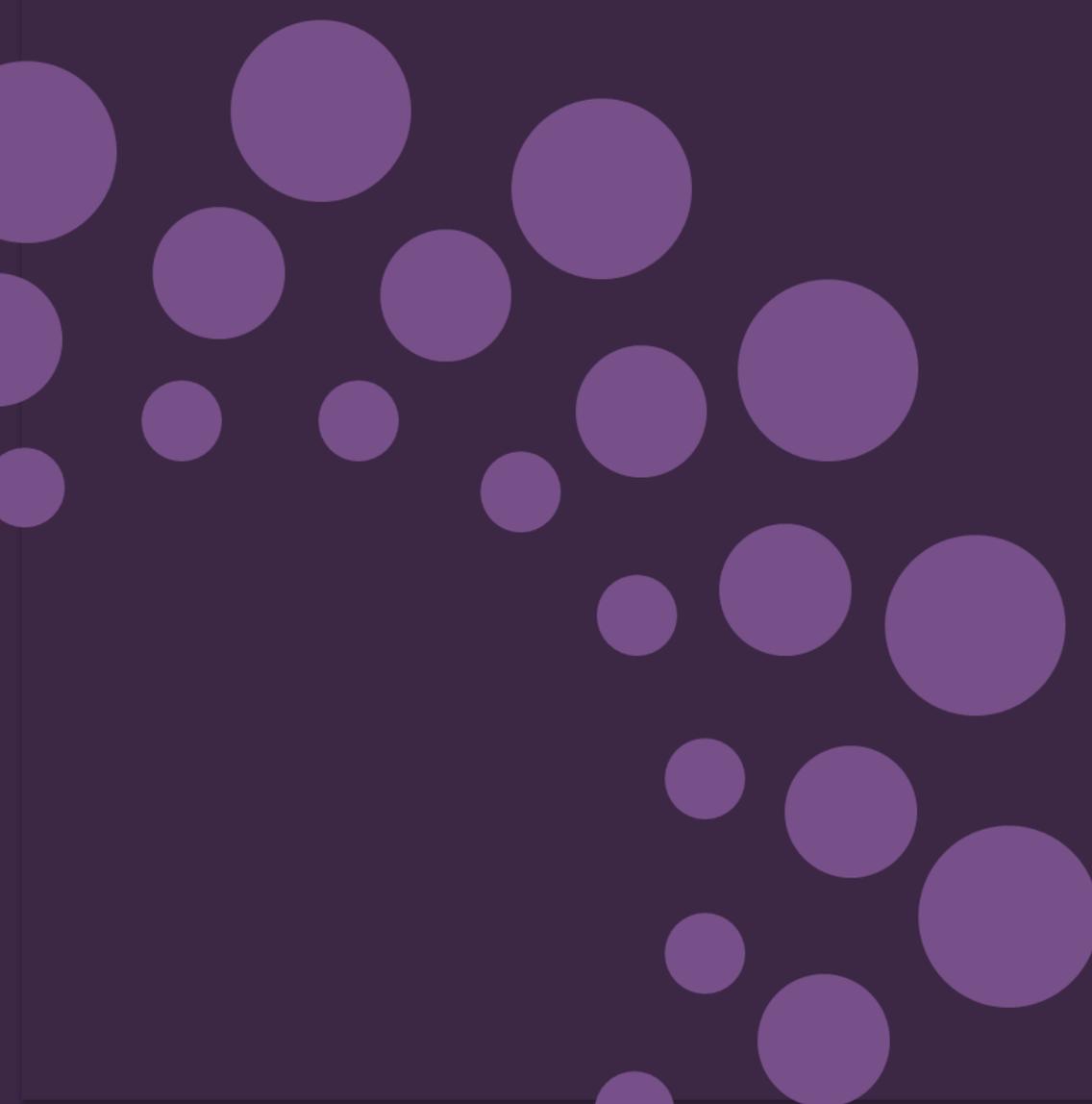

December 2015



INTRAC STRATEGY

2015-2020

Supporting sustainability
and activism in civil
society



OUR PURPOSE

Civil society means people coming together, mobilising, and organising themselves to bring positive change locally, nationally and globally. This spirit of collective action is motivated by a desire to develop shared solutions, give voice to marginalised people, and hold power to account.

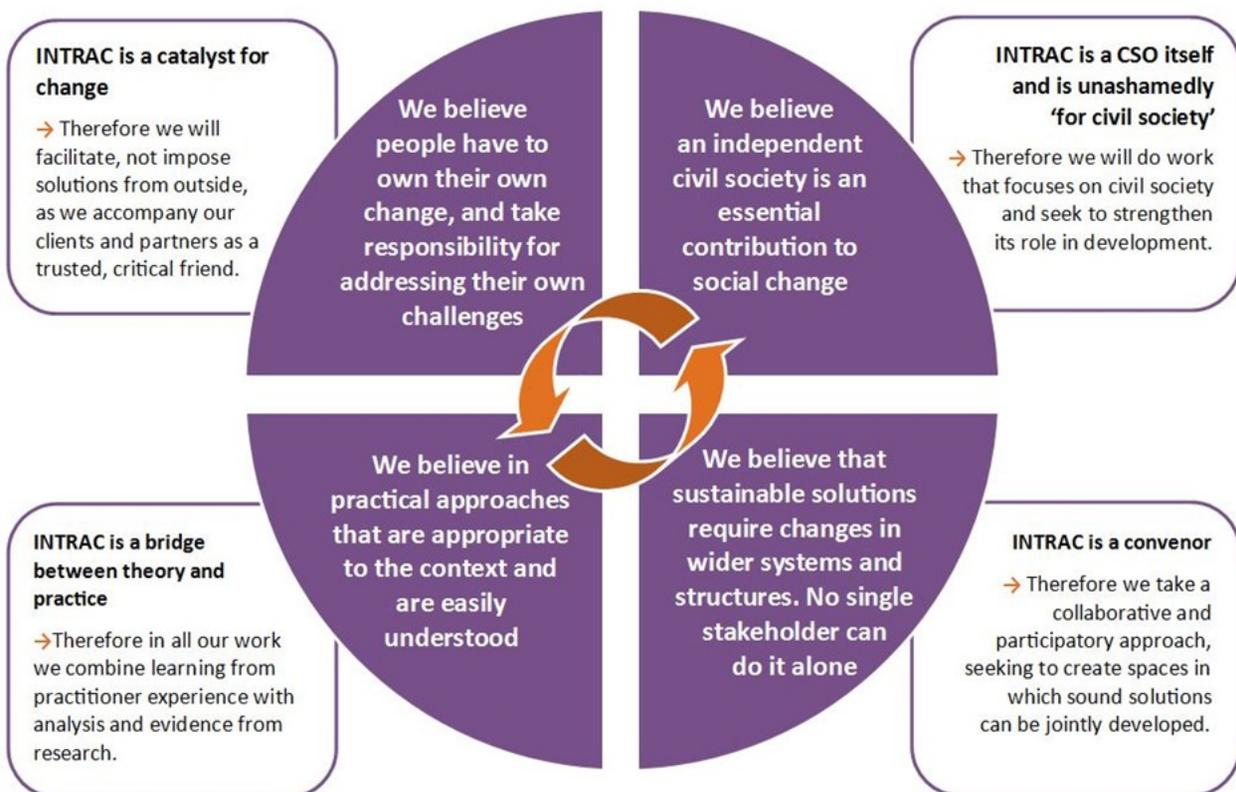
OUR MISSION

We exist to strengthen the effectiveness of civil society to challenge poverty and inequality, empowering people to gain greater control over their own future.

OUR VISION

Our vision is that people are able to come together and to organise in forms that are effective, sustainable, and legitimate in their own societies.

OUR VALUES



INTRAC STRATEGY 2015-2020

Over the next five years we will focus on **supporting civil society in places where there is persistent poverty and disenfranchisement**, and where space for civic action is threatened by tensions between state, the private sector and civil society.

To do this we will **build the capacity of civil society and the organisations that underpin it** so they can develop their potential for achieving change as sustainably and effectively as possible.

This means **working with all types of civil society organisations** (CSOs), from grassroots groups to international NGOs, from gender and faith-based organisations to trade unions, and from social media networks to social enterprises.

It also means **working with funders of civil society organisations** to improve policies and programmes.

We will **support sustainability and activism in civil society** as key elements for its effectiveness and identity.

This is a snapshot of how we will do it.

OUR WORK IN CONTEXT

GLOBAL CHALLENGES

The world has changed dramatically in the past decade. Rising inequality, gender discrimination, mass-migration, poor access to health services, education and sustainable livelihoods require focused attention.

Yet solutions remain elusive – not least because of divergent views among government, the private sector and civil society on what to do. There is disagreement on how relationships with citizens and civil society should be structured. As a consequence, the political space for civil society is shrinking in many countries.

GROWING ACTIVISM

Nevertheless, more people than ever before are supporting each other and organising based on shared issues and interests, challenging those with power in innovative ways.

New forms of civic organising are emerging through which people engage with each other to address challenges they face at all levels in society. The number and variety of civil society organisations continues to grow worldwide.



THE NEED FOR SUSTAINABILITY

Established international NGOs remain important in tackling global challenges, yet they face big pressures to change, adapt, and demonstrate their added value – both to donors and to southern civil society activists and organisations.

To perform well and have legitimacy in their communities, CSOs require a clear purpose, progressive leadership and well-balanced accountability relationships with their different stakeholders. Critically, in order to operate freely, effectively and sustainably, CSOs need resources: stable funding from a balanced set of sources, and a mix of skills and capacities. They also need sufficient political space to operate.

High-quality support is key to making organisations fit for the future and enabling them to turn civic energy into a durable, independent force for change.

This is what INTRAC works to achieve.

“Partnering with INTRAC is a learning journey in every detail; every interaction is information, a new experience, a flow of insights (...) INTRAC’s work and passion (...) ensured we all shared a mutual understanding for the “good” we want to achieve and the methods for achieving it.”

Tayma Abdulhai, Mobaderoon Network, Syria

“My organisation (...) only had three mini projects. After the Analytical Skills Training Programme (...) I gained self-confidence. We found partners. Now the organisation has ten projects.”

Roziya, participant involved in the INTRAC-run Analytical Skills Training Programme, Tajikistan

SIX STRATEGIES FOR ACTION

1) INFLUENCE POLICY, STRATEGY AND PRACTICE RELATED TO CIVIL SOCIETY

Global institutions and international policies recognise the vital role that civil society has to play in development. Yet in practice, the approaches used often do not foster a strong and independent civil society.

We will work with policy makers, government regulators, donors, international NGOs and private funders to develop effective strategies, policies and programmes related to civil society.

We will seek to ensure that CSOs' accountability to funders, policy-makers and regulators is balanced with their accountability to the people they serve, to peer organisations, and to other stakeholders.

2) IMPROVE ACCESS FOR CIVIL SOCIETY TO HIGH QUALITY CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT

INTRAC has been a pioneer of approaches and tools for organisational development and capacity building. Yet many CSOs cannot find affordable and relevant support locally.

We will implement initiatives to enhance the skills, knowledge and experience of national and regional consultants and trainers so that they in turn can provide high quality, context-specific support directly to local CSOs.



We will develop new models for capacity development that can be integrated into civil society support programmes.

Where good quality local and national level support is unavailable to local CSOs we will contribute directly to capacity development or to sharing international best practice in partnership with others.

3) PROVIDE CUTTING-EDGE CAPACITY BUILDING AND ADVISORY SERVICES

For over 25 years, we have honed our skills and expertise in organisational development and change; monitoring, evaluation and learning; participatory research; and strategy and programme design.

We will continuously review and add to our methods to ensure we offer and develop new thinking for the benefit of civil society and our partners.

We will remain true to our values, putting CSOs and their needs at the forefront of our approaches. We will be a trustworthy, knowledgeable and critical friend offering support that draws from extensive, practical experience.

“For Danish Refugee Council, the work with INTRAC has been essential in grounding our process on strengthening monitoring, evaluation and learning in the organisation”

Mikkel Nedergaard, Danish Refugee Council

4) EXPAND TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES FOR INDIVIDUALS WORKING IN OR WITH CSOS

Training, coaching and mentoring are the main ways in which we build the skills of individuals to become supporters and champions of civil society, whether they work within CSOs, government or funder institutions.

We will focus on making our services more accessible to people where they are based. We will develop new online approaches and innovative methods that are compatible with the needs and day-to-day reality of practitioners on the front line.

In addition to short-term courses, we will collaborate with partners on longer-term capacity building programmes using mixed methods.

We will expand our pool of expert trainers and develop new training offers in all of our key thematic areas.

5) PROMOTE LEARNING AND INNOVATION

We have always provided safe spaces and platforms for sharing best practice and fostering debate on critical issues affecting civil society.

We will enable learning among practitioners, policy-makers and researchers through virtual and face-to-face events. Together with like-minded organisations and thinkers from around the world, we will promote approaches to civil society strengthening that are genuinely innovative and transformative.

We will monitor trends in the global political economy, analysing their impact on civil society sustainability and activism, and collaborate with partners to offer solutions for policy and practice.

6) SHARE FINDINGS AND RESULTS OF OUR WORK

We believe in universal, open access to information and knowledge. As civil society grows and changes, so do its practices for learning, accessing information and engaging with knowledge.

We will refresh our approach to communications, and produce a new range of accessible publications to meet the needs of our audiences wherever they are. We will support practitioners and researchers working on civil society to disseminate findings and results in order to enhance their impact.



OUR ROLE

Activists and civil society operate in a globalised and rapidly changing landscape. We will adjust our role depending on the relative strength of civil society and the type of support that is already available in different contexts.

WHERE CIVIL SOCIETY IS STRONG

- We will collaborate with like-minded organisations to stimulate a global exchange on civil society policy and practice.

WHERE CIVIL SOCIETY EXISTS BUT IS WEAK

- We will invest in the sector by bringing the best of international practice and building the skills of local providers.

WHERE CIVIL SOCIETY IS NEW OR EMERGING

- We will build the capacity of that sector and deliver direct support where appropriate.

We are at our most effective when we work with others. We will continue to build the INTRAC community: our network of associates and research affiliates; partnerships with peer organisations and funders; training participants; individuals involved in projects; former staff and board members; and other friends and supporters.

We will monitor and evaluate our work to ensure we are meeting our mission and vision to strengthen civil society, and to ensure that we continuously learn in order to improve our performance.

OUR GEOGRAPHIC FOCUS

We will prioritise settings where INTRAC can make a significant difference in supporting the development efforts of civil society. We will actively respond to demand worldwide based on our rich portfolio of work and expertise.

GLOBAL

Our worldwide expertise and international networks provide us with a strong basis to influence civil society policy and support strategies. Over the next five years we will focus on working with funders and policy makers to improve existing approaches.

We will work with like-minded individuals and organisations around the world to carry out comparative studies, share best practice and convene debates on new pathways for effective support of civil society in its varying forms.

MIDDLE EAST & NORTH AFRICA

The Middle East North Africa will be a focus region for INTRAC, building on a substantial track record of work with funders, networks and civil society organisations across many countries. We will expand our dedicated team of staff and associates with social, cultural and linguistic expertise of the region.

We will enhance the quality of capacity building provision in the region, work with emergent civil society actors across the development and humanitarian sectors, and build new alliances across research and practice.

CENTRAL ASIA & RUSSIA

INTRAC will maintain its office in Kyrgyzstan to provide accessible support for local organisations across Central Asia and Russia. Our staff and associates with deep contextual knowledge of the region will work with different civil society actors to enhance their sustainability and impact, including trade unions, youth, the media, disabled peoples' organisations and social enterprises. We will support civil society to engage with local government through our Analytical Skills Training Programme.

SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

We will help to build a stronger and more sustainable civil society through contributing to civil society support programmes and influencing donor and government approaches. We will develop ways to enable hard-to-reach populations to access support and funding. We will collaborate with regional capacity building providers to share best practice and enhance the quality of local support.

EASTERN & CENTRAL EUROPE

We will focus on specific areas where INTRAC can add value. We will collaborate with funders, CSOs and consultants to strengthen civil society organisations as they tackle marginalisation, poverty and conflict.

We will accompany CSOs and networks across the region in their journey towards sustainability models beyond international resourcing. In politically-charged contexts we will support organisational development and resilience.

SOUTH & SOUTHEAST ASIA

Together with long-standing civil society partners in India and other countries we will explore the legitimacy and sustainability challenges faced by CSOs as they transition from external to domestic resourcing.

We will provide direct support in countries like Afghanistan and Laos to develop strategies for building the capacity of civil society and the local support sector. We will carry out international evaluations of humanitarian and development operations.

LATIN AMERICA & THE CARIBBEAN

We will work with our wide network of connections in the region to exchange learning on the changing dynamics of civil society across Latin America and the Caribbean, and to ensure that knowledge is shared with practitioners and decision-makers in other parts of the world. We will collaborate on joint evaluations and impact assessment of programmes involving civil society.



Oxbridge Court, Osney Mead
Oxford OX2 0ES
United Kingdom
Tel: +44 (0)1865 201851
Fax: +44 (0)1865 201852
info@intrac.org
www.intrac.org

INTRAC is a company limited by guarantee No.2663769, Registered in
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