



**Civil Society
Facility**
Supporting communities

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MOTT
MACDONALD

Civil Society Facility

from strength to greater strength:
building resilience of civil society in South Sudan



The CSF in brief...

The Civil Society Facility (CSF) has strengthened the capacity of national Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) in South Sudan, helping these committed groups to become more accountable, legitimate and relevant, and ultimately add more value to the contexts in which they work.

Funding will only have an impact if the grantee has the organisational capacity to bring about change. This principle underpins CSF's investment in strengthening CSOs' effectiveness. Our aim is to strengthen the organisational capacity of CSOs not just as the delivery wing of INGOs, but also to help citizens organise, set priorities, and work with local decision makers to determine what they can jointly do at a local level to enact the changes that they want to see. Dialogue must stay open for momentum to continue.

The CSF showed how good things happen when CSOs are given the time and space to improve their capacity to help. The stories of change from the first phase of the CSF reflect the successful mix of inputs including grants, capacity development support and CSOs' commitment to improving their own organisational capacity.

How did the CSF begin?

The five-year-plus fund, initiated by the Dutch Government, with support from the governments of Norway and Sweden, was conceived to strengthen the organisational capacity of South Sudanese CSOs and increase their effective and sustained engagement with local authorities and decision-makers. The programme aims to empower CSOs to identify and jointly address their communities' needs and priorities.

The CSF in numbers

64
CSOs

2.7
million USD
in grant funds

4
INGOs
as intermediaries for organisational
capacity development

1,000 +
CSO
staff and board
members trained



Why must civil society continue to receive support in South Sudan?

CSOs have traditionally offered a bridge between the state and society in South Sudan. This need has grown in recent years, in support of the peace process, combatting the COVID-19 pandemic and making a stand on many grassroots issues that affect everyday life. However, civil society in South Sudan has been considered weak for many years due to the local context and also the low capacity of CSOs, which have almost no opportunities to lead implementation without an intermediary. In fact, only 0.3% of humanitarian funding in South Sudan goes directly to NNGOs¹.

As a result, they become short-term contractors rather than sustainable partners for change. Many humanitarian actors recognise that if NNGOs are supported, they will do a better job and have fewer issues with compliance and implementation. But support takes time, effort and involves a degree of risk. The CSF donors recognised the potential benefits of empowering CSOs and put their support behind it.

¹ Funding to local humanitarian actors: South Sudan case study (HPG, 2018)

Since January 2019, Mott MacDonald has served as fund manager and technical advisor for the USD 4 million project that is laying the foundations for a vibrant and actively engaged civil society.

We have directly provided specific demand-driven training, coaching, mentoring and support on areas where capacity gaps were experienced by CSO grantees. CSF also played a brokering role to facilitate collaboration between CSOs, individuals or other organisations on particular issues affecting communities; supporting peer learning amongst CSOs within the region/hub; and working with local providers to take on new approaches and methodologies that offer context appropriate capacity development support.

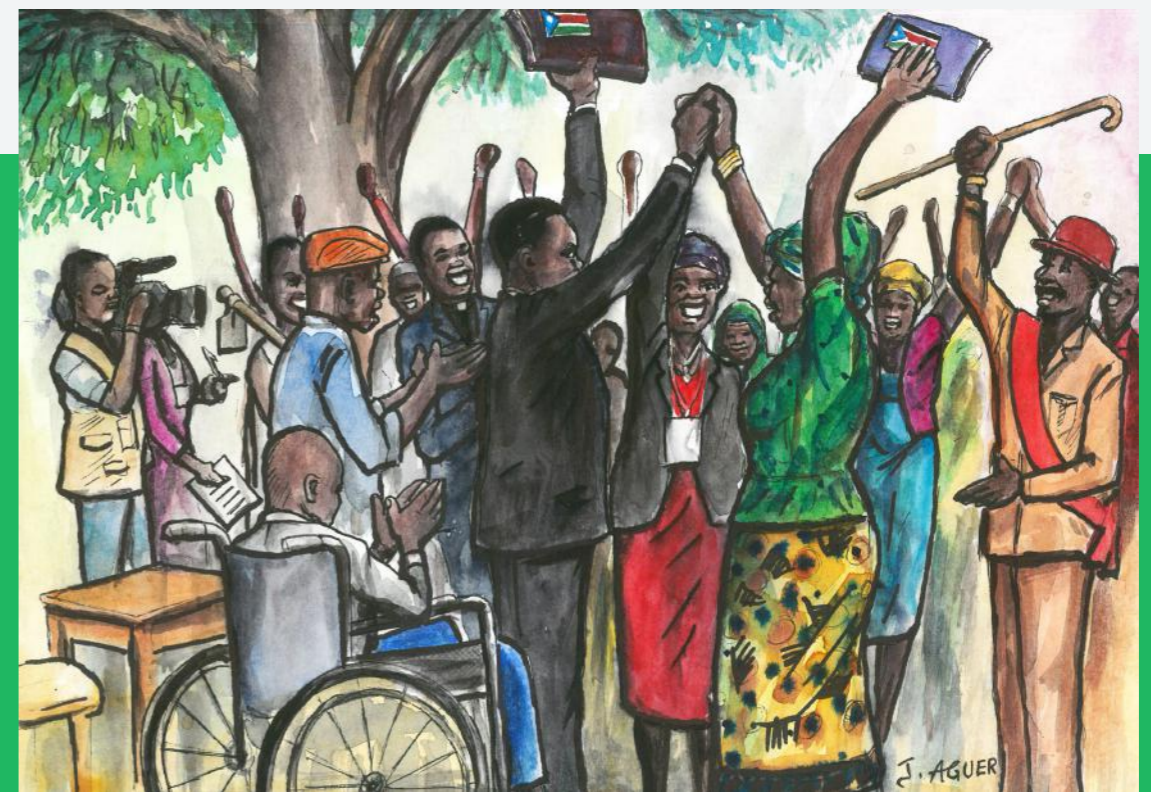
Best-fit strategies

Mott MacDonald has maintained a constant presence in South Sudan over many decades. Our team brings experience in organisation capacity development as well as contextually-nuanced understanding of the social and political landscape of the country and its people. This combination helps us to develop “best-fit” strategies – rather than fall back on a playbook of “best practice”, which may prove less effective in South Sudan.

The success of the programme relied on sound relationships and open, two-way dialogue. By the end of the first phase of the project Mott MacDonald’s role had evolved into an on-call helpdesk, a sounding board and a connector to other resources. We saw first-hand how CSOs will rise to the opportunity when they are given the space to act.

“With the CSF’s funding, we established a gender-based violence feedback desk. Since then, we have recorded 10-15 cases of domestic violence against women every month. As a result, community chiefs have actively denounced domestic violence and pushed for these cases to be taken to court.”

Rumbek Civic Engagement Centre



What makes the CSF unique?

7 ways to make a difference

1. Our capacity development work is driven by demand. We tailor plans, rather than prescribe actions. We start with a participatory organisational capacity assessment (OCA) and invite the CSOs to set their capacity development priorities.

2. The OCA is used to drive organisational capacity development rather than make funding decisions. The OCA is an opportunity for having honest two-way dialogue about the capacity development needs and priorities for each CSO. It starts with an invitation: tell us the capacity development support you need to achieve meaningful change.

3. The CSF works from six hubs in six regions of South Sudan rather than focusing activities from a base in Juba. This approach allows new or marginalised themes to emerge directly from the grassroots and from different regions that might have been lost or overlooked by donors. It also creates opportunities for scaling-up civil society participation from micro/ grassroots project level to macro/policy levels.

4. Our organisational capacity development approach goes beyond the typical three-day workshop. We invest instead in practical, on-the-ground mentoring and coaching to implement learnings from workshop-based training and procedure manuals. We then monitor and review progress.

5. We balance capacity development to improve both upward accountability to donors and downward accountability to constituents.

6. We believe CSOs have the right to initiative on setting their own agendas and priorities. Our approach encourages CSOs to be driven by strategic choices made on the basis of identified problems, which means the CSOs are able to work on a broad range of issues prioritised by the communities they represent. We do not insist on certain areas of focus.

7. Our aim is to help CSOs develop long term thinking, so they can weather storms, with the right systems to become implementation partners – and not just sub-grantees – in case of funding opportunities.



How did the grant funding work?

Four grant funding windows were designed and implemented to support CSOs' organisational capacity development, advocacy initiatives, networks and networking, dialogue with decision-makers and accountability mechanisms. A bottom-up approach to capacity development was applied whereby CSOs identified and prioritised their own needs, which were funded through the broad themes of the grant windows, allowing for flexibility and tailored support.

The 4 funding windows:

1. Reach: four INGOs were selected as 'Outreach Partners' to support a broad group of small and medium-sized CSOs with activities ranging from leadership support and financial management to mentoring and coaching in proposal writing and providing a COVID-19 response in CSO activities.

2. National Intermediary Organisations: The CSF identified three mature and well-structured NIOs for taking on a similar role as the Outreach Partners. This innovative model holds potential of taking CSO capacity development to scale and reaching smaller grassroots organisations by using national NGOs as intermediaries, instead of INGOs who might not be permanently present in all regions of the country.

3. Yes We Can: 22 CSOs were selected through an open competitive tendering process across all 6 regions, channelling funds directly to new and upcoming organisations using a flexible and demand driven approach.

4. Local Civil Society Forums: The CSF also supported two Civil Society Networks with grants and capacity development. Both networks were supported with training in advocacy to implement their priority advocacy issue.

“ In our tradition, women are not supposed to be elected as community or town chiefs. With our new skills acquired through the CSF’s advocacy support, WIDO successfully lobbied with decision makers for the appointment of women in court. ”

Lillian Awut Ater,
Women Initiative for Development Organisation

How did the CSF help during the COVID-19 pandemic?

Our agile approach paid dividends during the crisis, as we could pivot quickly to meet the immediate need for accurate information, freeing up funding to support preventive actions and raise awareness.

COVID-19 created financial hardships with many CSOs facing serious headwinds. With most having annual budgets under \$100,000, the cuts led to heavy or even irrecoverable funding losses. For CSOs supported by CSF, the availability of flexible funding to sustain core operational costs enabled them to survive the adverse economic effects of the crisis.

The CSF’s flexible funding also enabled partner CSOs to reprioritise and make adjustments in their programming and work in new ways to meet new needs of the moment. This approach has shown the value of investing in strengthening local capacities and skills that can be rapidly deployed in times of crisis.

“ HUMAES operated for six years without a board. This has hampered our development as an organisation. With the CSF’s help, the election of a board is a very important step forward. Having the board in place will allow the organisation to grow. ”

Anyanzo Charles Jacob,
Humans Must Access Essentials

What was the impact of the CSF?

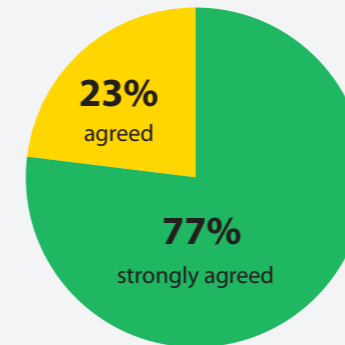
By strengthening the CSOs, we are helping to protect the humanitarian lifelines into such a vast and fragmented country as South Sudan, ensuring that CSOs are effective partners in delivering humanitarian support to grassroots communities. By bringing greater solidity and continuity in an area, CSOs will develop closer relationships with the local government and provide a bridgehead for INGOs and the United Nations.

4 key outcomes:

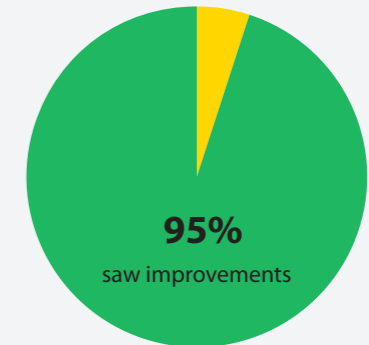
1: CSOs become stronger organisations

Our internal evaluation showed that 77% strongly agreed and 23% agreed that their organisation has improved its organisational capacity as a result of the CSF’s support. The external evaluation also confirmed that 95% of the CSOs saw improvements in areas on which they received the CSF’s support.

Internal Evaluation

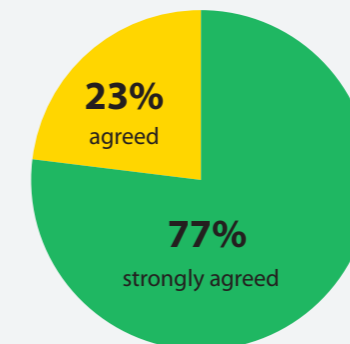


External Evaluation



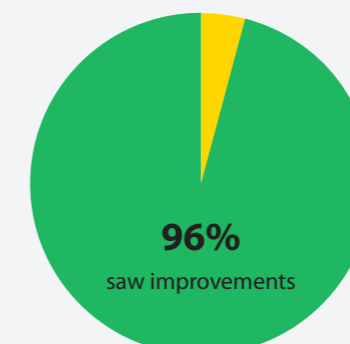
2: CSOs responding to and vocalising major issues of public concern raised by their communities

We found that 77% strongly agreed and 23% agreed their organisation has deepened their linkages with communities or groups because of the CSF’s support.



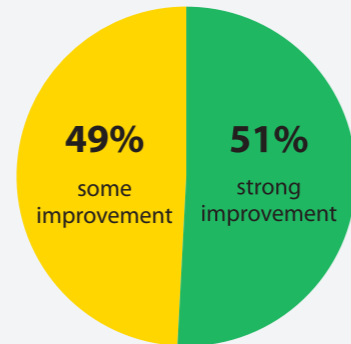
3: CSOs have increased their capacity to influence and engage with decision makers

The external evaluation showed that 96% of the respondents saw improvements in the capacity of CSOs to influence key decision makers.



4: CSOs form alliances between themselves and with other actors to work on issues relevant to the needs and priorities of communities/groups

The external assessment concluded that 51% saw 'strong improvement' and 49% saw 'some improvement' in CSO's capacities to coordinate with other CSOs.



Model for the future

The commitment and passion that CSOs have brought to their work will continue to drive the quest for stronger, more sustainable organisations and improved mission impact. Since 2019, CSOs supported by the CSF have strengthened their organisational capacities and successfully engaged with state authorities, policy makers and other key stakeholder in decision-making positions. CSOs are already attracting donor funding independently, which shows a boost in resource mobilisation.

Results indicate that CSOs have increased their legitimacy in the eyes of their constituents. There is a substantial increase in the proportion of respondents willing to seek the help of a CSO to solve an issue.

We believe the CSF provides a model for change that could be used in other countries across Africa where restricted civic space limits civil society's ability to engage and influence.

