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| Title | Uruguay – strengthening civil society in Uruguay.  |
| Focus areas or intended purpose | Civil Society |
| Start/completion date | January 2009 – August 2010 |
| Context/description | As part of the Delivering as One pilot process being applied in Uruguay, inclusivity of all stakeholders has been a central theme. To that end, civil society organizations (CSOs) were identified as key stakeholders in cooperation for development, and the UN system in Uruguay has made several efforts to strengthen and include it into the implementation of how cooperation for development is delivered especially in a MIC. The Government too has increasingly recognized the need to involve and strengthen the CSOs in the definition, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of public policies. From 2005 to 2009, the Government began a process of collaboration and incorporation the CSOs into the decentralization and citizen participation within the democratic transformation of the State aiming at involving citizens and other entities in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of public policies. This process opened up the possibility that CSOs as well as Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) participate in the formulation, implementation and evaluation of policies. These efforts have continued with the new administration that took office in March 2010.As the One UN Programme was developed between the Government and the UN System in 2007, the strengthening and incorporation of CSOs was present throughout the process. One of the 15 joint projects that are being implemented aims at strengthening and developing capacities amongst CSOs at an institutional level in order to improve the effectiveness and success of their participation as key actors in various spaces.  |
| Results/Achievements | The key objectives of the joint project were: to analyze the situation of CSOs in Uruguay (capabilities, strengths, weaknesses, and deficits)- component 1; to generate discussions and disseminate, the results – component 2; to develop activities to strengthen civil society organizations especially in the interior of the country and to reinforce their institutional capabilities to achieve their objectives – component 3; and to develop capacities in CSOs to monitor and follow-up public policies using the human rights based approach -component 4. In particular, the project focused on the promotion of organizations based in the interior of the country (not in Montevideo), as these CSOs have repeatedly argued that due to the low levels of decentralization of the country, they have less access to information and to resources -including access to funding- and they are less consulted on issues that eventually impact on their work. |
| Key elements of success | In Uruguay, the joint projects financed through the One UN Coherence Fund, as part of the DaO pilot experience, had a strictly limited timeframe for implementation; this resulted in the overlapping of the Civil Society Index (CSI) diagnosis phase (identifying CSOs’ strengths, weaknesses, and needs) with the implementation of training workshops in the interior of the country and the implementation of an International Forum to discuss organizational structures, strengthening, and public policy advocacy.This overlap presented the opportunity to combine both the CSI diagnosis along with training activities and gather as many CSOs from all over the country in four workshops held from September 2009 to March 2010 in the interior of the country. Thus, synergies were generated between both of the components. More than 300 participants from various parts of the country met in the regional workshops to discuss the characteristics of local organizations, to develop a diagnosis of their weaknesses and strengths collectively, and to generate a common action plan to be implemented throughout the joint project’s activities. The resulting action plan aimed at improving policy capacities, autonomy and impact of the actions performed by the CSOs. In addition, the workshops allowed for the collection of data for the CSI, reaching a wider range of organizations and individuals than was originally foreseen including many grassroots level organizations. One of the key achievements attained by the workshops was the fact that they took place in small towns in the interior of the country and outside of Montevideo, with small and diverse organizations that were introduced to the CSI for the first time. The majority of workshop participants occupied strategic positions within the organizations represented and came from the country’s interior (not from Montevideo); only 5% of the participant organizations were based in the capital. Women made up the majority of participants in the workshops. For many organizations, these workshops were an opportunity to exchange experiences and information with other regional and/or local CSOs; for others, the workshops offered a space to create new connections and/or strengthen existing ones. Also, through this collective exercise, participants were able to visualize the CSI as a concrete and relevant tool that is relatively easy to use. The workshops also showed participants how the tool was able to generate a collective diagnosis while, at the same time, helping individual organizations conceptually organize their introspective debates.Another relevant synergy was created between the 2009 CSI and the organization of an International Forum. The International Forum brought together more than 100 organizations from all around the country to discuss and create exchange opportunities among national and regional organizations. The programme included a segment for the CSI to be presented by Institute for Communication and Development (ICD, the implementing CSO in Uruguay) and other implementing NGOs in Argentina, Venezuela and Chile. In this space, participant organizations shared and compared the results of implementing the CSI in the region, deepening their understanding of the instrument and analyzing possible causes of their weaknesses and strengthens. The discussion of the forum was compiled in a book which includes a specific section on CSI implementation in the region.Finally, another innovative synergy brought about by the implementation of the CSI was the efficient use of resources through the creation of alliances. In 2009, Ministry of Social Development (MIDES), UNDP, and the United Nations Volunteers agreed to carry out a national survey on volunteerism. The survey used the ongoing data collection process of the CSI by adding a few volunteer-related questions to the original questionnaire. The efficient use of resources made it possible to develop a survey and a case study that ultimately enabled a better understanding of the growth and the value of volunteerism in Uruguay. Results showed that 20% of the population performed some kind of voluntary work, and more than 43% had volunteered at least once in their lifetime. This survey prompted the beginning of a National Dialogue on Volunteerism and Social Commitment in 2009. |
| Lessons learnt | The 2009 CSI in Uruguay integrated the lessons learned in 2005 and, as a result, it generated new communication strategies between the organizations around the country. It also improved the channels used to disseminate the findings and the means to create alliances with other institutions, and it created synergies with other initiatives.Through the support provided as a DaO pilot experience, this effort built confidence and trust among CSOs as these generated new relationships based in dialogue for the generation of collective actions. Additionally, the CSI showed that capacity building processes can become, at the same time, a learning process for CSOs to improve their ability to analyze, organize, build networks and do advocacy. Noting the high level of diversity attained at the CSI workshops, both in terms of thematic and geographic representation, CSOs recommended the implementation of the CSI at the Departmental levels (local administrative levels) as this would set a baseline for the analysis of the situation of CSOs in different communities. Moreover, this action would also assist in the creation of well-targeted strategies to strengthen the capacities of CSOs at the Departmental level to have an impact on local development processes. It was also recommended that the CSIs should include the possibility of generating indexes by sectors, thus achieving a more precise snapshot of each dimension. Building indexes by sector would take into account the fact that social organizations are not homogeneous and have different strengths and weaknesses depending upon the sector to which they belong. |
| Partners and donors | The joint project was implemented by UNDP, UNESCO and UNFPA in partnership with ANONG and other civil society networks with financial support of the Uruguay One UN Coherence fund. Uruguay One UN Coherence Fund (donors: Norway, Spain, The Netherlands, Expanded DaO Funding Window) |
| Provide recommendations | The implementation of CSI as part of the DaO experience in Uruguay facilitated the processes of generating agreements, becoming a bridge that connected State and social institutions, and generated spaces and capacities to dialogue in search of a national consensus by including opposition political parties, Parliament, civil society and academia. |
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