Overview of Civil Society in the Pacific

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An exercise for you

- Look at the list of civil society organizations that you have worked with in your country as part of your ADB work.
- Group them into the following categories and write them on the large papers:
  - International Nongovernment Organizations
  - National Nongovernment Organizations
  - Faith-based Organizations
  - Community-Based Organizations/Informal Associations
  - People's Organizations (eg youth, women's, disability)
  - Coalitions of NGOs/Peak bodies of NGOs/Umbrella bodies
  - Labor Unions/Professional Associations
  - Research Institutes and Universities
  - Foundations
  - Others

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CSO Strengths

- What are the common strengths of civil society organizations you have worked with?

- Diversity

- Community based through to national

- Local mobilization of resources

- Community-based engagement; strong links to community (but not always)

CSO Strengths

- Volunteerism is high: based on the collective over the individual
- Community-based organizations very strong, particularly:
  - Village women's groups
  - Village youth groups
  - Landowning groups
  - Village self-help groups
  - What else?
- Culturally relevant and embedded.

Common Themes for Pacific CSO Development

- Overarching themes
  - Clan based/chiefly structures
  - Christianity/Missionization (generally 1850s →)
  - Colonization/Independence
  - Ethnic/linguistic tensions (not all)
  - Gender inequality
  - Urban-rural divide (outer islands)
  - Fragile and Conflict Affected Situations (FCAS)

- Themes of CSO development
  - Existing clan/chief/village structures merge/sit alongside faith-based organization at local level
  - Faith-based orgs tend to focus on service delivery (schools, health, welfare)
  - Churches sometimes replace the function of the state especially rural areas
  - International NGOs tend to arrive during colonization period
  - Local NGOs mostly develop around time of independence
  - Newer local advocacy NGOs form post-independence (1970s →)

Common Challenges Faced by Pacific CSOs

- What are the common challenges you know are faced by Pacific CSOs?
  - Resources
  - Skills
  - Financial dependence
  - Difficulty meeting donor requirements
  - National CSOs may lack links to community
  - Local CSOs may have poor accountability structures
  - Urban/rural divide (outer islands), transport, communications
  - *Kastom*, *wantok*
  - Mistrust across the sector (only in some countries)
  - Generally weak in advocacy/holding government to account (but improving)

Law and Regulations for Pacific CSOs

- Different laws and regulations across the Pacific
- Often register as charitable trust or association
- Low entry costs (Timor Leste had a high $ bar, but has improved)
- Some countries where CSOs bypass the formal registration system
- Most offer tax breaks to CSOs
- Some opt into the CSO registration system specifically to access donor funds

Pacific CSOs' Relationship With Government

- Churches are often an embedded delivery partner with governments
- Beyond the churches, varies across the region from somewhat hostile to relatively friendly
- Growth of local advocacy NGOs focusing on government corruption and environmental impacts (logging, deep sea mining etc)
- Some governments have aspirational ideals about working with CSOs in their national development plans
- Some governments actively engage CSOs, especially through peak NGO bodies
- Some governments hostile

What is the Government – civil society relationship like in your country?

Modes of Pacific CSO Engagement with ADB

- ADB tends to engage with national or international CSOs not local CBOs
- CSOs have had input into CPS – information sharing or consultation?
- CSOs have been subcontracted to deliver part of a larger project
- CSOs generally not used for Monitoring and Evaluation
- NGOC very active in promoting modes of engagement ADB-CSOs

Overview of Civil Society in the Pacific

- What are the implications of all of this for your engagement with CSOs?

- What do you need to work better with CSOs?

- What opportunities are there for you to increase engagement with CSOs?