



## Icelandic CSO Evaluation: Synthesis Report

Final Report

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## Abbreviations and acronyms

BRCS	Belarus Red Cross Society
CAHW	Community Animal Health Workers
CBHFA	Community-based Health, Care & First Aid Project
CDF	Community Development Facilitator
COMREP	Community Resilience Project
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
DRS	Developing Regional States
FGM	Female Genital Mutilation
FTC	Farmer Training Centre
HD	Humanitarian diplomacy
ICA	Icelandic Church Aid
IceCross	Icelandic Red Cross Society
Iceida	Iceland International Development Agency
IFRC	International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
ISK	Icelandic kronor
LWF	Lutheran World Federation
MFA	Ministry for Foreign Affairs
MISK	Million Icelandic kronor
MRCS	Malawi Red Cross Society
OECD/DAC	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development / Development Assistance Committee
RACOBABO	Rural Action Community Based Organisation
RBM	Results-based Management
RC	Red Cross
RFSL	Swedish Federation for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer Rights
RFSU	Swedish Association for Sexuality Education
SÍMAH	Association of Icelandic NGOs that work in development cooperation and humanitarian assistance
UNU-GEST	United Nations University Gender Equality Studies Training Programme
VC	Vulnerable Children
WWF	World Wide Fund for Nature

# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 BACKGROUND

Icelandic Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) constitute a channel for Icelandic development cooperation and humanitarian assistance. Icelandic development cooperation via CSOs is guided by *Iceland's Strategy for Development Cooperation* (2013) as well as the *Guidelines for Cooperation with Civil Society* (2015, hereinafter referred to as the *CSO Guidelines*).

The principal objective of development support through Icelandic civil society organisations is to contribute to an independent, **strong and diverse civil society** in low income countries that **fight against poverty** in its various forms. The support furthermore aims to support civil society in safeguarding democracy and the human rights of impoverished and marginalised populations. The Icelandic *CSO Guidelines* highlight income generation, provision of basic services, capacity building, and advocacy as means to reduce poverty and realise human rights. In addition, the *CSO Guidelines* confirm the importance of promoting **gender equality** and **environmental sustainability** – key priorities areas in the Icelandic development cooperation strategy; draw attention to the **human rights principles** – non-discrimination, participation, accountability and transparency; and raise the importance of **local ownership**.

According to the *CSO Guidelines*, the first and foremost intent of channeling support via Icelandic CSOs is “to utilize the expert knowledge of the organisations, their willingness, ability and social networks to successfully reach Iceland’s developmental objectives. The operations of civil society organisations are suitable to strengthen the grassroots and support democracy in the receiving states, as well as being the grass roots at home and gathering support for their cause and increasing interest among the public in Iceland.”

Iceland has since 2012 channeled development aid funding via eleven Icelandic CSOs, of which four received regular support in this period. Among these, the Icelandic Red Cross (IceCross) and Icelandic Church Aid (ICA) are by far the largest. In 2017, the CSO support will amount to an estimated 167.3 million ISK.

The Icelandic Red Cross, founded in 1924, is the largest CSO in Iceland and an important partner in carrying out both development cooperation and humanitarian assistance. The national society has little under 20 000 members, over 3000 trained and active volunteers, around 100 staff with five working in international development cooperation and humanitarian assistance. In 2016, the national society spent little over 470 MISK on international programmes, thereof around 50 MISK for development cooperation.

Meanwhile, ICA was founded in 1970 by the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Iceland, the national church, to initiate and coordinate relief/development work on behalf of the Icelandic clergy and congregation. ICA is governed by a council of representatives from 63 congregations of the Church of Iceland. ICA has six paid staff (two positions for international work) and 60 volunteers who parttake in the work in Iceland - of which 20 work for four

hours every week. ICA spent around 110 MISK on international programmes in its last operating year, thereof around 60 MISK for development cooperation.

## 1.2 ICELANDIC CSO EVALUATION

Iceland's Ministry for Foreign Affairs (MFA) has commissioned an evaluation of four projects undertaken by Iceland's two most internationally active CSOs – ICA and IceCross. The evaluation has the following purposes:

- Assessment of the performance and results on the ground achieved by the four projects;
- Provide general lessons for MFA's support to other CSO; and
- Raise the monitoring and evaluation capacity of MFA and the two CSOs by including representatives on the evaluation team and conducting a participatory process.

The four case study projects selected by MFA and the CSOs represent two projects focussing on a small group of target persons/households (Belarus and Uganda) and two community development projects (Malawi and Ethiopia):

- *Water and Sanitation Project*<sup>1</sup> in Rakai/Lyantonde, Uganda – implemented by Rural Action Community Based Organisation (RACOB AO), channelled via LWF, 2008-2015, three phases. The project provided welfare support to the most vulnerable HIV/AIDS-affected households;
- *Jijiga Integrated Community Development Project*, Ethiopia (later the District Food Security and Livelihood Project) – implemented by LWF, 2008-2017; three phases. The project provided integrated livelihood support to vulnerable communities;
- *Community-based Health & First Aid Project*, Mangochi, Malawi (later Community Resilience Project) – implemented by Malawi Red Cross Society, 2013-2019, in two separate phases/projects. The project focussed on improving health and sanitation conditions in the target area;
- *Belarus Red Cross Open Home Centre - a Project for community based Mental Health services*, Minsk, Belarus – implemented by Belarus Red Cross Society, channelled via IFRC, 2013-2018, one phase, with an extension. The projects focussed on rehabilitation of persons with mental health problems;

To ensure that the evaluations i) served as a hands-on learning process to build monitoring and evaluation capacity; and ii) provide high utility for all key stakeholders (Icelandic CSOs,

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<sup>1</sup> While this is called a water and sanitation project, the core of the project is the construction of homes.

MFA's CSO desk officers, and MFA evaluation unit); the evaluation process was as participatory as possible. It has included participatory workshops, joint country-level visits to all four countries, and collaboration in the report drafting process. The evaluation questions and evaluation frameworks were also developed jointly. Details of the methodology in each country is outlined in the respective evaluation reports.

The following chapter presents an overall overview of the findings and conclusions of the four project evaluations, as well as overall lessons learnt.<sup>2</sup> Chapter 3 discusses the extent that international development cooperation channelled through Icelandic CSOs can add value to Icelandic international development cooperation. The final section raises strategic issues for future Icelandic CSO support. Annexed to this report are the executive summaries of the four project evaluations.

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<sup>2</sup> There are separate evaluation reports for each of the four projects.

## 2. Overall conclusions

The ICA and IceCross projects have been running for between three to ten years. Project funding has been allocated on a **short-term** (annual) basis, although agreements between MFA and the CSOs sometimes covered up to three years. All four programmes have relatively **small sized** target groups and/or have a **limited geographic scope**. The support to Belarus has directly supported only 91 people since its inception. RACOBABO's project with ICA has assisted about 75 families. The Jigiga and Mangochi projects encompass many more – 30,000 to 70,000 people – which still represent a fraction of the population of the respective districts and countries.

All four programmes work in areas where the respective governments have failed to provide adequate **services and protection for** the target group. Therefore, the focus of the projects has mostly been on supplementing these services, building resilience, and empowering the target group (rights-holders). A few activities have involved building capacity among local government agencies (duty-bearers), but advocacy and monitoring of government actors have been minimal.

The sections below present the conclusions of the evaluated projects in relation to the OECD/DAC criteria.

### 2.1 RELEVANCE

All four programmes have been **highly responsive** to needs. In Belarus, IceCross has addressed the problem of inadequate care and rehabilitation for people with mental illness. In Uganda, ICA's support has focused on households in the margins of the community, made destitute by the morbidity, death and/or abandonment that are a consequence of the AIDS epidemic. ICA's support in Ethiopia stems from the recognition of the cyclical pattern of drought affecting the target area, requiring strengthened preparedness and resilience of communities, in the form of multi-dimensional livelihood support. IceCross support to Malawi has focused on an area in the country with the poorest health, education, and food security indicators.

All four programmes have **successfully targeted marginalised, discriminated,** and/or very poor people. In this sense, they are highly relevant to the priority of poverty reduction outlined in the *CSO Guidelines*. The three projects in Africa are focused on extremely poor rural communities. They are similar in that they have water, sanitation, and food security components; and women and/or children constitute an important part of the target group. The projects, however, differ in their other components and approaches. The project in Belarus is dissimilar from the others in that it focusses on service delivery to a small group of persons with mental illness in a middle-income country, but who are nevertheless discriminated against, stigmatised, and face great limitations in relation to employment.

In terms of prioritised activities highlighted in the *CSO Guidelines*, all four projects constitute



**service delivery** at the core. All projects have also had a **capacity building** component and have engaged in **awareness-raising**. The ICA projects have furthermore supported **income generation**. **Advocacy** has either not been a part of the project or has not been prioritised. The potential for advocacy, has however, been there: for instance, in Belarus, there has been an opportunity to advocate for non-institutionalised care and other policy changes among government duty-bearers (who even happened to be board members of the Belarussian RC), but this was not seized upon to the extent possible. In Uganda, some advocacy towards local authorities has taken place by RACOBABO, but not under the project funded by Iceland. In Malawi, advocacy (humanitarian diplomacy) towards local leaders and decision-makers focused on issues related to sanitation practices and early marriage, while advocacy for systemic changes in relation to education, water access, and sanitation were not considered.

The *CSO Guidelines*, which came out after these projects were initiated, emphasise the importance of **strengthening civil society** in developing countries. This has generally not been a feature of the projects. Only the IceCross project in Malawi has contributed to this aim, by including a component concerning the organisational development of the Malawian Red Cross (district branch) as one of its five pillars. It aimed to develop the branch capacity to respond independently to local small-scale emergencies without too much involvement of headquarters support. In the case of RACOBABO, a concrete opportunity existed with a proposal regarding the building of its office building that was submitted to MFA, but MFA passed on it.

In terms of drawing on their own expertise and **Icelandic knowhow**, IceCross in Belarus has drawn on the unique technical expertise that IceCross has in relation to community based mental health care, which has been essential to the project. The other projects, however, have not made use of Icelandic knowhow in this manner. In this context, it is important to recognise the limited capacity of the Icelandic organisations in terms of staff and the fact that the activities supported currently in Africa lie outside the scope of what the CSOs work with in Iceland.

## 2.2 EFFECTIVENESS/OUTCOMES

All four programmes have led to positive changes at the individual/household and community levels, although to varying degrees. For a start, the projects **have directly and indirectly led to wellbeing** – both in terms of **health** and **psychological wellbeing**. The target group in Minsk, for example, had reduced levels of depression and felt less isolated and more engaged in social life. Some had managed to return to work and studies. The vulnerable children that were assisted with school fees and school supplies in Mangochi in Malawi expressed hope for their future and were empowered to even make complaints against teachers and delays and deficits in the project. Also, the Red Cross volunteers expressed a feeling of empowerment, due to the knowledge and status achieved through the project. The support to destitute households in Uganda and the capacity building of women in Ethiopia gave them each group dignity, improved status, and considerable self-confidence. This change has in many cases been

immense on a personal level.

In terms of **physical health**, there are indications in all countries that health improved among the target groups. In Belarus, the participants could reduce their medication. In the African countries, use of mosquito nets, use of latrines, access to clean water, and improved sanitation practices led to malaria and water borne diseases being reduced. HIV/AIDS patients in Uganda were able to take better care of themselves. Access and use of prenatal care services improved among the Malawian target group. Health improvements in Malawi were, however, limited by the lack of access to clean water, long distances to health clinics and maternity wards and insufficient incomes to afford medications and treatments.

**Nutrition** improved among the Ethiopian target groups and among some of the Ugandans too, while in Malawi, the food security measures were insufficient, and many gardens were destroyed by floods. The second phase of the project has a greater focus on food security and resilience.

The results of the project in Ethiopia was significant in terms of **transformational changes in the community**, leading to an improved socioeconomic situation for the communities. New techniques/approaches introduced by the project for farming, post-harvest processing, surface water harvesting, and animal husbandry – along with income generating activities have increased incomes – changed and improved diets, saved time, and led to more children attending school. Furthermore, community dynamics have changed significantly in a positive way – including transformed gender roles and new community organisations that are active, democratically-run, well-attended, and respected.

A level of community change has also occurred in the other projects. In Uganda, the re-acceptance of the destitute households into the fold of the community has been important. In Belarus, there is evidence that the project has led to greater openness towards discussing mental health in the media and some doctors now refer patients to the Open Home. In Malawi, behaviour change has led to some of the targeted communities being declared “open defecation free” and to improved sanitation practices in households.

## 2.3 SUSTAINABILITY

The evaluations examined the prospect of sustainability in relation to three main areas which are important elements for continued effects of the projects, namely local ownership; government involvement; and durability of physical assets introduced by the projects.

In terms of ownership, the **high level of participation** and consultation among target and stakeholder groups in the African projects led to a strong sense of ownership. In Belarus the participants at the Open Home have been involved in the planning and running of the activities of the centre, including awareness-raising. However, as a national-level pilot project, it has only recently interacted to create ownership with the local authorities in Minsk and the Minsk Red Cross branch.

The three projects in Africa have also been conscientious in establishing strong **relations with local government** and working in close collaboration with them. This has included fitting into local plans, drawing on government expertise, and/or sharing information. However, a central reason for the interventions have been the fact that the local governments have not fulfilled their tasks as a duty-bearer, due to lack of capacity, resources, and/or competing demands. Thus, while the African projects have improved the prospects of local government involvement in supporting the target groups after the end of the project, the local government actors are still weak, making it unlikely that some of the project results will be well sustained by government interventions in the future. Meanwhile, in Belarus, there has been little involvement of the relevant national or local government actors built into the approach, except for interaction with doctors at the mental health clinics in Minsk.

The sustainability of the **infrastructure improvements and assets** introduced by ICA's projects have been assessed as relatively high (birkas, hand-dug wells and threshers in Ethiopia; and water tanks, houses, and latrines in Uganda). The quality of these have been high and any spare parts that may be needed are available locally at prices that are not out of reach. The community committees in Ethiopia that manage the assets are well run and able to collect fees and organise labour inputs to assure maintenance. In Ethiopia stakeholders found the agricultural tools that they had received were of decent quality and durable. The houses built by RACOBABO in Uganda are of good quality and the latest model is expected to last more than 20 years. The bed nets and utensils that households received in Uganda have not all lasted and in some cases, families have replaced them.

The IceCross support to the Malawi project included infrastructure support *and* the donation of assets to both communities and the local Red Cross itself. The sustainability of the infrastructure improvements and donations targeting the community has in some cases been questionable. For example, the latrines built from locally available (free) clay are destroyed every rainy season and must be rebuilt regularly by the community members. The latrines and handwashing facilities constructed in schools are not fenced and thus lids, doors, faucets, locks, hinges have been stolen and can no longer be used as intended. While some borehole committees have managed to organise collection of fees for maintenance, most of them are struggling. There is thus high risk that boreholes become dysfunctional due to over-use and lack of maintenance.

On the other hand, the sustainability of the support provided to the Mangochi RC branch, which has consisted of the purchase of office premises and bicycles for volunteers, is mostly promising. Since the branch occupies another office space offered for free by the government, when the project has ended and project staff have moved out, it plans to convert the donated premises into an income generating asset. The branch has already started to generate income by renting out the Red Cross tents for functions. It has also invested in chairs to go with the tents. With regard to the donated bicycles, the bikes from the first project were of good quality, while those received during the current phase have mostly broken down after one year.

## 2.4 EFFICIENCY

The projects have generally undertaken the activities as planned, although there have sometimes been temporary delays and small modifications along the way, often to accommodate developments or a changed situation. For the projects in Ethiopia and Uganda, delays due to external circumstances such as inclement weather or contractors delivering late have sometimes affected **timeliness**, while bureaucratic systems on occasion caused delays in Belarus. Malawi, on the other hand, faced more significant interruptions: due to severe floods, mismanagement, and misappropriation of funds (which was dealt with), the project was delayed by a year. The project has also often been delayed by the unavailability of government staff for training or monitoring activities, since the staff prioritise engagements that offer higher allowances (those of the Malawi Red Cross are among the lowest).

The projects in Africa have shown a high degree of **cost consciousness** – including modest equipment, salaries, and allowances. The project in Belarus, however, has had a high administrative/management budget of 40 percent, due to its bureaucratic structure and many levels of administration. While regard for cost consciousness is desirable, in a few cases it has had a constraining effect on implementation. As discussed above, the low allowances of the project in Malawi has led to difficulties in engaging government officials, while in Ethiopia modest salaries is a factor making it challenging to find candidates for vacancies in LWF.

ICA and IceCross have an **intermediary channel** in relation to the projects in Uganda and Belarus respectively. In Belarus, IceCross has relied heavily on IFRC, which has facilitated the administration, monitoring, and reporting considerably. IFRC has received around five percent of the budget for this service. At the same time, having IFRC as an intermediary made it difficult for IceCross to get first-hand information on the management set-up of the project and the organisational capacity of BRCS. In Uganda, LWF serves as channel, taking ten percent for the oversight function it performs. However, this has not had any effect on the communication between ICA and RACOB AO.

In Malawi, IceCross initially had a delegate posted in Mangochi to facilitate the cooperation and monitor the use of funding during the first year of the project. This function constituted 13 percent of the budget for the first year. The IceCross delegate was replaced by a Danish delegate, who took on the responsibility along with other tasks associated with Danish RC support in other districts. The new delegate is financed through the Danish RC.

In terms of **monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL)** practices and systems, each project was at a different level. LWF applies a well-developed framework for MEL, although its lessons learning has not always been explicit. Uganda's MEL is still developing, but is functional. The capacity of the Malawi Red Cross is still weak, it relies on foreign funds for its programmes and it depends on foreign delegates for management and monitoring functions. It does not undertake an overall financial or narrative reporting that responds to its strategic plan. The monitoring, evaluation and learning process in Belarus was hampered by the bureaucratic systems of the organisation and the pilot nature (at national level) of the project.

## 2.5 LESSONS LEARNT

A number of factors have both contributed and constrained the achievement of the projects' results. Among the contributing factors are the following:

- **Participation, fostering ownership, good communications, and respectful relations** are critical vis a vis the target populations. All four projects have tried to promote these aspects in their support. LWF, RACOBABO, and the Open Home project in Belarus have been particularly good at this. In relation to participation it is critical that participation is inclusive and not only consists of the voice of community leaders. In Malawi, the consultative and participatory processes were also an important part of the project design, but, sometimes the voices of community leaders had greater influence. Furthermore, boys and girls in schools, who were targets of some of the support, were not consulted. Consulting with girls at schools and hearing their perspectives could have ensured better protection from abuse and more effective sanitation measures that corresponded to their needs.
- A **holistic approach** that meets the inter-connected needs of target groups enhances results significantly. In Ethiopia the different components of LWF's multi-dimensional livelihood support interplayed to provide a more effective support and also strongly responded to needs. This approach was also used by RACOBABO, but not within the Icelandic project, but by leveraging its other projects funded by other donors. In Malawi, the CBHFA approach has been fairly holistic, except that, in retrospect, more focus could have been on food security, family planning, and resilience. However, recognising these shortcomings, the Red Cross have included these elements in the ongoing project.
- **Supporting organisational development** can empower a CSO in a developing country and improve prospects for organisational sustainability. The support from IceCross, combined with the creative and proactive approach of the Mangochi branch, has significantly strengthened the latter. Meanwhile, the other three projects have not addressed organisational development. In fact, the project based support provided has done little to strengthen the partner CSOs at country level.
- Fostering good relations, sharing information, and **working collaboratively with the local authorities** has been an important strength of the three projects in Africa. This is crucial to ensure any form of sustainability. In Belarus, involvement of local authorities only began in earnest in the last year.
- For the LWF project in Ethiopia, having **continuity of staff** has contributed positively to results. Not only have many of LWF's staff members worked with the project for many years, a majority of the government officials have been involved for ten years. Likewise, in Belarus, the continuity and commitment of the manager of the Open Home centre has been a key factor for the positive results. Meanwhile, the evidence from Malawi, for instance, suggested that staff changes in both Iceland and Malawi adversely affected the project in terms of timeliness and internal communications and relations. While discontinuity on several fronts can have a negative impact, it is not a critical element – RACO-

BAO, for instance, was able to weather three leadership changes without serious consequences for its project with ICA.

There are also lessons regarding the factors that have constrained implementation of the four projects:

- The project-based support that is provided on a **short-term basis** (one to three years) undermines an organisation's ability to plan long-term. The country-level partners receive "slices" of funding from a number of other donors, but this support is not harmonised or coordinated. In MRCS, some harmonisation took place when IceCross became part of a consortium of four supporting RC/RC societies. The larger Red Cross Societies supporting MRCS have, however, not been part of it.
- Project-based support does little to **strengthen country level CSOs**. The Icelandic CSOs have not supported or not sufficiently supported the strengthening of the management, financial administration, and monitoring capacities of their national partners. Instead, both organisations have relied on other organisations (LWF and IFRC) or locally posted expatriate Red Cross delegates (in Malawi) to undertake this function.
- **Advocacy** is important to ensure that duty-bearers work towards addressing underlying causes of poverty, discrimination, and non-realisation of human rights. Combining service delivery with advocacy is an effective way of gaining the attention of authorities, raising their awareness, and convincing them of the action that is needed for sustained improvement. Advocacy has not featured strongly in any of the evaluated projects, if at all. It should be noted that advocacy does not have to be antagonistic. It can be a way of supporting the decision-makers, providing them with knowledge or creating an atmosphere of joint work to address challenges.
- The **girl child** is a vulnerable person in most developing countries, particularly among the very poor. Over the years, data and significant research<sup>3</sup> show that the girl child also holds a key to change, since if she is educated, future generations will be better off, healthier, and more educated. In Uganda, the team found that when children were mentioned with families visited, the discussions tended to focus only on the boys. It also came across several cases of girls becoming pregnant at a young age in the supported households. Some left home to seek livelihood elsewhere and returned with babies. Meanwhile, the school drop-outs among vulnerable children assisted in Malawi tended to be girls. The team further-

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<sup>3</sup> For instance, [http://www.worldbank.org/content/dam/Worldbank/document/Gender/Voice\\_and\\_agency\\_LOWRES.pdf](http://www.worldbank.org/content/dam/Worldbank/document/Gender/Voice_and_agency_LOWRES.pdf)

more heard of serious abuses of girls by teachers in two of the visited primary schools. In Ethiopia, several of the mothers in the women's groups were under 18. Giving particular attention to girls and their needs and working specifically to empower young girls could enhance the long-term effectiveness of the support. Supporting the girl child also involves raising awareness in the community, including addressing issues of men and masculinities.

Some of the constraining factors lie outside the control of the CSOs:

- The government and **local authorities** typically **lack capacity and resources**. Involving the local authorities and activities within the projects to build their capacity – while critical – can only achieve so much.
- **Government regulations**, such as the ones imposed on CSOs in Ethiopia,<sup>4</sup> and by the Malawi government<sup>5</sup> can have a constraining effect on both implementation processes, but also on thematic areas of work.
- The different levels of **allowances** provided to government officials and other stakeholders by different actors (international CSOs, bilateral agencies, the UN agencies, and government entities) create strong incentives/disincentives that can seriously affect implementation processes. To the extent possible, Icelandic actors should advocate for adhering to the standardised government level per diems, if these exist.
- Inclement weather (both droughts and floods) and **less predictable weather patterns** have hampered support and destroyed the crop for target groups in Africa.

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<sup>4</sup> The Charities and Societies Law's '70/30' Directive requires that CSOs devote 30 percent of their budget for "administration". What counts as administration is broadly and arbitrarily defined, including monitoring and evaluation activities, communications, and equipment such as office generators. Likewise, international CSOs are prohibited from promoting human rights.

<sup>5</sup> Education policy changes in Malawi has led to more children being excluded. Among these are the new curriculum that makes two-shift education impossible in already overcrowded schools and compulsory education in English language.

### 3. Added value of CSO-Channeled Civil Society Support

Iceland's *CSO Guidelines* emphasises the importance of utilising “the expert knowledge of the (Icelandic CSOs), their willingness, ability and social networks to successfully reach Iceland's developmental objectives.” It highlights the links that can be made between the grassroots in Iceland with the grassroots in developing countries, through this type of support. To be eligible for support, the Icelandic CSOs must “be able to show that their participation will increase the value of the development cooperation”, not least by contributing towards an Icelandic public that is well-informed through dissemination of information and educational activities about developing countries and development cooperation. The CSOs should also support Iceland's development cooperation through engagement in the country's aid programmes by providing expertise and insights in the country's development discourse.

The following sections conclude on the extent that the Icelandic civil society organisations add value to Iceland's development cooperation effort in relation to the following areas:

- Information dissemination and awareness-raising in Iceland
- Active in the development cooperation community in Iceland
- Synergies with Icelandic bilateral efforts
- Additional funding
- Monitoring and administration of the support
- Reduced financial risk
- Engaged in international solidarity and international networks
- Drawing on Icelandic knowhow

#### 3.1 INFORMATION DISSEMINATION AND AWARENESS-RAISING IN ICELAND

The Icelandic CSOs add value by promoting international engagement and solidarity among the Icelandic public. They provide visibility for development cooperation and contribute to promoting interest among the Icelandic public in international engagement and solidarity.

Both ICA and IceCross have significant grassroots networks in Iceland. In the case of ICA, the Lutheran church provides constituencies in the form of congregations. IceCross, on the other hand, has branch organisations with volunteers throughout Iceland. Both organisations are thus well known in Iceland and for decades have been considered major pillars of Iceland-



ic development cooperation and humanitarian aid. A Gallup survey from April 2017 that sampled 1400 Icelanders about their knowledge of and attitudes toward five Icelandic CSOs<sup>6</sup> indicated that 96.9 percent of the public know of the Icelandic Red Cross, while 89.5 percent know of ICA.

ICA and IceCross are actively involved in awareness-raising and public education. Both organisations:

- Publish material about their development cooperation work;
- Produce annual reports that are available both online and in paper form;
- Are active on different social media platforms and have informative webpages from which the public can learn about its initiatives in developing countries;
- Regularly discuss development issues in the media (articles in publications and television and radio interviews);
- Give presentations on their projects to different groups in Iceland – including at clubs, organisations and students (primary, secondary and university);
- Undertake regular door-to-door fund-raising campaigns for development and humanitarian assistance.

### 3.2 ACTIVE IN THE DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION COMMUNITY IN ICELAND

ICA and IceCross add value by serving as dialogue partners to MFA. They have participated in different development fora:

- They are members of the Association of Icelandic NGOs that work in development cooperation and humanitarian assistance – SÍMAH.
- They participate in MFA's Development Cooperation Committee.
- They used to participate in the annual week-long public awareness campaign on development issues – *Próunarsamvinna ber ávöxt* – with former Iceida and other Icelandic CSOs, which ended the merger with the MFA in 2016.

### 3.3 SYNERGIES

Two of the projects have operated in Malawi and Uganda, countries to which Iceland also provides bilateral development assistance, which potentially created opportunities for syner-

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<sup>6</sup> Other CSOs were SOS Children's Villages, Icelandic Church Aid, Save the Children and UN Women.

gies. However, in Uganda, there has been minimal interaction between Iceida and ICA projects, aside from occasional visits, since Iceida works in other districts and in different sectors. In Malawi, on the other hand, Iceida and IceCross have been working in the same district (Mangochi) for years – although in different geographic areas of the district, as assigned by local government. Moreover, Iceida has funded a basic services project with several similar components to IceCross’ health and resilience projects. Nevertheless, there has been no cooperation between the two except the occasional interaction. In addition, by paying higher level allowances to district government staff and volunteers, the Iceida project has indirectly affected the MRCS project negatively, making it difficult for them to involve government staff in trainings and monitoring. Furthermore, expectations of remuneration for volunteers has increased.

### 3.4 ADDITIONAL FUNDING

Working with Icelandic CSOs adds value to Iceland’s development cooperation efforts by increasing the total amount of Icelandic resources for this purpose. Effectively, MFA and the Icelandic CSOs are able to mutually leverage each other’s funds to have greater effect. In recent years, the CSOs have contributed between 20 to 55 percent of the project budgets.

### 3.5 MONITORING AND ADMINISTRATION OF THE SUPPORT

An added benefit of channelling funds through Icelandic CSOs is that the CSOs take on the tasks to plan, manage, and monitor the projects and report back to the MFA on a regular basis according to MFA’s requirements. The CSO desk at the MFA is a small unit which does not have the capacity to undertake monitoring and administration of the support in a way that the CSOs do. It is furthermore easier for MFA to engage with intermediary organisations based in Iceland developing country-based

### 3.6 REDUCED FINANCIAL RISK

With the addition of the CSOs’ own funds *and* the monitoring support they supply, MFA reduces the financial risk involved in supporting civil society organisations in developing countries. The CSOs evaluated have contributed between 30 and 55 percent of project budgets.

### 3.7 ENGAGED IN INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY AND INTERNATIONAL NETWORKS

IceCross and ICA broaden the horizons of Iceland’s development effort by the fact that both CSOs are part of larger international solidarity movements. They also offer potential networks at community level in developing countries which provides a good basis for sustainability and local ownership of programmes.

IceCross is a member of the International Federation of Red Cross Societies (IFRC), which is the world’s largest humanitarian organisations, comprising of 190 member Red Cross and Red Crescent National Societies and more than 60 delegations supporting activities around the world. Through its sister societies, IceCross can also potentially tap into 14 million active Red

Cross volunteers worldwide. The national societies typically have systems in place to organise resource mobilisation and volunteerism and to coordinate service provision in the health and social sectors.

Through congregations and Lutheran CSOs, ICA can also tap into the grassroots level, though its networks are not always quite as large, structured, and quick to mobilise as the Red Cross volunteer networks. Nevertheless, ICA is a member of two transnational church organisations – the Lutheran World Federation (45 churches that work in 98 countries) and the ACT Alliance (a coalition of more than 140 churches and church-related organisations). It furthermore engages with the other Nordic Lutheran organisations, which hold annual directors' meetings, work on common strategies, and occasionally make joint statements.

Both organisations have special features. The unique role the Red Cross societies have in relation to their mandate to disseminate and monitor international humanitarian law sets the Red Cross apart from other CSOs. In developing countries, they are often guided by separate legislation and often have close ties to the government and serve as an auxiliary service provider in emergencies. This means that national societies often have great potential to influence policy and practice, if desired. Other strengths of the national RC/RC societies are that:

- They are controlled and run by domestic human resources and have a grassroots anchorage through its branches and volunteers (also in the most remote areas). This provides a good basis for sustainability and local ownership of programmes.
- They often have systems in place to organise resource mobilisation and volunteerism and to coordinate service provision in the health and social sectors.

Although IFRC and national societies work with recovery and development projects, the strength and the historical role of the Red Cross Movement consists of providing protection and assistance to people affected by disasters and conflicts.<sup>7</sup> Thus the scope of the development work of many national societies is relatively narrow and focused on service provision – typically relating to health, water, sanitation, food security, disaster preparedness, and service delivery.<sup>8</sup> They also undertake advocacy work based on the humanitarian principles (humanitarian diplomacy), but do not champion human rights as such,<sup>9</sup> and usually do not work expressly towards change of societal systems and structures. There are, however, great differ-

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<sup>7</sup> <http://www.ifrc.org/en/who-we-are/the-movement/>

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.ifrc.org/en/what-we-do/>

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.ifrc.org/en/what-we-do/principles-and-values/>

ences among the national societies, and their respective relationships with the government authorities can either stifle their ability to promote change or allow them to influence behind the scenes.

Emergency humanitarian assistance is also part of ICA's roots, although today it works more with development projects. As a faith-based organisation, ICA is committed to working with other faith-based organisations, not least as a member of the ACT Alliance. Faith-based organisations have a strong voice and represent huge sections of the poorest and marginalised groups, not least in rural areas. Being able to draw on these resources offer a significant advantage. In particular, church leaders can be a powerful ally in efforts to promote social change. At the same time, faith based organisations must balance this with convincing assurances that their assistance is open to all, regardless of faith, gender, ethnicity, etc.

The members of LWF state that their values “are a deeply rooted response to God's grace as revealed through Jesus Christ”.<sup>10</sup> While the Nordic Lutheran organisations were the first to draw a theological connection to and argument for adopting a human rights based approach, this has been more complicated for some of the member churches. The differences in standpoints can lead to frictions. For example, the Nordic member churches have recognised same sex unions, while member churches in e.g. Ethiopia<sup>11</sup> and Tanzania do not. Because of the different positions, Ethiopia announced in 2016 that it would not be affiliated with the Swedish and American members of LWF.

### 3.8 ICELANDIC KNOWHOW

The Icelandic CSOs can potentially add value by drawing on Icelandic expertise and knowhow in developing country contexts. However, in relation to ICA and IceCross, this has not taken place except in the case of Belarus, where IceCross has used its unique competency as an organiser of community based mental health services to provide technical support to the project, which has been key to the project's success. For 2018, however, ICA is planning to connect its social work in Iceland with the new vocational training/social work project in Kampala slums. Both CSOs could do more to make use of its domestic competencies. There could also be opportunities to draw on Icelandic capacities for organisational development of the CSOs in developing countries.

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<sup>10</sup> <https://www.lutheranworld.org/content/our-core-values>.

<sup>11</sup> In 2016, the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus, announced that it will not be affiliated with any churches "who have openly accepted same-sex marriage". <https://www.christianpost.com/news/ethiopian-church-severs-ties-with-lutherans-over-homosexuality-89745/>.

## 4. Strategic considerations for the future

As small country, Iceland has comparatively small CSOs, and a fewer number of civil society actors involved in development cooperation. To ensure that Icelandic development cooperation efforts make the most of available resources and have the greatest effect in line with Icelandic policy priorities, there are a number of strategic issues to consider.

### 4.1 STRENGTHENING OF CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS

The key purpose of Icelandic civil society support is to contribute to an independent, strong, and diverse civil society in low income countries. However, to date, efforts have barely focused on this objective, if at all. Part of the reason for the lack of progress in this area is that the support has been project focused, often funded a year at a time. The aim has been to make a difference to stakeholders on the ground and not to the civil society organisations themselves. To strengthen CSOs in low income countries requires that these organisations are empowered and in the driver's seat, and not merely used as implementing agents. To this end, organisational development (OD) initiatives are highly relevant. This includes efforts aimed at developing specific capacities such as strategic planning, accountable governance system, human resources administration, M&E, resource mobilisation, outreach, advocacy approaches, etc. A programmatic approach that supports an organisation's multi-year strategic plan as opposed to a project "slice" is more empowering for CSOs. This requires that the partners agree on unmet needs and a theory of change to address these. Not all CSO partnerships are suitable for longer-term programmatic and/or organisational development support.<sup>12</sup> However, if MFA and its partner CSOs are serious about strengthening CSOs in developing countries, this approach should be the norm rather than the exception.

In Iceida programme countries, the Icelandic embassy/representation could play a role in strengthening civil society at country level. The Icelandic representations could use their networks to support promising CSOs in strategic areas, including those that may relate to Iceida's other efforts, with the aim of promoting synergetic effects. They could also pair up with other donors or engage in joint donor facilities for civil society support. Such approaches would allow Iceland to leverage the resources of others to create greater effects.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> For instance, strengthening a well-established international CSO like LWF would not be relevant.

<sup>13</sup> For a comparison among funding modalities and types of intermediaries, please refer to Annex 2.

**Recommendation 1:** MFA should prioritise applications from CSOs that in a comprehensive way aim to strengthen civil society partners in low income countries. For country-level CSOs that show promise, including having a good and realistic strategy/theory of change, this could consist of multi-year funding that can be used for programmatic and/or core funding of civil society organisations in developing countries. Ensuring relevant capacity development components will be important. MFA should clarify to the Icelandic CSOs that MFA funds can be used for core support and that it accepts joint (harmonised) narrative and financial reports as long as i) the Icelandic government contribution is visible; and ii) include the five points referred to in the *CSO Guidelines*.

**Recommendation 2:** In addition to support via Icelandic CSOs, MFA should consider making funds available for its representations to support country level CSOs working in areas of strategic importance. Leveraging the support of other donors, through for instance joint facilities, should be encouraged.

## 4.2 THEMATIC SCOPE

A robust, vibrant, diverse, independent, and pluralistic civil society is considered critical for democratic development that realises the human rights of all citizens. This calls for support to a wide range of themes, issues, organisation types, approaches, etc. However, given the comparatively small size of Iceland's civil society support, trying to cover many bases would spread the resources thinly. Another approach would be to champion a few themes, approaches, issues, organisation types etc. During the discussion with Icelandic CSOs at a meeting on December 14, 2017 at MFA, several CSOs considered that since Iceland has a reputation for being leaders in gender equality, the CSOs should champion gender equality and make it a common theme of all Icelandic civil society support.

Another approach would be to prioritise themes, issues, and approaches in which Icelandic CSOs have specific know-how. Examples would be, for instance, ICA's expertise in social work and the IceCross's work in mental health.

Among the approaches that need strengthening in the current Icelandic CSO portfolio is advocacy. While supporting stand-alone advocacy efforts is not always successful, when combined with service delivery, capacity building and/or research, advocacy can be highly effective in contributing to change.

**Recommendation 3:** MFA should prioritise applications that include advocacy components. This could consist of development of advocacy capacities or specific advocacy initiatives that e.g. address some of the underlying causes of poverty, discrimination, and non-realisation of human rights.

**Recommendation 4:** MFA and the CSOs active in development work should continue the dialogue on how to promote an appropriate thematic scope for Icelandic CSO support, based on the strengths of Icelandic civil society organisations.

### 4.3 GEOGRAPHIC SCOPE

Between 2012 and 2017, Icelandic CSOs worked in 14 different countries. Ten of these were in Africa (Ethiopia, Gambia, Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Malawi, Somalia, South Africa, Togo, Uganda, Zambia). Currently, the *CSO Guidelines* specifically state that CSO support should be given for efforts in low income countries – although three CSO projects were funded in middle income countries (Belarus, Bosnia and South Africa). While there are certainly large populations of poor people in some middle income countries, a scope that only includes low income countries would seem to be a reasonable means of ensuring some sort of geographic concentration that corresponds to Iceland’s development priorities.

Concentrating the support in fewer countries could create critical mass, promote synergies among CSOs and/or with Iceida. During the discussions at the above-mentioned meeting, Icelandic CSOs held, however, that being guided by where they have good partners and networks would ensure better results than being pressed to establish partners within a limited geographic scope.

Iceida only works in a few countries and the *CSO Guidelines* encourage CSOs to undertake initiatives in these. Those that have done so have found that the Icelandic representation in the country has been useful. However, as the project evaluations show, synergies with Iceida efforts have not taken place.

**Recommendation 5:** To ensure that Icelandic funds have the most effect, MFA should to the extent possible, promote the concentration of CSO efforts in fewer countries. For instance, Icelandic CSOs should only receive funding for projects in up to three different countries.

**Recommendation 6:** In programme countries, Iceida should have regular information exchange meetings with CSO projects funded via Icelandic CSOs. Synergies should be promoted when relevant, but not considered an end in themselves. In this context, opportunities for synergies with other Icelandic efforts, such as the UNU-programmes in Iceland, should be considered.

## 4.4 ICELANDIC CSO BASE

Having a broad base of civil society organisation engaged in development cooperation has two advantages: i) it ensures that a wider range of society is involved at some level in supporting development; and ii) it can promote a more diverse set of civil society initiatives being supported in developing countries. The current range of Icelandic CSOs involved in development cooperation is relatively limited. For instance, the youth movement, the labour movement, cultural CSOs, the disability organisations, environmental organisations, and other associations are not involved. According to both the Ministry and the CSOs that the team discussed with, there is an interest in broadening the types of Icelandic civil society actors involved in the support. The Ministry notes, however, that despite efforts over the years to this end, the interest from civil society has been generally tepid.

At the same time, it is in the interest of MFA to work with Icelandic CSOs that have enough experience, knowledge, and capacity to work with development initiatives. One way that Icelandic CSOs can broaden their experience is to leverage the international and/or Nordic networks that they may be part of. Through, for instance, co-financing arrangements with Nordic sister CSOs, small Icelandic contributions could become more effective. Exchanges, internships, and other collaborative engagements with Nordic sister CSOs could furthermore enhance capacity – particularly for Icelandic CSOs that are new to development. Icelandic CSOs would do well to partner with the Nordic CSOs that are leaders in their field.<sup>14</sup>

The *CSO Guidelines* commit Iceland to supporting capacity strengthening of Icelandic CSOs. In this context, MFA initiated a workshop on gender equality in October 2017. This evaluation too, has contributed to building CSO capacities. Furthermore, since 2015, MFA has had funds available for capacity development of Icelandic CSOs (up to ISK 500,000), but so far only one organisation has applied.

**Recommendation 7:** MFA should encourage Icelandic CSOs to apply for the funds available for capacity building purposes. It should furthermore continue to explore opportunities to build the capacity of its domestic CSOs to engage in development cooperation and even consider capacity building initiatives in cooperation with the other Nordic governments.

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<sup>14</sup> For instance, Norway's disability movement (through Atlas Alliance) has been at the forefront in development efforts. In Sweden, CSOs that are well established internationally and leaders within their field include RFSL (LGBT movement), RFSU (sexual and reproductive health and rights), Save the Children (child protection) and WWF (environmental sustainability).



## **Annex 1 – Executive Summaries of the Evaluation of the Four CSO Projects**

### **1. ICA – RACOBABO**

ICA has provided support to the Rural Action Community Based Organisation (RACOBABO), since 2007. RACOBABO is since 2008 a local civil society organisation based in Rakai, established as an offshoot of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) project whose main goal was to reduce the incidence of HIV/AIDS transmission and mitigate the social impact of AIDS. RACOBABO operates in central Uganda (districts of Lyantonde, Rakai, Sembabule and Mityana).

RACOBABO's mission is "to promote human rights of the most vulnerable people through community empowerment, engaging duty bearers and advocacy for accountability and quality services in the targeted districts". It is a member of the ACT Alliance, Uganda Forum, which is comprised of both international and national ecumenical CSOs. RACOBABO has around half a dozen international donors at any one time and has also raised money from local donors. ICA has been one of its most steadfast donors.

The support from ICA has concentrated on constructing houses, providing basic sanitary facilities (water tanks, latrines, kitchens, and household items) for the most vulnerable AIDS-affected households. When funding has allowed, RACOBABO has also contributed goats, chickens, and seeds. Importantly, with funding from its other donors, RACOBABO supported the same families through e.g. voluntary AIDS counsellors, advocacy towards local government agencies, and village savings and loans schemes. Thus, the total support from RACOBABO to households has been more holistic than what has been covered by the ICA contribution.

The context of the districts that RACOBABO works in is one in which the exceptionally high prevalence of HIV/AIDS has torn the social fabric through morbidity, death, and abandonment. Food insecurity is high, poverty levels above the national average, water shortages are experienced during the dry season; and there is poor education and health service delivery.

By providing decent standard housing, latrines of good quality, and access to clean water next to the home; RACOBABO has provided safety, protection, healthier living conditions, better hygiene, and saved time for severely vulnerable families. The difference to their lives that the target group experiences has been extraordinary – giving families dignity, hope, and respect from members of the community from which they had previously been excluded.

Due to their circumstances, for many families there is a limit to what can be expected in terms of self-help or their ability to leverage the support from RACOBABO as a stepping stone to improving their lives further, since merely coping is a considerable feat for them. Thus, while the support has pulled the households out of extreme destitution, allowing them to survive, several remain highly impoverished and food insecure. Within these families, adolescent girls

seem to be most at risk.

For another group of families, the support has improved their situation enough to scrape by – they engage in more productive economic activities, produce more food, participate in saving and loans schemes, and so on. Then there is a small number of households that are succeeding and becoming leading figures in their community. These successes are not easily replicable as the exceptional mettle of the individuals in question is one of the underlying elements. However, in addition to the project support, an important contributing factor has been the support RACOBABO has provided outside of the ICA-funded project – in particular psycho-social counsellors, but also saving and loans schemes, agricultural support, and advocacy – all which the Icelandic funds have inadvertently leveraged, resulting in a more holistic support to the households.

RACOBABO has been highly relevant and responsive to needs. In relation to Iceland's policy, RACOBABO has been particularly strong in targeting the very poor and most marginalised people. It has also been apt at fostering local ownership and working competently with the local authorities. To a good but comparably lesser extent, RACOBABO's project has also been relevant to the Icelandic priorities of environmental sustainability, gender equality, human rights, and human rights principles.

Sustainability in terms of the durability of infrastructure support (houses, kitchens, latrines, and water tanks) is high. These have been made with due regard for quality. In terms of the future welfare of the households, the prospects are uncertain. The HIV/AIDS counsellors are committed but their capacity is limited and they are also not well off. The local authorities express strong moral support for the project, but government allocations to assist these types of households are meagre.

RACOBABO is a locally based CSO, with a sizable constituency base in its community. RACOBABO has managed to establish and consolidate itself over these years, growing organisationally and programmatically to become a competent community-based organisation. The staff and leadership are committed and proficient at implementing the support. It has a high standing in the community, is much appreciated by the local authorities, and enjoys a good relationship with ICA.

RACOBABO was one of several LWF projects that became “indigenised” as a local CSO. RACOBABO, however, is the only organisation that has managed the transition well and is still a functioning organisation. RACOBABO is, nevertheless, constrained by a fragmented resource base, consisting of short-term project funds with many donors that each support a sliver of its work. This undermines its ability to apply a consolidated and strategic approach in line with its theory of change and resulting priorities.

If ICA and MFA are serious about strengthening civil society in developing countries, it will be important to encompass organisational strengthening and longer-term programme support to CSOs in developing countries. RACOBABO and ICA have been partners for ten years.

Building on this long history, it would seem suitable for the two organisations to **take the relationship to the next level**, basing the support on a broader strategic vision for change in the communities in which RACOB AO works, and supporting RACOB AO in its development as an organisation. This will require a comprehensive dialogue among the parties to determine the shape, content, and form for a closer partnership. RACOB AO and ICA need to be on the same page when it comes to a series of issues such as a theory of change, strategic priorities, programmatic areas, prioritise approaches, RACOB AO’s organisational development priorities, mechanisms to mitigate financial risk, etc.

Since many of the other organisations supporting RACOB AO over the years have been ACT Alliance members, it would seem that there is an opportunity for ICA to join up with other “friends of RACOB AO” that could provide more strategic support in an organisationally empowering way. The Nordic Lutheran organisations, which also are bound by Nordic government development policies to support the strengthening of civil society, would seem like suitable partners in such a venture.

## 2. ICA – JIJIGA

Since 2008 ICA have supported LWF’s livelihood project, the Jijiga District Integrated Community Development Project (later the Jijiga District Food Security and Livelihoods Project) in Jijiga, which is in the Somali Regional state of Ethiopia – one of the country’s least developed regions. The support developed out of the recognition that the cyclical pattern of drought, which led to the need for recurrent emergency food assistance, required a response that strengthened the preparedness and resilience of communities.

The purpose of the project has generally been to improve the economic and social wellbeing of the targeted communities by enhancing their coping capacity and increasing their access to food and social services. In the current phase, working to empower women through improved control and decision-making power over productive resources has become a central component. The project is in its third phase, with the fourth phase expected to start in 2018. Each phase has focused on between eight and fourteen kebeles (villages), and catered to between 35,000-75,000 people. Key activities have included:

1. *Water development* – building of birkas, hand-dug wells, sanitation awareness, and forming of water committees;
2. *Crop development* – introduction of improved seeds, new vegetables (like onion, peppers, beans), bullocks for the most vulnerable women, donation of mechanical threshers, provision of farm tools, and support to district farmers’ training centres;
3. *Livestock production* – training of Community Animal Health Workers (CAHW), introduction of poultry rearing, drug and equipment support to district veterinary services, and training in forage development;
4. *Income generating activities* – establishment of women’s groups that receive access to a revolving fund and training in income generation;

5. *Environment protection* – training in natural resources & environmental protection, and tree seedling production.

The ICA-MFA funded LWF project in Jijiga has, during its three phases, made substantial transformational change within the kebeles that were targeted. Clean and closer water, greater food security, improved diets, better sanitation, higher income (and thus better beds, clothing, and kitchen utensils), saved time, and more children attending school have effectively changed the lives of many people in the 20 kebeles that received support over the years. Furthermore, the communities are farming with better tools and using new techniques and crops that have produced better harvests. They have healthier animal stocks and are raising poultry for the first time.

In addition to making important socioeconomic differences to the communities served, the support has also led to psycho-social changes. Many of the women have become self-confident, are active in their communities, have been exposed to the world outside the kebele, and are enjoying an improved status in the communities through the respect they have gained. Moreover, community dynamics have changed in a positive way as a result of the support – including gender roles and active community organisations.

In terms of sustainability, there is evidence from the kebeles that LWF worked in during the earlier phases that communities continue to organise themselves, maintain assets, and engage in livelihood activities introduced by LWF. Within the communities there is a strong sense of ownership, responsibility, and accountability to one another. The local authorities express significant moral support for the project, but there is little evidence of them undertaking follow up support after LWF has moved on.

The project is relevant in several ways. First, LWF has provided multi-dimensional livelihood support within a scope that corresponds to its areas of proficiency and which responds to critical needs of the community. Second, it is highly relevant to Iceland's priorities of reducing poverty, promoting gender equality, and the sustainable use of natural resources. While the support does not purport to strengthen civil society or human rights, to a lesser extent it also contributes to these priorities as well. Third, the support is well aligned with the priorities of the Ethiopian government and the Somali Regional State.

LWF is a professional and cost-conscious organisation with considerable experience and well developed tools and approaches. The support has been efficiently managed by LWF, reaching most targets successfully within the timeframes set. Good communications and trustful relationships have also contributed to efficiency. This includes between LWF and ICA; between LWF and relevant government authorities; as well as between LWF and the communities it serves. The project has furthermore benefitted from the long-term financial support that it has received from Iceland, as well as a relatively high level of continuity among staff and local government counterparts.

The many years of support has allowed LWF to reflect on results and adjust the support in the

subsequent phase. The lessons learnt, however, have not always been fully documented. Furthermore, while LWF pays visits to kebeles from the earlier phases, it has not documented the post implementation situation in these communities. Doing so, and analysing the factors that contribute/constrain continued effects, could provide useful input for the proposed upcoming phase.

LWF staff show strong commitment, technical knowledge, and skills. They are, however, over-stretched, due to staffing shortages, resulting in work-life imbalance. These shortages are largely caused by external factors. First, the Ethiopian government's 30/70 directive forces LWF to broaden the job descriptions of staff so that one staff member covers many functions. Second, the regional government insists that vacancies are filled by ethnic Somali staff, but identifying qualified candidates from the region is highly challenging. Hiring female staff has been particularly difficult. There are currently no female project staff, despite the project's strong focus on women.

### 3. ICELANDIC RED CROSS – BELARUS

IceCross has supported the Project for Mental Health in Minsk that is implemented by the Belarusian Red Cross Society (BRCS) since 2013. BRCS has 1,297,085 members, (13.6 percent of Belarussians) and around 20 000 volunteers organised in 77 volunteer councils. In total, IceCross has contributed EUR 785 130 (ISK 95 795 882) to the project (via IFRC) since its inception, which is approximately EUR 160 000 per year (around three percent of BRCS annual budget).

The overall objective of the project is to assist people with mental illness in leading more productive and autonomous lifestyles; and promote mental health and reduce stigma through service, advocacy, and awareness-raising. The specific objective is to promote participation and social inclusion of people with mental illness in Minsk by strengthening capacity of and cooperation between Belarus Red Cross and relevant state and non-state actors.

The expected results are:

- 1) Improved wellbeing of people (adults) with mental illnesses with increased access to psycho-social support, rehabilitation, and education, enabling their social inclusion.
- 2) Improved advocacy for social inclusion of people with mental illnesses.
- 3) Improved exchange and cooperation between the Red Cross, civil society and authorities to promote participation of people with mental illnesses in the community.

The project sprung from IceCross's inquiry regarding interest in learning from its mental health self-help centres in Iceland among other national Red Cross societies. The main activities of the project have been the setting up and running of a centre; offering services to persons with mental illness; and supporting them to regain social and professional abilities and relationships. In total, 91 persons have been guests at the centre since the start in 2013, of which just over one-third were women.

The centre has employed a manager and a psychologist, who have received technical back-stopping from a similar centre run by IceCross in Iceland. Mutual study visits have been organised. The manager has also worked to influence psychiatrists in Minsk clinics and in the Ministry of Health to recognise the work of the centre and to refer patients. Furthermore, the centre has engaged in media and awareness-raising campaigns to inform about mental illness and reduce stigma in society.

Each guest at the centre has a personalised rehabilitation plan, aiming at independence, social inclusion, and work (when possible). The centre relies on the voluntary work of selected guests who have come far in their rehabilitation process. The work is based on a self-help group methodology.

The IceCross support to the “Open Home” project has contributed to some impressive results. It contributed to improvements in the psychological and social well-being of 89 percent of the guests who had been registered at the centre. Twenty-five percent managed to return to work or studies and many others improved their social skills and only need the services of the centre occasionally. The technical support from IceCross has been a key component to the successful development of the model, along with a deeply committed manager for the centre.

The project is highly relevant to the context in Belarus, where institutionalisation is common and almost no community based services are available. The project has been able to influence some doctors’ practices in Minsk clinics and place the issue of mental health on the media agenda. Indeed, many guests found the Open Home centre through the media coverage.

The project has focussed on development and delivery of quality rehabilitation services, while the efforts to address systemic problems in the area of mental health and psychiatry have been limited, despite having excellent contacts within the Ministry of Health.<sup>15</sup> The cooperation with other CSOs working on similar issues, such as deinstitutionalisation, independent living, community based rehabilitation and self-help groups, has also been limited.

The relevance and effectiveness of the project were hampered by the project constituting an isolated pilot initiative at the national BRCS level. Only in the very last year, was the project integrated as part of the operations of the Minsk RC branch, which led to some steps towards sustainability and local ownership. The Minsk city government provided premises (for discounted rent) and will pay for the services to some of the guests through the social welfare

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<sup>15</sup> The former chairperson of BRCS is the Minister of Health and the present Chairperson is the Deputy Health Minister. The current Secretary General is a member of Parliament.

budgets. However, the issue of mental health is not yet recognised as an important focus area of the BRCS and its branches. Furthermore, a substantial part of the project budget has been used for management and administration of the project at various levels, making efficiency low.

It is recommended that IceCross continue to provide technical support to BRCS in its efforts to take ownership of the project and make it a sustainable part of regular BRCS operations in Minsk and other selected branches. IceCross also need to engage in dialogue with other national RC societies supporting BRCS in order to harmonise its support to the organisational development of BRCS.

As Belarus is a middle-income country it is not part of the Icelandic development cooperation policy focus. However, MFA should grant a no-cost extension to allow IceCross and BRCS to find a reasonable phase out strategy that can ensure sustainability.

#### 4. ICELANDIC RED CROSS – MALAWI

The three-year integrated Community-based Health & First Aid (CBHFA) Project supported by IceCross was implemented by the Malawi Red Cross Society (MRCS) between 2013 and 2015, but the partnership between Icelandic Red Cross (IceCross) and the Malawi Red Cross Society (MRCS) dates back to 2002. MRCS is Malawi's largest humanitarian organisation, with established presence in all 28 districts. Approximately 30,000 volunteers make up the backbone of MRCS, who are organised in 33 divisions and many more sub-divisions (to match the government structure at local level).

The CBHFA project was implemented in the Traditional Authority Chowe (ADC Masanje) in Mangochi District. The project target population was 100 villages with 7,701 households and a total population of 32,321. From 2016, a new “Community Resilience Project” (COMREP) was initiated in the same geographical area (and in two additional districts in Malawi). It is based on the lessons from the first project and has a greater focus on social inclusion and disaster risk reduction and less on organisational capacity development of the Red Cross local structures and volunteers. The new project is supported by a coalition of four national RC societies – Denmark, Finland, Italy, and Iceland. It runs until 2019.

The immediate objective of the CBHFA project was to sustainably improve the health and well-being of 7,700 households in the targeted communities by the end of 2015. To achieve the objective, the project was designed to address the following five issues:

1. To reduce maternal and child mortality
2. To reduce morbidity and mortality due to malaria
3. To increase access to sustainable safe drinking water, sanitation and hygiene practices.
4. To reduce vulnerability to HIV & AIDS through preventing further HIV infection
5. To improve MRCS's performance efficiency of both Governance and Management to

deliver community-based health care programs.

The CBHFA methodology, developed by the International Federation of Red Cross & Red Crescent Societies, aims at building the capacity of community volunteers in all types of health issues/emergencies. It engages the communities and their volunteers in the use of simple tools adapted to local contexts to address the priority needs and to empower them to be in charge of their own development.

The project in Mangochi was carried out in cooperation with the district health department as part of the District Health Plan. Areas of cooperation were information-sharing, joint planning and service delivery by supporting community outreach (e.g. fuel). At community level, 100 MRCS volunteers (one per village) directly interacted with the fifteen Health Surveillance Assistants to provide health information and services to the communities. The majority of MRCS volunteers were male, as many women found it difficult to find time to take on additional duties and to move around independently

Apart from the construction of school toilets (sometimes specifically for girls) and the provision of boreholes in seven schools and four communities, the CBHFA project was mainly about promoting behavioural change in communities in relation to health and sanitation e.g. encouraging constructing household latrines with covers, arranging rubbish pits, improving hand washing practices, using mosquito nets, keeping kitchen utilities clean and safe, covering water buckets, taking children for vaccination, preventing HIV/AIDS infections, maintaining boreholes, etc. In addition, the project supported “granny groups” to establish back yard gardens to support their food security. Fifty selected vulnerable children were supported with school fees and school utensils. Sixty percent of these children were girls and 40 percent were boys.

The IceCross support to the CBFHA project contributed to visible improvements in health and sanitation conditions in the targeted area. Despite the difficult context, initial management problems and the slow pace of the social mobilisation, the project has managed to create ownership, pride and a sense of responsibility among most of the target communities.

Reduction of diarrhoea cases is widely reported and confirmed by the data available. This is believed to be a direct result of the sanitation and hygiene components of the project. Increased immunisation is reported as a direct consequence of the project support to the “Under 5” outreach clinics (paying transport for local health workers). The project also seems to have contributed to increased breastfeeding practices, increased attendance at the ANC services and increased deliveries at the health facility, combined with the government policies.

The VC (vulnerable children) component has increased the awareness in the communities of the importance of child protection and education – including early childhood development. The majority of supported VCs report an increased self-confidence and hope for the future, while being disappointed about frequent delays in the support packages. The VC school drop-out rate has been around 30 percent, mainly due to girls’ pregnancies. The supported mother’s



groups have served an important role to prevent child marriage, along with recently introduced legislation.

Thus, the project has been highly relevant to the context and its methods (training and household visits by RC volunteers, combined with financial support to health outreach services) have been somewhat effective. The RC branch in Mangochi has eventually become a model for its ability to monitor projects and to develop a sustainability strategy for its own management, volunteer structures, and a small VC component.

The relevance and effectiveness were, however, hampered by the contextual situation in which population growth and environmental emergencies (flooding and draughts) affect food security and access to services. Many backyard gardens established by the supported granny-groups were destroyed by flooding. The most urgent needs mentioned by community members were food security, access to education for their children, and access to maternity wards. The food security issue is somewhat addressed in the new project (COMREP), in which a feeding programme has been introduced in the preschool component (Community Based Child Care centres, CBCCs).

Another constraint to effectiveness has been that sanitation practices in communities were undermined by poor access to clean water and lack of hand washing facilities in schools and community latrines. Although the new project is planning more boreholes and rehabilitation of dysfunctional boreholes, there are still gaps in coverage and the existing boreholes are overused. Also, the approach to sanitation in schools (latrines and handwashing facilities) had not sufficiently considered the number of children or the practical functioning of the facilities. There were serious problems with theft of parts (doors, lids, hinges, taps, pipes). Most schools still have deplorable sanitary conditions. The model promoted for hand-washing (the tip-tap model) in communities is not being used except in a few places.

Furthermore, the government policies and lack of resources constrained the effectiveness of the project. The MRCS practice to pay low level allowances (for sustainability) made it difficult for the project to access government staff to conduct training and outreach, which led to delays and inefficiency. Other donors are ready to pay ten times more (including ICEIDA). The latrines that are affordable for community members to build are mostly constructed with homemade bricks and clay, which do not survive the rainy season. Thus, they are not so useful during the rains and have to be rebuilt regularly. Sustainability is difficult to achieve in a near-emergency context and where the government lacks the resources to fulfil their obligations.

The IceCross has been a long-term partner to MRCS, thus contributing a stable funding base and attracting other national RC societies to support MRCS. It has also played a role in moral support to the branch in Mangochi over the years. The Icelandic Red Cross has also supported MRCS on ICT matters, installing dependable internet at headquarters as well as at the Mangochi branch office.

Due to its staff changes and the small size of its financial contributions in comparison with other donors of MRCS, the added value of IceCross' support has been somewhat limited. However, the long-term engagement has been appreciated for the moral support it has provided to the Mangochi RC branch. Also, during the CBHFA project, the Icelandic Red Cross purchased new office premises for the branch. This includes the office building itself in addition to a small guesthouse and the land on which they both stand. Presently, only the project staff (reporting directly to the MRCS HQ) is using the office, while the branch officials remain in their old premises provided for free by the District authorities. The branch intends to use the premises for income generation – not for office use. They have already been able to rent out the guesthouse for profit and parts of the office building as well. They are actively planning for sustainability in the coming times, when the project is phased out. They have also started income generation by renting out the RC tents for social functions and they have purchased lawn chairs to supplement this business idea. These profits have enabled them to become the first branch to pay for their volunteers' insurance and in addition support some of their activities with their own resources.

## Annex 2 – Funding modalities and types of intermediaries

The table below includes the advantages and disadvantages of direct and indirect modalities, as well as those of the different potential intermediaries for civil society support.

Type of modality / intermediary	Advantages	Disadvantages/Risks
<b>Direct modality</b>	<i>The donor is closer to the partner and can more directly trace results of its contributions and have more influence. Getting first-hand information from the field to bring into the dialogue. Helps keep the donor updated on contextual developments. Lower transaction costs. Often fits well for support to human rights defenders, think tanks, research organisations, and sector umbrella organisations that have a lot of information and contacts to offer to the Icelandic dialogue.</i>	<p><i>Increases administrative burden of partners and the administrative role of donor. Risk of donor-driven organisations rather than vision-driven.</i></p> <p><i>Organisations become implementers of Icelandic agenda rather than agents of change on behalf of the local CSOs or international networks.</i></p> <p><i>Requires systematic mapping before selection. The donor must be aware of changes in context and new actors on the arena.</i></p>
<b>Partner country CSO</b>	Country CSOs often have good contextual knowledge and understanding of political and power relations. The channel contribute to local ownership and local CSO capacity development on a solid and long-term basis. Funding goes directly to partner country. Low transaction costs.	<p>Risk of giving power to some organisations at the expense of others. Risk of politicised agenda, especially in conflict/post conflict settings. Risk of intermediary being unfamiliar with Icelandic development goals and policies or unwilling to work in line with these (LGBT rights, gender equality, transparency, accountability etc.) Often weak management and M&amp;E capacity. Risk of being project driven rather than vision driven.</p> <p>Needs close monitoring by MFA, which takes resources. Risk of being only CSOs based in the capital city.</p>
<b>Indirect modality</b>	<i>Provides the opportunity of reaching a large number of organisations, at different levels (local, national, regional), in rural areas, and in different countries. Experience</i>	<i>Risk of losing contact with realities of people on the ground. May bring high transaction costs. No direct input to dia-</i>

	<i>shows that this modality works well for local governance programmes and in sector programmes where service delivery needs to be monitored at the grass root level (agriculture, environment, health, education, rural development sector programmes etc.)</i>	<i>logue. Difficult to select the most effective intermediary.</i>
<b>Icelandic CSOs (e.g. disability movement, youth movement, LGBT movement, sports organisations, labour movement)</b>	Possible to draw on Icelandic technical or thematic expertise and professional networks. Can contribute to awareness-raising in Iceland.	Risk of limited added value in many development contexts, because these CSOs will typically lack sufficient contextual knowledge and competence in results based management, organisational development, development cooperation frameworks.  Risk of being supply-driven and lacking local ownership.  High transaction costs.
<b>Icelandic CSOs that are part of experienced international networks (e.g. ICA, Red Cross, SOS)</b>	Considered for its possible common value base, knowledge of Icelandic development policy, easy communication, trusted, with good international networks. Can leverage Icelandic MFA funding and enhance dialogue on development issues with MFA.  Often fits well in conflict/post conflict settings where mistrust between groups exists, and there is a need for a neutral, well respected party to control funding, ensure transparency and arrange neutral meeting places (e.g. Western Balkans, Middle East).	Contextual relevance is not guaranteed. May not build local capacity in partner countries. Added value needs to be specifically spelt out in each case and related to cost effectiveness.  Risk of being supply driven and lacking local ownership.  High transaction costs.
<b>Partner country platforms/umbrellas or organisations</b>	Iceland has direct dialogue with civil society in countries where it works, can learn from partners, and influence the focus of the support. Mutual benefits, mutual strengthening of capacities and close dialogue. Can reach out to many grassroots organisations, also outside the capital, funding goes directly to the partner country.	The organisations become implementers of Icelandic agenda rather than agents of change on behalf of the local CSOs. May give power to some organisations at the expense of others, unless sub-granting procedures are transparent and accessible, and systems are in place for emerging new organisations to gradually build capacity and gain access to funding. Can be politicised.  Risk of double financing.
<b>International CSOs as intermediaries (e.g. IFRC, LWF, Save</b>	Potentially strong technical and/or thematic expertise. Can be used as consultants and for service delivery.	May take the role, position, and funding from national/local organisations. Limits the role and influence of national/local

<b>the Children International, Oxfam)</b>	Many have national offices with good administrative capacity and contextual knowledge. Good networks. Expertise in development cooperation and humanitarian assistance. Good track record, quick, effective, and safe.	organisations. May not strengthen and even undermine national civil society.  High transaction costs
<b>UN agencies</b>	Many times well-reputed with good competence, systems, and capacity, but significant differences between countries and agencies. Particularly useful for humanitarian interventions.	UN agencies can be bureaucratic. Icelandic influence may be small. Difficulty to get reports related to the Icelandic cooperation objectives.  High transaction costs.
<b>Joint donor CSO facilities</b>	Enables each donor to leverage the combined resources of the facility to have much greater effect. Donors jointly set the thematic focus of support and selection criteria. Joint funding and reporting requirements facilitates administration of CSO partners. Can reach many more grassroots organisations. Can engage in strategic discussions on civil society with the partners. Reduces risk of double financing by donors supporting the same local CSOs, increases transparency. In line with aid effectiveness agenda.	Risk of a donor driven agenda and limited ownership by partner country organisations. Risk of disagreements in donor group/board. Difficult to attribute results to a specific donor.