



Guide

Assessing the effectiveness of civil society networks



The project is funded by the European Union





Assessing the effectiveness of civil society networks

This publication was produced with the financial support of the European Union. Its contents are the sole responsibility of RECOFTC and do not necessarily reflect the views of the European Union.

Reproduction of this publication for educational or other non-commercial purposes is authorized without prior written permission from the copyright holders provided the source is fully acknowledged. Reproduction of this publication for resale or other commercial purposes is prohibited without written permission of the copyright holder.

Published by RECOFTC
©RECOFTC November 2021
Bangkok, Thailand

ISBN (ebook) 978-616-8089-42-2

The views expressed in this publication are those of the authors and are not necessarily shared by RECOFTC or any of the agencies that support RECOFTC.

Suggested citation:
RECOFTC. 2021. *Assessing the effectiveness of civil society networks*. Bangkok, RECOFTC.

Assessing the effectiveness of civil society networks

Guide

November 2021

Contents

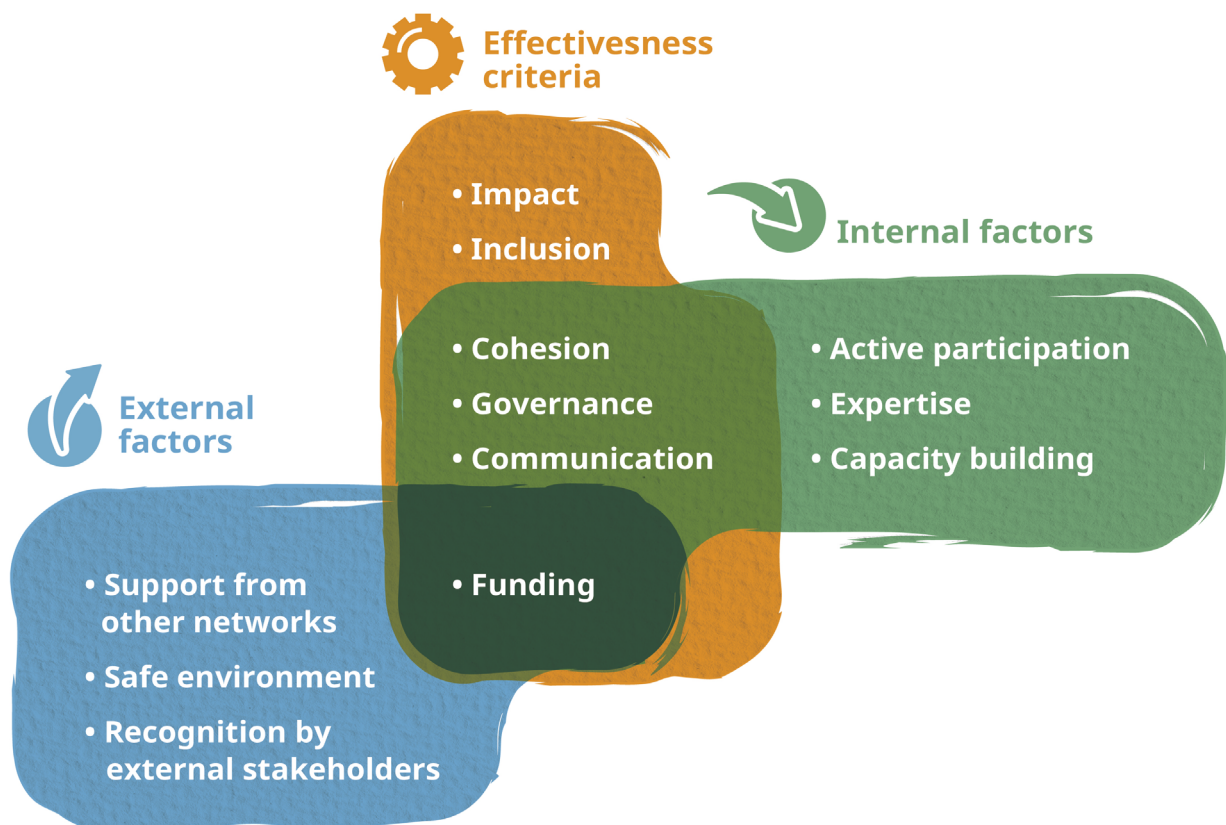
Introduction	5
Assessment questions for scoring	6
Criteria and internal factors that determine network effectiveness	6
External factors that determine network effectiveness	15
Assessment results table	19

Introduction

This guide for assessing the effectiveness of civil society networks is based on the findings of a study carried out in the Mekong region, the Congo Basin and West Africa in 2021. It was conducted by RECOFTC, the Field Legality Advisory Group (FLAG) and the Centre for International Development and Training (CIDT) of the University of Wolverhampton.

The study captured the perspectives of representatives from 14 networks of environmental civil society organizations (CSOs), as well as the views of external stakeholders, including representatives from government agencies, international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and donors. The study revealed six effectiveness criteria, as well as seven internal and four external factors that influence the effectiveness of civil society networks.

This guide is designed to help civil society networks conduct a participatory self-assessment to evaluate their effectiveness and identify areas for improvement. It could also be useful to international NGOs and other institutions interested in assessing collaborating with CSO networks.



Assessment questions for scoring

This guide presents criteria and factors that influence the effectiveness of CSO networks. Begin the assessment by gathering network members together to discuss the questions listed under each criteria and factor.

To ensure the assessment is as inclusive as possible, we recommend it is carried out by all or a large representation of network members, including a fair representation of women and minority groups. Network members may also choose to involve partners or others in the discussions to carry out the assessment.

Following the discussion, and upon agreement, provide a single score for each factor. Use a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being the lowest level of performance and 5 being the highest. Mark your scores on the table provided in the section Assessment results table.

Criteria and internal factors that determine or influence network effectiveness

Impact

1. Ability of the network to achieve goals and expected impact

- Does your network have a clear set of objectives?
- Is the network able to achieve these objectives?
- Does the network attain tangible results in line with the set objectives?
- Have there been positive changes triggered by your network?

Select score

1 <input type="radio"/>	2 <input type="radio"/>	3 <input type="radio"/>	4 <input type="radio"/>	5 <input type="radio"/>
Lowest				Highest

Notes:

Cohesion

2. Level of cohesion and unity among network members

- Do the members work together to increase the group's influence?
- Do members jointly raise concerns?
- Does the network provide the support its members need?
- Is there a good link between members at national level and members at local level?
- Are the members conveying the same messages to external audiences?
- How easy or difficult is it to reach a common agreement among members?
- Is there any form of competition or conflict among members?

Select score



Notes:

A series of horizontal dotted lines for writing notes, spanning the width of the page.

Communication

3. Adequate internal communication and sharing of information

- Does the network use mechanisms to equally share knowledge and information at all levels?
- Does the network communicate information, including about its decisions, in a transparent manner?
- Does the network have a mailing list, website or social media channels with which it regularly shares information?
- Do members listen to each other and respect diverse opinions?
- Does the network regularly convene to share information and discuss issues?

Select score



Notes:

A series of horizontal dotted lines provided for taking notes.

Inclusion

5. Level of representation and inclusion of historically underrepresented minorities

- Are members able to help ensure the concerns of local communities are heard and valued?
- Does the network promote gender equality and the empowerment of women?
- Does the network try to equally involve and empower all network members?
- Does the network apply a gender and social inclusion policy or strategy?

Select score



Notes:

A series of horizontal dotted lines for writing notes.

Expertise

8. Knowledge and expertise

- Are members providing diverse and complementary expertise?
- Is the network able to source additional external expertise when required?
- Are members able to increase their knowledge and expertise over time?
- Is the network able to compete and retain its most qualified members, or is there frequent turnover?

Select score



Notes:

A series of horizontal dotted lines for taking notes.

Funding (external)

12. Funding opportunities

- How diverse are the network's funding sources (donors, NGOs, government and private funding)?
- How secure is funding (amount, type of funding, number of years and potential for a renewal of projects)?
- Are the funding opportunities for CSO networks stable, shrinking or expanding?
- Does the network develop and maintain good relationships with funders?
- Do you envisage new funding opportunities in the near future?

Select score

1 ● 2 ● 3 ● 4 ● 5 ●

Lowest Highest

Notes:

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

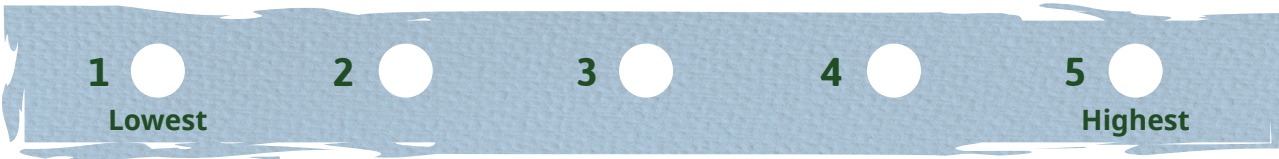
.....

Recognition

13. Appreciation and respect by other stakeholders

- Is the network formally recognized by the government?
- Does the government regularly invite representatives from the network to attend public consultations of multi-stakeholder forums?
- Does the network have to obey any government restrictions or scrutiny?
- Does the network benefit from recognition and appreciation by other stakeholders (communities, authorities, donors, international NGOs, media and the private sector)?

Select score



Notes:

A series of horizontal dotted lines for taking notes, spanning the width of the page below the scale.

Assessment results table

Mark your scores on the table below. You will then have an overview of how members perceive the effectiveness of your network.

Any areas that received a low score of 1 or 2 should be considered problematic. The network should create a plan to monitor and improve these areas. In question 10, a low score indicates safety and a high score indicates an unsafe environment. Your network would need to develop appropriate strategies to monitor and improve this area.

Criteria and factors determining network effectiveness	"Mark (X) your score 1 to 5 (1 = lowest score and 5 = highest score)"				
	1	2	3	4	5
1. Ability of the network to achieve goals and expected impact					
2. Level of cohesion and unity among network members					
3. Adequate internal communication and sharing of information					
4. Capacity to secure and adequately manage the required resources					
5. Level of representation and inclusion of historically underrepresented minorities					
6. Suitable structure and governance mechanisms					
7. Commitment and motivation of network members					
8. Knowledge and expertise					
9. Meaningful learning opportunities					
10. Favorable and safe environment for the network to act					
11. Reciprocal support and collaboration among CSO networks					
12. Funding opportunities					
13. Appreciation and respect by other stakeholders					