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Civil Society Partnership Policy

Guidelines for the Ministry of Internal Affairs Engagement with Civil Society Partners.

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Civil Society Partnerships Policy

1. INTRODUCTION

The Ministry of Internal Affairs (MOIA) is responsible for the delivery of key outputs of social policy across the Cook Islands. This includes the following outputs of: Welfare payments, child and family services, the elderly and disability, gender and development and youth and sports. In carrying out its mandate, the MOIA works with a broad range of stakeholders to address these social needs and support our most vulnerable communities. The MOIA under instruction of the Government of the Cook Islands has determined that engagement with Civil Society (CS) stakeholders is necessary to ensure the delivery of its annual business plan and social development priorities.

The MOIA recognises the importance and value of our country's Civil Society and its role in ensuring social needs are met and that necessary improvements take place for individuals, families and communities. In order to ensure quality delivery of its services and that meaningful dialogue is practiced, the MOIA seeks to clarify its working partnerships with its Civil Society partners in relation to the following key policies and plans: the National Youth Policy, the Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Policy and implementation plan, the national disability Policy and National Action Plan 2008 – 2012, Rau Ti Para - the Elderly Policy and proposed Child and family policy.

Defining Civil Society

In recognising that Government is responsible for setting national priorities and mobilizing the necessary resources to address those priorities, Civil Society in the Cook Islands is deemed to be:

*'that part of society that is separate from the state and the private sector, e.g. associations and groups that operate within society to **advance common interests and facilitate collective action**. The term Civil Society can be used to refer to the public arena for debate on societal issues, as well as the values and institutions that enable citizens to participate in political and social decision making.'*¹

Roles of Civil Society

Alongside government's leadership and response, Civil Society organisations and groups in meeting their obligations to their members and communities, fulfil a wide range of real and potential roles in our country's development. This includes advocating for those without power in the community, engaging with those who government can't reach, providing rapid humanitarian response in areas of greatest need, working to address hardship at the community and village level, providing information and services to the community, mobilizing community resources and promoting community participation in sustainable development. Civil Society also has a role in providing alternative views to those of government and scrutinizing the impact and effort of agencies and systems in the community.

Working as Partners

The MOIA acknowledges that there is no one right arrangement with its CS partners and a distinction can be made between the purposes and nature of these partnerships. In broad terms, partnerships can usefully be seen to range on a continuum from networking through to collaboration that will guide MOIAs engagement with CS partners.

¹ P.5, NZAID (2010), Guideline: Working with Civil Society Organisations

Partnership Continuum



Networking involves the exchange of information for mutual benefit. This requires little time and trust between partners.

Coordinating involves exchanging information and altering activities for a common purpose.

Cooperating involves exchanging information, altering activities and sharing resources. It requires a significant amount of time, high level of trust between partners and sharing the turf between agencies. **Collaborating**. In addition to the other activities described above, collaboration includes enhancing the capacity of the other partner for mutual benefit and a common purpose. Collaborating requires the partner to give up a part of their turf to another agency to create a better or more seamless service system.²

The continuum above shows that 'not all partnerships will or should move to collaboration. In some cases, networking is the appropriate response. The nature of the partnership will depend on the need, purpose and willingness of participating agencies to engage in the partnership. As a partnership moves towards collaboration, the more embedded it will need to become in the core work of the agencies involved.'³

2. STATEMENT OF POLICY

The MOIA will ensure that its engagement with Civil Society partners is actioned in such a way to create the most relevant, effective and sustainable social development outcomes⁴ that enables the full and active participation of all members of Cook Islands society.

3. PURPOSE

The partnerships between MOIA and Civil Society partners are key to ensuring 'quality of life' outcomes for all. This policy will enable the MOIA to meet its obligations as set out in the National Sustainable Development Plan, goal 4 - Social Development that states that:

*'Investment in social development is needed to promote opportunities for all to ensure social inclusion. The aim for social investment is to create a virtuous circle grounded on family and community unity. Our investment in social development will result in a healthier, better educated, employable and productive population.'*⁵

The strategies of this goal are to:-

- Ensure gender equality and empower our women

² Refer to A partnership tool developed for health promotion, McLeod, Vichealth, and adapted from: *Himmelman A 2001, 'on coalitions and the transformation of power relations: Collaborative betterment and collaborative empowerment', American Journal of Community Psychology, vol. 29, no. 2.*

³ Ibid: p.1

⁴ Refer to NSDP Goal 4 and MOIA social policies for description of outcomes.

⁵ NSDP P.29.

- Guarantee that our children are safe and well cared for; that our youth are given the opportunity to grow as valuable members of society; our persons with disability are valued and included in our development and where our elderly are acknowledged for the contributions to society and are looked after.
- Ensure that we have strong families and communities
- Access to Leisure, recreation and sport.

In guiding the MOIA further, these NSDP strategies have determined that:

*'Meeting the needs of our children, youth, persons with disabilities and the elderly requires **coordinated inter-agency support** and a **strong partnership** between government, Civil Society and communities.'*

*'Government will commit to develop and implement robust policy interventions to address the needs and capacities of those groups and legislation that will protect and ensure their human rights and wellbeing.' In addition, 'policy interventions will focus on **inclusiveness, value the contribution** that these groups make to a cohesive society and its sustainable development' and 'will be mainstreamed into the national policy environment ... and 'fulfil regional and international obligations.'*

Stronger Families and Communities recognises that *'government, the private sector, civil society organisations, communities, families and individuals **working together will be fundamental** in building stronger families and communities'* and *'Government will **work in collaboration** with other key stakeholders and our communities to develop and implement policy.'*⁶

In addition, the NSDP determines that *'Our culture and social heritage will be incorporated into our strategies for ... social development.'*⁷

Furthermore, the NSDP goal 8 -Law and Order strategy of reducing reoffending through offender rehabilitation also determines that *'particular attention will be paid to our young offenders' ... and ... 'we will work in collaboration with other agencies and stakeholders.'*⁸

At the international and regional level, the MOIA is committed to its mandated responsibilities of the Pacific Plan, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and Human Rights Conventions, namely the Convention on the elimination of discrimination against women (CEDAW), the Convention of the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the rights of Persons with disabilities.

4. SCOPE

This policy applies to all MOIA staff where MOIA is the lead agency for achieving the outcomes of the National Youth Policy, the Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Policy and implementation plan, the national disability policy and National Action Plan 2008 – 2012, Rau Ti Para - the Elderly Policy, the proposed Child and family policy and other relevant interactions of the MOIA that guide good practice.

5. PRINCIPLES, OUTCOMES and OBJECTIVES

The guiding principles of this policy include:

⁶ Refer to page 31 of NSDP 2011-2015.

⁷ Ibid. Page 32.

⁸ Ibid. page 41.

Overarching Principle of Partnership - The relationship between MOIA and Civil Society partners should be founded on appreciation of the constraints under which all sides operate, mutual respect, reciprocated trust, authentic consultation, genuine negotiation and a shared recognition of common purpose.

Supporting Principles

1. Recognition of the distinctive and diverse, but often complementary, roles of CSOs
2. Recognition of the independence of CSOs irrespective of any funding relationship that might exist
3. Recognition that the effective participation of Civil Society is a key element in local, national and international development initiatives
4. Commitment to open and ongoing dialogue on policy and practice
5. Commitment to simplification of processes and requirements in meeting transparency and accountability obligations
6. CSO empowerment is critical for achieving the social and economic development goal of the country.

Outcomes

1. Inclusive and integrated implementation of MOIA led social development outcomes
2. Improved Civil Society and MOIA engagement towards addressing social needs and those communities most at risk
3. Enhanced resilience of Civil Society partners

Strategic Objectives:

In order to achieve the social development outcomes of MOIA mandated policies, the objectives of this policy are to:

1. Ensure proactive and relevant information sharing between the MOIA and CSO
2. Recognise and support the independence and contribution of Civil Society to achieving social development outcomes
3. Strengthen MOIA and Civil Society partnerships for joint service delivery
4. Ensure authentic consultation and dialogue between MOIA and relevant CSO in the development, planning and implementation of its policies and plans.

6. POLICY DETAIL

Civil Society Organisations

Civil society organisations can be identified through varied groups, organisations and bodies. This includes traditional kinship and village structures as well as community level interest groups, legally incorporated societies and as affiliates to umbrella organisations and associations. Access to accurate and timely information about CSOs is important to inform evidenced based policy decisions of partnerships, dialogue and service delivery.

Volunteerism as a source of civic action along with efforts of kinship, village and island networks are fundamental to advancing common interests and collective action. Ensuring that the rights of those most vulnerable are maintained and ensuring that assistance is provided at the level where people work and reside is acknowledged. Understanding the basis and nature of CSO relationships with each other and the individuals and families they serve will inform how and where MOIA can support CS efforts.

Support to Civil Society

Support to CS is provided through a range of avenues of governments, development partners, international CS organisations and trusts as well as multilateral agencies and philanthropic individuals. Resources to support CS organisations come in a range of forms from cash grants and service contracts to technical advice, services, training, goods and equipment. With limited resources attention to analysis of what needs and services are available will contribute to effective delivery and avoid duplication.

Genuine dialogue and joint service delivery by CS and MOIA is of key importance to ensure the rights of individuals, families and communities are maintained and their needs are met. This includes promoting client centred approaches that integrate case management. This is carried out with regular conferencing of clients to ensure interventions of multiple agencies are coordinated and joined up to provide a holistic service. It also requires the political will of societal leaders to voice and advocate as well as to account and serve.

Focus Areas

This policy establishes four focus areas that take account of the nature of partnerships between MOIA and CS partners, the purpose of those partnerships and how each of the strategic objectives will be achieved.

Focus area 1 Information Sharing and Reporting		
Strategic Objective	Description	Instrument/Action
Ensure proactive and relevant information sharing between the MOIA and CSO	Provide transparency, predictability of policy and plans. Taking an 'open and right door' versus a 'closed wrong door' customer service approach by government.	As set out in each of the identified social policies and plans including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish and communicate to stakeholders identified MOIA point of contacts for all relevant MOIA social policy matters. • Relevant Stakeholder reporting mechanisms • Annually maintain a CSO's register • Develop and implement relevant consultation schedules and agenda for each social policy
Focus area 2 Civil Society Empowerment		
Strategic Objective	Description	Instrument/Action
Recognise and support the independence and contribution of CS to achieving social development outcomes	Support volunteerism, socialization of CSOs with government systems and decision making systems, policies and processes	As set out in each of the identified social policies and plans including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outline and communicate relevant government systems • Review and amend to ensure relevant MOIA systems are user friendly. • Provide access and information to CSOs to relevant training opportunities available to MOIA Staff and stakeholders • Establish protocols for requests to facilitate the exchange of relevant statistical data with CSOs and that protects the rights and privacy of individuals.
Focus area 3 Targeted Service Delivery		
Strategic Objective	Description	Instrument/Action
Strengthen MOIA and Civil Society partnerships for joint service delivery	Purchase of services through grant, private sector and where appropriate outsourcing of government functions and services.	As set out in each of the identified social policies and plans including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify priority areas to guide and establish range of funding relationships with CSOs • Maintain funding source register that combines grant, government and private sector funding opportunities.

	Deliver services that are people focused and take a holistic/joined up approach where multiple agencies work together to wrap services around individuals, families and communities.	
Focus area 4 Communication and Dialogue		
Strategic Objective	Description	Instrument/Action
Ensure authentic consultation and dialogue between MOIA and relevant CSO in the development, planning and implementation of its policies and plans.	Promote public accountability, avenues of redress, input into policy development, advocacy, monitoring and reporting.	As set out in each of the identified social policies and plans including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish and support Advisory boards, reference groups and expert panels for dialogue • Develop and use tools that formalize arrangements between CSOs and MOIA • Establish and implement policy review schedule and consultations plans for each social policy.

7. RISK AND MITIGATION

The table below lists examples of possible consequences, along with mitigating actions, that relate to this policy not being adhered to:

Issue/Risk – Examples	Mitigation - Examples
Decision-making restricted to a narrow group.	Increased participation by CSOs in policy and decision making.
Limited family and community participation in addressing social issues	High level participation in programmes Effective involvement of community and CSOs in programmes and processes
Little support for social policies and programmes from the community and CSOs	
Isolation and restricted support opportunities to deliver services.	Active collaboration with community and CSO and groups.
No involvement of stakeholders.	Partnerships with CSOs and development partners.
Widespread criticism of processes, systems and access to information. Perception that MOIA services are poor. Ineffective use of resources Low staff and volunteer morale and high turnover	Effective and regular communication at all levels.
Duplication and saturation of services	Analysis and prioritizing of service areas.

8. MONITORING, EVALUATION AND REVIEW

Monitoring is keeping track of the workings of a policy. This includes noting whether the policy is referred and adhered to during the preparation and implementation of social development processes and programmes.

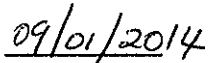
Evaluation involves making careful judgments about the worth, quality and benefit of a policy. It provides feedback on the efficiency, effectiveness and performance of policy and is critical to policy improvement and innovation.

Review refers to implementing any required changes that have become apparent during the monitoring and evaluation processes.

The Social Policy Division will monitor and evaluate the implementation and impact of this policy and report as required. The policy will be reviewed as per the policy register on an ongoing basis by the Director: Social Policy Division. Feedback will be presented to key stakeholders in a range of modalities. This policy will be reviewed in consultation with CS stakeholders 24 months after implementation and thereafter every 36 months.



Ms Bredina Drollett
Secretary of Internal Affairs



Date: