



MINISTÈRE  
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ÉTRANGÈRES

*Liberté  
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Strategy

# Strategic guidance paper 2023-2027 civil society and civic engagement



This strategy stems from broad consultation with the following stakeholders:

- The Directorate-General for Global Affairs, Culture, Education and International Development of the Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs (MEAE/DGM)
- The Directorate-General for Political and Security Affairs (MEAE/DGP)
- The Crisis and Support Centre (MEAE/CDCS)
- The Strategy, Analysis and Policy Planning Centre (MEAE/CAPS)
- The embassies of the French diplomatic network
- The Ministry of National Education and Youth
- The Ministry of the Economy, Finance and Industrial and Digital Sovereignty
- The Ministry of Public Sector Transformation and the Civil Service
- The Ministry of the Interior and Overseas France
- The Ministry for the Ecological Transition and Territorial Cohesion
- AFD group
- France Volontaires
- The Agence du Service Civique (French civic service agency)
- Fonjep (youth and public education organization)
- CFI (Canal France International)

### **Produced by:**

The Delegation for Civil Society, Civic Engagement and Youth (DGM/CIV):  
Camille Mazari, Anne-Charlotte Dommartin, Thibaut Lespagnol and all the team.

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Caption: In Nkayi (Congo), Juliette, an international solidarity volunteer with the SARIS foundation, assist cooperatives and individuals in the implementation of their income-generating activities.

# Summary

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The beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century has seen civil societies burst onto the international scene. The emergence of local dynamics and powerful non-state actors have complemented and sometimes upended traditional inter-state relations in response to the global challenges facing us (climate change, pandemics, etc.).

Civil society organizations (CSOs) are on the front lines, the world over, defending the universal values that are ours – respect for human rights and human dignity, gender equality, good governance, freedom of expression – and promoting an ambitious agenda of sustainable development, solidarity and tackling global inequalities.

CSOs are key partners in implementing the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals. Their concrete action towards vulnerable populations, their responsiveness and agility in often difficult contexts, their grassroots knowledge and their local networks make CSOs essential partners and contacts in conducting credible and effective solidarity policies.

Lastly, civil society also has a valuable role of advocating for international solidarity, among public authorities, citizens and local

and regional communities. We need these guardians – or sometimes even these whistleblowers – whose high standards and rigour improve the efficacy of public action and its accountability in relation to our fellow citizens and beneficiary populations.

However, since the first political guidance paper on the partnership between the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and civil society was published in 2017, the international context has significantly changed. New themes and priorities have emerged, including the localization of aid, promotion of gender equality, awareness of climate issues and adaptation to new digital challenges.

At the same time, we have observed a worrisome narrowing of the public space for CSOs and their room for manoeuvre in many countries. In this respect, I wish to renew the unwavering commitment of the Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs (MEAE) to defending a supportive environment for civil society actors throughout the world. And I personally wish to commend the dedication, professionalism and sacrifice of thousands of women and men who work daily in CSOs for a fairer and more sustainable world. Partnerships between the MEAE and civil society are strong and long-standing. It is with satisfaction that we can measure the progress made since 2017: a doubling of our official development assistance going through CSOs, a strong increase in our humanitarian action – a large portion of which is implemented by CSOs – the promotion of innovative mechanisms for civil society – for example through the creation of a fund to support feminist organizations and the strengthening of our development policy in the areas of sport and cultural and creative industries. These developments have been enshrined in the Act of 4 August 2021 which “recognizes the role, expertise and added value of civil society organizations, both in the North and South, and all non-state actors involved in solidarity development policies and the struggle against global inequalities”.

# Preface

In Africa, dialogue with all components of civil society is also at the heart of the new partnership that we have endeavoured to build since 2017. It is also the spirit of the New Africa-France Summit held in Montpellier that I strive to promote during all of my travels.

The MEAE remains fully committed to further strengthening its partnership with civil society, to support all actors and work alongside them daily to meet the challenges of our times, together.

It is for this reason that the 2023-2027 Civil Society and Civic Engagement Strategic Guidance Paper is structured in two parts. The first part presents elements of analysis, assessment and forward planning for detailed characterization of the issues and challenges facing CSOs in today's world. The second part draws up a clear roadmap based on five themes: promoting a supportive environment for CSOs; supporting their development and their organization; developing partnerships; strengthening civic engagement and supporting the advocacy role of CSOs.

This strategy was drafted in close cooperation with all components of civil society, the departments of all the ministries concerned and state agencies responsible for implementing it over the coming five years.

I wish to thank all actors who helped to draft this strategy and I am delighted to work alongside them in strengthening the partnership between the Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs and civil society.



**Chrysoula Zacharopoulou,**

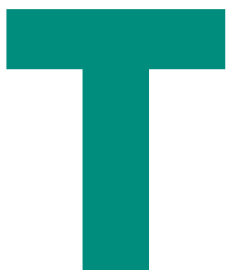
Minister of State for Development,  
Francophonie and International Partnerships

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***“We must more closely involve civil society, find partners and allies to support and explain our action, and we must adapt to changing locations, cooperate without being naive and react objectively.”***

***Speech by the President of the French Republic at the Conference of Ambassadors, 1 September 2022.***

# Summary



This paper sets out the first strategy by the Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs (MEAE) for civil society and civic engagement. This strategy aims to provide the MEAE with objectives and real means to consolidate its partnership with all sectors of civil society and to work together to reach the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

International solidarity associations (ISAs) have maintained a prominent role in the sector and have continued to be key partners of the MEAE for several decades. New actors have emerged alongside them and provide expertise in their spheres of competence as well as new forms of intervention: foundations, actors of the social and inclusive economy, multi-stakeholder platforms and even informal movements.

Civil society organizations (CSOs) play a number of vital roles: developing projects and innovative approaches, strengthening civil society in the partner countries, defending their space, advocating on behalf of international solidarity, monitoring the accountability of public authorities towards populations, raising awareness and mobilizing citizens around international issues.

Throughout the world, however, they are experiencing an increasing number of violations of their freedoms. This shrinking of civic space limits their room for manoeuvre. They also face the emergence of new forms of social organizations, especially digital, that are upending their traditional means of action and compelling them to renew their operating methods. In light of the emergence of new standards, whether promoted by the CSOs themselves or imposed on them –

localization of aid, climate issues, gender equality, adapting to digital challenges, combating illegal financing – CSOs are rethinking their methods of action, in keeping with their commitments and those of French and international donors. France's bilateral partners are carrying out similar reflection to deal with these new challenges.

In this context, interactions between Équipe France and CSOs are extensive and excellent. The MEAE is developing and diversifying its partnerships with all components of civil society, using a multi-stakeholder approach, and is providing them with technical and financial support through its central administration services, embassies and state agencies. CSOs contribute to drafting public policies as part of a co-development approach – especially within the framework of the National Council for Development and International Solidarity (CNDSI) – and remain essential in implementing them.

Civic engagement measures such as education for citizenship and international solidarity are prerequisites and one of the determining factors of community work. Many international volunteer programmes respond to numerous situations in relation to the motivations, availability or sensitivities of everyone, as well as the needs identified within the host community. The array of volunteer schemes open to reciprocal exchange continues to expand, within a partner-based and co-developed approach. The Programming Act on Inclusive Development and Combating Global Inequalities therefore recognizes volunteering as one of the tools of French international solidarity.

The “Civil Society and Civic Engagement” strategy will help to implement the sectoral strategies of the MEAE. Maintaining dialogue fora with civil society makes it possible to remain attentive to today's major changes in civil societies that contribute to promoting human rights, defending democracy, combating inequalities and preserving our planet.

## Strategic Priorities

### **PRIORITY 1: Promote a supportive environment for all components of civil society throughout the world and in France**

In a context of shrinking space for civil society, France must raise awareness among its bilateral partners and engage in dialogue in the multilateral arena to maintain a supportive environment for civil society, as it must also preserve and strengthen this environment in France. The MEAE will endeavour to promote normative frameworks conducive to civil society and to facilitate the implementation of activities carried out by civil society organizations.

### **PRIORITY 2: Support the development, organization and initiatives of partner CSOs**

Historically, French international solidarity associations have been made up of the dense and diverse interweaving of small structures that need support. The renewal of the economic and operational models of CSOs, linked to changes in practices and standards, requires appropriate support. The MEAE will ensure that the financing of civil society ecosystems is stepped up. It will also support the capacity-building of French CSOs, as well as the localization of aid.

### **PRIORITY 3: Develop partnerships with all civil society actors**

Developments in civil society ecosystems are characterized by the growing role of a variety of actors in the field of international solidarity. Promoting multi-stakeholder dynamics and exchanges between the public and private sectors and the various CSO components, such as the joint construction of public policies, contribute to the effective implementation of France's priorities and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). On this basis, the CNDSI is the consultation body that provides a forum for dialogue between the State and the wide range of CSOs. The MEAE will endeavour to promote the action of all sectors of civil society organizations. It

will help to strengthen the role of CSOs in the joint construction of public policies and to facilitate human exchanges between the various components of civil society, government and the private sector.

### **PRIORITY 4: Foster civic engagement**

In order to support civic engagement, France must promote legislative frameworks conducive to the deployment of volunteers abroad and continue to develop its own volunteer programmes, which are unique in the fact that they are jointly built with CSOs from both North and South. The MEAE will endeavour to promote a supportive framework for civic engagement. It will support the development of volunteer mechanisms and will work towards promoting volunteering experience in career paths.

### **PRIORITY 5: Strengthen the presence and voice of French-speaking CSOs in particular, in the international arena**

The advocacy work of French and French-speaking CSOs in the international arena could be enhanced, even though their expertise in numerous fields is unanimously recognized. France will work towards better consideration for the positions held by French and French-speaking CSOs in multilateral bodies and will develop tools to allow CSOs and their platforms and networks to be more present and visible in these fora.

# Part 1

## CIVIL SOCIETIES

# IN THE INTERNATIONAL ARENA

## IN 2022

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### A ◦ An increase in actors involved in developing public policies driven by the Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs

#### 1/ The civil society ecosystem involved in international issues is becoming more complex and diverse

The MEAE recognizes the following as CSOs: ISAs, foundations, regardless of their nature (recognized as serving the public interest, business, umbrella, or endowment funds), cooperatives, professional associations, trade unions and employers' organizations, limited-profit economic actors (social and solidarity-based enterprises) as well as their networks and platforms, according to the definition adopted and shared by the OECD and its member countries. CSOs are characterized by their independence from public authorities, their ability to innovate and their priority of meeting the needs of local communities. The MEAE respects their autonomy and intends to work with them to reach the SDGs through working methods that combine cooperation, co-development and support for their initiatives.

#### → International Solidarity Associations (ISAs)

**In the association sector alone, there are currently over 10,000<sup>2</sup> French ISAs involved in reaching the SDGs.** Most of them are totally dependent on volunteers, and work alongside small or medium-sized professional structures,

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development entails civil society's participation in promoting and implementing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Rallying all forces and actors is vital to achieve the 17 SDGs, adopted in 2015 by the United Nations Member States and that "address the global challenges we face, including those related to poverty, inequality, climate, environmental degradation, prosperity, peace and justice". SDG 17 focuses specifically on implementing partnerships to achieve these goals. Today's challenges are considerable, as some 50% of humanitarian needs are not being covered.<sup>1</sup>

**SDG 17.16** calls to "enhance the global partnership for sustainable development complemented by multi-stakeholder partnerships that mobilize and share knowledge, expertise, technologies and financial resources to support the achievement of sustainable development goals in all countries, particularly developing countries".

**SDG 17.17** calls to "encourage and promote effective public, public-private, and civil society partnerships, building on the experience and resourcing strategies of partnerships".

Furthermore, the framework text of the 2030 Agenda explicitly recognizes volunteer groups as stakeholders in the implementation of the 17 SDGs (paragraph 45).

1. World Humanitarian Summit, Istanbul

2. "On 31/06/2020, France had 17,503 registered international solidarity associations, 14,274 were officially active, 483 had significant formal activity, and 220 were considered as professionalized." Socio-economic study of French international solidarity associations: contributions, models and evolutions, Institut Français du Monde Associatif, Fondation pour l'Université de Lyon; study conducted by S. Núñez Regueiro, 2020



international structures and some French international solidarity “multinationals”. With the exception of a handful of predominantly expert ISAs, most combine an activist and/or volunteer base with salaried employees.

**In recent years, the international solidarity sector has benefited from a globally positive economic situation<sup>3</sup>**, although this observation warrants some qualification in relation to the size of the associations and where they are established, and the sector is continuing to restructure. It is supported by the Coordination SUD platform, grouping together 180 French NGOs active in the humanitarian and development fields, fully fledged members or part of six NGO collectives (CLONG-Volontariat, CNAJEP, CHD, CRID, FORIM and Groupe initiatives), and whose missions include the promotion, development and professionalization of the sector through training, accumulating experience and disseminating information.

Numerous French association stakeholders that do not have international solidarity as a social purpose but rather as a sector of activity serving their core profession (i.e., socio-educational and medical-social associations, training bodies, local missions, youth and sports associations, public education or social integration actors) have in recent years

been developing their activities internationally and have more broadly fuelled growth in the international solidarity sector. They provide new financial means but also recognized expertise in terms of education, health, combating poverty, etc. In parallel, various humanitarian organizations hitherto exclusively focused on the international scene are using their experience to serve projects in France. This increasingly close link between activities in France and abroad, whether actions in the field or involving education for solidarity, illustrates the interconnection challenges generated by the SDGs.

**In line with the “International Migration and Development” action plan and in view of the French chairmanship of the Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD) in 2022-2023, the partnership with the diaspora remains strong.** The Forum of International Solidarity Organizations for Migration (FORIM) has been bolstered in its redistributive role among International Migration Solidarity Organizations (OSIM), through additional funding of micro- and meso-projects. **The New Africa-France Summit and the Mediterranean Worlds Forum**, held in October 2021 and March 2022 respectively, **established the role of the diaspora in a rationale of a dual space, and particularly organizations made up of youth representatives.**

## ISAs within the national and international association ecosystem

France has some 1,500,000 associations, representing a budget of €113 billion, or 3.3% of GDP. The sector employed approximately 1,780,000 employees in 2021.<sup>4</sup> Among these associations, French ISAs represent a niche within which members of a diversified ecosystem benefiting from a relatively positive economic situation for 2016-2020 coexist. This ecosystem is characterized by a very strong economic concentration: very large ISAs collect the majority of resources (a trend that grew over this period) and the growth rate of their resources remains higher than that of other ISAs.<sup>5</sup> In recent years however, the smaller ones have been benefiting from better access to public funding.<sup>6</sup>

French ISAs face a dual challenge: renewing their activist and donor base and their legitimacy as intermediary bodies. The high number of actors in international solidarity has heightened competition for access to donations. Increasing donor loyalty appears to be a vital step.<sup>7</sup>

While the third edition of the study on the socio-economic models of French ISAs illustrates the substantial

development of activity among very large NGOs,<sup>8</sup> the ecosystem of French ISAs remains, on the whole, lagging, in relation to international and especially CSOs in English-speaking countries. While this significant difference does not prevent French CSOs from being influential in the international arena, as seen by the latest ranking of thedotgood<sup>9</sup>, it remains a major challenge for the sector. In France, the ISA landscape is extremely dispersed and comprises many small structures, which is as much an advantage as it is a challenge.

Creating a robust ecosystem of French ISAs that are active in a common sector, such as Alliance Education, created by Solidarité Laïque and Aide et Action or the GRET and AVSF alliance, addresses the MEAE’s desire to better promote the expertise of French associations in the international arena. France is willing to support the move for NGOs of an intermediary size to the category of very large NGOs. Also, the partnership between the MEAE and French CSOs must help build the capacity for action and advocacy of CSOs, especially within multilateral fora, for the purpose of the fair recognition of French expertise. The MEAE and AFD also support initiatives to structure the association sector for French ISAs, such as CHD’s Groupe Enfance or the Plateforme des Droits de l’Homme.

3. Coordination SUD, “Les modèles socio-économiques des associations de solidarité internationale (ASI) françaises 2016-2020, Nouvelle édition de l’étude Argent ASI” (socio-economic models of French ISAs 2016-2020), Paris, Coordination SUD, April 2022

4. MENJ, “Reprise de l’emploi associatif en 2021”, (upturn in jobs in associations in 2021) 09/02/2022

5. Coordination SUD, “Les modèles socio-économiques des associations de solidarité internationale (ASI) françaises 2016-2020, Nouvelle édition de l’étude Argent ASI” (the socio-economic models of French international solidarity associations), Paris, Coordination SUD, April 2022, p. 34

6. Ibid. p.30 / 7. Ibid. p.49 / 8. Ibid.

9. thedotgood.net/ranking/world-200-sgos/ Top 200 of the most influential SGOs (social good organizations).

In both France and in our partner countries, **volunteering ecosystems based on cooperation between States and civil society are developing**. CSOs play a major role in the instigation, development and implementation of volunteer assignments and programmes. With the support of France Volontaires, they are a driving force in the implementation and reinforcement of national and international volunteering frameworks.

## French expertise in the humanitarian and emergency sectors

Since the era of the “French Doctors” in Biafra in the late 1960s, French know-how in the humanitarian sector is renowned. Médecins sans Frontières (MSF), Handicap International (HI), Médecins du Monde (MDM) and Action contre la Faim (ACF) have developed international networks with national chapters in many countries. In addition, the expertise of these organizations is internationally recognized by actors working in a crisis context, including in particular the United Nations funds and programmes that appreciate their skills and know-how.

The expertise of French civil society organizations in combating malnutrition and global health is recognized worldwide, and especially their ability to innovate in this sector. These organizations help to implement the programmes of bilateral and multilateral donors. They are often called on to help with the activities of international organizations in the field.

**Young people are playing a key role in social transformation dynamics:** in 2020, 58% of young people took part in one or more youth organization activities (sports activities, volunteering, environmental initiatives), representing an increase of 17% in relation to 2019.<sup>10</sup> During the COVID-19 pandemic, volunteering or activist engagement continued to progress among young people, mainly on environmental and social issues.<sup>11</sup>

**The MEAE recognizes the role of young people in its relationship with civil society,** the importance of promoting the full participation of young people in creating, implementing, monitoring and evaluating public policies, and the potential for initiative and diverse forms of engagement of young people.

## Support for micro-projects

The organization La Guilde, created in 1967 and recognized as serving the public interest, works in four sectors: adventure, volunteering, micro-projects and development intervention. Its local footing and experience make it a key organization in terms of volunteering, especially as part of civic service and international solidarity volunteer programmes. Since 1983, the micro-project incubator Agence Micro Projets reflects the ambition of its instigator, La Guilde, to support and finance the development of international solidarity projects led by French associations with less than €130,000 in annual resources in countries eligible for OECD Development Assistance Committee aid. With the support of the MEAE and AFD, La Guilde is implementing several programmes to support international solidarity, among which the Sports and Development: Impact 2024 International Call for Projects (since 2019) and the platform for local and regional micro-projects.

The Forum of International Solidarity Organizations for Migration (FORIM) is a national platform that brings together networks, federations and groups of International Migration Solidarity Organizations (OSIM) engaged in action to integrate immigrants in France and development in their countries of origin. Created in 2002 with the backing of the MEAE, it has some 1,000 associations working in sub-Saharan Africa, the Maghreb, South-East Asia, the Caribbean and in the Indian Ocean. It supports its members in improving their internal structure, providing information, training and advocacy. The PRA/OSIM programme for OSIMs is a support, co-finance and capitalization mechanism for local development micro-projects.

## ➔ Other international solidarity actors

**For several years, new actors have also been intervening in the area of international solidarity,** beyond informal movements,<sup>12</sup> leading to a change in traditional advocacy methods within international public opinion and challenging the traditional intermediaries. In this regard, several examples of practices and methods can be mentioned to illustrate this evolving landscape.

**As the French model of the social and solidarity economy (SSE) is recognized for its methods and organization, France is endeavouring to promote it at both European and international levels,<sup>13</sup>** to maximize the sector’s

10. Flash Eurobarometer on Youth and Democracy conducted during the European Year of Youth, February-March 2022

11. INJEP, Barometer on French youth, 2021

12. See below: The challenge of informal movements and the digitalization of engagement

13. At European level, the role of the SSE in implementing the SDGs was enhanced during the French presidency of the Council of the European Union (the Council’s “Agenda 2030” working group, the informal ministerial conference and European social economy event). At international level, an OECD Recommendation on the Social and Solidarity Economy and Social Innovation was adopted on 10 June 2022; universal conclusions relative to the SSE were adopted by the International Labour Conference on 10 June 2022; France supports the drafting of a draft resolution on the SSE by the United Nations General Assembly.



Led by French CSO AVSF (lit. Agronomists and Veterinarians Without Borders), the project «Agroecological Transitions and Resilience of rural territories» helps to strengthen farmers' organizations and civil societies in 15 countries.

potential and to contribute to the sustainable, inclusive and resilient recovery of economies and to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The MEAE's «Innovating Together»<sup>14</sup> strategy promotes the new SSE models at international level, recognizes the complementarity of public policies and initiatives driven by the social and solidarity economy sector, supported by appropriate regulations and has helped support and promote innovative multi-stakeholder projects with a considerable social or environmental impact, mainly in Africa. By linking the SSE sector to the issues of international solidarity, it is possible to support projects with an economic dimension by promoting economic models such as fair trade, local distribution channels, energy transition and others that boost cooperation between civil society and between local and regional communities in terms of common challenges.

**The economic actors engaged in sustainable development and corporate social responsibility are stakeholders in coalitions of actors** for adaptation to climate change and biodiversity (just like the members of the One Planet Business for Biodiversity coalition) and the development of lasting infrastructure adapted to the needs of populations.

The partnership between the various civil society components can also be seen **through the skills-based sponsorship mechanism**, when businesses make their employees available for international solidarity associations on an ad hoc basis, to organize an event for example, or on a long-term basis. Within this framework, the international solidarity leave programme allowing

business employees to make their skills available for an international solidarity project is currently being assessed by the MEAE.

**Some companies are using a proactive corporate social responsibility (CSR) approach** or are developing skills-based sponsorship with the aim of social change and not as part of human resource management or communication.

**The partnership with French foundations is strong.** LAFD has over one hundred foundations helping to co-fund CSOs, with its CSO-Initiatives scheme (I-OSC). Private foundations play a growing role both in their capacity to mobilize in times of crisis, such as in Ukraine in 2022 – in particular in connection with the MEAE's Crisis and

As part of its pro bono engagement, a law firm<sup>15</sup> advised the French Development Agency (AFD) on how to draft financing and grant contracts related to the first French Development Impact Bond (DIB), financed by the MEAE, and aimed at improving the management of menstrual hygiene in Ethiopia. This innovative financing tool linking the public (AFD and MEAE) and private (BNP Paribas and the NGO CARE) sectors is in line with SDG 5 on Gender Equality and has been recognized as a Support Fund for Feminist Organizations (FSOF) given that the programme will support Ethiopian civil society organizations.<sup>16</sup>

14. Innovating together: Summary of the promotion strategy for new social and inclusive economy models abroad, MEAE, 2016

15. Gide, conseil de CARE France, AFD et BNP Paribas, 31/01/2022

16. France Diplomatie, Signature du premier contrat à impact de développement français destiné à soutenir la gestion de l'hygiène menstruelle en Ethiopie (signing of the first French development impact contract to support menstrual hygiene in Ethiopia), 28/01/2022

Support Centre (CDCS) – and in a sectoral approach to international solidarity. The growing role of foundations in development is highlighted in the ministry's "Philanthropy and Development" strategy.<sup>17</sup> In this, foundations are recognized for their structural and operational specificities, which make them key actors in sustainable development due to their sectoral and geographic expertise, their local presence, their capacity for innovation and the flexibility of their action. Concrete courses of action are being proposed to reinforce action synergies and partnerships between the French government and foundations, thereby creating significant leverage on financing the SDGs. Partnerships between foundations and the heads of general, thematic, sectoral and local and regional networks are to be encouraged, to devise the support and financial engineering of civil society initiatives.

**Partnerships with foreign foundations also exist at MEAE level** with the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, for actions connected to health, mainly in Africa, and with the Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN) for human development in Asia, East Africa and the Middle East, and at AFD level with the Egyptian charity organization, Sawiris Foundation for Social Development, to co-finance projects for human development in Egypt.

As a major platform devoted to multi-stakeholder initiatives, the Paris Peace Forum contributes to the networking of the different civil society actors, including French and foreign foundations.

## 2/ The vital role and expertise of ISAs

**ISAs** (associations based on the 1901 and 1908 laws, foundations recognized as being of public interest) remain **key players in international solidarity and are the leading partners of the MEAE and its agencies**. They have historic and long-standing relations with the MEAE, going back to the first liaison service with international NGOs in 1965, from which the MEAE's Delegation for Civil Society, Civic Engagement and Youth (DGM/CIV) directly stems.

They play several key roles: designers of innovative projects and approaches, local contacts for the most vulnerable populations and actors to support civil societies in partner countries, defenders of their space, strategic partners for discussion and advocacy in favour of international solidarity, guardians of public authorities' accountability towards populations, whistle blowers, and stakeholders in France to raise awareness and rally citizens around international issues.

In addition to this, through their way of working based both on cooperation, in an intercultural context, but also

with a strong foundation in French society, ISAs help to create links between people with very different cultures, ways of thinking and social, economic and ecological realities. They work for better understanding and respect between peoples, a vital element in building a harmonious and peaceful world. This is a valuable asset, as these associations help to maintain openness in a context marked by a tendency within our contemporary societies to become inward looking.

### → Co-developers of public policies and implementation partners

**The association sector has occupied a key position in the MEAE's strategic thinking regarding the partnership with civil society for several decades.** ISAs are specifically involved in drafting public policies on international solidarity, in particular as part of the National Council for Development and International Solidarity (CNDSI), created in 2014 and whose role is now set out in the Programming Act of 4 August 2021 on Inclusive Development and Combating Global Inequalities (LPDSLIM), developed with these associations.

**The CNDSI helped to co-develop the LPDSLIM Programming Act from 2018**, especially through the National Forum for a Renewed Development Policy and four extraordinary sessions dedicated to the act, supplemented by broad written consultation involving close to 400 organizations.

**ISAs have become major strategic and technical partners for the MEAE in areas beyond the scope of international solidarity.** This partnership is fuelled by their sectoral expertise (ECIS, gender, climate, food, etc.) and their innovative approaches in terms of governance, partnership methods and change management. Within the framework of FISONG projects (Sectoral Innovation Facility for NGOs) for example, ISAs have proven their ability to initiate innovative projects and build and disseminate new practices, across all their fields of expertise.

**ISAs are also key AFD partners in the Minka Sahel Initiative** – an AFD initiative launched in 2017 that focuses on consolidating peace through projects led in crisis situations (Sahel, Lake Chad, Central African Republic, Middle East), **and the Support Fund for Feminist Organizations (FSOF) within which** CSOs have proven their ability to innovate.

**The strong presence of French ISAs in partner countries, either physically or via partnerships with local organizations, boosts recognition of their expertise** in the humanitarian and development fields. This local footing is an additional source of knowledge for embassies in relation to the situation and the civil society dynamics in the partner countries.

17. Philanthropy and development – Stocktake and partnership strategy, MEAE, 2021. The MEAE wishes to strengthen its partnerships with philanthropic stakeholders, who, through their innovative and sustainable practices, have become key players in the field of international cooperation.

## → Official development assistance going through CSOs

The amount of official development assistance (ODA) going through CSOs continued to increase and reached €620 million in 2022, twice the amount allocated in 2017, and €574 million in 2021.

In 2021, the breakdown was as follows: AFD €291 million (+€16 million/2020); CDCS €89 million; Volunteering €15 million; Embassies €20 million; Programmed Food Assistance (AAP) €23 million. Added to this were other grants from the DGM (the MEAE's Directorate-General for Global Affairs, Culture, Education and International Development), local and regional authorities, Expertise France and the other ministries.

Article 2 – VIII of the Programming Act of 4 August 2021 on Inclusive Development and Combating Global Inequalities (LPDSLIM) **establishes the right of initiative of CSOs. This is illustrated by the increased funding to CSO-Initiatives, which is also open to CSOs established in ODA-eligible countries.** Other public funding initiatives going through CSOs **also qualify for the right of initiative.** The right of initiative of a civil society organization, within the framework of its by-laws, its association project and/ or its analysis, concerns an action, project, programme or strategy stemming from the will of civil society and taking into account the various stakeholders, and first and foremost the beneficiaries.<sup>18</sup>

To respond to this, the State has implemented schemes such as the CSO-Initiative, managed by AFD since 2009, and which allows the financing of grassroots and public interest development projects (ECIS and organization of the association sector), or the more recently created Fund for Innovation in Development (FID). In parallel, French financing of humanitarian projects respects the right of initiative, whether in terms of finance granted by the CDCS or programmed food aid. The right of initiative also concerns CSOs established in countries receiving aid through funds made available by embassies (intervention funds or FSPI funds [Solidarity Fund for Innovative Projects], including FSPI/PISCCA [Innovative Projects of Civil Societies and Coalitions of Actors]) or own initiatives (small initiatives programme of the FFEM).

Lastly, certain structures operate in a hybrid manner using both calls for projects or direct contracts for CSOs, but are also able to respond to their proposals. This is the case for Expertise France and AFD's Sustainable

AFD has implemented several financing initiatives for which CSOs are eligible. In 2021, CSOs received €110.8 million as part of the CSO-Initiatives scheme (I-OSC). In 2021, the amounts allocated by AFD to CSOs stood at approximately €291 (including FISONG projects: €5.8 million; the French Facility for Global Environment (FFEM): €9.2 million; Crisis and Post-Crisis Calls for Projects (APCC): €3 million; financing of initiatives or implementation of projects following dialogue between CSOs and the thematic and geographical departments of AFD: €150.4).

Exchanges between the MEAE, AFD and French ISAs have been facilitated in recent years through the financial efforts made to support the organization of the French association network. For almost 30 years, the MEAE and then AFD have financially supported and encouraged these efforts. Some examples include: Coordination SUD, the F3E network, the Coordination Sud Agriculture and Food Committee (C2A), the Research and Innovation Centre for Development (CRID), the Réseau Action Climat (climate action network, RAC), the Projet d'appui à la mobilisation des ONG françaises sur le climat (project to support the mobilization of French NGOs for climate (PAMOC), FORIM, Coalition Education, the platform of French NGOs for Palestine, the Réseau Euromed France (France Euromed Network, REF), the Collectif Haïti de France, the French Committee for International Solidarity (CFSI), Groupe Enfance, the Plateforme des droits de l'Homme (human rights collective, PDH) and the Programme Solidarité Eau (water solidarity programme, PSEAU). The amount of projects to structure the association sector stood at €18.4 million for 2020-2021.<sup>19</sup>

By way of illustration, the SOBioDev project to support the organization of the network of French biodiversity CSOs, active in countries of the Global South, is implemented by the IUCN French Committee.

Development Solutions (SDS) and Regions (GEO) departments issuing calls for crisis and conflict projects which are likely to finance initiatives presented by CSOs.

To facilitate accessibility and the right of initiative for as many as possible, the MEAE promotes intermediate mechanisms through stakeholder-networks such as the regional multi-stakeholder networks (RRMA) or via FORIM or the platform for local and regional micro-projects.

	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
<b>AFD credit to and through CSOs (in millions of euros)</b>	115	136	208	275	291
<b>Total amount of bilateral aid to and through CSOs (in millions of euros)</b>	310,4	374,2	460	532	574

\*MEAE data

18. Definition given by Coordination SUD

19. Excluding amounts concerning FORIM and La Guilde

Using the definition mentioned above by Coordination SUD, in 2021 some **53% of French ODA (excluding regional authorities)** going through CSOs corresponded to the right of initiative through funding of the CSO-Initiatives, the FID, the CDCS, AAP, embassies, the volunteering sector and the civic service abroad. The remaining percentage of the funding (47%), especially when stemming from a mutual agreement between a CSO and AFD, could also correspond to the right of initiative but is not yet developed as such due to a lack of indicators.

### 3/ Co-development of volunteer activities

**The French voluntary sector, co-developed and co-financed with French associations and host structures, is part of a partnership approach** that has continued to grow over the past 20 years. In this way, the MEAE, France Volontaires, the platform for international exchange and solidarity, FONJEP, the administrator of several mechanisms, and the association partners meet regularly as part of the working group for international solidarity volunteering (VSI).

VSI posts are co-financed by the MEAE and the sending and hosting organizations. The ministry contributes financially to the initial training, the management, social security and support for helping people re-enter themselves the workforce. Likewise, the JSI/VVV-SI mechanism (see table below) puts institutional and association partners together within thematic working groups. Volunteer assignments and programmes are drafted and implemented with the local partners and in connection with local and host community needs, in keeping with national development priorities, and thus meeting one of the main criteria for responsible and quality volunteer work.

**Although the number of VSI assignments decreased considerably in the two years of the COVID-19 pandemic (2020-2021), embassies are encouraging this initiative** and are working closely with the France Volontaires branches to revitalize it. In 2019, there were 1,963 international solidarity volunteers, for

The LPDSLIM Programming Act recognizes volunteering as one of the tools of French international solidarity policy.<sup>20</sup> It embodies free and responsible engagement, through which citizens devote time to a public interest activity, in France or abroad, within an association or a not-for-profit organization.

initiatives in all sectors,<sup>21</sup> some 7,000 volunteers and 2,150 unpaid staff, a figure that has been on the rise in recent years. These volunteers have entitlements in their civic engagement “accounts” in recognition of their work.

Every year, the VSI initiative allows several dozen volunteers from countries of the Global South to carry out assignments in other ODA beneficiary countries. This means of engagement, known as **South-South volunteering or reciprocal mobility**, reflects the MEAE’s desire to drive regional development momentum, based on a new partnership vision.

The principle of reciprocity allows all ODA beneficiary countries, whether hosting French volunteers or not, to send volunteers with VSI status to France to carry out a public interest assignment.

**The principle of reciprocity in the volunteering sector, now part of the LPDSLIM Programming Act, is promoted by Équipe France**, and several agreements have already been implemented with local authorities (especially in Latin America and Africa) to foster this initiative. The JSI/VVV-SI scheme and the civic service are already based on reciprocity (61 and 251 volunteers respectively in 2019). In accordance with the law, VSI opened up to reciprocal exchanges in late 2022, with decree no. 2022-1067 defining the procedures. There is still much room for improvement in all the schemes.



The “Territoires Volontaires” programme, financed by the

Delegation for the External Action of Local Government (DAECT), and led by France Volontaires, through its “turnkey” mechanism, aims to support local government in mobilizing international volunteers within the framework of the civic service and/or VSI. Launched in early 2022 for a period of three years, the purpose of this programme is to bolster the local and regional response to the SDGs through the mobilisation of 250 volunteers, both sent from and hosted by France. International volunteering provides an effective response to the challenges of internationalizing local and regional communities, by focusing both on individuals and mainly young people, and on the international activities of local government.

20. The LPDSLIM does not include international volunteering in administrations (VIA) and in companies (VIE).

21. VSI; international civic service; VEC; JSI/VVV-SI; OFAJ; OFQJ.

France supports different types of international volunteering, in addition to programmes corresponding to numerous situations in relation to the motivations, availabilities and sensitivities of everyone, and needs identified within the host community:

- **International solidarity volunteering (VSI)** allows all accredited associations to mobilize volunteers over the age of 18 for a one- to six-year period, in coordination and capacity-building positions in the field of cooperation and humanitarian action..
- **The international civic service** allows people from 18 to 25 to carry out 6-to-12-month assignments, in particular in associations accredited by the civic service agency under the supervision of the Ministry of National Education and Youth.
- **Exchange- and skills-based volunteering (VEC)** offers both working and retired people the possibility of using their skills to serve development projects over short periods. A call for expressions of interest published each year focuses on innovative projects that foster the involvement of private actors or practices such as skills-based sponsoring.

- **The Youth and City/Life/Holiday-International Solidarity programmes (JSI and VVV-SI)** allow groups of young people aged 15 to 25 to meet other groups of young people for joint international solidarity projects over short periods, in France or abroad. Since 2020, it is possible to discover interculturalism and international solidarity to a greater extent through projects supported by the MEAE as part of the International Solidarity Initiative (ISI).
- **The MEAE, along with the Ministry for National Education and Youth (MENJ) also supports other forms of youth workshops** such as the Cotravaux network, and Union Rempart on historic heritage sites abroad.
- **Youth exchanges with the Franco-German Youth Office (FGYO) and the Franco-Quebecois Youth Office (OFQJ):** With the support of the MEAE in partnership with the MENJ, and its German counterpart, the FGYO manages three special facilities allowing the implementation of exchanges between young people in France, Germany, Central and Eastern European countries, and countries in South East Europe and the Maghreb. The MEAE also supports the OFQJ in its mission of international mobility for young people in the Francophone area.

## 4/ Fostering openness to the world for all

Awareness of the challenges facing us collectively and faith in our ability to act lead to civic and volunteering engagement, and engagement in international solidarity associations.

In order to foster the awareness and engagement of all regarding international solidarity, **the MEAE and AFD stepped up their support to actors in education for citizenship and international solidarity (ECIS)** to €50 million for the 2015-2020 period. In France, where international issues seem far from the minds of the general public, ECIS appears as a key means to foster appropriation by citizens of the issues of development and international solidarity. It is also a necessary tool to contribute to democratic and global challenges, citizen action and living together in harmony. In this way, by reinforcing citizens' desire and power to act, ECIS fosters and supports the increase of citizen and solidarity initiatives. ECIS intersects and complements other types of education implemented by a variety of actors with a similar philosophy such as sustainable development education and global citizenship education.

**Other ministries are also involved in volunteering and civic engagement missions**, such as the Ministry for National Education and Youth (MENJ), the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Sovereignty (MASA), the Ministry for the Ecological Transition (MTE) and local authorities, and these are mobilized as key actors or funders of CSOs. In 2021, the multi-stakeholder

consultation group launched by AFD and bringing together associations, ministries, local government and regional multi-stakeholder networks (RRMA) built a strong argument in favour of ECIS, thus collectively reaffirming its utility, efficacy and vital role alongside other forms of "education for" actions to raise awareness, inform and mobilize French citizens in favour of international action. The MEAE and its agencies support this argument and the definition of ECIS. This document sets out a framework on which dialogue between the State and civil society actors can be enhanced.

Although mobility and openness to the world have increased for some groups through various mechanisms (Erasmus+: Education, Training, Youth and Sport, European Solidarity Corps, compulsory mobility in university studies), a special effort must be made to reach all youth and citizens and particularly vulnerable

The European Declaration on Global Education to 2050, adopted in Dublin on 4 November 2022, defines global citizenship education as "education that enables people to reflect critically on the world and their place in it; to open their eyes, hearts and minds to the reality of the world at local and global level. It empowers people to understand, imagine, hope and act to bring about a world of social and climate justice, peace, solidarity, equity and equality, planetary sustainability, and international understanding. It involves respect for human rights and diversity, inclusion, and a decent life for all, now and into the future."

groups who are out of reach of mobility (Youth with fewer opportunities, JAMO) or those with a disability. Volunteers must be made aware of interculturalism, also enriched by migration, before travelling to partner countries.

It is also important to educate and raise awareness among younger generations as part of the school curriculum, through education for sustainable development and for citizenship, developed by the French national education system from nursery school to high school. This teaching focuses mainly on the major environmental, social and economic issues of today's world, with their challenges of international solidarity and civic engagement. This teaching is rounded out by educational projects, often in conjunction with civil society organizations and sometimes in cooperation with schools located in European or other countries.

In 2021-2022, the MEAE and AFD carried out a joint and shared assessment of the funding they allocated to ECIS in order to identify new avenues for progress and new partners to boost the efficacy and impact of these schemes.

This advocacy and definition work also allows CSOs in local and regional communities to launch dialogue with decentralized government services likely to support ECIS initiatives for our fellow citizens at grassroots level.

## B ◦ International Context

### 1/ Shrinking of space for civil society

**While an increase in the number of civil society actors of various forms has been noted globally** (ISAs, trade unions, foundations, think tanks, actors of the social and solidarity economy, networks and platforms, etc.), their ability to act remains dependent on the existence of a positive legal and regulatory environment guaranteed by the public authorities. But the frameworks governing CSO activities are not evolving at the same pace everywhere and in some countries they have even become tougher.

**Legislation relative to civil society actors remains restrictive in many states**, both in terms of financing and registration authorization (made complex due to administrative constraints for many CSOs, in particular those less experienced and lacking human resources) and in terms of actions. In 2021, CSOs in Thailand expressed their concern about the draft amendment to the law<sup>22</sup> on the running of not-for-profit

### The International Solidarity Initiative (ISI)

was launched in 2020 by the MEAE in response to the pandemic and the closing of borders. ISI is now a sustainable mechanism of the ministry. It supports youth projects focusing on interculturalism and international solidarity, without having to travel. This works through online youth exchanges or awareness-raising activities in France on international solidarity. It aims to be a first step for people towards international engagement. As an example, for five days in 2021, in Cuizon (Centre Val de Loire), students from vocational and general high schools were able to exchange ideas with reciprocal volunteers (civic service abroad, European volunteers), visit educational farms and discuss the topic of food sovereignty.

organizations in the country and aimed at placing stricter obligations and financial sanctions on CSOs, which could jeopardize the scope of freedom of association in Thailand. In Tunisia, civil society mobilized in February 2022 against a draft decree-law increasing the administrative constraints for CSOs and aimed at governing foreign financing.

The COVID-19 crisis weakened Southern CSOs even further, as they did not receive the same support measures as those implemented by some Northern countries. Their ability to influence the multilateral arena was impacted by restrictions on access to negotiation fora. With the move to online discussions for the major conferences during the pandemic, informal exchanges on the sidelines of these meetings disappeared. For example, the International Federation of Action by Christians for the Abolition of Torture (FIACAT) faced access difficulties both to prisoners and state representatives, in particular regarding the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (CADHP). Many CSOs also lost their observer member status in multilateral bodies, due to a lack of sufficient funds of their own to maintain a permanent representation.

CSO members are the first to defend civil liberties and fundamental rights. For this reason, CSOs are the main host structures for human rights defenders, as indicated in the definition of "human rights defenders" proposed by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.<sup>23</sup> To bolster their activities, support for CSOs is a top priority and requires action from donors before the total closure of the space for civil society.

22. Still a draft amendment in November 2022

23. "Human rights defender" is a term used to describe people who, individually or with others, act to promote or protect human rights in a peaceful manner. Human rights defenders are identified above all by what they do [...]. "About human rights defenders", by the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders, OHCHR



**With regard to national contexts, in Russia for example, there are several particularly aggressive GONGOs** – government-organized non-governmental organizations specially created and controlled by a political regime to create propaganda tools and influence public opinion<sup>24</sup> – **internally and in the UN fora**, whereas independent civil society is increasingly subject to restrictions. The recent amendments to the framework law on not-for-profit organizations, adopted in 2020, target undesirable, terrorist and “foreign agent” organizations and have increased control of the latter. This legislative framework has trivialized resorting to measures of administrative, financial and physical intimidation over civil society actors and has contributed to creating an openly repressive environment.

**The situation in China is also particularly complex, where civic space continues to shrink.** Since the adoption in 2016 of the law on foreign NGOs, pressure has continued to increase on CSOs with links to foreign countries and on international NGOs subjected to strict control of their activities and staff. Lawyers, human rights defenders, journalists and activists are also victims of growing repression as confirmed in several reports. Foundations, unions and think tanks are closely involved in promoting the political goals of the Chinese authorities and cannot be considered to be independent from the local governments.

These restrictive policies also impact CSO participation in multilateral fora, summits and other multi-stakeholder formats, while some states are even becoming involved in CSO accreditation bodies to control their access.

Lastly, the phenomenon of exile also has an effect on many CSOs, now obliged to work from abroad, far from their native country. This exile deprives these CSOs of legal recognition, which is vital for durable intervention and it weakens their access to resources.

Faced with the shrinking of civic space globally, **on 6 July 2021 the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) adopted the Recommendation on Enabling Civil Society in Development Co-operation and Humanitarian Assistance.**<sup>25</sup> The goal of this recommendation, based on three complementary pillars, is to promote an enabling environment for civil society, to enhance cooperation with all civil society actors and to make CSOs more accountable. The DAC invites Member States to respect, protect and promote civic space in compliance with the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly, association and

expression, and in particular to engage in dialogue with governments of partner countries or regions to achieve these goals. Member States are also invited to establish policies for working with civil society actors and their partners and to encourage the effectiveness, transparency and accountability of CSOs, by supporting them in particular in following best practices and standards in CSO-led self-regulation, transparency and accountability.

## 2/ The challenge of informal movements and the digitalization of engagement

**Due to the fact that the militant base of some CSOs has not always been regenerated, informal movements, such as the Extinction Rebellion and Youth for Climate movements, have managed to massively mobilize, especially among the youth. In addition to this role of advocacy, many key issues such as adapting to and mitigating climate change stem from them.**

In this regard, **the OECD considered the role of informal movements in its definition of CSOs:** “Civil society organisations (CSOs) are an organisational representation of civil society and include all not-for-profit, non-state, non-partisan, non-violent, and self-governing organisations outside of the family in which people come together to pursue shared needs, ideas, interests, values, faith and beliefs, including formal, legally registered organisations as well as informal associations without legal status but with a structure and activities.”<sup>26</sup>

**Various forms of online engagement are developing in parallel**, similar to the online petition aggregators Avaaz and Change.Org, which claim to have 65 million members and 467 million “people taking action” respectively.

Their impact is, however, called into question. These online events have rapidly increased and particularly during the pandemic. They mobilize more people in a broader geographic area but may not inspire the same durability of engagement in participants and have the same medium- and long-term effectiveness.<sup>27</sup> Influencers on social media also manage to put SDG-related topics on the agenda.<sup>28</sup> The influence strategies of traditional CSOs therefore seek to integrate these more collective and digital mindsets, namely by seeking the support of influencers.

24. Strategy report, “Creating a supportive environment for civil society”, CNDISI, 2021. GONGOs exist in several countries outside Russia, where they pursue the same goals.

25. DAC Recommendation on Enabling Civil Society in Development Co-operation and Humanitarian Assistance, OECD, 06/07/2021

26. DAC Recommendation on Enabling Civil Society in Development Co-operation and Humanitarian Assistance, OECD, 06/07/2021

27. Kayros study, “Les organisations de la solidarité internationale en 2030” (international solidarity organizations in 2030), 2020-2021

28. For example @laviondebernard

### 3/ New engagements, new constraints?

#### → The challenge of localization

**The localization of aid was one of the agenda points agreed on at the United Nations World Humanitarian Summit** held in Istanbul in 2016, known as the Grand Bargain Conference, involving the main donors and actors working in the humanitarian realm. Since then, the debate has expanded to include development issues. As defined by the URD,<sup>29</sup> "Aid localization is a collective process which aims to place local actors, civil society organizations, and local public institutions at the centre of the humanitarian system and the humanitarian response. This can take several forms: more equitable partnerships between international and local actors; increased funding that is 'as direct as possible'; and a more central role in aid coordination for local organizations".

This involves changes in several respects: direct financing to local CSOs, strengthening of their capacity, recognition of the legitimacy of local CSOs, changing the role of ISAs in Northern countries and the existence of a legal and regulatory framework that is conducive to the transfer of international funds and the roll-out of independent activities.

*"It is important to point out that localisation has an impact on actors from the South as well as the aid system as a whole. It requires significant change both in terms of strategic decision-making and control over resources. Finally, over and above being a question of money, localisation is a question of coordination and leadership. It therefore involves establishing a new balance of power and trust between the North and the South."<sup>30</sup>*

**The localization of aid questions both the intervention methods of donors and the cooperation methods developed by Northern CSOs with those of the Global South, and leads to the reassessment of policies, practices and action tools for localization. This process can only be effective if independent actors from the South are fully involved in the discussions and new forms of partnership are established.**

France is extremely attentive to developments in the localization of aid and has already planned to increase its direct funding to local CSOs, through existing schemes in embassies (Solidarity Fund for Innovative Projects and the Solidarity Fund for Innovative Projects of Civil Societies and Coalitions of Actors, FSPI/ PISCCA) and certain AFD funding mechanisms.

The opening of the AFD's CSO-Initiatives funding mechanism to CSOs under local law in ODA-eligible countries adheres to the localization of aid and the right of initiative of CSOs.

The localization trend must go hand in hand with in-depth reflection and take into consideration the benefit of solidarity initiatives forged over the years within international alliances of actors sharing the same values and producing balanced and respectful intercultural working methods. It should also support the process of deconcentration and capacity transfers, including the increased responsibility of managers and other people working in the partner countries, implemented by the CSOs under French law.

Lastly, the challenges of the localization of aid include finding a better match between actions and the needs and expectations of populations in the short, medium and long term. In contexts that are often rapidly changing, flexible means of action that can be quickly adapted must be explored.

When doing so, the aforementioned GONGO phenomenon, used in authoritarian countries, and the fact that in some cases it is impossible to work with CSOs in the field, must be taken into consideration. This means it is often necessary to work with local CSOs established abroad or with networks capable of carrying out redistribution and providing indirect support.

#### → Evolution of standards

CSOs are facing **new challenges in terms of the evolution of standards, which they have significantly helped to disseminate widely and encourage.** They include cross-cutting youth and gender strategies, the rights-based approach, awareness of the challenges of protection from sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA), awareness of the environmental impact and carbon-zero projects.

Donors, for their part, are also expecting stronger commitment in terms of administrative and financial accountability, especially to meet obligations regarding the fight against terrorist financing and money laundering, and in particular observance of prohibitions to make funds and economic resources available to listed persons or entities.

**It is clear that public authorities and civil society are at the same time partners and learning organizations** that mutually strengthen each other and share their experience and best practices. For example, in February 2022, AFD published a study<sup>31</sup> (commissioned by the MEAE) aimed at identifying best practices in terms of fighting sexual exploitation and abuse,

29. / 30. Groupe URD, «Aid localisation»

31. "Etude sur la protection contre l'exploitation et les abus sexuels dans le cadre du partenariat AFD/OSCs" (study on protection from sexual exploitation and abuse as part of the AFD/CSO partnership), AFD, 03/2022

in order to share and pool them. In cooperation with CSOs, the challenge was also to “identify significant experiences that could shed light on the processes linked to PSEA practices, as well as the obstacles and levers encountered”.<sup>32</sup> France Volontaires is carrying out a study with actors in the volunteering sector on CSOs’ awareness of their carbon footprint.

The “Place aux Jeunes !” project brings together a consortium of about a dozen actors<sup>33</sup> from the contexts of international solidarity, civic engagement and public education and promotes the enhancement and mainstreaming of the role of young people within CSOs, and their consideration in public policies.

**The role of public authorities is evolving towards guidance for CSOs when considering emerging standards.** The Ministry proposes teaching tools, along with Expertise France and AFD, such as the Gender and Development MOOC<sup>34</sup> which promotes an integrated approach to gender in CSO practices. The goal of the F3E network, which has over 85 French ISAs, is to support the improvement of organizations’ practices, and with the Coordination SUD platform it develops online tools to take into account the new issues mentioned above. Regional multi-stakeholder networks are also key in supporting local actors in the evolution of this regulatory framework.

Monitoring-evaluation and compliance practices are not uniform among the international donors. The trend however is towards **growing awareness of internal CSO procedures and a stronger partnership-based approach.** As a result, the number of exercises such as audits on CSO activities could be limited, while maintaining high quality standards. Germany, for example, has set up a qualification process system aimed at implementing the monitoring-evaluation and compliance procedures of CSOs before any funding is provided, thus reducing the frequency of audits during the projects. In a similar vein, USAID “centralizes” the monitoring of various projects financed by donors and organizes a single annual audit covering all CSO practices on the different projects financed.

### → Risks linked to activities in countries under sanctions or in countries where terrorist groups are operating

**The implementation of projects by CSOs, either directly or through local partners or intermediaries,**

**in countries under sanctions or in areas where terrorist groups are operating, is likely to expose these actors to certain risks** (violation of sanctions, instrumentalization or misappropriation of assistance contributing to financing terrorist organizations, etc.). The assessment and awareness of these risks in CSOs’ due diligence procedures, the regular monitoring of legislation in terms of restrictive measures, the use of exemptions or derogations planned in these regulations and awareness-raising activities for staff and the organization on the risks linked to financing terrorism and to sanctions are just some examples of best practices to control them. France supports CSOs in these areas through awareness-raising actions, the dissemination of educational aids<sup>35</sup> and the setting up of special focal points to address the questions raised by these actors.<sup>36</sup>

Concerning obligations by **CSOs to comply with prohibitions (just like any natural or legal person) concerning the provision of funds and economic resources to persons identified by European regulations establishing restrictive measures, whether adopted autonomously by the EU or transposing the UN Security Council sanctions regimes into European law**, the MEAE is aware that the resulting screening measures should not jeopardize the partnership model developed by ISAs. For this reason, support measures are being set up by AFD and the MEAE.

F3E is an education network that aims to help improve the practices of international solidarity actors and enhance their skills. The network helps make organizations more flexible in a complex environment and helps disseminate learning tools among the 85 French member organizations. F3E is a specialist in the field of assessment of practices, and it proposes innovative methods and a collective peer-based approach, in particular within the studies committee, which is its main support and co-financing mechanism.

Another mechanism entitled FRIO (institutional and organizational support fund) managed by Coordination SUD supports French NGOs in their professionalization and continuous improvement efforts. Since 2007, “FRIO has backed over 200 supportive actions and over 130 different NGOs”.<sup>37</sup>

32. Ibid.

33. Cnajep, Educasol, Engagé-e-s et Déterminé-e-s, Equilibres & Populations, Forim, France Volontaires, La Guilde Européenne du Raid, Migrations & Développement, Plan International, Réseau Euromed France, Scouts et Guides de France, Service de Coopération au Développement, Solidarité Laïque.

34. MOOC - Genre & Développement, Campus AFD, 03/12/2021

35. In this respect, the following documents can be consulted: Vade-mecum “Sanctions et financement du terrorisme sur les opérations humanitaires en zones sensibles” (sanctions and the financing of terrorism on humanitarian operations in sensitive areas), the guide de bonne conduite (good conduct guide) for associations on the risk of financing terrorism, and the guide des dérogations (guide of exemptions) relative to humanitarian aid provided for in EU sanctions (all in French).

36. All questions can be sent to the dedicated point of contact: [humanitaire-sanctions@dgtresor.gouv.fr](mailto:humanitaire-sanctions@dgtresor.gouv.fr)

37. FRIO – Conseil externe et renforcement des ONG, Coordination SUD website

## C o Post-COVID-19 pandemic context and a change in practices

**The COVID-19 crisis strengthened the partnership dimension between the MEAE and CSOs.** In this context of crisis, the sum of €20 million was allocated to the CSO initiative (€10 million via the Crisis and Support Centre and €10 million via AFD) with CSOs helping to implement the “COVID-19 – Health in Common” initiative. During the pandemic, for some of these schemes, AFD increased the funding earmarked for management costs linked to the implementation of projects by ISAs, at the behest of the MEAE, to take the extra costs into account.

The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the close links between development, human health and pressure on biodiversity and ecosystems. These links promote partnership-based and complementary approaches between the ISAs of the different sectors of

intervention for development assistance (environment, farming and health in particular).

### **The pandemic boosted the move to digital technology, including for the association sector.**

Remote communication tools made it possible in particular to develop local/global interactions, to increase exchanges between the field and CSO headquarters and to propose online training for staff. This relevant development in methods of action is now almost institutionalized within CSOs. The move to digital technology also fuelled debate on the carbon footprint of actions carried out by CSOs and the localization of aid.

### **Online volunteering, still in its early stages, was developed during the COVID-19 pandemic,**

in particular as a response to the urgent situation, as actors in the sector experimented with new collaboration methods while seeking to maintain the human connection that characterizes this type of cooperation. New partnerships were developed,

## How can financing tools evolve to face these challenges?

The project-based approach of most ODA donors leaves little room to finance the development and operation of CSO structures. This limited room may be compensated by seeking financing among more flexible public or private donors. For many large NGOs, public generosity also guarantees the possibility of autonomously financing or co-financing the costs involved in certain projects. CSOs specialized in promoting and defending human rights have more difficulty than others, on average, in financing their structural costs, given the low public participation in their budget.

Beyond even the portion allotted to structural costs as part of the subsidies granted to project initiators, reflection must be conducted to foster the structural support of subsidized associations. The increase in the number of non-earmarked financing operations will lead to the faster and more durable development and restructuring of the association sector.

In France, firstly, where the increased funding of projects concerning restructuring of the association sector and multiannual partnership agreements has led to the development of many sectors of activity and structures, allowing medium-sized associations to work on more ambitious strategies that have produced results. But also in ODA-eligible countries, where the predominance of project-based financing, albeit essential, leaves insufficient room for the development of sectors or structures that are nevertheless vital in preserving and even in expanding civic

space. Furthermore, the widespread absence of local philanthropy and public generosity is a greater constraint on development CSOs. Access to donor funding often depends on the use of a project-based approach to the detriment of structural funding. Some studies (Humentum, 2022) tend to highlight the fact that the CSOs in ODA-eligible countries generally underestimate the indirect costs of fund transfer and project implementation on their structure. These relatively unidentified costs represent a risk for the resilience of CSOs, their professionalization and their ability to position themselves other than as CSO “service providers” of the “North” or ODA donors.

Low awareness by donors of the issue of structural costs for CSOs of ODA-eligible countries acts as a hindrance to their organizational development: the absence of funding for structural costs weakens the maintenance of stable professional teams as well as the global operation of the structure and its ability to seek co-funding, or to develop own activities and intervention strategies. This is also leads to significant bias in terms of independence concerning strategies and priorities developed by CSOs in ODA-eligible countries, and paves the way towards certain forms of instrumentalization.

Support for feminist organizations in ODA-eligible countries, through the FSOF, has shown that long-term backing for flexible means of finance would provide better backing for these organizations.

The question of structural financing for CSOs is increasingly raised. An evolution in French financing methods towards support for strengthening structures would be an additional tool in supporting the growth of CSOs.

focusing increasingly on the dynamics of local/national/international volunteering work.

Certain aspects of this new way of working are however set to last. Nevertheless, the implementation of remote work sometimes led to a loss of quality in exchanges, as reported by several ISAs. The absence of international mobility or interventions in the field has also led to a loss of meaning for both professionals and volunteers.<sup>38</sup>

A study led by Coordination SUD on the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on the organization of work within French ISAs, concluded that the measures implemented by these ISAs did not sufficiently take issues of gender and inequality into consideration. Coordination SUD is inviting ISAs to “develop gender policies in a structural manner, or to translate their possible engagements into action plans ahead of crises”.<sup>39</sup>

**For CSOs of ODA-eligible countries on the other hand, the impact of the pandemic was significant.** Many projects that were deprived of funding were not implemented and many CSOs were forced to put an end to their activities.

The association Planète Urgence developed online volunteer positions to meet the needs of its partner organizations. About a dozen of these positions, of four hours per week and lasting two months on average, were launched in 2020 for company staff unwilling to leave on a field assignment but wishing nevertheless to engage in the international solidarity effort.

38. Coordination SUD, Les modèles socio-économiques des associations de solidarité internationale (ASI) françaises 2016-2020, Nouvelle édition de l'étude Argent ASI, (The socio-economic models of French international solidarity associations [ISAs]) Paris, Coordination SUD, April 2022, pp. 122-123

39. Coordination SUD, Genre et organisation du travail pendant la crise covid-19, (gender and the organization of work during the COVID-19 crisis) 09/11/2020, p.26

# Part 2

## STOCKTAKE

# OF RELATIONS BETWEEN ÉQUIPE FRANCE AND CIVIL SOCIETY

### A ◦ Dialogue and restructuring of the local association sector

#### 1/ Role of Embassies

**Support for local civil society and especially for capacity building is a priority for the majority of posts of the French diplomatic network.** These posts have several CSO support tools (FSPI financing instruments, in particular the FSPI/PISCCA funding mechanism, the Programme 209 package, training workshops, organizing events and debating ideas, volunteer mechanisms, etc.). In 2021, the total aid allocated by the diplomatic posts to CSOs amounted to €19.9 million.

**The Solidarity Fund for Innovative Projects of Civil Societies and Coalitions of Actors (FSPI/PISCCA projects) are the preferred tools of the diplomatic posts for supporting local CSOs.** The aid allocated under the FSPI/PISCCA mechanism allows diplomatic posts to provide direct financial support to innovative initiatives led by local CSOs, and to contribute to strengthening their capacity and visibility among donors and local authorities.

**The posts have regular exchanges with most French CSOs active in their country of residence** (in particular concerning AFD-financed programmes or those supported by volunteers, AAP and CDCS-financed projects): field visits, sharing of security guidelines, discussions on the local situation and the activity of CSOs, etc. For the most part, CSOs work jointly with their local partners. The role of local CSOs has thus begun to extend beyond that of simple implementation partner to become that of a more strategic partnership.

The posts also contribute to drafting the roadmaps of the European Union and its Member States on relations with civil society in their country of residence, steered by EU delegations.

The FSPI/PISCCA led by the Embassy of France in Caracas entitled “Renforcement de la société civile vénézuélienne face aux défis de la crise”, (Strengthening civil society in Venezuela to face the challenges of the crisis) which ended in December 2021, allowed for example the implementation of a framework policy for support and dialogue with civil society that was particularly adapted to the local context. In Mauritania, the FSPI/PISCCA entitled “Améliorer la gouvernance démocratique par le renforcement des capacités de la jeunesse mauritanienne, notamment les femmes” (Improving democratic governance by building capacity for Mauritanian youth, and especially women) generated a real collective dynamic around the youth issue, while working towards reducing gender inequalities.

The creation of local development councils, created by the LPDSLIM programming law, allows local CSOs to take part in exchanges with Équipe France. On 6 December 2021, the Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs chaired the first local development council in Dakar, in the presence of civil society partners, through a representative from Consortium Jeunesse Sénégal (illustrating the will of Équipe France to engage in closer dialogue with youth organizations), a representative from the CSO Enda Pronat and the chair of the association FESTIC. In Chad, the first Local Development Council meeting was held on 20 January 2022, in the presence of French development agencies and civil society actors from Chad, including some participants from the New Africa-France Summit in Montpellier. At this meeting, cooperation methods were developed that will be implemented with local partners.

## Practical support for CSOs in the field

In summer 2021, the Embassy of France in Cambodia carried out a survey among French ISAs active in the country. The goal of this survey was to present the operations, evolutions and the difficulties encountered by these associations. Out of about 100 ISAs identified, 55 fully completed the survey. A manual was written based on the summary of the survey, comprising briefing notes, to provide support to ISAs facing current challenges and to help achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) on gender equality, environmental protection, inclusiveness, the development of partnerships, etc.

In conjunction with the embassies, the **Future Leaders Invitation Programme**, run by the Strategy, Analysis and Policy Planning Centre (CAPS) participates in the goal of facilitating the circulation of civil society actors towards France. It provides future leaders, many of whom are from civil society, the opportunity to come to France to participate in high-level meetings.

## 2/ Role of Agencies

**AFD has significantly developed its partnership with CSOs since 2007.** Once limited to a role of project operators for AFD-funded projects (health, farming, education, water, etc.), in the past 15 years, CSOs have become essential partners, and the funding allocated to them has constantly increased, from €116 million in 2016 to €375 million in 2021 (for all mechanisms). The chair of Coordination SUD also sits within AFD's board of directors.

The transfer of the CSO Initiatives mechanism from the MEAE to AFD in 2009 strongly accelerated AFD's consideration of the added value of CSOs. This mechanism grew significantly, from €40 million in 2009 to €139 million in 2022. This helped AFD to have better understanding of the CSO ecosystem and more frequent use of their expertise and skills over many geographic areas and sectors (APCC, FISONG, One Health, FSOF, Sport and Development).

Greater efforts will be needed to support the structuring of local civil societies, through the financing of collectives, platforms and networks that will strengthen the collective capacity of CSOs in ODA-eligible countries and their advocacy in relation to authorities or at international level. Several platforms have been supported in this way, including Forus and international networks such as FIDH or the World Coalition Against the Death Penalty.

**The action of Expertise France among CSOs is mainly within the framework of Initiatives.** This mechanism to foster global health (combating HIV/AIDS, malaria, tuberculosis) is aimed in particular at supporting French or local CSOs, through the "Projects" and "Expertise" channels. In parallel to technical assistance (sending of experts), Expertise France provides assistance on governance and support for financial management (especially through training). Over the 2017-2021 period, the amount earmarked for support to CSOs through this mechanism came to €89.6 million (for all means of intervention). Over 90% of projects financed by the Initiative are CSO-led. **The chair of the Groupe Initiatives has also held a seat on Expertise Frances's Board of Directors since 2022.**

**The action of Canal France International (CFI), a state agency, is aimed at supporting the enhanced role of the media within civil society** as development actors, by supporting the visibility of projects, fighting misinformation, gender stereotypes, and by boosting awareness of environmental issues. CFI also encourages civil society actors to interact more frequently with the media and provides training to civil society representatives in this respect.

CFI works in close cooperation with AFD, Expertise France and the MEAE, including the CDCS, as part of projects involving media. The "MédiaSahel pour Elles" project, financed by AFD, involves CSOs from the three beneficiary countries (Mali, Niger, Burkina Faso) in combating gender-based stereotypes. CFI also participates in projects to combat climate change through the FSPI mechanism, and involves journalists, civil society members and scientists. The "Medialab Environnement" project receives direct funding from the MEAE and encourages the inclusion of environmental issues in journalistic productions stemming from exchanges between journalists and local civil society actors.

As part of the Open Government Support Programme in Francophone Africa, CFI endeavours to create long-term operational collaboration between the media and civil society, in partnership with Expertise France. Lastly, CFI works in cooperation with the CDCS as part of the "Tock Paix" project implemented in Cameroon in June 2022 and aimed at fostering the process of dialogue and adapted news coverage in crisis areas. A "media literacy and digital citizenship" section involving groups of young people rounds out this mechanism.

## B ◦ Co-Development of public policies

The co-development of public policies encompasses the drafting, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of public policies.

Within the central administration, regular exchanges between geographical directorates, the Directorate-General for Global Affairs (DGM) and CSOs **enhance analysis on internal policy and fuel reflection on the drafting of policy guidelines, such as reflection on France's development policy.** CSOs remain essential partners, on par with the Directorate-General of the Treasury and the Ministry of Health and Prevention, in particular as part of the "Innovating Together" and "Philanthropy and Development" strategies and fora for dialogue such as the Steering Group on Innovative Financing for Development, the French Interministerial Food Security Group, monitoring of the actions of the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria and the Support Fund for Feminist Organizations.

In addition to daily exchanges with humanitarian partners (including CSOs and foundations), **the CDCS has developed a special co-development and dialogue model, through the Humanitarian Coordination Group (GCH),** which is reflected in particular in the biannual holding of the **National Humanitarian Conference (CNH).**

**A joint climate and humanitarian working group** was also created in 2021 by the CDCS and meets monthly. This group comprises members from the MEAE (CDCS/COHS, NUOI/H, DGM/DDD/CLEN, DGM/DDD/HUMA), the Ministry for the Ecological Transition, AFD and CSO representatives, and it works to include a climate and environmental dimension in France's humanitarian strategy. This working group helped prepare the Humanitarian Aid Donors' Declaration on Climate and Environment, adopted by the European Union during the French Presidency of the Council of the European Union.

In addition, along with the Directorate-General of the Treasury, the CDCS oversees all the bodies and work of the State/bank/NGO **three-way dialogue** aimed at facilitating banking access for humanitarian partners operating in crisis areas.

The MEAE's United Nations Directorate also maintains numerous contacts with human rights advocacy CSOs and humanitarian NGOs, including regular informal exchanges. The purpose is to fuel reflection and help define the positions defended in the multilateral fora (consideration for international humanitarian law in UN resolutions and at the Human Rights Council).

**Practices in terms of co-developing public policies and international events with civil society are evolving,** as can be seen with the organization of the

New Africa-France Summit, designed, developed and monitored through dialogue led by the posts with civil society, and the Mediterranean Worlds Forum designed in multi-stakeholder format with local and regional authorities, agencies and the Euromed France network. The Paris Peace Forum also fosters partnerships between public actors and the association sector, around numerous initiatives in connection with the forum's priorities. Launched in 2021, the "Marianne" initiative for human rights defenders has also led to a reciprocal process of learning and experience sharing between public authorities and French human rights promotion and defence CSOs.

**Issues relative to civil society and volunteering have been increasingly introduced into training programmes for MEAE staff** (training by the Diplomatic and Consular Institute for successful candidates in the ministry's competitive recruitment examinations, open days for employees going to work abroad as part of the cooperation and cultural action network, network days). In 2021, new MOOC training courses (in particular on "Gender and Development"), given by the FSOF, included the issues of collaboration with civil society organizations. This MOOC, which was accessible to ministry and AFD agents as well as to CSOs through Campus AFD, was taken by over 4,600 people in summer 2022. This course paves the way for other training courses on shared themes (accountability, carbon footprint, preventing and combating sexual assault and exploitation).

## C ◦ Role of the National Council for Development and International Solidarity (CNDSI)

**Since 2018, the CNDSI has been the preferred discussion forum for civil society and non-state actors in co-developing the LPDSLIM programming law** (see above).

**The evolution of this council has affirmed its legitimacy.** It formerly had 54 members within eight groups, and now boasts 67 members divided into ten groups. On 30 December 2020, two new groups were created: foundations and multi-stakeholder platforms, for better consideration of the diversity of development and international solidarity stakeholders. These developments have enhanced the involvement of the private sector and actors from higher education and research. At least three plenary meetings are held each year.

**The role of the CNDSI has been enhanced by the LPDSLIM Programming Act,** which recognizes the CNDSI as a multi-stakeholder discussion forum for the State and specialists in development and international solidarity (Art. 5) and broadens the scope of its





Plenary meeting of the National Council for Development and International Solidarity (CNDSI) on July 5th, 2022.

missions. The CNDSI discusses the annual report on development policy (Art. 3) and it now receives a copy of the ODA evaluation committee report (Art. 12).

**The dynamic nature of the CNDSI can be translated into figures.** Since 2014 and including on 31 December 2022, the CNDSI has met in a plenary session 24 times, four times in special session, 33 times in the form of board meetings, and eight working groups have been created. Working groups help draft recommendations on priority topics related to the international agenda, including “Development Finance”, “Migration and Development”, “Private Sector Involvement in French Action towards Sustainable Development Cooperation”, “The French G7 Presidency”, “France’s Strategy with Regard to Banks and Multilateral Funds”, “Creating a Supportive Environment for Civil Society”. The “The Role of Foundations in Development” and “The Participation of Young People in Drafting France’s Development Policy” working groups are ongoing.

## D ◦ Revitalizing volunteering

In the wake of the COVID-19 crisis, **major work to reform and revitalize volunteering mechanisms has been conducted in consultation with volunteer-sending associations.**

In Article 4 of the LPDSLIM Programming Act, volunteer work is seen as a “cross-cutting lever for action in solidarity development policy” and commits to promoting “access for all women and men to international volunteer mechanisms and to ‘reciprocal’

volunteer schemes”. In Article 8, the act allows reciprocity in international solidarity volunteering (VSI), so that France can welcome volunteers from partner countries. The LPDSLIM Programming Act has therefore led to significant regulatory work for the VSI scheme.

**The support of France Volontaires and actors from the association sector, committed to improving practices but also to implementing a framework conducive to the principle of reciprocity,** was decisive. Volunteer associations are also key actors in helping the position and assignments of France Volontaires evolve. As future members of this new public interest group, **their contribution on issues of enhancement, cooperation with the diplomatic network and the safety of volunteers is vital.**

## E ◦ The Regional Multi-Stakeholder Networks

**The regional multi-stakeholder networks count over a thousand members from all categories of actors working in international cooperation. These include local and regional authorities, associations, and economic and academic actors.** These networks are independent structures falling under the status of association (with the exception of the regional public interest group in Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes) that work closely with the State and local and mainly regional authorities.

Since the creation of regional multi-stakeholder networks in Bretagne and Pays de la Loire in 2018, all the regions in mainland France have similar networks, with the exception of Ile-de-France (greater Paris) and Corsica. Guadeloupe is the only overseas territory with this type of network. In 2021, these 12 networks had 1,589 members (+10% in one year) from the different previously mentioned categories. That same year, they organized 406 meetings and training courses for over 4,000 project leaders and reached a wide group of pupils and students through educational activities.

These networks are therefore the vital relays of the MEAE **both in terms of rallying citizens at local and regional level and creating synergies between the numerous local initiatives**. These networks have been particularly active during the war in Ukraine, by identifying local initiatives and communicating national recommendations to direct them in the most effective way possible. The MEAE, through its two delegations devoted to the external action of local government bodies (DAECT) and to civil society relations and partnerships (CIV), will continue to support the growth of these networks, including financially, which are effective and influential actors for our stepped up diplomatic action.

In most French regions, **regional multi-stakeholder networks were the regional coordinators of the MEAE's International Solidarity Initiative (ISI)** for the 2020-2021 period and have also **coordinated the JSI/**

**VVV-SI scheme** since 2022. Their mission is to promote and build on schemes, and to lead, facilitate networking and build the capacities of association stakeholders. These networks have generated strong momentum for youth and international solidarity at regional level, in synergy with regional institutional and association stakeholders.

**In short**, dialogue between CSOs and government services has intensified over the past few years. All MEAE departments and the AFD group maintain close ties with civil society organizations within formal (CNDSI, GCH) or informal frameworks.

The progressive broadening of the scope of activity of French CSOs, increased French funding (in a still uncoordinated manner) and the increased skills of CSOs have generated informal discussions with these different departments, in parallel to existing strategic dialogue with the CDCS, DGM, AFD, Expertise France and the diplomatic posts.

This increasingly collective dialogue has led to a more holistic approach today by the MEAE, and it is in keeping with the growth of the various structures, which are currently active in both crisis areas and developing regions. These strategic exchanges have also led to a stronger voice for Team France and civil society in multilateral fora for negotiation and dialogue.



# Part 3

## PRACTICES

# OF BILATERAL AND MULTILATERAL PARTNERS

France's bilateral partners are carrying out similar reflection with respect to current challenges: localization of aid, emergence of informal movements, amount of aid, partnerships, evolution of standards, awareness of the general public, volunteer work and the right of initiative.

### A ◦ Support for local CSOs

**Given that very few partners to date have opened their central funding mechanisms to CSOs within ODA-eligible countries**, France is regarded as pioneering, by making it now possible to directly finance local CSOs via the CSO-Initiative mechanism and the humanitarian financing implemented by the CDCS.

German and Dutch embassies have budgets to finance small local CSO projects. The Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs may finance informal civil society stakeholders in the Global South either directly or via Swedish CSOs, for projects related to human rights.

In view of extending the scope of its development assistance, the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs has for several years been redirecting its ODA **towards localized initiatives and provides support to informal civil society actors such as the Support Fund for Drivers of Change (FAMOC)**, the programme of direct operating grants to local CSOs and support for some informal civil society movements in Mali. **In this way, some partners are moving towards structural funding** contributing to the emergence, stabilization and professionalization of new local actors.

The programmes of the **European Commission's Directorate-General for International Partnerships (DG INTPA)**, managed by the EU delegations, are open to all CSOs, both local and international.



**The EU's new instrument for external action, the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI)**, fosters a more partnership-based approach. It should make it possible to address the broader challenges of external action through the partitioning of pre-existing instruments, and by interconnecting previously separated issues. The new instrument has a budget of €79.5 billion over seven years (Multiannual Financial Framework 2021-2027), €1.6 billion of which (2% of the funds) is earmarked for the "CSO" programme.

### B ◦ Amount of ODA channelled through CSOs and our partners' priorities

Our partners allocate a significant portion of their bilateral aid to funding channelled through ISAs, especially those without a development agency. The significant portion of funding allocated to ISAs does not however necessarily translate into growth of the mechanisms in terms of localization of aid.

	Japan	France	Germany	European Union	Italy
Percentage of bilateral aid to and through CSOs in 2020	1%	5%	7%	9%	15%
Total bilateral aid in 2020	16,8	13,1	25,9	23,4	1,4

	UK	US	Netherlands	Canada	Denmark	Sweden
Percentage of bilateral aid to and through CSOs in 2020	17%	22%	26%	28%	28%	32%
Total bilateral aid in 2020 (in billions of dollars)	12,4	30,3	3,7	3,9	1,7	3,6

Table – OECD Data for 2020 on bilateral aid<sup>40</sup> from G7 members, the EU, Netherlands, Sweden and Denmark

**In Germany, funding allocated to CSOs, including the percentage earmarked for the right of initiative of these CSOs** (in particular the equivalent programme of the CSO-Initiatives scheme), **is constantly increasing**. Over the past seven years, a doubling of the budget of Germany’s Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) has led to **approximately a 75% increase in funding allocated to German CSOs, reaching €1.17 billion in 2021** (€1.4 billion in total for civil society, business groups and institutions).<sup>41</sup>

Comparatively speaking, there are ten times less volunteers entering France than those leaving France. On another note, just like France’s initiatives for the development of national volunteer programmes in partner countries, **Germany has helped to build capacity and increase support for volunteering stakeholders in Africa in recent years**, following the conclusions of the 2017 Africa-Europe Youth Summit.

## C ◦ Volunteer Mechanisms

On the issue of volunteering, some of our partners state mechanisms act in the interest of the national authorities, such as the US Peace Corps (on hold since the pandemic) or the JICA volunteers in Japan and those of the KOICA in South Korea. **Other European partners such as Ireland** (1,500 volunteers in 2019), **Belgium** (223 volunteers in 2019), **Germany** (3,352 volunteers in 2019) **and Canada prefer models based on partnerships with civil society, as is the case in France.**

Germany relies on several types of mechanisms, including the Weltwärts programme, which welcomes volunteers on a reciprocal basis. Norway has ambitious reciprocal programmes based on reciprocity the principle of one international volunteer welcomed for every Norwegian volunteer sent abroad.

## D ◦ Groups of “civil society” technical and financial partners

**Groups of technical and financial partners** already exist in many countries and are extremely useful. Many examples of best practices abroad can be highlighted, in terms of partnerships between international donors. One example is the Small Grants Program coordination group, launched by the US and rallying donors providing small amounts of funding to CSOs in Lebanon. Another is the association of Nordic countries in Tanzania for the purpose of financing major programmes on gender equality or to support think tanks.

Inter-European coordination is led by European Union delegations on their “Civil Society” focal point and sometimes through Team Europe initiatives, and more broadly in the groups of civil society technical and financial partners.

40. « Aid for Civil society Organisations 2019-2020 », OECD, June 2022

41. BMZ website “Facts and figures of German development cooperation”, 2021

# Part 4

## VISION

# AND CHALLENGES INVOLVED IN PARTNERSHIPS

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The Civil Society and Civic Engagement Strategic Guidance Paper contributes to implementing the ongoing strategies of the Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs, namely: Human Rights and Development, France's International Strategy for Gender Equality, Innovating Together, Philanthropy and Development, France's Humanitarian Strategy. The MEAE has also identified avenues for progress in youth and children's rights. This paper takes stock of the overall status of civil society, but particularly international solidarity organizations, without forgetting the contribution of other actors (humanitarian, cultural cooperation, education and scientific) in its areas of action.

**France's diplomatic action endeavours to achieve the Agenda 2030 goals with the help of civil society. In this regard, a strong, independent and dynamic civil society seems vital to achieving the SDGs and to creating an open and democratic society.**

The Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs will endeavour to promote a model of interaction between public authorities and civil society based on trust, at international level and with our partners, as well as a **legal framework based on international commitments**. This will also mean **helping establish relations between all components of civil society and fostering multi-stakeholder and synergistic approaches** to serve the initiatives they jointly pursue and share with the State. **The sharing of practices is beneficial to the public authorities**, as is the case with consideration for gender issues and equality driven by civil society and appropriated by the State through feminist diplomacy.

**It is necessary to preserve dialogue frameworks to remain attentive to changes in civil society**, which are currently significant and contribute to promoting human rights, defending democracy, fighting inequality and preserving the planet.

**In the long term, the drafting of public policies on international solidarity will involve CSOs more systematically. Dialogue and the sharing of practices strengthens the capacity of the State and its agencies, as well as of CSOs and the influence of French-speaking actors in the international arena**

is enhanced. Practices of solidarity-based civic engagement are deeply rooted in French society and in people's individual career paths. The professional bridges between civil society and public institutions are being encouraged and developed, and are a mark of the recognition of civil society's expertise.

*Monitoring of the implementation indicators listed below will be studied during annual meetings gathering all the stakeholders.*



# Part 5

## STRATEGIC PRIORITIES AND IMPLEMENTATION MEANS

### PRIORITY 1

#### Promote a supportive environment for all components of civil society throughout the world and in France

The overall deterioration of civil society space has been observed throughout the world, and this includes in particular the development of restrictive legislation in terms of foreign funding for CSOs, either de facto or de jure shrinking of civic space and growing violence towards CSOs and their members. This generally goes hand in

hand with reduced freedom of expression, assembly and association. In France it is necessary to maintain and develop measures that facilitate public generosity and the operating modes of CSOs, in particular by applying the recommendations of the High Council for Community Life (HCVA).

#### Objective 1.1 Promote supportive regulatory frameworks for civil society

**Objective 1.1.1** Support the adoption or continued application of national legislation conducive to the development of civil society initiatives

**Objective 1.1.2** Encourage the implementation of internationally recognized standards for a supportive environment for civil society

#### Actors and Implementation Means:

##### MEAE embassies and geographic directorates

- > Carry out actions among local authorities in a national capacity or jointly with other OECD members, based on current recommendations and in particular the OECD Recommendation on Enabling Civil Society in Development Co-operation and Humanitarian Assistance, adopted on 6 July 2021 by the Development Assistance Committee;
- > Intensify dialogue with our bilateral partners for the purpose of promoting and developing common frameworks to defend civic space throughout the world;
- > Promote the role of national human rights institutions and conduct dialogue with them so that they develop a supportive space for civil society;

- > Systematically include relations with civil society in the action plan of ambassadors, in conjunction with the civil society roadmaps of EU delegations and ensure that the delegations themselves maintain this dialogue with the national platforms and networks.

##### Permanent Representatives of France to the EU, to the United Nations, to the OECD and regional organizations – in connection with our European partners

- > Promote quality standards in terms of development assistance and a supportive environment for civil society, based on the recommendations of the CNDSI working group on the shrinking of civic space and the protection of human rights defenders;
- > Become involved in civil society accreditation bodies to ensure both the legitimacy and the diversity of the CSOs represented;

-> Work with civil society for the adoption of resolutions, agreements for a supportive environment for civil society, and development mechanisms at regional level.

### International Solidarity Associations (ISAs)

-> Carry out advocacy work among partner countries and in multilateral fora, including at regional level, on these issues.

### Performance Indicators:

- > Number of initiatives carried out among local authorities (based on diplomatic notes);
- > Number of embassy action plans in which civil society is a central stakeholder;
- > Number of multilateral meetings and working groups in which France participates regarding this issue;
- > Creation of a "Supportive Environment" MOOC accessible to CSOs.

## Objective 1.2 Facilitate the implementation of activities carried out by civil society organizations

The State will work to facilitate the activities of CSOs recognized as serving the public interest mission specified in their articles of association and which the Ministry of the Interior has verified in terms of effectiveness.

### Objective 1.2.1 Facilitate the movement of civil society actors to France

Building a partnership-based international solidarity policy is based on exchanges aimed at facilitating the transfer of skills and knowledge and at fostering better knowledge of the respective goals. Consequently, this implies exchanges to and from France.

### Objective 1.2.2 Maintain a supportive tax and banking framework in France that is compatible with

### requirements in terms of combating the financing of terrorism and money laundering (LCB-FT)

ISAs represent a very small portion of the French association ecosystem and the specific issues they encounter warrant better consideration in the relevant representative bodies. In France, the advantageous tax breaks for donations and bequests must be maintained. ISAs, on the other hand, seem to be facing growing difficulties in making bank transfers to certain partner countries, for example countries under sanctions, and areas where terrorist groups are operating.

The implementation of regulations by CSOs to combat the financing of terrorism and money laundering requires state-led methodological and financial support.

### Actors and Implementation Means:

French Nationals Abroad and Consular Administration Directorate (MEAE/DFAE) – consular network – Ministry of the Interior (MININT – visas)

-> Consider the specific nature of civil society representatives and the areas in which they operate in the challenges of the movement of persons, and implement suitable measures to facilitate their movement.

Directorate-General of Public Finances and Directorate-General of the Treasury – AFD – MEAE – MININT

- > Maintain the tax provisions conducive to CSO activities;
- > Provide the appropriate means to CSOs to allow them to implement the regulations on combating money laundering and the financing of terrorism;
- > Foster dialogue between the banking sector and CSOs to provide real operational solutions to the difficulties in accessing financial services; Provide better supervision of non-bank transfers in digital currency or via credits;
- > Streamline the requirements and the monitoring, evaluation and compliance procedures of the various

French donors (different departments of AFD, MEAE) towards facilitating the implementation of projects;

- > Continue awareness-raising initiatives by the various relevant State services on the risk of misappropriation of funds to finance terrorism and on the risks linked to initiatives in countries under sanction, for organizations likely to conduct operations in sensitive areas.

Permanent Representative of France to the UN bodies – Multilateral Banks and funds

- > Advocate for sustainable accountability requirements between donors.

Prime Minister's Departments

- > Work towards better consideration for international solidarity issues within the HCVA.

### Performance Indicators:

- > Production of recommendations by the HCVA on international solidarity issues;
- > Number of CIV/MININT exchanges on the issue of movement of persons;
- > Number of events organized as part of the "major events" initiative for CSO-organized events in France.

## PRIORITY 2

## Support the development, organization and initiatives of partner CSOs

Support for CSOs is also a form of support for intermediary bodies that carry out a core role of link and intermediary within society.

Enhanced support for CSOs in ODA-eligible countries meets the key need of consolidation and promotion of democratic societies, benefiting from an independent, dynamic, inclusive and robust civil society.

Capacity building of French ISAs is also aimed at guaranteeing the best quality service for development and international solidarity

initiatives, and at allowing them to fully contribute to strengthening actors in partner countries.

In this regard, financing plays a crucial role as its nature and the initiatives financed have an impact on the CSOs' socio-economic models. The question of over-representation of project-based financing in relation to structural or operational financing within the donor community warrants examination.

### Objective 2.1 Improve the financing of civil society ecosystems

The various government departments and agencies maintain reinforced and synergistic dialogue with the main implementation partners for projects financed by the State. Grants awarded to CSOs are subject to consultation between the MEAE and the AFD group to ensure complementarity and provide a global response to crisis situations (to their causes and their consequences) as well as to the implementation of the SDGs

**Objective 2.1.1 Develop more extensively the array of French financing tools, both private and public, to take into consideration the needs of CSOs and to maximize the impact of this funding**

**Objective 2.1.2 Ensure the complementarity and continuity of financing mechanisms aimed at supporting the strong development of ISAs, within the framework of an appropriate funding process**

#### Actors and Implementation Means:

Directorate-General for Global Affairs (MEAE/DGM) – AFD – Expertise France (EF) – Coordination SUD – France Volontaires – CFI – RRMA

- > Make a quality diagnosis, in consultation with the ISAs, of the existing tools and make proposals aimed at acquiring a range of global financing tools that cover all types of needs and sectors, and that are complementary to existing private financing, with specific analysis of financing the right of initiative;
- > Carry out a mid-term (2025) review of the tools.

Embassies (including the Cooperation and Cultural Action Services – SCAC)

- > Foster dialogue between donors and with CSOs on the needs of local CSOs for the purpose of further developing the tools and methods;
- > Implement financing with a long-term impact;
- > Improve accountability for projects financed by the posts that contribute to the right of initiative;
- > Encourage partner countries to finance the CSOs in their own country (and even encourage them via our budgetary tools) as part of an inclusive process.

AFD – Expertise France (EF)

- > Improve accountability for projects financed that contribute to the right of initiative;
- > Enhance the role of CSOs in both partner countries and France, in AFD and EF interventions (including with loans).

Permanent Representative of France to the European Union

- > Maintain regular dialogue with the Commission's DG INTPA and DG NEAR on the evolution of CSO financing systems and contribute to the designated funds that help preserve civil society initiatives.

United Nations, International Organizations, Human Rights and Francophonie Department (MEAE/NUOI) – Permanent Representative of France to the multilateral bodies

- > Encourage French and French-speaking CSOs to use the funds and agencies.



## Performance Indicators:

- > Number of projects scaled up (transition between financing mechanisms);
- > Trajectory as a percentage of ODA channelled through CSOs targeting 11% of French ODA in 2027;
- > Doubling in volume of ODA channelled through CSOs;
- > Increase in the percentage of right of initiative funding in terms of ODA channelled through CSOs (out of the 47% of ODA channelled through CSOs in 2021 not corresponding to the right of initiative, the State will

- have to create an indicator enabling the following information to be entered for each project: whether it was financed in response to a call for projects, as part of a public procurement contract or in response to a proposal from a CSO. In the long term, it will be possible to determine the entire field covered by the right of initiative and to establish an exhaustive list of the financing operations addressing a CSO proposal);
- > Evolution in the co-financing rates of the CSO-Initiatives scheme;
- > Amount of European financing awarded to French ISAs.

## Objective 2.2 Support the capacity building of French CSOs

Developments in practices and constraints require a change in working methods for ISAs, in order to take into consideration, when designing and implementing projects, both the needs and expectations of beneficiaries and the local, national and global context in which they intervene. Funds granted to partner CSOs must support these structural transformation trends.

**Objective 2.2.1 Support capacity building in connection with cross-cutting themes and issues (cross-cutting of youth and gender, human rights-based approach, carbon and climate neutrality, etc.), building capacity for financial accountability and intervention in complex situations (security, absence of state structures, etc.), building the capacity to respond to calls for projects including in a pooled manner**

### Objective 2.2.2 Support the structuring and revitalization of French CSOs in the evolution of their economic and social model

In the dual context of localization of aid, which implies adapting practices, and the evolution of militant, volunteer and donor bases, the economic and operational model of French ISAs is set to be revitalized.

### Objective 2.2.3 Support the progress of medium, large and very large ISAs,<sup>42</sup> in terms of advocacy, visibility in the international arena and diversity of financing

## Actors and Implementation Means:

AFD – Expertise France (expertise channel for Initiatives) – MEAE and diplomatic posts

- > Increase the proportion of financing schemes supporting programmes and structural reinforcement in addition to project-based financing;
- > Provide training programmes accessible to or even co-developed with CSOs

Coordination SUD through FRIO – Multi-Stakeholder Regional Networks (RRMA) – F3E

- > Based on financing allocated by the MEAE and AFD, develop the training courses provided, diversify the structures supported and the tools provided.

French public and private donors

- > Conduct dialogue on the nature of audits to harmonize procedures or create a procedure recognition mechanism for partner donors.

## Performance Indicators:

- > Percentage of structuring projects within the association sector that are part of the CSO-I scheme (baseline: average of 20% per year, including ECIS, of the total amount of the scheme);
- > Cumulative amount of grants to RRMA helping to build the capacity of CSOs established in the country;
- > Number of CSOs impacted by RRMA training and capacity building initiatives;
- > Number of CSOs supported by FRIO and F3E (2021);
- > Number of MOOCs made available by the State and its agencies;
- > Overall budget of French ISAs;
- > Creation of a State/agency/CSO working group to work on harmonizing auditing practices and the monitoring/evaluation of projects and the structural financing granted to CSOs.

42. For the definition of an ISA, refer to the study “Les modèles socio-économiques des associations de solidarité internationale (ASI) françaises 2016-2020, Nouvelle édition de l'étude Argent ASI” (the socio-economic models of French international solidarity associations (ISAs) 2016-2020), Paris, Coordination SUD, April 2022

## Objective 2.3 Support the aid localization process

### Objective 2.3.1 Facilitate access to public financing tailored to actors in ODA-eligible countries

### Objective 2.3.2 Develop support tailored to the local context

In the longer-term perspective of partner States taking charge of financing CSOs in ODA-eligible countries, contribute to the capacity building of civil society in

countries of the Global South, in connection with the other donors, (management of organizations and projects, consideration for cross-disciplinary issues, capacity for advocacy and dialogue with the national authorities with a view to participating in drafting public policies, the operation of multilateral and multi-stakeholder mechanisms).

### Actors and Implementation Means:

#### Directorate-General for Global Affairs (MEAE/ DGM) – CDCS – Embassies – Agencies

- > Involve local CSOs in local development councils;
- > Encourage and facilitate dialogue between CSOs in ODA-eligible countries and national and multilateral bodies;
- > Participate in the “civil society” groups of technical and financial partners;
- > Create an indicator on ODA channelled through CSOs in ODA-eligible countries based on data available in 2022;
- > Initiate dialogue with European partners to quantify the volume of their ODA contributing to the localization of aid;
- > Study the impact of financing from embassies to local CSOs and develop tailored financing by allowing a certain amount of flexibility or by taking charge of structural costs.

#### MEAE – AFD

- > Foster access for CSOs in French cooperation partner countries to a variety of tailored financing, including structural;
- > Support the restructuring of civil society at local, regional and international levels, including national and regional CSO platforms, to allow them to develop

capacity building proposals as close as possible to their beneficiaries and to be able to influence public debate and help define not only local, national, European and other public policies, but also the agendas of major public or private international donors;

- > Encourage an increasing share of retrocession in French ISA projects and, where relevant, the integration of joint support and learning activities;
- > Ensure a reasonable increase in the proportion of right to initiative for CSOs in ODA-eligible countries.

### Performance Indicators:

- > Proportion of ODA channelled through CSOs allocated to CSOs in ODA-eligible countries (reference year 2021, including through retrocession);
- > Number of national or regional CSO platforms in ODA-eligible countries benefiting from public interest projects (CSO-I, PISSCA or others);
- > Proportion of projects supported with structural and capacity building costs included in their budgets;
- > Number of local development councils involving local CSOs;
- > Number of schemes open to CSOs in ODA-eligible countries;
- > Proportion of embassy funds allocated to local CSOs.

# PRIORITY 3

## Develop partnerships with all civil society actors

The mutual enrichment of the various components of civil society, by sharing best practices and increasing multi-stakeholder dynamics, goes hand in hand with the development of partnerships between government bodies and CSOs as a whole. The recognized role of CSOs in co-developing public policies contributes to the effective implementation of the SDGs and of France's priorities shared by civil society. The multi-stakeholder approach comes in

different forms. Partnerships and cooperation are represented by collaboration between several independent parties sharing common objectives, based on the mutual recognition of each others' skills. Co-development on the other hand, is the process through which the different stakeholders develop their positions more precisely in order to reach a compromise and define a joint vision. This takes form in the development and implementation of a joint project.

### Objective 3.1 Promote the initiatives of CSOs in all sectors

**Objective 3.1.1** Encourage multi-stakeholder dynamics between the various components of civil society, including with the youth and with informal movements, helping to implement foreign policy priorities

**Objective 3.1.2** Promote best practices in terms of international initiatives, for each component of civil society

**Objective 3.1.3** Facilitate networking between the different components of civil society and donors and project leaders

#### Actors and Implementation Means:

DGM departments, including the DAECT – Agencies – Embassies

- > Encourage multi-stakeholder dynamics;
- > Ensure that local development councils involve all components of civil society (foundations, SSE, etc.);
- > Promote best practices in terms of international initiatives for all components of civil society (ISAs, SSE, foundations, unions, etc.), including philanthropy and volunteering;
- > Facilitate feedback from practices in the field to the MEAE and its agencies;
- > Foster exchanges between public experts and civil society;
- > Continue to develop partnerships with the RRMA networks to promote multi-stakeholder dynamics all over France.

#### Performance Indicators:

- > Number of meetings/conferences co-organized by Ministry departments and CSOs;
- > Number of meetings with CSOs dealing with the different Ministry departments and agencies;
- > Number of foundations deciding to increase or engage in international development projects;
- > Number of tools, programmes and support mechanisms for cooperation and development initiatives led by SSE and fair trade actors;
- > Number of financing schemes for multi-stakeholder projects, including FSPI and FSPI-PISCCA.

## Objective 3.2 Strengthen the role of CSOs in the co-development of public policies

**Objective 3.2.1** Strengthen the role of the CNDSI in its contribution to drafting MEAE policies, including its planning work and strategic discussions

**Objective 3.2.2** Encourage consultation with our partners in drafting public policies

### Actors and Implementation Means:

#### CNDSI

- > Contribute to drafting public policies, including through its planning work and strategic discussions through its working groups and theme-based plenary sessions;
- > Organize delocalized CNDSI meetings at local level, in connection with the RRMA;
- > Perform an online test consultation on one of the Ministry's strategies, open to everyone.

MEAE – AFD – Embassies – French ISAs and CSOs in partner countries

- > Create a framework and inclusive means of dialogue with CSOs, beyond the CNDSI.

### Performance Indicators:

- > Number of CNDSI publications;
- > Number of CNDSI initiatives led with other advisory bodies or in connection with external partners;
- > Monitor the implementation of CNDSI recommendations by the administrations concerned.

## Objective 3.3 Facilitate exchanges between the various components of civil society, administration and the private sector

**Objective 3.3.1** Facilitate incoming and outgoing mobility between CSOs and public bodies involved in international solidarity

**Objective 3.3.2** Develop skills-based sponsorship to serve ISAs

### Actors and Implementation Means:

MEAE Human Resources Department (HRD) and agencies – Directorate-General for Administration and the Civil Service (DGAFP) – ISAs – Companies and skills-based sponsorship structures – RRMA

- > Contribute to the test phase allowing the roll-out of civil servants in skills-based sponsorship;
- > Develop skills-based sponsorship assignments with ISAs;
- > Develop exchange- and skills-based volunteering (VEC) by facilitating access to information on the existing

- schemes, as well as on available supply and demand;
- > Guide ISAs and companies in defining and structuring their needs;
- > Encourage training and guidance for volunteers.

### Performance Indicators:

- > Number of CSO representatives participating in training sessions with the Institut des Hautes Études Diplomatiques;
- > Trajectory of exchange- and skills-based volunteering (VEC) (baseline 2022).

# PRIORITY 4

## Foster civic engagement

While only 9% of French people acknowledge knowing what the SDGs are (Focus 2030 poll), ECIS (Education for Citizenship and International Solidarity) helps raise people's awareness of development and international solidarity issues, as well as of France's policy in this area. By providing a global approach that encourages everyone to understand, become informed and act for change, ECIS plays a critical role in addressing the major contemporary challenges and attaining the SDGs. Citizens at local and international level must be encouraged and reassured in their engagement to serve the public interest through public policies.

For volunteer organizations, this means being able to respond to requests both from local partners, whose needs have increased due the COVID-19 crisis, and from new prospective volunteers seeking meaning in life, and who cannot find positions today due to their limited number. There is a real risk that these people could turn to less cautious organizations that break with the principles of quality volunteering, thus possibly leading to practices such as "voluntourism".<sup>43</sup>

### Objective 4.1 Promote a supportive framework for civic engagement globally

#### Objective 4.1.1 Encourage the adoption of national legislation and national and international frameworks promoting national, regional and/or international volunteering

The understanding and recognition of volunteering by States hosting volunteers fosters the development of national and international volunteering, thus creating a more reciprocal partnership framework and better conditions.

#### Objective 4.1.2 Support education for citizenship and international solidarity in France and globally and strengthen the engagement of civil society towards interculturalism

The report entitled "Renforcer l'engagement citoyen pour la transition écologique, solidaire et démocratique en France et dans le monde à horizon 2030" (strengthening civic engagement for the ecological, solidarity and democratic transition in France and throughout the world to 2030), published by a multi-stakeholder consultation group, led by AFD in 2021, constitutes an initial framework of reference. The MEAE relies on this framework for its ECIS initiatives and intends to promote it in inter-ministerial dialogue, and during discussions at European level regarding ECIS: the existence of a concerted definition developed by the actors involved, interactions and mutual reinforcement with education for sustainable development and global citizenship, the identification of sectoral priorities in response to expectations regarding the multi-stakeholder ECIS partnership. The 2021-2022 evaluation of MEAE and AFD financing

earmarked for ECIS recommends different courses of action to enhance the effectiveness and impact of public policies and mechanisms in this area. The relevant recommendations will be implemented for the duration of this Strategic Guidance Paper, especially regarding the creation of a forum for discussion for the ministries concerned.

#### Objective 4.1.3 Developing partnership opportunities in France and globally and fostering cooperation with European countries

At European level, this will involve active cooperation with the Global Education Network Europe (GENE) of which France is a member. This collaboration will benefit from the consensus and the dynamic generated by the conclusions of the Council of Europe on Education for Sustainable Development and Global Citizenship adopted on 21 June 2022, under the French Presidency of the Council of the European Union, and by the European Declaration on Global Education to 2050 adopted on 4 November 2022 in Dublin.

France Volontaires has signed several cooperation agreements with the ministries of partner countries in charge of civic engagement to foster the socio-professional integration of young people, reciprocal mobility and the recognition of volunteering. Enhanced coordination with the diplomatic posts could allow better consideration for international volunteering in bilateral and regional cooperation projects and public policies, as well as added support for national agencies.

43. France Volontaires, Report "Lutte contre le voluntourisme : une démarche collective pour un volontariat responsable", (combating voluntourism: a collective approach for responsible volunteering) July 2022

### Actors and Implementation Means:

MEAE/HRD – Press and Communication Department (MEAE/DCP)

-> Continue activities targeting the general public, especially in the regions (universities, schools at all levels, NGOs, etc.).

DGM/CIV – Embassies – France Volontaires and its members – Civic Service Agency

-> Inform partner States of the contribution of volunteering as a lever for development

CFI

-> Support digital information stakeholders, encourage media education for active and informed citizenship, support the development of professional journalist networks.

MEAE – AFD – MENJ/DJEPVA and its decentralized departments (DRAJES) – RRMA and approved Youth/Popular Education associations

-> Step-up support for ECIS association stakeholders, for their restructuring and their initiatives;  
 -> Develop ECIS projects at local level;  
 -> Strengthen the participation of sectors of society which have the least amount of access to international solidarity and mobility in ECIS programmes.

MENJ, Directorate-General for School Education – AFD

-> Make known and promote teaching projects that participate in ECIS as part of education in schools (education about sustainable development and citizenship).

OFAJ (OFAJ civic fund and tri-national programmes) – OFQJ

-> Support intercultural exchange projects, based on Franco-German and Franco-Quebec experiences and opening up to third countries.

### Performance Indicators:

- > Number of “Le Quai hors les murs” (Foreign Ministry beyond the walls) initiatives;
- > Number of participants in the summer diplomatic academy;
- > Proportion of ECIS projects in the CSO-I scheme;
- > Proportion of ISI and JSI-VVSI projects for sectors of society with little access to mobility;
- > Number of bilateral volunteering agreements;
- > Contribution to GENE accountability exercises on the implementation of the Dublin Declaration;
- > Number of citizens from ODA-eligible countries having participated in tri-national OFAJ and OFQJ programmes.



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Volunteers acting for the preservation of the environment.

## Objective 4.2 Develop volunteering programmes

**Objective 4.2.1** Promote links between informal engagements and access to volunteer mechanisms

**Objective 4.2.2** Develop diverse international exchange-based and solidarity volunteering (VIES), both quantitatively and qualitatively, including in its reciprocal dimension

**Objective 4.2.3** Promote the complementarity of existing mechanisms at national, European and

international level, to facilitate life-long engagement

**Objective 4.2.4** Consolidate the quality framework by developing reference standards for exchange-based and solidarity volunteering (VIES)

**Objective 4.2.5** Establish a quality charter for online volunteering and the related standards to support and consider this practice

### Actors and Implementation Means:

France Volontaires and its members – Civic Service Agency – FONJEP and their parent ministries

- > Use all the different mechanisms while ensuring the quality of offers;
- > Facilitate transitions and complementarity between the various mechanisms;
- > Implement volunteer programmes responding to France's sectoral priorities (civic ecosystems, adaptation to climate change) and to needs expressed by young people.

Accredited VSI and civic service associations and partner associations of youth and international solidarity mechanisms

- > Enhance the reciprocal dimension of volunteering missions.

Actors of exchange- and skills-based volunteering (VEC), of international solidarity leave and of solidarity-based leave

- > Roll out skills-based volunteering for international solidarity missions.

### Performance Indicators:

- > Number of volunteers involved in France Volontaires programmes;
- > Number of volunteers involved per mechanism (reference year 2021);
- > Number of international volunteers hosted in France per mechanism (reciprocity);
- > Implementation of sessions to evaluate offers.

## Objective 4.3 Promote the volunteering experience

**Objective 4.3.1** Ensure better visibility and recognition of the experience acquired, in particular in study and career pathways

**Objective 4.3.2** Include civic engagement abroad in career pathways

### Actors and Implementation Means:

MENJ and its agencies – the Ministry for Higher Education and Research – Universities – Ministry for Labour, Full Employment and Economic Inclusion – Employment Centres (Pôle Emploi)

- > Facilitate the socio-professional inclusion of volunteers and recognition of the skills acquired.

### Performance Indicators:

- > Number of partnerships with higher education institutions and employment and economic inclusion stakeholders;
- > Percentage of volunteers integrated into the labour market, in training programmes or otherwise engaged (locally or internationally) up to one year after the end of their mission.

## PRIORITY 5

## Strengthen the presence and voice of French-speaking CSOs in particular, in the international arena

French and French-speaking CSOs are regrettably not very present or active in the multilateral bodies, even though they are involved in the major sectoral coalitions of civil society. Their voice is still heard far too little, with the exception of those sitting on the governance bodies of the multilateral fora, such as the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis

and Malaria. In addition, the advocacy activities of French and French-speaking CSOs in the international arena would gain from being strengthened, even though their expertise in numerous fields, such as health and fighting the death penalty, is unanimously recognized. Lastly, coalitions of French-speaking stakeholders deserve to be supported.

### Objective 5.1 Strengthen the role of French-speaking CSOs and of their platforms and networks in the international arena

#### Objective 5.1.1 Improve the role of civil society in multilateral bodies

Better consideration for the positions held by civil society organizations in the policies promoted at multilateral level can only strengthen the complementarity of initiatives led at local, national and regional level by local authorities and CSOs. Civil society that is consulted more at multilateral level participates in the effective implementation of the SDGs.

#### Objective 5.1.2 Improve the quality of dialogue with civil society in international fora

#### Actors and Implementation Means:

##### Permanent Representations of France to multilateral bodies – MEAE/NUOI

- > Encourage the creation of groups, when they do not exist, to consult with civil society organizations within the bodies of international organizations, by following innovative participation methods (such as deliberation, see OECD initiatives);
- > Support the participation CSOs that are French, French speaking or from La Francophonie within such consultation groups;
- > Encourage French-speaking CSOs to become involved in the multilateral field.

#### Performance Indicators:

- > Number of consultation meetings with CSOs, especially those that are French, French-speaking or from La Francophonie, organized by the Permanent Representatives of France, or at their initiative;
- > Number of international organizations with civil society members in their governing body;
- > Number of French and French-speaking CSOs involved in dialogue groups devoted to civil society at multilateral level;
- > Number of CSOs participating in French delegations for international events where the added value of CSOs is vital.



## **Objective 5.2** Strengthen the voice of CSOs that are French speaking and from La Francophonie in particular, in the international arena

### **Objective 5.2.1 Promote the expertise of civil society actors that are French speaking and from La Francophonie, especially that of their young leaders, in multilateral and sectoral multi-stakeholder bodies.**

The expertise of French-speaking CSOs in the international arena is heard through NGO networks (mainly English speaking). However, these have everything to gain by being heard more on an individual basis.

The lack of visibility of many French-speaking CSOs within international organizations can be explained by a lack of access to information and to multilateral

bodies, due to accreditation costs and insufficient funding, but especially due to the language barrier, as many bodies use English as their only working language.

### **Objective 5.2.2 Encourage partnerships between civil society actors that are French speaking and from La Francophonie and support their restructuring.**

It could be beneficial to develop synergies between French-speaking partners in the North and South, and increase exchanges and mobility between young French speakers.

#### **Actors and Implementation Means:**

**Agencies – Permanent Representations of France to multilateral bodies, including the OIF and its INGO conference (COING) – Partnership with UN agencies**

- > Support the accreditation of French-speaking CSOs in multilateral bodies;
- > Encourage the organization of multilingual meetings in all bodies;
- > Provide financial support for translation and interpreting at events organized by CSOs, where appropriate (mainly parallel events).

**France Volontaires – AFD – Cooperation with the EU and European partners – OFQJ**

- > Continue to develop exchange and mobility programmes between young French speakers;
- > Support the restructuring work of French-speaking CSOs, possibly in connection with the OIF;
- > Encourage framework projects in the association sector with an international advocacy role, for both French and French-speaking CSOs.

**Embassies – MEAE geographic departments**

- > Foster civil society participation in regional organizations.

**Coordination SUD**

- > Encourage French and French-speaking CSOs to carry out more advocacy work among European institutions, including within European CSO coalitions.

#### **Performance Indicators:**

- > Number of accredited French-speaking CSOs in multilateral bodies;
- > Number of French-speaking CSOs consulted prior to multilateral assemblies;
- > Number of young people benefiting from a mobility programme at Francophonie level.

# Annex

## 1. ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

<b>AAP</b>	Programmed food assistance	<b>DAECT</b>	Delegation for the External Action of Local Government
<b>ACF</b>	Action Contre la Faim	<b>DDD/ CLEN</b>	Directorate for Sustainable Development/Environment and Climate Department
<b>AFD</b>	Agence Française de Développement	<b>DDD/ HUMA</b>	Directorate for Sustainable Development/Human Development Department
<b>AKDN</b>	Aga Khan Development Network	<b>DFAE</b>	Directorate for French Nationals Abroad and Consular Administration
<b>APCC</b>	Crisis and Post-Crisis Calls for Projects	<b>DG INTPA</b>	Directorate-General for International Partnerships
<b>BMZ</b>	German Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development	<b>DG NEAR</b>	Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations
<b>CADHP</b>	African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights	<b>DGAFP</b>	Directorate-General for Administration and the Civil Service
<b>CAPS</b>	Strategy, Analysis and Policy Planning Centre	<b>DGM</b>	Directorate-General for Global Affairs, Culture, Education and International Development
<b>CDCS</b>	Crisis and Support Centre	<b>DGM/ CIV</b>	Department for Civil Society, Civic Engagement and Youth
<b>CFI</b>	Canal France International	<b>DGP</b>	Directorate-General for Political and Security Affairs
<b>CFSI</b>	French Committee for International Solidarity	<b>DGT</b>	Directorate-General of the Treasury
<b>CNDSI</b>	Conseil national du développement et de la solidarité internationale/French National Council for Development and International Solidarity	<b>DRAJES</b>	Regional Academic Department for Youth, Engagement and Sport
<b>CNH</b>	National Humanitarian Conference	<b>ECIS</b>	Education for Citizenship and International Solidarity
<b>COCAC</b>	Cooperation and cultural action advisor	<b>EF</b>	Expertise France
<b>COHS</b>	Centre for Humanitarian and Stabilization Operations	<b>EU</b>	European Union
<b>CRID</b>	Research and Information Centre for Development	<b>FAMOC</b>	Support fund for drivers of change
<b>CSO</b>	Civil Society Organization	<b>FFEM</b>	French Facility for Global Environment
<b>CSR</b>	Corporate Social Responsibility	<b>FIACAT</b>	International Federation of Action by Christians for the Abolition of Torture
<b>CSUD</b>	Coordination SUD	<b>FID</b>	Fund for Innovation in Development
<b>C2A</b>	Agriculture and Food Committee		
<b>DAC</b>	Development Assistance Committee		

<b>FIDH</b>	International Federation for Human Rights	<b>NDICI</b>	Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument
<b>FISONG</b>	Sectoral Innovation Facility for NGOs	<b>NSAF</b>	New Africa-France Summit
<b>FMM</b>	Mediterranean Worlds Forum	<b>NUOI/H</b>	United Nations, International Organizations, Human Rights and Francophonie Directorate/Human Rights and Humanitarian Affairs Department
<b>FORIM</b>	Forum of International Solidarity Organizations for Migration	<b>ODA</b>	Official Development Assistance
<b>FRIO</b>	Institutional and Organizational Support Fund	<b>OECD</b>	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
<b>FSOF</b>	Support Fund for Feminist Organizations	<b>OFAJ/FGYO</b>	Franco-German Youth Office
<b>FSPI</b>	Solidarity Fund for Innovative Projects	<b>OFQJ</b>	Franco-Quebecois Youth Office
<b>F3E</b>	Education network for actors in solidarity (evaluate-exchange-enlighten)	<b>OIF</b>	Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie
<b>GCH</b>	Humanitarian Coordination Group	<b>OSIM</b>	International Migration Solidarity Organizations
<b>GENE</b>	Global Education Network Europe	<b>PAGOF</b>	Open Government Support Programme in Francophone Africa
<b>GISA</b>	Inter-Ministerial Food Security Group	<b>PAMOC</b>	Project to support the mobilization of French NGOs on the climate
<b>HRD</b>	Human Resources Department	<b>PDH</b>	Plateforme des Droits de l'Homme (human rights collective)
<b>HCVA</b>	High Council for Community Life	<b>PIPA</b>	Future Leaders Invitation Programme
<b>HI</b>	Handicap International/Humanity and Inclusion	<b>PISCCA</b>	Innovative projects of civil society and coalitions of actors
<b>I-OSC</b>	ICSO-Initiatives scheme	<b>PRA/OSIM</b>	Programme to support OSIM projects
<b>ISA</b>	International Solidarity Association	<b>PSEAU</b>	Programme Solidarité Eau (water solidarity programme)
<b>ISI</b>	International Solidarity Initiative	<b>RAC</b>	Réseau Action Climat (climate action network)
<b>JSI/VVV-SI</b>	Youth and City/Life/Holiday-International Solidarity scheme	<b>RRMA</b>	Regional multi-stakeholder networks
<b>LCB-FT</b>	combating the financing of terrorism and money laundering	<b>SCAC</b>	Cooperation and Cultural Action Department
<b>LPDSLIM</b>	Programming Act on Inclusive Development and Combating Global Inequalities	<b>SDGs</b>	Sustainable Development Goals
<b>MASA</b>	Ministry of Agriculture and Food Sovereignty	<b>SSE</b>	Social and Solidarity Economy
<b>MDM</b>	Médecins du Monde	<b>URD</b>	Emergency-rehabilitation-development think tank
<b>MEAE</b>	Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs	<b>VEC</b>	Exchange- and skills-based volunteering
<b>MENJ</b>	Ministry for National Education and Youth	<b>VIES</b>	Exchange-based and solidarity volunteering
<b>MININT</b>	Ministry of the Interior	<b>VSI</b>	International solidarity volunteering
<b>MSF</b>	Médecins sans Frontières (Doctors Without Borders)		
<b>MTE</b>	Ministry for the Energy Transition		

## 2.

# LIST OF BODIES FOR REGULAR SECTORAL CONSULTATION WITH CSOS

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- Monitoring group of the “Innovating Together” strategy bringing together actors from the Social and Solidarity Economy (SSE)
- Monitoring group of the “Philanthropy and Development” strategy bringing together foundations
- Monitoring group of the “Human Rights and Development” strategy
- Platform of French stakeholders in legal and judicial cooperation abroad
- “Global Health” group
- Inter-Ministerial Food Security Group (GISA)
- Plateforme RSE (*in charge of drafting recommendations on social, environmental and governance issues raised by Corporate Social Responsibility*)
- OECD National Contact Point (NCP)
- Climate ambassador group/Réseau Action Climat (RAC)
- Christchurch Call Advisory Network (*combating the dissemination of terrorist content online*)
- Appel à l’action international pour défendre les droits de l’enfant dans l’environnement numérique (*initiative to defend children’s rights in the digital environment*)
- Groupe de concertation humanitaire (GCH) (Humanitarian Coordination Group)







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**Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs**

Directorate-General for Global Affairs, Culture, Education and International  
Development

**Civil Society, Civic Engagement and Youth Department**

27 rue de la Convention – 75732 Paris Cedex 15

[secretariat.dgm-civ@diplomatie.gouv.fr](mailto:secretariat.dgm-civ@diplomatie.gouv.fr)

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pour la société civile,  
l'engagement citoyen  
et la jeunesse