to achieve sustained, systemic change?

The situation in rural settings is very complex – beyond imagination of many people. There are deep rooted problems not understood and not being addressed. For example, the Hadiya Administrator – took it for granted that the Fuga were left out. CSSP made sure he could no longer feel comfortable and complacent. It was an embarrassment to see the Me'enit – how could this be happening? In SNNPR, the scale is shocking: it could be 1 million minorities out of population of 13 million. But ***the issue is beyond numbers – it is the nature of the issue.*** The Ethiopian Federal structure was intended to address exclusion once and for all.

In relation to gender – the status quo is such a powerful thing. What can be changed through a single area of investment? In the Munessa woreda programme we see a level of coordination and integration which is required elsewhere. The important thing from Munessa is not just learning about an approach (SASA! among other approaches) in one project but learning how to do something with more effect.

Overall, ***what the issue based reports tell us is the sheer magnitude of the problem of exclusion*** (so many dimensions, so many causes) – versus the time and budget to tackle it.

¹ This community, which is found in SNNPR, appears to be susceptible to a form of epilepsy, the cause of which has been ignored and under-researched. Yet the exclusion which results from this is severe, both within the Me'enit where more affected people are expelled, and between Me'enit and other communities which fear their 'curse'.



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Did Anything Really Change?

CSSP showed that with small money you can deliver big ideas. As an Ethiopian – CSSP has been a big contribution to democracy at macro level, but not in relation to elections, political parties or voter education. These have not been the field of work. But what CSSP has done is contribute to strengthening of a healthy, pluralistic society at the micro-level – to benefit the macro level. Through CSSP, people have been able to see the depth of issues and taken concerted efforts to deal with these issues. **Previously in the bureaucratic type mentality, we wouldn't expect people to take notice of what Fuga means – 200,000 people in SSNPR left out. That's the type of society we are. 15 years ago, we wouldn't be moved by that. But now we would be.**

Change is possible – but the speed at which we can bring about change varies from one subject matter to another. Factors include understanding of the depth of the problem. CSSP has motivated the CSOs in a great way – regardless of the amount of money. Some have managed Birr 20 m; some only Birr 20-30,000 - but it all mattered. **When CSSP got close to an issue, it mattered.** There isn't a conventional trajectory for CSSP projects. It's not an exponential growth. It's not a simple growth curve – one project leading to another. This has been a 5 year 'big influence' and 'catalysing force'.

In a short period of time, the HTR issues, the CD initiatives have really demonstrated that something could be done – and anyone interested could now pick from this and develop it further, whether through a CSSP2 or any other vehicle. A most common phrase across the Issue Based Reports comes from different government actors interviewed: *'This [the work done by CSSP and CSOs] made us pay attention to...'* a range of hard to reach issues which the government had been complacent about. This is one of the big results for CSSP.

Was it worth trying? For sure. **National problems of this magnitude cannot be addressed just through donor programmes. But it is still worth doing something that leaves something behind – if buy-in is achieved, something may continue – at policy level or local level.**

Government was also catalysed by CSSP to think differently. Government bodies tended to look as if everyone is equal on the ground because of its laws. **Now it is the CSOs which are bringing to government the deep rooted issues [while government keeps up its rhetoric to make the CSOs increase their focus on people on the ground].**

The Capacity Development aspect has done impressive work. If we take one organisation in Dire Dawa – the CSSP innovative grant was its first. They would not have survived without it. Now it has 4-5 other donors and has become much stronger local NGO. Take another in Assosa – only 2 staff at the beginning – now stronger with 13 staff. These organisations have been helped to identify very important issues and to develop strengths to tap resources and learned how to work with government. There is much hope that these organisations and issues will continue. It is a kind of parable of the talents.

CSSP has been about capacity development, awareness raising and changing lives of people. As we read across all the Results Review reports we have delivered, we were attracted by the number of unnoticed issues affecting the lives of people. Some of us were not aware of how different the causes and consequences are. Different forms – some from inside, some from outside. There are unnoticed issues that government must be responsible for - for example, the closure of the textile factory in Dire Dawa which had a big consequence not only for economic well-being but also mental



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health. Even looking at the issue of the Gumuz people is about understanding people completely on the margins.

The government is partly responsible for such issues – and we’re quite sure that this will continue to change people’s thinking, including the CSOs who have been encouraged to design innovative responses in different contexts.

You see the trajectory of individuals through the CSSP portfolio (and there are many – some more visible than others) that **when people now talk, they talk facts and they talk with evidence. This already makes them more credible, more listened to.**

CSSP has been a massive 5 year catalyst. The momentum of change will reduce without the CSSP ‘focus’ and commitment. But the initiatives are evolving – they will take their natural course. For example, the Minority issue. This has largely a political dimension, yet it is now being discussed within government structures.

What we really learn is how much superficial knowledge we have of our country. It is reported that we have high levels of service coverage in most parts of the country. But as we talk locally – we ask how many children seen herding cattle, coming to market with fuel wood *‘To be honest, 30% are not in school’* acknowledges a government official at woreda level. ***CSSP’s work has made denial harder, [and clarity better, for meaningful change that can affect people].*** Think about disability also. How many minorities are unable to access their very basic rights? ***This work challenges the government narrative.*** The data used by CSOs is often so basic. Government can tend to avoid the reality. ***CSSP helped deepen knowledge – provoked a sense of discomfort about where [even access to basic services] are not being met,*** for one reason or another.

CSSP’s Added Value

CSSP is not the only organisation working on exclusion; there are many others. But ***it is probably the only cross-country programme seeking to work on such a diversity of causes of exclusion and always at the interface between Ethiopian civil society and government – using its instruments (such as the sequencing of grants) to deepen incentives for working on ever more HTR issues.*** The Capacity Development then reinforces this approach. This makes it stand out. The potential here was for different DPs to work together to influence the different policy issues. Different voices of NGOs and DPs to be effective and pooled to influence policy issues. Rather than talking separately, the combined voice may be bigger.

And these areas are complex also. For example, in Tigray the report suggests that although collaboration has emerged between Government and CSOs, there is something of a ‘comfort zone’. At the same time, ***sometimes you need the ‘comfort zone’ to do uncomfortable things*** (such as working on Violence Against Women/Girls).

The grey area (space to do something seemingly not allowed) has been tested by CSSP, and it has been proved that it can be done. There is so much variability in different regions – affected by personalities and personal perceptions. The space for CSOs now appears to be like this: neither allowed nor forbidden. The question is, how should CSOs behave in the future? It is now possible to do something – but will it be even tighter in the future, or will be more allowed?



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The physical presence of CSSP has made a difference. It came up with something new – the specific targeted interventions on HTR. Instead of broad, unstructured interventions, it has trimmed down the interventions – to specific targeted areas. After that, ***the mode of engagement was different. Not only about throwing the funding at CSOs, but also being physically present close to the action, constantly engaging with CSOs and Government. CSOs and Government always know that CSSP is there – and why it is there, and the modalities of CSSP's engagement.*** We as a Results Review team may not have paid adequate attention to this during the process as we focussed just on the project results. This was something we took for granted.

For example, the NGO-Government fora have always been there in the regions – but they only happened when BoFED wanted it to review income and reports. Now, ***the modality has changed. CSSP supported it to be consultative rather than combative.*** The environment has forced CSOs and CSSP to avoid advocacy – but this could have meant avoiding engagement altogether. Instead, ***collaborative space was utilised; engagement happened and people learned together because the nature of the discourse was different – modelled by CSSP.***

Some people may say: CSSP 'got lucky' by funding some extraordinary people within civil society. But you have to make your luck. CSSP identified and cultivated these people to help them be much more than they were and to put organisational strength around them.

Where does the boundary lie between empowerment and rights? When we look at the projects, they look at empowerment [through inclusion in services delivery] – with an inherent relationship with rights. CSOs manoeuvre with the language that they use; they have to in order to be effective but also because of the legal environment. Messages also get transferred in different languages. For example, in the Oromo language, the concept of 'rights' can be a bit shallow because the understanding of 'rights' is not well developed. But from an empowerment point of view (which is well understood in Oromo language), ***CSSP has been dealing [with how people can create and make use of opportunities more effectively, which for some appears challenging because it transcends] the territory of rights..***

CSSP's role was to deepen knowledge in CSOs of the issues and how to work on them. They were encouraged to ask many more questions – about the why and how, without [too much self-censoring for fear of transgressing into] 'rights promotion'. Let it be service delivery – but why do you do it, and how do you do it? CSSP has had at least a bit of a touch on all of its partners. Some did service delivery – but who they did it to and with changed. Some did it and then withdrew. There is a lot more potential to reflect. ***It's not just the few interventions which stand out – or which got picked out beyond individuals. There is a contribution made to wider groups of CSOs and CSSP has not managed yet to tell these individual stories within the collective CSSP experience.***

Looking Ahead

If you take CSSP out of the equation now, so what? The CSOs have learned a lot through the innovative approaches they used and can build on this – from wherever the source of funding. Many CSOs know what's possible and have built their capacity through CSSP to deal with donors as well as government - for many local ones. When CSSP stops, the pace will slow down but lessons and tools will remain. Things weren't revert to what they were before.



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Whether CSSP continues or not, the issues raised are critical ones which won't just stop. Now the HTR issues, the focus on minorities – we have a sense that these cannot be put back in the box. **It's an interest for everyone – which has been ignited by CSSP. It will continue.** Demonstrating CD initiatives for CSOs – that they really need certain foundational capacity to engage with government.

What have the DPs really learned about having this instrument? **It is not clear whether they know quite what they have had in the reach and presence of CSSP** – and whether they have utilised it to the full. The CSSP team depended on the DPs to think of the future of CSSP. But the DPs seem to have tended to think only in terms of a programme, not an approach or a capability; otherwise, the latter needed capitalising on opportunities without losing the momentum. **There is still a tendency to instrumentalise civil society for the latest DP strategy, rather than to support it, in and of itself.**

What would happen if Government says 'stop!' e.g. to the SASA! work which is being done to tackle violence against women. The community in Arsi would come out... to challenge such a decision! **The status quo never comes again – it is broken. They won't go back.** It's no longer possible to stop the momentum once it has started. But the question is, what comes next? We're not sure yet.

What matters now is how to promote and preserve what has been done to date.