

Strategic Statement 2007-10

Mission Statement

INTRAC works in partnership with other civil society organisations (CSOs), state, corporate and multi-lateral actors, to influence policy and programmes working towards sustainable livelihoods and just societies.

Research into trends in global policy and practice informs INTRAC advocacy and activities which strengthen the capacity of CSOs wherever they are located.

Through training, consultancy and public events, INTRAC promotes the work of CSOs and those supporting them especially in the rehabilitation of civil society where it is endangered or suppressed, working for the inclusion and empowerment of the poorest and most marginal groups.

As an international NGO that serves civil society and endorses gender equity, INTRAC's participatory approach draws on long experience as a member of the global NGO community and from its own organisational learning.

The skills of INTRAC's ethnically diverse staff are complemented by the specialist expertise of Associates, Board members and international alliances and partnerships to ensure that INTRAC services are fully relevant and of the highest quality.

Introduction

This paper covers the strategic areas which will guide our work for the next four years. It will inform our annual plans and we will ensure that the means are in place to ensure annual monitoring of our activities against this Strategic Statement and to enhance quality assurance.

1. Implications of a changing environment

- 1.1. There seems to be general agreement that the space for civil society in development is being constrained by geo-political, security and developmental policies. This provides a key challenge for INTRAC. There is a challenge for us to defend the gains made by civil society, and to persuade donors and policy makers that civil society is an essential component of human development, not a marginal extra.
- 1.2. To meet these challenges will require us to place greater priority on engaging in international development debates, disseminating the ideas of our partners and ourselves. **Therefore we will prioritise joint research, publications and events with partners around the key issues affecting civil society.**
- 1.3. With this shrinkage of the space for civil society in development the need for an independent think tank working on civil society is at its greatest for several years. INTRAC has a proven track record as an independent commentator, innovator and partner to a wide range of civil society groups globally.
- 1.4. We will constantly assess the changing need for our work, which may include looking at areas of civil society activity where new groups are emerging (e.g. around climate change, conflict resolution, living with HIV/AIDS).

2. Challenges for the next five years

- 2.1. A move by official aid agencies to place an increasing emphasis on a state-led economic based form of development.
- 2.2. A reduced emphasis on 'social development'.
- 2.3. A technical and apolitical stance to development in that, to avoid confronting issues of power, many argue for purely technical solutions to poverty.
- 2.4. The financing of CSOs/NGOs is increasingly being transferred or decentralised to recipient countries.
- 2.5. There will be a continued need for the development and support for civil society in many parts of the world both to promote it where it is weak, as well as to improve performance in areas such as governance, accountability, and organisation, as well as the impact of their work.

We will therefore need to:

- 2.5.1. stay **relevant**, in terms of our themes, style and products.
- 2.5.2. continue to **add value** to the development effort of others.
- 2.5.3. synthesise **experience**, review and analyse it, and provide advice and develop ideas based on the outputs.

3. INTRAC identity and commitment

- 3.1. INTRAC will continue to strive to be the pre-eminent independent international organisation of its kind working to strengthen civil society and enable it to support development goals. INTRAC is unique in its global reach and reputation as an independent body working with and on civil society issues. We use a **unique mix** of approaches including: research, dissemination, organisational capacity building, consultancy, participatory development and training.
- 3.2. INTRAC will continue to provide an international platform of those working with civil society groups. We have a unique and proven capacity to convene southern, eastern and northern civil society actors and other stakeholders including multi and bilateral donors, with a civil society mandate and focus.
- 3.3. The focus on poverty in our mission statement means more than just income poverty, and includes broad indicators of human development, including participation in civic and community life/citizenship. In addition we need to be more aware of inequality within societies and the impact of gender based oppression. INTRAC believes that through strengthening local civil societies we can contribute to the process of poverty reduction and human development. We can aid this by promoting the voice and plurality of civil society as the associations of citizens.
- 3.4. INTRAC regards civil society as the space between the State and the 'for profit' market,¹ where citizens come together in associations as civil society organisations (groups, networks, and formal organisations).
- 3.5. INTRAC is dedicated to strengthen civil society, in the belief that civil society plays a key role in:
 - 3.5.1. Improved governance.
 - 3.5.2. Holding the state accountable to the citizen.
 - 3.5.3. Ensuring the state should serve the citizen.
 - 3.5.4. Enhancing the power of the ordinary citizen through organised representation.
 - 3.5.5. Serving the needs of citizens either through representing their interests or direct delivery of services.

¹ The traditional triad of market, state and civil society derives from political analysis thus it is important to ensure that we do not underplay the role of the household and social relations generally.

- 3.5.6. The formation of NGOs, though they should not be regarded as the only significant actors in civil society.
- 3.5.7. Ensuring a plurality of representative organisations as the way to develop social capital through representing all classes, ethnic, generations, gender and special interest groups.
- 3.5.8. Counteracting, through inclusivity, the increasing levels of inequality in many parts of the world and the chronic poverty which often accompanies it.
- 3.5.9. Broadening membership of civil society organisations and interest groups as one element in improved well-being and human security.
- 3.5.10. Extending rights of individuals and groups and policies to reduce inequality and oppression.
- 3.5.11. Extending the voice and political influence of socially excluded groups in order to spread possible growth in resources to groups beyond small elites.

4. INTRAC strategic position and uniqueness

- 4.1. This is derived from our strategic focus, methods of working and the competencies that have been developed over the last 15 years in our identified niche of working within civil society.
- 4.2. **Areas of focus**
 - 4.2.1. Building support for practitioners of development.
 - 4.2.2. Strengthening civil society's voice.
 - 4.2.3. Defending the space for civil society.
 - 4.2.4. Supporting and working with international civil society networks.
 - 4.2.5. Influencing donors who support the development of civil society.
 - 4.2.6. Analysis and mapping of civil society trends.
- 4.3. **Methods of working**
 - 4.3.1. Bringing together advanced skills and experience in order to build our knowledge base.
 - 4.3.2. Ensuring a core participatory approach to our work.
 - 4.3.3. Maintaining the high quality in our work in all our fields of operation.
 - 4.3.4. Being client based; demand rather than supply driven in our provision of services
 - 4.3.5. Not competing with southern civil society groups in their own areas of operation.
 - 4.3.6. Improving the practice of INGOs, but not such that they undermine or compete with locally based civil society groups.
 - 4.3.7. Not engaging in proxy grant management through managing grant funds for donors.
 - 4.3.8. We will continue to develop a quality assurance scheme.
 - 4.3.9. Maintaining a balance between grant funded proactive work and fee funded reactive work; INTRAC has to be responsive to demand with state of the art knowledge, skills and networks, while also defining demand, This requires considerable intelligence gathering, information management and long-term funding.
- 4.4. **INTRAC competencies**
 - 4.4.1. Research
 - 4.4.2. Consultancy
 - 4.4.3. Capacity building
 - 4.4.4. Conferences and other international events
 - 4.4.5. Expert knowledge base
 - 4.4.6. Being an honest broker with developing country NGOs
 - 4.4.7. Training
 - 4.4.8. Dissemination to practitioners
 - 4.4.9. Action-reflection-dissemination-action.
- 4.5. We count on the experience, knowledge and expertise of our core staff supported by a group of associates, board members and consultants. We also rely on our ability to draw upon and bring together different types of skills and experiences gained through our activities.

5. Aims and activities for the next four years

- 5.1. Our overarching goal is to 'strengthen and develop civil society'. Under this are two major areas:
 - 5.1.1. **Activities to directly strengthen civil society.** These include, for example, capacity building, training, programme design, monitoring and evaluation, and other forms of consultancy and programme work.
 - 5.1.2. **The global analysis of policy and other trends impacting on civil society.** Greater importance will be placed on INTRAC's role in mapping, understanding and challenging development policies and global trends, specifically how they impact on the development of civil society ('trend spotting').

6. Future strategic areas

- 6.1. Support civil society to reduce poverty, inequality and social injustice.
- 6.2. Work with emerging civil societies in transitional countries, in fragile states and where civil society is endangered or suppressed, to strengthen their contribution to development and democracy as well as in resource (money) poor regions.
- 6.3. Actively develop new models of intervention in partnership with key allies to provide greater support to civil society support organisations.
- 6.4. Place greater emphasis on influencing the policies of those in the international aid system on issues related to the goal of strengthening civil society.
- 6.5. Develop new regional and thematic **programmes**. Geographic priorities are Africa, South Asia, the Middle East, and our present work in Central Asia. We shall identify within the existing **thematic** approach certain areas each year on which to focus our attention, with an aim of improving our own understanding in conjunction, wherever possible, with our key partners.

7. Principles for engagement

- 7.1. It is important to assess all our work against the our principles, mission, vision and values. Our commitment to overarching goals means that we should respond to requests and opportunities wherever they emerge as long as we are clear that we doing so because of the opportunity to:
 - 7.1.1. Contribute towards the reduction of poverty, social inequality.
 - 7.1.2. Address injustice through civil society.
 - 7.1.3. Assist emerging civil society in transitional, new, fragile or endangered civil society regardless of the income levels of the country.
 - 7.1.4. Assist where civil society still has not taken hold for whatever reason, using our experience in assisting local institutional development.
 - 7.1.5. Utilise the comparative advantage of INTRAC based on its knowledge and experience base, international outreach, and independent and critical approach.
 - 7.1.6. Add value through relevant, timely, informed, quality support to civil society and other developmental activities. Engage where we can make a difference and where our skills, experience, independence and commitment to local civil society development can achieve change.
 - 7.1.7. Exploit specific areas of potential new learning for INTRAC which could strengthen our research as well as contribute to others through consultancies in related areas, as well as contribute to the wider body of knowledge around civil society strengthening.
- 7.2. We will use these criteria to develop a geographic strategy, although specific focused programmes in certain regions and countries will not undermine our international outreach and perspective.
- 7.3. We will, however, continue to identify priority areas for greater concentration of research, programme and other activities. These will invariably alter over time according to external demand and we will need to be proactive regarding issues affecting the sector.

8. Global analysis of policy and other trends impacting on civil society

8.1. We will achieve this through:

- 8.1.1. **Independent research** that is crucial to our critical understanding of the nature, role, and development of civil society. Our research will look at elements promoting and threatening the emergence and development of civil society as well as enhancing our learning from the practice of international civil society groups.
- 8.1.2. Informing and **influencing policy** in the context where civil society is under threat and where the space for civil society is being curtailed.
- 8.1.3. Increasing our capacity and ability to research, analyse and interpret our client's **changes in aid policies and architecture** through research, workshops and joint activities wherever possible with developing and transitional country organisations.
- 8.1.4. Improve our overall **communications** and dissemination work, develop a new communications policy, review existing information work, and introduce an overall communications programme with the aim of making better use of the enormous amount of material and learning accumulated through our work.

9. Strategic alliances

- 9.1. The key to the success of our work lies in our alliances and engagement with an international network of similar organisations and individuals sharing a belief in the crucial role of civil society in general and NGOs specifically in confronting persistent poverty, inequality and injustice.
- 9.2. INTRAC will invest further in its international alliances and collaborative work by exploring new ways of working directly with and learning from our partners.
- 9.3. We will build on and develop long-term partnerships and relationships across the globe, in particular in developing and transitional countries. This provides the ability to work with, support and learn from like minded agencies, as a way of achieving wider civil society support goals.
- 9.4. We do not assume that we will necessarily lead in joint activities, and therefore do not aim to always be the dominant partner.
- 9.5. We will, however, ensure that we always seek to add value to any joint activities and partnerships, and remain relevant to the needs of partners. By working together we can have a greater influence over both global and national policies affecting civil society.
- 9.6. We will also seek to expand alliances with like minded donors and others, with the aim to develop longer term support and joint activities with key donor agencies.
- 9.7. We will also continue to cultivate alliances with others such as university departments committed to civil society and equitable development.