

*Protecting Civic Space in a Turbulent World***DRAFT AGENDA****Wednesday, 18 June (09:00 – 19:00 CEST)**OECD Conference Centre, Room CC5 + [Zoom](#)**09:00 – 09:30** *Welcoming coffee***09:30 – 10:00** *Setting the scene***10:00 – 11:15** *Roundtable – Protecting Civic Space in a Turbulent World***11:15 – 11:45** *Coffee break**Technical Sessions***11:45 – 13:15** *Session 1 – Working on Civic Space in Politically Constrained Environments***13:15 – 14:30** *Networking lunch***14:30 – 16:00** *Session 2 – Consultation on the Five-year Implementation Report of the DAC Recommendation on Enabling Civil Society***16:00 – 16:15** *Coffee break***16:15 – 17:45** *Session 3 – Strengthening CSO Accountability to Counter Shrinking Civic Space***17:45 – 19:00** *Reception***Thursday, 19 June (09:30 – 17.45 CEST)**

OECD Conference Centre

09:30 – 10:00 *Welcoming coffee**Technical Sessions***10:00 – 11:15** *Session 4 – Engaging Civil Society for Inclusive Climate Change Adaptation Governance*
*Room CC5 + [Zoom](#)***11:15 – 11:30** *Coffee break***11:30 – 13:00** *Session 5A – Monitoring Civic Space*
*Room CC5 + [Zoom](#)***Session 5B – Consultation on Developing Practical Guidelines for Locally Led Development Co-operation**
Room CC20 + [Zoom](#)

13:00 – 14:15 *Networking lunch*

14:15 – 15:45 **Session 6 – Interlinkages between Civic Space and Gender Equality through the Lens of Development Co-operation**
Room CC5 + [Zoom](#)

15:45 – 16:00 *Coffee break*

16:00 – 17:30 **Session 7 – Changing Official Development Assistance (ODA) Landscape: Implications for Civil Society and Civic Space**
Room CC5 + [Zoom](#)

17:30 – 17:45 **Closing remarks**

DRAFT ANNOTATED AGENDA

Wednesday, 18 June (09:00 – 19:00 CEST)

OECD Conference Centre, Room CC5 + Zoom

09:00 – 09:30 *Welcoming coffee***Setting the scene**

09:30 – 10:00

Carsten Staur, Chair, Development Assistance Committee (DAC)**Mary Beth Goodman**, Deputy Secretary-General, OECD**Keynote speaker: Aidan Eyakuze**, CEO, Open Government Partnership (OGP)**Roundtable – Protecting Civic Space in a Turbulent World**

In recent decades, civic space has become increasingly constrained, with a growing number of countries introducing measures that restrict the ability of civil society organisations (CSOs) to operate freely.¹ The erosion of civic space is intertwined with broader trends of democratic backsliding and escalating global conflicts, which are reshaping the landscape of international development co-operation. Yet CSOs are key actors in advancing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), delivering services, fostering accountability, acting on the frontlines of crises, and amplifying the voices of marginalised people. Enabling CSOs to thrive in increasingly restrictive environments has become a pressing priority for development actors, including DAC members.

10:00 – 11:15

The roundtable discussion will highlight current civic space trends, illustrate practices of different stakeholders to address restrictions, and generate ideas for further action to respect, protect and promote civic space in today's challenging context. The roundtable will feature guidance from the forthcoming OECD Toolkit on Coordinating Action for Civic Space, designed to support implementation of the [OECD DAC Recommendation on Enabling Civil Society in Development Co-operation and Humanitarian Assistance](#). The roundtable will offer participants practical examples of taking proactive and preventive actions to protect civic space, on dialogue and co-ordination within and between countries, with regional and international bodies, and with CSOs, on the value of inclusive and independent civil society and open civic space.

Moderator: David Moore, Vice President of Legal Affairs, International Center for Not-for-Profit Law (ICNL)

Speakers:

- **Gunvor Bjerglund Thomsen**, Head, Partnerships & Civil Society, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Denmark
- **Emilie Palamy Pradichit**, Founder & Executive Director, Manushya Foundation
- **Berenice Barinas**, Executive Director, Government Ethics and Integrity, Dominican Republic
- **Jacqueline Wood**, Team Lead, Civil Society, Reforms and Partnerships for Development Impact Division, Development Co-operation Directorate, OECD

11:15 – 11:45 *Coffee break*

¹ CIVICUS (2024). [Rights Reversed: A Downward Shift in Civic Space \(2019-2023\)](#).

Session 1 – Working on Civic Space in Politically Constrained Environments

Politically constrained environments refer to situations where the space for and the quality of political dialogue between a development co-operation and humanitarian assistance provider and partner-country government is significantly limited, deficient or non-existent. This deteriorated dialogue on development often impacts the way providers can support the protection and promotion of civic space. Several factors can degrade a political dialogue with an impact on development co-operation. For partner countries, these may include, but are not limited to, undemocratic or unconstitutional changes of government, human rights violations, contested elections, and geopolitical tensions. For provider countries this may arise due to other foreign policy objectives, changes of government, shifts in policy priorities, and availability of resources.

11:45 – 13:15

This session will explore how providers and practitioners support civic space in politically constrained environments. Drawing on concrete examples and experiences, it will address intervention strategies and key dilemmas, including on the use of civil society as a channel for ODA, and efforts to promote and defend civic space in politically constrained environments. Participants will discuss the emerging findings of research conducted by the OECD DAC networks on conflict and fragility (INCAF) and governance (GovNet), and draw on participants' practical experiences with co-ordination, adaptive responses and continued engagement, while also examining what actions to avoid. The session aims to equip providers and practitioners with insights to navigate the risks while reinforcing the resilience of civic actors.

Moderator: **Sanne de Mayer**, Delegate to the OECD Development Assistance Committee, Belgium

Presentation: **Marc De Tollenaere**, Policy Analyst, Policies and Networks Division, Development Co-operation Directorate, OECD

Discussants:

- **Sarah De Figueiredo**, Deputy General Secretary of the National Council for Development and International Solidarity, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, France
- **Nadiia Ivanova**, Director of the Center for Human Rights and Democracy, People in Need, Czechia

13:15 – 14:30 *Networking lunch*

Session 2 – Consultation on the Five-year Implementation Report of the DAC Recommendation on Enabling Civil Society**14:30 – 16:00**

The adoption of the [DAC Recommendation on Enabling Civil Society in Development Co-operation and Humanitarian Assistance](#) in July 2021 was the first international standard specific to enabling civil society to maximise its contribution to the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and to protect and strengthen democracy. The Recommendation supports DAC members and other providers in addressing civic space and working with civil society actors, underscoring that these actors must enhance their effectiveness, transparency, and accountability. Since its adoption, DAC members have made relevant progress on reforming policies and programmes in line with the DAC Recommendation and have taken important steps to disseminate its content.

As the five-year mark of its adoption approaches in July 2026, the DAC is preparing a Report to assess progress made on the implementation, dissemination, and continued relevance of the Recommendation. As part of the OECD DAC Civil Society Days, the DAC Community of Practice on Civil Society and the DAC-CSO Reference Group (CSO RG), in collaboration with the OECD Secretariat, are conducting consultations to inform this Report. Open to all participants, the current consultation will discuss the state of play of the Recommendation, highlight good practices, and identify areas requiring further efforts to enable civil society. This CSDs consultation will be one among other sources informing the Report.

Moderator: **Carla Musi**, Policy Analyst, Civil Society, Reforms and Partnerships for Development Impact Division, Development Co-operation Directorate, OECD

Opening speakers:

- **Valérie Grenier-Lafon**, Deputy Director, Strategic Program Policy and Partnerships Division, Global Affairs Canada
- **Brian Tomlinson**, Executive Director, AidWatch Canada

Guided discussions in break out groups:

Participants will break into three hybrid groups to discuss the different areas enabling civil society, addressed in the three pillars of the DAC Recommendation:

- Group 1/Pillar 1: Respecting, protecting and promoting civic space
- Group 2/Pillar 2: Supporting and engaging with civil society
- Group 3/ Pillar 3: Incentivising CSO effectiveness, transparency and accountability

Each group will discuss the following guiding questions:

- What changes have you seen in policies and programmes related to Pillar 1 / 2 / 3 since the adoption of the DAC Recommendation in July 2021?
- What good practices have you identified related to Pillar 1 / 2 / 3?
- Which provisions of Pillar 1 / 2 / 3 do you see as most important in the current climate, and going forward?
- What further efforts and attention are needed to advance the provisions of Pillar 1 / 2 / 3?

Reporting back and closing:

- **Rapporteurs** share main takeaways from discussions

Session 3 – Strengthening CSO Accountability to Counter Shrinking Civic Space

As civic space continues to shrink globally, civil society organisations (CSOs) face increasing restrictions that hinder their ability to operate effectively. Strengthening CSO accountability to their varied stakeholders – their constituencies, the broader public, provider and partner-country governments amongst others – can serve as a key strategy for building trust and ensuring legitimacy and can provide a counterweight to restrictive measures. Transparency and accountability not only enhance CSO effectiveness but also help push back against narratives that seek to delegitimise civil society. Recognising this, “incentivising CSO effectiveness, transparency and accountability”, is one of the three pillars of the 2021 [OECD DAC Recommendation on Enabling Civil Society](#). DAC members and other development co-operation providers have a role to play in shaping enabling environments and funding modalities that encourage CSOs to be accountable to the people they serve or represent, while CSOs themselves hold responsibility for their own accountability.

This session will explore CSO accountability measures and how accountability can be leveraged as a tool to protect and expand civic space, drawing on policies and practices from

16:15 – 17:45

provider countries, partner countries, and CSOs. The discussion will highlight national strategies, CSO-led self-regulation initiatives, and global accountability mechanisms, bringing together diverse perspectives to reflect on how accountability can serve as a shield rather than a constraint, reinforcing civil society's resilience in increasingly challenging environments.

Moderator: Megan Colnar, Executive Director, Accountable Now

Speakers:

- **Oleksandr Yarema**, State Secretary, Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine
- **Domenico Carolei**, Lecturer, University of Stirling
- **Anne Lindeberg**, Senior Policy Advisor for Civil Society, Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida)
- **Fredrick Olinga**, National Coordinator, Development Network of Indigenous Voluntary Associations (DENIVA)
- **Hans Rosenkranz Silva**, Executive Director, Comunidad de Organizaciones Solidarias

17:45 – 19:00 *Reception*

Thursday, 19 June (09:30 – 17.45 CEST)

OECD Conference Centre, Room CC5 and CC20 + Zoom

09:30 – 10:00 **Welcoming coffee**

Session 4 – Engaging Civil Society for Inclusive Climate Change Adaptation Governance

Room CC5 + [Zoom](#)

10:00 – 11:15

Adaptation finance commitments have doubled since the 2015 Paris Agreement and adaptation institutions, policy instruments, and actors are proliferating. Official development assistance (ODA) targeting climate objectives averaged nearly USD 50 billion (32.9% of total allocable bilateral ODA) in 2021-2022. Yet, despite the significant escalation of adaptation financing, institutions and action, recent work by the OECD DAC's governance network (GovNet) has shown that these efforts are falling short of delivering sustained and inclusive adaptation outcomes, particularly for the most vulnerable communities. The localisation of adaptation objectives by government actors, ODA providers and partners is typically top-down and highly technocratic, while adaptation knowledge and resources are often captured by vested interests, undermining the potential for effective engagement with local civil society, communities or other local actors.

Given the urgency to address the climate challenges, this session will explore the opportunities and constraints of current local climate change adaptation governance approaches, with particular emphasis on the role of civil society, community groups and other local actors. The session will also examine what is needed for ODA to better support effective, inclusive, and sustainable adaptation efforts in partner countries. It will explore how ODA can better assist climate-exposed communities to navigate and

connect with leading adaptation authorities, funding, and action, and identify practical strategies for ODA to enhance the influence and agency of local stakeholders.

Moderator: **Catherine Anderson**, Team Lead, Governance and Anti-corruption, Development Co-operation Directorate, OECD

Speakers:

- **Andrea Nightingale**, Professor, University of Oslo, Norway
- **Dil Khatri**, Executive Director, Southasia Institute of Advanced Studies (SIAS), Nepal
- **Nicola Nixon**, Senior Director of Governance, Asian Foundation
- **Suranjana Gupta**, India-based Special Advisor, Community Resilience, Huairou Commission

11:15 – 11:30 *Coffee break*

Session 5A – Monitoring Civic Space

Room CC5 + [Zoom](#)

The [OECD Practical Guide for Policymakers on Protecting and Promoting Civic Space](#) highlights regular monitoring as a key step to a whole-of-government approach to effectively protect and promote civic space. This requires a comprehensive and nuanced monitoring of the implementation of civic freedoms and other elements that shape the enabling environment for civil society organisations (CSOs). However, this is a complex task that is not yet widely developed among OECD members and partner countries. Existing challenges include the collection, disaggregation and proactive disclosure of up-to-date high-quality data, as well as the cross-cutting nature of civic space, with many actors and policy areas potentially involved.

This technical session led by the OECD Observatory of Civic Space in the Public Governance Directorate will explore current efforts by governments and civil society to monitor civic space, both online and offline, and to develop meaningful indicators. Following a presentation by the OECD on its civic space data collection and monitoring framework, a moderated panel discussion will showcase opportunities for enhanced collaboration between governments and civil society on monitoring civic space. The discussions will focus on the value-added of this collaboration, as civil society actors are often the first to be aware of emerging challenges and can meaningfully participate in data collection and validation for national statistical systems. Participants will then have the opportunity to pose questions to panellists during the Q&A.

Moderator: **Nina Lenglinger**, Policy Analyst, Open Government Unit, Innovative, Digital and Open Government Division, Public Governance Directorate, OECD

Speakers:

- **Carlos Alberto Hernández Lozano**, Advisor to the Deputy Director, National Administrative Department of Statistics (DANE), Colombia
 - **Serah Mwikali Ndunda**, Manager data, Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (KNBS), Kenya
 - **Cathryn Grothe**, Senior Research Analyst, Democracy Studies, Freedom House
 - **Staffan Lindberg**, Director, V-DEM Institute
 - **Maria Lehtonen**, Senior Specialist, Ministry of Justice, Finland
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11:30 – 13:00
(parallel session)

Session 5B – Consultation on Developing Practical Guidelines for Locally Led Development Co-operation

Room CC20 + [Zoom](#)

Locally led development co-operation has gained political traction as global calls intensify to challenge entrenched norms, biases, and power imbalances in development co-operation. It has become more evident that locally led development is an integral part of effective development co-operation as it is a process of shifting agency dynamics in specific contexts in support of a whole-of-society ownership over development processes. Building on the inclusive OECD DAC peer learning exercise that culminated in the synthesis report “[Pathways towards effective locally led development co-operation](#)”, there is now a need to move from shared understanding to concrete action. Therefore, the DAC has committed to developing common guidelines on locally led development co-operation. The objective of these guidelines is to serve as the go-to reference for DAC members to support the operationalisation of their locally led development ambitions. It will provide concrete areas for action to help implement locally led development co-operation effectively.

This session will focus on an early-stage draft outlining the approach to and the main areas of focus for the light guidelines which build on the [enablers](#) identified during the peer learning exercise. The Secretariat seeks to foster an inclusive and open environment for debate to help define the vision and delve deeper on the concrete operational areas for action.

11:30 – 13:00
(parallel session)

The Secretariat will introduce the session and focus the first part of the discussion on the opening chapter of the guidelines: “Locally led approaches in an evolving development co-operation global context”. The participants in the plenary will have the opportunity to react.

Moderator: **Gregory De Paepe**, Policy Analyst, Development Effectiveness Team, Development Co-operation Directorate, OECD

Speakers:

- **Gunjan Veda**, Global Secretary, Movement for Community Led Development
- **Caro Krijger**, Head of the Civil Society Division, Department for Social Development of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Netherlands (TBC)

Guided discussions in break out groups:

Participants will break into four breakout groups to discuss working with and through “international intermediaries” as an entry point to the different sections of the guidelines.

- The breakout groups will address the four main sections of the guidelines: 1. Policy enablers, 2. Institutional enablers, 3. Financing enablers, 4. Management enablers.
- Each group will assess the specific role of intermediaries in enabling locally led development across the four groups of enablers outlined, as per specific guiding questions.
- The objective is to gather perspectives and insights on how DAC members can advance locally led development co-operation via their engagement with international intermediaries.

Reporting back and closing:

Rapporteurs share main takeaways from the discussions

13:00 – 14:15 *Networking lunch*

Session 6 – Interlinkages between Civic Space and Gender Equality through the Lens of Development Co-operation*Room CC5 + [Zoom](#)*

Women's rights and gender equality are inextricably linked to democratic civic space. Evidence shows a strong correlation between the status of women and a country's democratic health: countries where women are thriving tend to have autonomous civil societies, fair elections, and accountable institutions.² Conversely, women's rights and gender equality are often the first targets in environments of democratic backsliding and rising inequalities. As trusted, community-based actors, women's rights organisations are central to crisis response and democratic resilience, yet their operating space is increasingly constrained. Restrictive policies and funding limitations undermine their ability to work effectively. Funding for women's rights organisations remains alarmingly low: official development assistance (ODA) to these groups averaged just USD 481 million annually in 2022–2023, less than 1% of total ODA for gender equality.

14:15 – 15:45

This session will explore how development co-operation can respond to the interlinked challenges of shrinking civic space and gender inequality. Panelists will share examples, highlighting both persistent barriers and emerging good practices for strengthening women's rights movements and civic space. The discussion will be followed by an interactive Q&A, offering space for exchange, and collective learning.

Moderator: **Alessandro Bellantoni**, Director for Policy and Partnerships, Open Government Partnership (OGP)

Speakers:

- **Suyen Barahona**, Executive Director, Colmena Fund
- **Glanis Changachirere**, Regional Coordinator, African Women Leaders Forum
- **Cecilia Zöller**, Swiss Agency for Development Co-operation
- **Anne-Sophie Schäffer**, Euro-mediterranean Foundation of Support to Human Rights Defenders

15:45 – 16:00 *Coffee break*

Session 7 – Changing Official Development Assistance (ODA) Landscape: Implications for Civil Society and Civic Space*Room CC5 + [Zoom](#)*

In a rapidly evolving global context, changing political priorities and budget constraints are reshaping support for civil society organisations (CSOs) and civic space. Recent announcements by some DAC members raise concerns about future levels of official development assistance (ODA). Simulations developed by the OECD, based on a recent survey of DAC members, suggest that ODA could decline by between 9% and 17% from 2024 to 2025³, with the decline likely to extend to ODA for CSOs and civic space. This, coupled with ongoing civic space restrictions ranging from burdensome legal and

16:00 – 17:30

² Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security (2023). [Exploring the Links between Women's Status and Democracy](#).

³ OECD (2024). [Preliminary official development assistance levels in 2024 – Detailed summary note, DCD\(2025\)6](#).

administrative requirements to anti-CSO narratives, is placing additional pressure on CSOs at a time when their role in humanitarian response and in protecting and promoting democracy, human rights, and gender equality is needed more than ever. According to the CIVICUS Monitor, nearly 30% of the world's population now lives in countries where civic space is classified as "closed".⁴ In this context, a pressing question emerges: What can be done to strengthen civil society's resilience and sustainability in the face of growing pressures, and to protect civic space from further deterioration?

This session will bring together diverse perspectives to examine the implications of these global trends and their impacts on civil society, and to explore potential solutions. Panellists will present diverse approaches to funding civil society and to strengthening its resilience. The conversation will also address the importance of fostering complementarity between actors to support the increased agency of CSOs in partner countries. The session will be followed by an interactive Q&A, inviting participants to reflect collectively on the future of civil society and civic space – how to protect it, sustain it, and ensure it remains a driving force for sustainable development and democratic governance.

Moderator: Robin Ogilvy, Head of Division, Reforms and Partnerships for Development Impact, Development Co-operation Directorate, OECD

Speakers:

- **Sheena Adams**, Communications Director, Accountability Lab
- **Mark Finegan**, Director of Civil Society Unit, Department of Foreign Affairs, Ireland
- **Jeroo Billimoria**, Co-Founder, One Family Foundation
- **Chilande Kuloba-Warria**, Team Leader, Warande Advisory Center
- **Helena Hofbauer Balmori**, International Program Director, Ford Foundation

Closing remarks

17:30 – 17:45

Julia Nielson, Acting Director, Development Co-operation Directorate, OECD
Carsten Staur, Chair, Development Assistance Committee (DAC)

⁴ CIVICUS (2024). [People Power under Attack 2024](#).