

Background

By way of background, the Cook Islands / NZODA Country Strategy 2001-2006 recognised the importance of a strong civil society in promoting equitable development and more accountable government, and provided support to a number of civil society organisations in Cook Islands. At the time of the review, the Cook Islands Government, NZAID and AusAID were finalising the Joint Country Strategy and sought to build on lessons learned for the civil society component of the future programme.

Purpose and Objectives

The review's purpose was to consider the effectiveness of the support provided to civil society organisations by three funding modalities in terms of their contribution to development and national governance, and the extent to which the support had strengthened the good governance and management of the organisations themselves. The review also sought recommendations for designing the NZAID/AusAID civil society support programme for 2008/09 and beyond. The review's approach was to consider relevant documents, and to visit Cook Islands to hold structured interviews and group discussions with a range of stakeholders. At the end of its visit, the review team held a workshop with those consulted to discuss preliminary findings.

Main Findings

The review's findings were that core funding of organisations and the work of the Disability Action Team had been particularly successful, but that it was not yet clear whether the Community Initiative Scheme (CIS) was a cost effective way to provide funds.

Follow-up

Review recommendations suggested that NZAID move from funding agreements to partnership agreements with selected civil society organisations, that NZAID provide mentoring and support for NGOs in planning, budgeting and monitoring and evaluation processes; that NZAID and Cook Islands Government agree a Civil Society Framework; that NZAID undertake an evaluation of the CIS to consider the effectiveness of projects and governance / management arrangements; and that it consider whether funding would be available for other NGOs, and if so how such organisations would be identified for support.

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