

CSO Learning Event Report, 2019



05 DECEMBER 2019
Livelihood and Food Security Fund



Livelihoods and Food Security Fund

Managed by 

Introduction

LIFT has been using a variety of models to support and strengthen civil society, of which four main models are thematic partnerships, strategic partnerships, small grants funds, and learning and networking. LIFT's 2019-2023 phase will be marked by a series of strategic shifts that will help intensify LIFT's focus on inclusion of the most vulnerable: inclusion and social cohesion, gender equality and women's empowerment, ethnic/border states and conflict-affected areas, internally displaced persons and returnees, urban and peri-urban areas, and adoption and implementation of policies and reforms.

Under LIFT's strategic shifts, a CSO learning event was organised in December 2019 at Park Royal Hotel for CSOs to present what they expect from LIFT after 2019, and for LIFT to devise how to best support CSOs in the future..

Overview

A CSO learning event was organised with 189 participants from 80 TCSOs, six local civil society networks, 12 LNGOs and two INGOs. Facilitated by the LIFT team, CSOs drew their organisational timelines individually, discussed in groups divided by region to reflect on the organisational development trends of CSOs, their turning points in organisational lives, common indicators that influence the growth of CSOs, what CSOs appreciate of their partners and donors, why CSOs wish to get direct funding from LIFT or to get LIFT funding through other CSOs, NGOs or the UN, CSOs' sustainability plan and what CSOs expect from LIFT after 2019.

LIFT partners' organisational development trend/ timeline

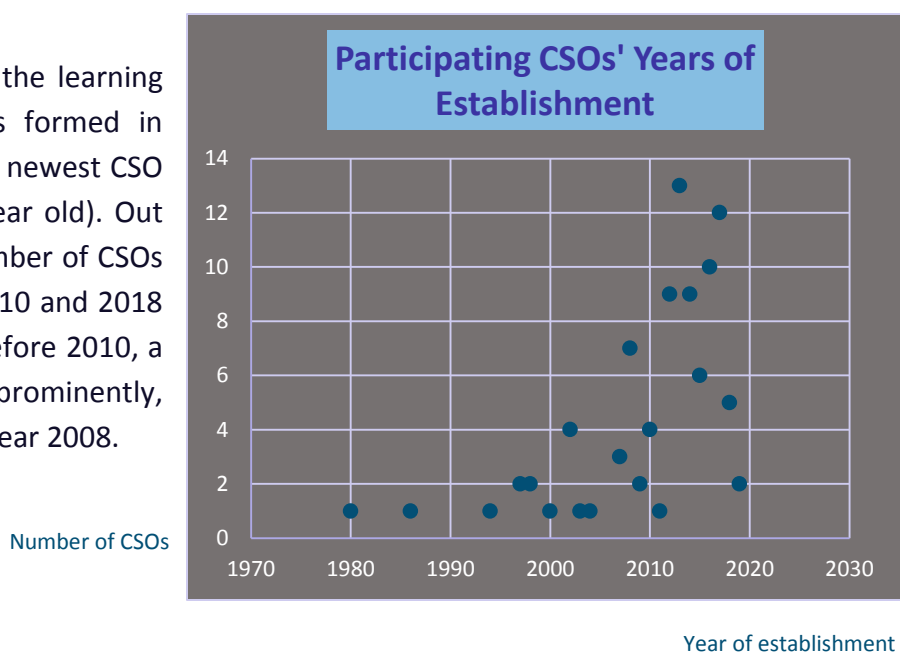
Part I

Using a timeline analysis of individual CSOs, this session analyses the established years of CSOs; the reason they emerged, how they see themselves in the future, whether and/or why they want to remain small or go for a big LNGO status, what their future plans are and what their sustainability strategies are.

1) Founding Years of CSOs

Of all the CSOs that joined the learning event, the oldest CSO was formed in 1980 (40 years old), and the newest CSO was formed in 2019 (one year old). Out of 98 CSOs, a significant number of CSOs was established between 2010 and 2018 (see Figure 1 on the left). Before 2010, a few CSOs emerged prominently, especially in year 2002 and year 2008.

Figure 1 CSOs' Founding Years



2) Motives for the establishment of CSOs

Almost 82% of the participant organisations are township level CSOs (TCSO), whereas 6% represent local CSO networks, and the remaining 12% embody LNGOs.

TCSO are created to primarily support;

- **Humanitarian aid and Emergency response:**
- **Agriculture, Livelihood and Food Security Action:** Seed producer group, livelihood, agri-technology, decent labour
- **Environmental Actions:** Mangrove Forest Conservation
- **Political:** Promote democratic principles and voter education
- **Water Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH)**
- **Child Protection and Child Rights**
- **Funeral Services**

The origin of TCSOs can be categorised in;

- **Volunteer and Youth-Based:** Volunteer groups, youth groups, (some initiated through forum), youth capacity building
- **Beneficiaries of NGOs, INGOs and the UN:** Beneficiary villages of INGOs (Help Aid International), beneficiaries of CBOs or LNGOs, village representatives of project beneficiaries (Saving Group), village associations engaging in KBC activities, UNDP-supported CBOs and villages, PACT Myanmar's project, CSOs with GRET/LIFT fund become strengthened and formed as TCSO
- **Women Group:** Self-help women groups, young women in rural communities
- **Religion-Based**
- **Led by Intellectual Youth**
- **Rights-based**

3) Preferences from a CSO standpoint -small CSO or big LNGO

For the question of the interest of CSOs in the scope and scale of their development trends, 40% of CSOs express that they wish to remain small CSOs, and 40% of CSOs state an interest in becoming big LNGOs. **20% express the desire to be neither bigger nor smaller, of which some are already big local NGOs. (The data of 79 CSOs was used for this calculation).**

CSOs' rationale on why being a big NGO is good: CSOs discussed the following rationale on why they want to become big NGOs (40% of participant CSOs.)

- 1) Effective Collaboration with all stakeholders: active in Government relations, extending partnerships with international organisations, effective engagement with different CSOs in different regions, enhanced trust building with communities and partners, and comprehensive networking.
- 2) Human Resources: Long-term skilled and qualified staff recruited in full-time positions within the organisation (a lack of skills results in more work on operations and management and less work on implementation)
- 3) Programmatic: Avoiding shifting programmes based on the availability of donors and funding and instead focusing on the organisation's strategic and programmatic areas for wider coverage, and engaging with policy advocacy at the national level.
- 4) Secure Funding: More donors and programme coverage.
- 5) Strong Technicality: Furnished with full set of technicalities within the organisation.

CSOs' rationale on why being a small NGO is beneficial: CSOs presented some of the good reasons to remain a small CSO as follows; (40% of participant CSOs)

- 1) Secured Funding: Small CSOs have smaller financial needs, their work is financially sustainable in the community, and their financial accountability is non-restricted (capacity is not yet there).

- 2) Capacities and Experiences: CSOs often believe that they do not possess the skills to implement large projects that require a certain level of experience and technical expertise. With effective management however, small CSOs are more flexible in their existing capacities.
- 3) Objectives of organisations: Small CSOs can focus on their organisation's objective to provide support to specific townships in specific accessible geographic areas.
- 4) Close collaboration: Close collaboration and relationships with communities to effectively provide support and develop an atmosphere of trust with the regional Government.

4) How CSOs see themselves in the future

	Future plans of CSOs	How CSOs want to see themselves in the next three years
Legitimacy & Organisational Standpoints	<p>CSO registration either at district level or at national level</p> <p>Government policy process</p> <p>To become qualified CSOs /strong CSOs</p> <p>To be part of regional and global drive on food security</p> <p>To become influential to the Government and other CSOs</p> <p>Association that can certify the trade of forest and forest-related products</p> <p>To become an organisation that can support new CSOs</p> <p>To create a bridge between the Government, communities and networks</p> <p>Organisation with strong collaboration with INGOsNGOs, CSOs, volunteer groups and youth groups in a transparent manner</p> <p>Peace Mediator</p> <p>Strong networks to help move towards political change at township level</p>	<p>CSO registration either at a district level or a national level</p> <p>Government relations</p> <p>Take part in Government policy processes</p> <p>Become big organisations to lead the peace process</p> <p>CSOs' engagement with the Government, the private sector, MP for social, economic and political</p> <p>Network for changes in the livelihood system</p> <p>To add community service to the existing funeral service</p>
Organisational Development	<p>Strengthened CSO policy</p> <p>To become a systematically strong organisation</p> <p>Good policy and organisational structure</p> <p>Women leadership</p> <p><u>Human resources</u></p>	<p>Strengthened CSO organisational policy</p> <p>HR and Finance manual</p> <p>Strategic plan development</p> <p><u>Human resources</u></p>

	<p>To produce a new generation</p> <p>Capacity building</p> <p>Financial and project management capacities</p> <p>Youth member's capacity</p> <p>Highly qualified staff</p>	<p>To have skillful staff</p> <p>Capacity building</p> <p>To produce new leaders</p> <p>To produce qualified staff who will remain within the organisation for longer</p> <p>Training for HR, Financial and Gender</p>
Funding	<p>Donor Engagement</p> <p>To get direct funding</p> <p>To have own funding, not just relying on donors</p> <p>To engage with donors that have the same interests as the organisation</p> <p>To establish a social enterprise</p>	<p>Funding</p> <p>Donor Engagement</p> <p>To get direct funding</p> <p>Sustained donor relationship</p> <p>To be able to use 100,000 USD and above</p> <p>To work with 3-5 donors and more</p> <p>Good accountability</p> <p>To start micro businesses for sustainability</p> <p>To stand strong independently</p> <p>To increase donors, policy and strategies</p>
Livelihood Project	<p>Economic Development</p> <p>Livelihood and natural resource preservation</p> <p>Sustainable Agriculture</p> <p>Organic Fertiliser</p> <p>Farmer's development</p> <p>Vocational Training Centre</p> <p>Research Centre</p> <p>Food safety</p> <p>Migration</p> <p>Land policy advocacy and equal rights</p> <p>Organic agro economic</p> <p>Women and marginalised people's rights and their development</p> <p>Market demand value added product</p> <p>Livelihood opportunities for young people</p>	<p>Rice sector</p> <p>Research Centre</p> <p>Agri-technology</p> <p>Farmer and Land Law</p> <p>Value chain and value added products</p> <p>Farmer Network Development</p> <p>Fishery law (Sea Water/Salty Water)</p> <p>Mangrove forestation</p> <p>Avocado Export</p> <p>GAP certification</p> <p>Seeds</p> <p>Economic opportunities and training for farmers and youth</p> <p>Job opportunities in the agri-sector</p> <p>Market linkages for agriculture</p> <p>Job opportunities for youth out of school</p> <p>Develop specific policies, curriculum for the school</p> <p>Support start-up businesses – entrepreneurship</p> <p>Engage with the hotel and tourism sector</p> <p>Beach cleanup work in coordination with City Development Council</p>

		Seeds and Agriculture Women-led tea business Tea project (market linkages, packing, certification) Upland livelihood development with long-term plans and policies
Environmental Livelihood	Environmental conservation Climate Adaptation and Job Opportunities Climate change	Environmental mainstreaming approach to livelihood Environmentally friendly food management Sustainable livelihood with high environmental sensitivity
Financial Inclusion	Saving Group Strong Institution of Micro-Finance	
Nutrition	Early Child Care Development and Network Nutrition support	Nutrition Mother and Child Health promotion
Gender	Increased participation of women in political, Economic and social activities Women leadership Women development centre Women-led development Development and Civic Engagement Karen Youth Community Development Gender Equality Society	Gender and Women leadership Expand GEN's CSOs network to regional level
Emergency	Disaster Risk Reduction	Emergency response WASH
CSO, Peace, Democracy, Rights and Policy	CSO Strengthening Peace process Democratic transition Policy process for smallholders and ethnic people Mobilise people to take part in the country's development and justice Ethnic culture and traditions Human rights	Voter education for 2020 election campaign Policy change for village development

Coordination	Effective coordination between CSOs, the Government and communities	Coordination Aid effectiveness
Inclusion		Support self-help centres for disabled people Social justice for human rights Participation of disabled people Support disabled people and elders Social welfare
Physicality and Capacity Building		Youth capacity building Support other CSOs in leadership, grant management and capacities Expand branch offices and increase staff Have own office and provide staff with salary
Conflict Area		Support conflict-affected people Land mine protection and awareness IDP support

5) Organisations' Sustainability Plans

CSOs have extraordinary vision when it comes to sustaining their organisations, whether it be for 10,30, or 100 years. Some CSOs base their existence on objectives and thematic areas , until for example the Government takes over responsibilities, policies change, the country is at peace, as long as an ethnic group exists, as long as agri-products are produced, or as long as catholic churches exist, etc. All CSOs have their own sustainability plan and vision. **Sustainability plans of CSOs are largely centered on seven areas; human resources and capacity building, learning, sharing and coordination with others, secured funding, shifting strategies, sustained physicality, and internal policy and legitimacy.**

Human resources & capacity building: One of the sustainability plans CSOs mentioned is to build human resources within their organisations, including maintaining permanent staff, building capacities of members and leaders, mentoring and motivating young people and educated individuals, recruiting volunteers and encouraging volunteers to become skillful staff, producing new leaders, building strong experience, networking and mobilising youth with interest in development, and equipping organisations with project management capacities, M&E, HR, logistics, finance, etc.

Learning, sharing and coordinating with others: CSOs have common views on learning, sharing and coordinating with others to support their sustainability. The priorities of CSOs' sustainability plans are to get support from peers, the Government, stakeholders; working with regional CSOs in a stronger

CSO network; developing strategies to work with multiple local and international stakeholders including donors, technicians, the Government, volunteers; working effectively with Government departments, MPs, CSOs, communities and the private sector; and learning with and getting suggestions from other stakeholders and valued partners.

Secured Funding for CSOs: Based on the nature and geographic areas of CSOs, they have different ideas about how to maintain/attract secured funding for the sustainability of their organisation and actions, to be able to provide staff with proper salaries, have their own office, etc. Four common approaches of CSOs to attract funding include:

1) 6% indirect costs from donors to keep as core fund to invest in businesses that can generate income/funding for organisations (local businesses of handmade materials, traditional food sale, the production of organic and value added products, social enterprises, perennial plantations, GAP sesame production, avocado production, etc.)

2) fund raising (through social policy and market research services, community-based tourism, preserving rainwater forests, bamboo forests),

3) engage with and strengthen relationships with current partners and new donors, and

4) collect membership fees as the number of members in the organisation grows.

Shifting Strategies: A few big CSOs/NGOs shift their strategies for sustainability by reforming their network structure from agro-geological zone-based SNNs to state and regional FSWGs, which is in line with the national political landscape; especially for federalism and the shifting position of organisations from implementing to facilitating and collaborating with the Government and EAOs .

Physicality of sustained CSOs: One main concern of CSOs is to preserve their organisation by sustaining their physical presence in the community/region (office, equipment, staff etc.). Renting offices requires project budget. Without offices however, CSOs can lose their physicality. CSOs' priority for sustainability is therefore to have their own offices.

CSOs's internal/organisational development: Organisational development is evidently recognised as a driver of sustainability for CSOs. In the list of CSOs' internal development plan are good financial management, accounting, annual plans, regular evaluations, adaptation, policies for capacity strengthening and development of CSOs, sustainability policies and human resources policies, guidelines, vision, missions, and clear roles and responsibilities of members.

Legitimacy: Registration is a major concern for many CSOs. Their sustainable existence is defined by official registration that represents their legitimacy.

LIFT partners' organisational development trend/ timeline

Part II

This session studies the development of CSOs over the years through key turning points, what factors CSOs believe are responsible for their growth, and what CSOs appreciate from their partners and donors.



Turning Points

The turning points of CSOs and LNGOs occurred in different forms and years. However, as seen in figure 2, the majority of CSOs across the country experienced turning points between 2016 and 2018.

Desirable Turning Points

Strategic Shifts

- Physically established for the first time in Yangon, Myanmar after its formation in exile (2015).
- Transformed separate community-based CBOs to collective township-level CSOs (Community Forest, Revolving Fund etc.)
- The organisation focuses more on humanitarian actions, after armed conflict in Kachin and Northern Shan.
- CSOs changed form from being associations to service providers.
- Developed a strategic partnership with multi-donor fund.
- Ceasefire agreement encouraged CSOs to produce human resources and establish offices in the country and work with the Government.
- Developed national strategic plan and became LIFT's Strategic Partner.
- Started with 15 CSOs as a network, could expand and attract 56 CSOs in total in the coordination unit and held meetings at district level.
- Expanded the collaboration of CSOs with the Government, businesses and communities.
- Successfully engaged with private sectors, farmer networks.
- Engaged with more donors after LIFT project was complete.

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- Became a member of Myanmar's National Committee (Myanmar National Committee for Women).
 - Developed a strategic plan to support the Government for the advancement of women in the country.

Organisational Shift

- Changed the name of the CSO to expand on thematic areas of the organisation.
- Changed CSOs' thematic area from emergency response to environmental conservation and parents' education, youth capacity building to livelihood project: natural resource management for livelihood.
- Changed organisational structure.
- Got registration and became recognised by the Government.
- Volunteer organisations were able to perform coconut value added project.
- Started to work systematically with staff members, salary, office and core fund, and engage with the Government.
- The number of staff increased prominently (100 to 600 in 2008).
- Revitalised the function of CSOs with the support of the LIFT fund.
- Could re-elect committee members and reestablish with clear objectives and actions (2018).
- Project area and branch office extended in different regions.
- Organisational development policies produced.
- Received core funding to establish office, staff, equipment, and got recognition and interest of local people, donors and the Government.

Undesirable Turning Points

- Members of volunteer group left the region for job opportunities, which put the volunteer association on hold (2013).
- Reduced the number of CSOs in the CSO network (2018).
- No staff and office as project ended.
- Turbulent years of organisation with management issues.

Based on experience, it can be assumed that the following factors influence the turning points of CSOs;

- **Political situation**
- **Conflict**
- **Exit Strategy of INGOs, the UN, NGOs**
- **Strategic plan and partnership of CSOs,**
- **Vertical and Horizontal partnership/relationship**
- **Type of fund availability (Thematic Area)**
- **Government's interest**

- Unexpected event (Such as Disaster, Cyclone)
- Economic stress
- Donor Fund

Some key common indicators that influence the growth of CSOs are;

Legitimacy

Attained registration of CSOs
 Received registration under cooperative
 Collaboration with Government department
 Exchange between farmers and MPs
 Engaged in peace talk between the
 Government and Chin National Front
 Policy advocacy

Multi-Stakeholders Event and Action

Conducting research
 Organising agri-product festival in engaging
 with CSOs, NGOs and the Government
 Participated in campaigns and talk shows

Collaboration

Work in engagement with other IPs
 Engaging with many other CSOs
 Recognised by CSOs and local NGOs in the
 region

OD and Capacity Building

Structuring of organisational development, network policy
 Being able to recruit staff and establish office
 Staff and members trained

Grant and Partnership

LIFT Dry Zone Sub Grant
 LIFT's Livelihood Project Support (nursery fishes)
 Seed grant
 Receiving OD fund
 Partnership with INGO, UN
 Receiving technical capacity through partnership project
 CSOs own business set up, GRET Fund
 Continuous partnership with no project gap

What CSOs appreciate of their partners and donors

Participant CSOs engage with diverse ranges of implementing partners and donors including local NGOs, INGOs, the UN, the EU, LIFT and multi-donors. CSOs individually discussed key capacities they learned from their partners and donors, the most appreciated qualities and valuable support CSOs received from their partners and donors are;

Collaboration capacity is one of the appreciated capacities that CSOs learn from their partners and donors, which helps CSOs to engage and network with each other, to engage with the Government as well as the private sector, to keep communication and coordination open, to build mutual trust between CSOs, communities and the Government, and to establish regular networking within CSOs. CSOs feel that they improved their communications with every stakeholder, including public speaking, open discussion and consultation with partners and donors.

Organisational Policies and System Development: CSOs receive organisational development skill sets such as organisational management, development techniques, values, strategic planning, financial management, operational management, report writing, internal policy development (Child Safety, Fraud, Finance, HR, Logistic) professional documentation, and accounting and M&E.

Learning and Exchanging Knowledge Opportunities: CSOs recognise that learning and exchanging knowledge opportunities for staff capacity building is helpful for the project through technical capacity building, project learning, and sharing within CSOs and with other partner organisations inside and outside the country.

Empowerment: CSOs that work with the LIFT fund (Pact Myanmar) and IOM feel that they are empowered as they can make independent decisions within their organisations and in the project (livelihood and development project), all the while having full rights to implement the project. They also receive consultation which empowers them.

Organisational Culture (Personality) of Partner/Donor: The traits of partners and donors that CSOs appreciate include patience when it comes to the often limited capacity of CSOs, as well as learning by working together, financial reporting requirements that fully comply with and can be followed by CSOs, trust building capacities with IPs, clear milestones, timely management of post-project work, and financial accountability.

Funding (6% and other): CSOs discuss whether the following fund allocation are effective for them; 6% indirect cost, core fund allocation, sufficient capacity building and reasonable travel costs, costs that CSOs could not define and meet on their own, like GAP certification for farmers. CSOs think that LIFT funding support is very relevant for their needs, and that they correspond with the needs of the community.

What challenges CSOs experience when working with partners and donors

Information & Communication: Information reach is not equal among all CSOs. There can be a high turnover rate of partners and less consultation with locals, and not enough township representation

to communicate with CSOs. CSOs recommend to increase efforts for CSO research (Pact/LIFT), and to provide clear information about LIFT's policies for CBO.

Capacity building and technical support: A few CSOs mentioned that they experience limited capacity building, workshops, training and meetings, and that township level livelihood technical support is not strong enough.

Funding: Delay in providing funding, unequal size of funding for CSOs, unclear funding amounts, or limited funding make it difficult to submit budget lines for capacity building. Funding not received as planned, fund provision placed on the number of CSOs submitted, and LIFT's strategy shift that has an impact on strategic partners, are some constraints mentioned by CSOs.

Policy: Tight financial policies and accounting policies, complicated financial procedures, restriction over the use of funds, some restrictions with thematic areas and rules which are not convenient, frequent accounting, and project reports (with tight supervision) were mentioned.

Project Duration: The project duration is too short to be able to achieve desired results in time.

LIFT Beyond 2019:

This session explains how CSOs want to see LIFT after 2019, how and what LIFT should do beyond 2019 to support CSOs to improve dialogue, advocacy, capacity building, leadership, etc.

LIFT has its 20% earmarked funding for local CSOs. This session studies CSOs' views, based on their experience of working with LIFT, INGOs, the UN and different donors. This session also studies the fraction of CSOs that want direct funding from LIFT, and why.

The analysis finds that 68% of CSOs prefer to receive direct funding, of which 33% prefer both direct funding and working through other INGOs; whereas 32% of CSOs prefer to get LIFT funding only through partnerships with other CSOs, INGOs or the UN.

Why 68% of CSOs prefer to get direct funding from LIFT under its 20% earmarked funding

Objectively Effective: CSOs expect direct funding will help them achieve their objectives effectively with the freedom to select project areas, thematic areas and geographic areas, budget management and budget allocation. Working with partners of INGOs or the UN becomes a double-burden for CSOs as they have to fulfill all partners' requirements.

Direct Donor Relationship with CSO would accelerate region's development

"Our region needs development in all aspects, so we are making efforts to meet the needs of our community. If we could have direct partnerships with strong donor organisation like LIFT, which has good systems and policies, our capacities and performance will improve. We can be in the position to collaborate systematically with the Government and engage with other INGOs and NGOs." -Noted from one CSO in Southern Shan.

Secured Fund: With direct funding, CSOs can expand their funding size to reach more beneficiaries, and to continue with projects with longer durations that will support the sustainability of CSOs in terms of project fund and core fund.

Opportunities to grow: The direct accountability of donors equip organisations with internationally recognised standards, procedures, systems and valuable experience that can strengthen CSOs' organisation in the long run, while motivating them to make systematic efforts for both internal and external growth. It will also promote and localise the visibility of CSOs in the region. Direct funding is also supportive in strengthening human resources through the recruitment of skillful staff, which will make the organisation stronger overall.

Active Communications: Working directly with donors, CSOs believe that communication flows more clearly, financials flow more efficiently, transparency and financial accountability improve, and challenges and constraints can be discussed openly and directly.

A few organisations that are already in direct partnership with LIFT prefer to continue to receive funds directly, which helps them consolidate stronger partnerships and networking with members CSOs, and provides CSOs with both technical and financial capacity building. Some organisations believe that they are already established and in place with the systems and procedures to comply with LIFT, and that they are ready to receive direct funding from LIFT.

What support CSOs would need to get Direct Fund: To get direct funding, some organisations prefer to receive technical support from the MEAL Plan, financial guidelines, capacity building in human resources, due diligence, organisational capacity and assessment. A few organisations wish to minimise working with partner INGO/UN, and prefer working with direct donors. Such a relationship

can come with some constraints, such as listed below;

“Partnership with INGO/UN is more effective when the project aims at a wide range of issues and targets. Planning and implementation are better in that situation.” -Noted from a LNGO

- Some organisations have specific interests and expected outcomes that require time and

efforts in terms of negotiation and compromise.

- Some activities and approaches of partners are in conflict with those of CSOs.
- Some partners are slow in strengthening the capacity of CSOs, or somehow even delay their growth.
- Each organisation has a responsible person that deals with donor relationships. When there is more than one donor however, the situation becomes more difficult to deal with, which can result in delaying the project. This can make negotiations difficult.
- Partnerships with other INGOs and the UN are not a good way to sustain the work of CSOs.
- It is complicated for CSOs to at the same time comply with donor requirements and partner requirements such as procurement procedures, finance procedures, etc.

Why 32% of CSOs prefer to get LIFT funding through partnerships with other CSOs, INGOs or the UN

Technical support: CSOs see that by working with other CSOs, INGOs or the UN, they can learn about technical and management capacities of programmes, as well as operational technicalities such as report writing, proposal writing, good accounting and financial systems. Working with partners, CSOs can receive close technical support, supervision, consultation and suggestions. Their existing capacities are often not sufficient to get direct funding from donors.

LIFT's requirements: CSOs have debated that some of LIFT's requirements such as reporting and due diligence assessment questions are difficult to uphold. LIFT's complicated processes can prevent CSOs from asking LIFT for support directly as some CSOs do not have the means to meet these requirements without help. They would therefore need prior assistance from a Fund Facilitator to meet LIFT's requirements in order to ask for support directly.

Organisational Resources and Donor accountability: Some CSOs do not have, or are only in the process of developing policies and systems that comply with LIFT's requirements. In that situation, the accountability is jointly shared between the donor and partner in terms of financials and reporting; supporting CSOs to focus on close communication with communities and effective implementation of the project.

As some CSOs are volunteer-based organisations with limited experience and without developed policies, operations, programmes or financial management skills, they believe that they are not ready to be directly accountable to donors.

*Fewer human resources (including language capacity) and frequent conflicts in the region result in frequent staff turnover. As such, they cannot invest enough time to do capacity building even though the organisation is now ten years old.-
Noted from a CSO*

What CSOs expect from LIFT beyond 2019

CSOs from different regions expect LIFT to support capacity strengthening, sharing, coordination and networking among CSOs, in order to be able to adapt to LIFT's policies, systems and approaches.

1) LIFT's Capacity Strengthening for CSOs

CSOs from different regions prefer LIFT to focus on capacity strengthening training. **Four main strategies/approaches** are proposed for capacity strengthening of CSOs;

- 1) LIFT to conduct training plan, then to jointly and directly lead and implement the plan for all CSOs.

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- 2) LIFT to introduce CSOs to other technically strong implementing partners or consider capacity strengthening approaches/channels when CSOs work in partnership with NGOs and INGOs under LIFT funding.
 - 3) LIFT to increase funding for capacity strengthening.
 - 4) LIFT to organise exchange visits to CSOs in and outside the country.

Proposed capacity strengthening **topics** can be divided into two; one is **CSOs' organisational development** including financial, technical, mobilisation, administration, advocacy and leadership skills, coaching and mentoring to organise public dialogue; and the other is **CSOs' capacities to be able to access LIFT's direct funding** such as understanding LIFT's compliance for financial, logistic, admin procedure, proposal writing, report writing, policy development and MEAL plan.

2) LIFT's support for Sharing, Coordinating and Networking for CSOs

CSOs want LIFT to support sharing, coordination and networking among CSOs, between CSOs, the Government and different stakeholders including the private sector (Vertically and Horizontally). Some of the strategies CSOs think LIFT can support are;

To organise regular learning and coordination workshops and/or meetings: LIFT to support, encourage or facilitate CSOs meeting quarterly at township and district level, and bi-annually and annually at national level, to facilitate learning and reflection among IPs. LIFT to enable and empower cross-cutting cooperation and coordination between consortia partners. LIFT to help find settings where the Government, armed groups, ethnic groups, the private sector, CSOs, the general public and MPs can discuss regularly and transparently.

Regional CSO network: LIFT to support the establishment of CSO network or strengthen existing CSOs' network in each region.

3) LIFT to adapt policies, systems and approaches for CSOs in Myanmar

CSOs from different regions want LIFT to adapt its policies, systems and approaches to become more manageable and accessible to local CSOs in order to achieve/access direct funding. Some of the recommendations include;

Funding: To have a focal organisation for the Delta region (Delta Group) that supports funding for CSOs. To provide funding for longer time periods. CSOs also highly appreciate the current 20% earmarked funding for local CSOs, and would like to increase fund allocation for local CSOs up to 50% in the future. CSOs would also like LIFT to establish a reserve fund to be available in the case of unexpected circumstances.

Policy and System: to loosen LIFT's strict policies, or to redefine policies to make them more relevant to local CSOs, including being allowed to submit proposals in Myanmar or ethnic languages.

LIFT's Scope of Funding: LIFT to conduct dialogue, capacity building and advocacy directly in the regions. LIFT should not limit itself to livelihood projects only, but also be open to projects supporting other thematic areas, such as technical support for humanitarian interventions in conflict-affected

areas. LIFT is to continue being a donor until 2030, in line with regional development policies, and engage with CSOs and the Government.

Communications: LIFT to have a channel or separate body where CSOs and LIFT can communicate directly.

MEAL: LIFT to provide continuous technical support for both baseline and end line surveys for efficiency in performance. Target numbers in the MEAL plan should be revised and adjusted every six months (Tanintharyee).

Recommendations

- Exchange, Learning and Sharing sessions for registration processes (CSO to CSOs), as CSOs find one of their main constraints is to engage efficiently with the Government. For the sustainability of CSOs, if LIFT can when possible invite key departments of the Ministry in order to share information for registration processes.
- Induced from the sustainability plan of CSOs and their preference in getting direct funding from LIFT, capacity building strategies should be developed. They should support strategic planning capacities so that CSOs can continue their work, partner with other INGOs, NGOs and the UN, which understand CSOs' core capacities and values, and those of their partners. (eg. LIFT's partnership contracts with CSOs to focus on their capacity strengthening, and Partner Matching Events to exchange core capacities and values.).
- Piloting direct funding delivery to highly selective CSOs so as to develop lessons learned and clear strategies and start working efficiently while CSOs prepare to meet requirements (When possible, LIFT should consider adaptating their policies for CSOs to access direct funding, through reducing policy restrictions over a certain period (Bridge Season). When CSOs are working towards meeting requirements, LIFT could stop the 'Bridge Season' and go back to normal policies and procedures, etc.).