

FRANCE & CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS

The Directorate General of Global Affairs, Development and Partnerships of the French Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs (MAEE) is committed to take into account the multidimensional nature of globalization and fully deal with cross-cutting global issues. The Unit for Relations with Civil Society promotes dialogue between all actors involved in development.

In 2009, the French inter-ministerial committee for international cooperation and development (CICID, Comité interministériel de la coopération internationale et du développement) highlighted the importance of involving citizens in development policy.

While increasing the effectiveness of French cooperation for development, the involvement of non-governmental development actors in defining, implementing and monitoring policies also provides an opportunity to share expertise and experiences.



As part of its policy of development cooperation, France is developing its partnership with civil solidarity organizations (CSOs). These organizations play an important role as regards development and poverty reduction, humanitarian action and promoting human rights.



↓ A volunteer on a mission in Senegal.

The main partnership principles

- Civil society organizations are development actors in their own right, as was proven by the international work on aid effectiveness and in particular the 2008 Accra Agenda for Action. The French MAEE and French civil society organizations are working in partnership, while respecting each other's independence. Coordination Sud, as a national platform for French CSOs, is in regular contact with the MAEE.
- In order to promote the initiative of civil society organizations, the MAEE is supporting the ground-based and general interest projects proposed by the CSOs, taking into account the diversity of the French associative landscape.
- The dialogue and networking of all development actors as well as the support and the strengthening of local actors, with the aim of ownership, meet one of the requirements of sustainable development.

Dialogue with CSOs

- The consultation between the MAEE and the civil society organizations is part of a renewed framework.
- In this new architecture, the strategic council for non-governmental cooperation, whose creation was confirmed by the CICID in June 2009, is a flexible and lightweight architecture which aims to encourage free dialogue and discussions with civil society.
- At the same time, a culture of consultation is being mainstreamed. The creation of the Framework Document on Development Cooperation in 2010 was subject to deep consultation with civil society representatives. Several thematic works carried out in consultation between the MAEE and NGOs show evidence of a regular and quality relationship: work on innovative financing for development, discussions on the climate and biodiversity (preparation for the Durban and Rio+20 Conferences), work of the interministerial group on food security (GISA, Groupe interministériel pour la sécurité alimentaire), tax issues in developing countries, French expertise internationally, the Millennium Development Goals, etc.

THE STRATEGIC COUNCIL FOR NON-GOVERNMENTAL COOPERATION

The strategic council for non-governmental cooperation brings together around the Minister about twenty leading figures from different areas of civil society (leaders of non-governmental organizations, business foundations, universities, union members, decentralized cooperation actors). Its members sit in a private capacity. The council meets on the Minister's initiative in order to freely and openly debate the major cooperation and international solidarity issues.

Co-financing the NGO initiatives

■ In order to accompany French CSOs involved in international development, the MAEE supports their initiatives through an annual budget of €42 million for the 2011-2013 period. Since 2009, the management of this system has been the responsibility of the Agence française de développement (AFD) in collaboration with the Unit for Relations with Civil Society and the French diplomatic network.

■ A specialized committee to support NGO initiatives, formed from the AFD Board of Directors, is responsible for granting subsidies based on the projects submitted by NGOs (field interventions, development education and awareness raising, governance and protection of human rights, structure of the associative environment), according to the geographical and sector-based priorities established by the CICID.

■ It comprises four State representatives, two of whom are appointed by the Minister of Foreign and European Affairs, one by the Minister responsible for the Economy and one by the Minister of the Interior.

International solidarity volunteering

■ Solidarity volunteering is a special area of cooperation between the State and NGOs to achieve the shared objectives for development and poverty reduction. The MAEE accompanies volunteering initiatives by supporting systems such as international solidarity volunteers (ISV), or programmes like “Jeunesse Solidarité Internationale” (JSI, “international youth solidarity”) and “villes-vie-vacances-solidarité internationale” (VVV-SI, “cities-life-vacation-international solidarity”).

■ Today’s objective is to develop the quality and quantity of international volunteering for exchanges and solidarity, new terminology including the ISV but also different forms of international solidarity commitment, in particular the international civic service.

■ It is from this perspective that the France Volontaires platform was set up on 1 January 2010. Grouping together public authorities and associations, France Volontaires aims to be both the benchmark State operator in the area of volunteering and a support and service structure for actors in the sector.

“NON-GOVERNMENTAL DIPLOMACY”

This partnership encourages **the commitment of NGOs in major international debates**. The White Paper on French Foreign and European Policy 2008-2020 calls on France to develop this “non-governmental diplomacy”.

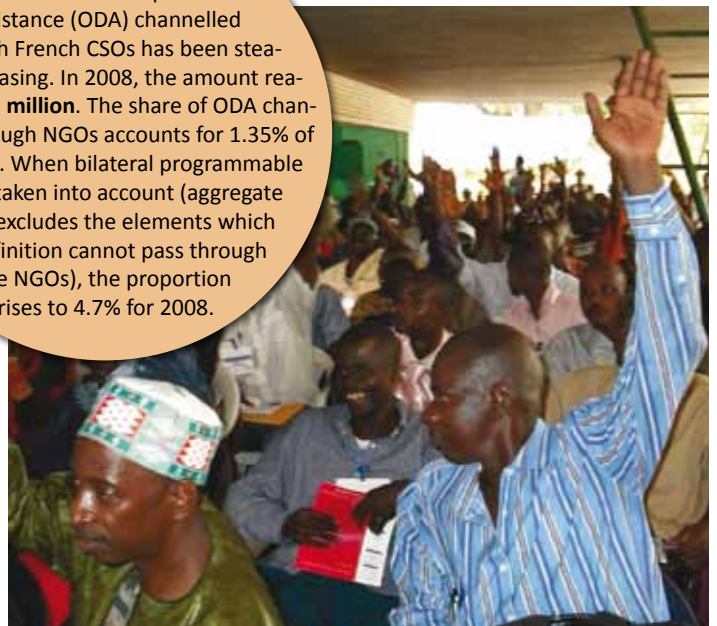
As was shown by the International Campaign to Ban Landmines, led by Handicap International and winner of the Nobel Peace Prize in 1997, interaction between CSOs and French diplomacy is a source of mutual enrichment, both for CSOs and government action.

CONCERTED MULTIPLE-STAKEHOLDER PROGRAMMES (PCPAS)

PCPAs gather together, around specific themes, both public authorities and civil societies from the North and South. Their objective is to contribute to the emergence of organized civil societies, which are capable of becoming recognized partners of the public authorities, and to allow the establishment or the strengthening of quality dialogue between civil societies and public authorities on the development and implementation of public policies.

There are currently five PCPAs in place: Morocco, Eastern Europe (Bulgaria, Moldova, Romania), Algeria, Guinea, Congo. For each PCPA, a leader from the French associative environment coordinates the programme’s actions: Solidarité laïque for the PCPAs of Morocco and Eastern Europe, the French committee for international solidarity (CFSI) for Algeria and Congo, and Aide et Action for Guinea.

Since 2006, the volume of official development assistance (ODA) channelled through French CSOs has been steadily increasing. In 2008, the amount reached **€102 million**. The share of ODA channelled through NGOs accounts for 1.35% of total ODA. When bilateral programmable ODA is taken into account (aggregate which excludes the elements which by definition cannot pass through the NGOs), the proportion rises to 4.7% for 2008.



↓ PROJEG general assembly of April 2011.

➤ FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

“Civil society and NGOs” on the MAEE website

www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/fr/actions-france_830/societe_civile_et_ONG_1052/index.html (French)

www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/en/france-priorities_1/civil-society-ngos_2500/index.html (English)

AFD (French)

www.afd.fr/home/AFD/nospartenaires/ONG

France Volontaires (French)

www.france-volontaires.org

Coordination Sud (French)

www.coordinationsud.org