



“Evaluation of EC aid delivery through Civil society organisations”





Session 1

PRESENTATION OF THE EVALUATION AND METHODOLOGY ADOPTED



Objectives of the CSO evaluation

- To obtain comprehensive picture of aid delivered through CSOs
- To define where lays the added value of aid delivery through CSOs in various settings
- To appreciate the effects (outputs, outcomes, impact) and sustainability of aid channelled through CSOs
- To provide recommendations for continued use of the channel, especially in light of the new commitments (European Consensus, Paris Agenda)



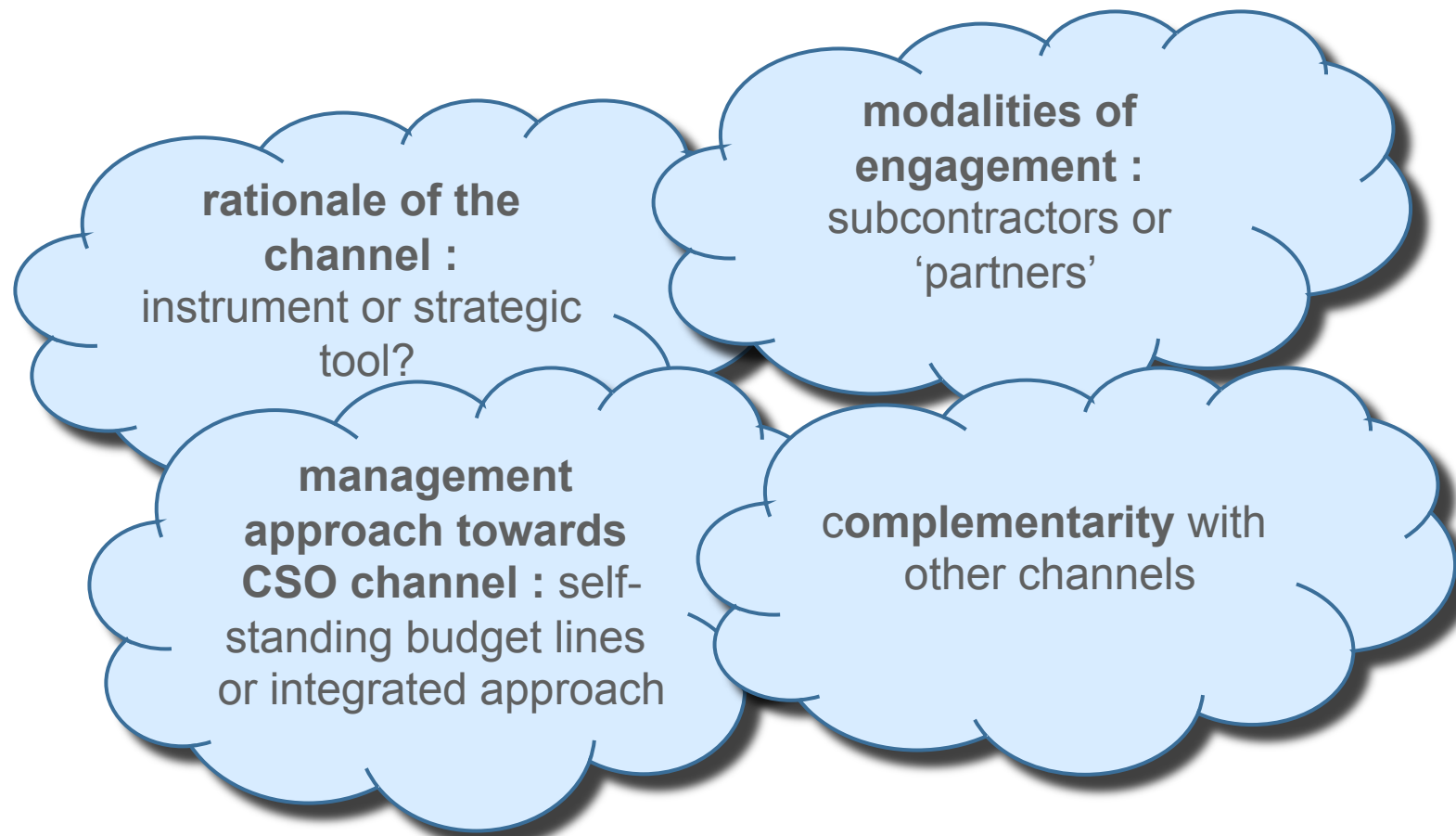
What is the
CSO
channel?

A matter of
perceptions

....



Confusion – thinking about CSOs as a ‘channel’ is new
Perceptions are different...





Perceptions from the field

“The word channel is a strange thing. Probably we should better see CSOs as possible vehicles to be used in different contexts to achieve key EC policy objectives” (EC official in focus group on CSOs in sector programmes)

“We refuse to look at CSOs as a channel of aid. For us they’re partners” (EC Somalia Unit).

“Our primary interest for working with EC does not lie in getting funding, but to count on its political power to jointly push for positive changes. We are keen to establish a political partnership with EC” (focus group with Brussels-based CSOs)



The questionnaire furthermore reveals that :

- ☐ (Only) 10 EC Delegations found the EC strategy towards the CSO channel of “crucial” importance
- ☐ 19 EC Delegations saw it as a “secondary” matter
- ☐ 4 EC Delegations as “marginal”



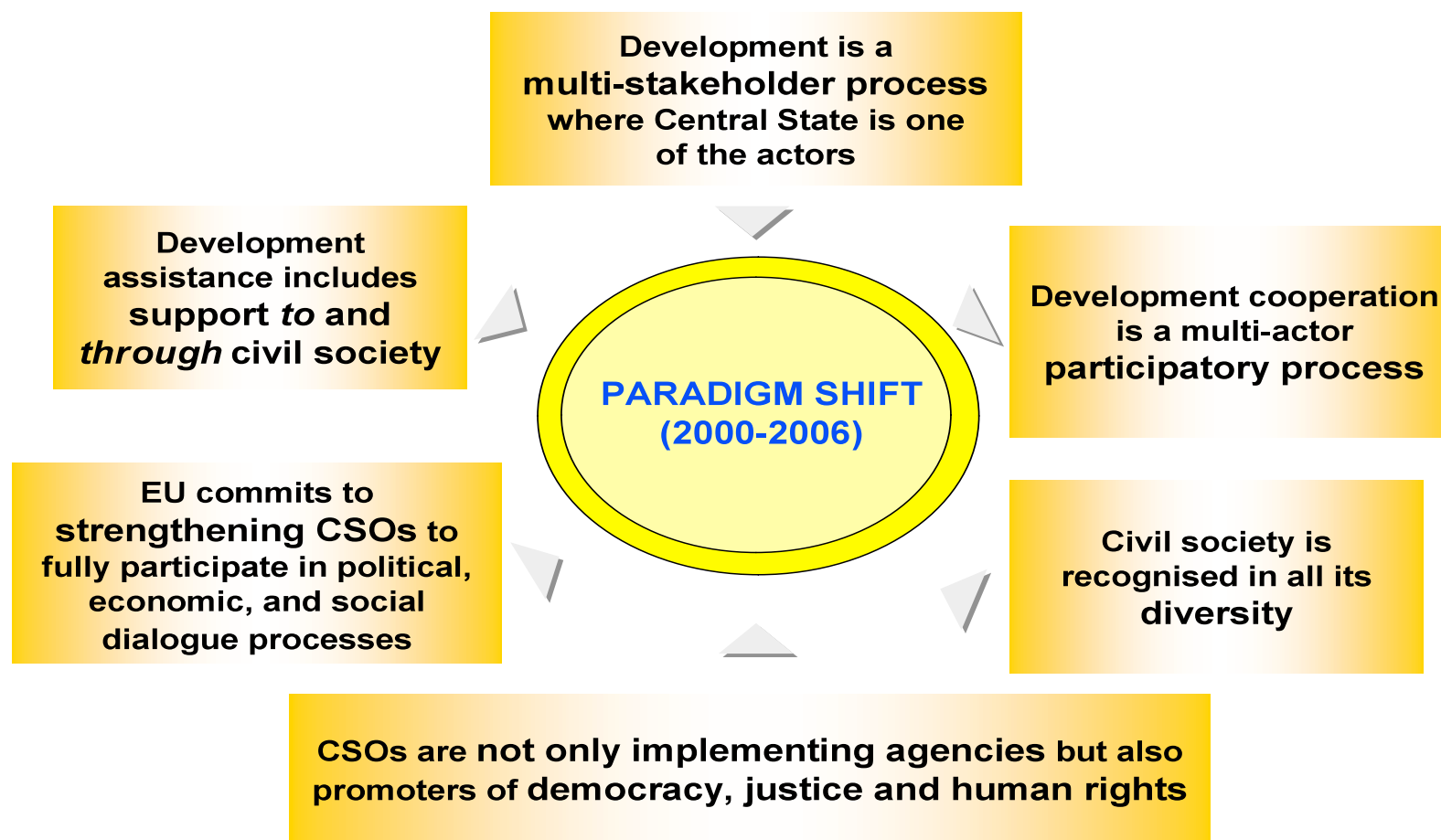
The channel in practice?





Starting point of the evaluation : Major changes affecting CSO channel

1. New EC policy framework towards CSOs
(end 1990s, early 2000) = “Paradigm shift”
in thinking about and dealing with CSOs
2. Changes in international cooperation
3. Internal and external pressures on the CSO
channel



What 'paradigm shift' are we talking about?

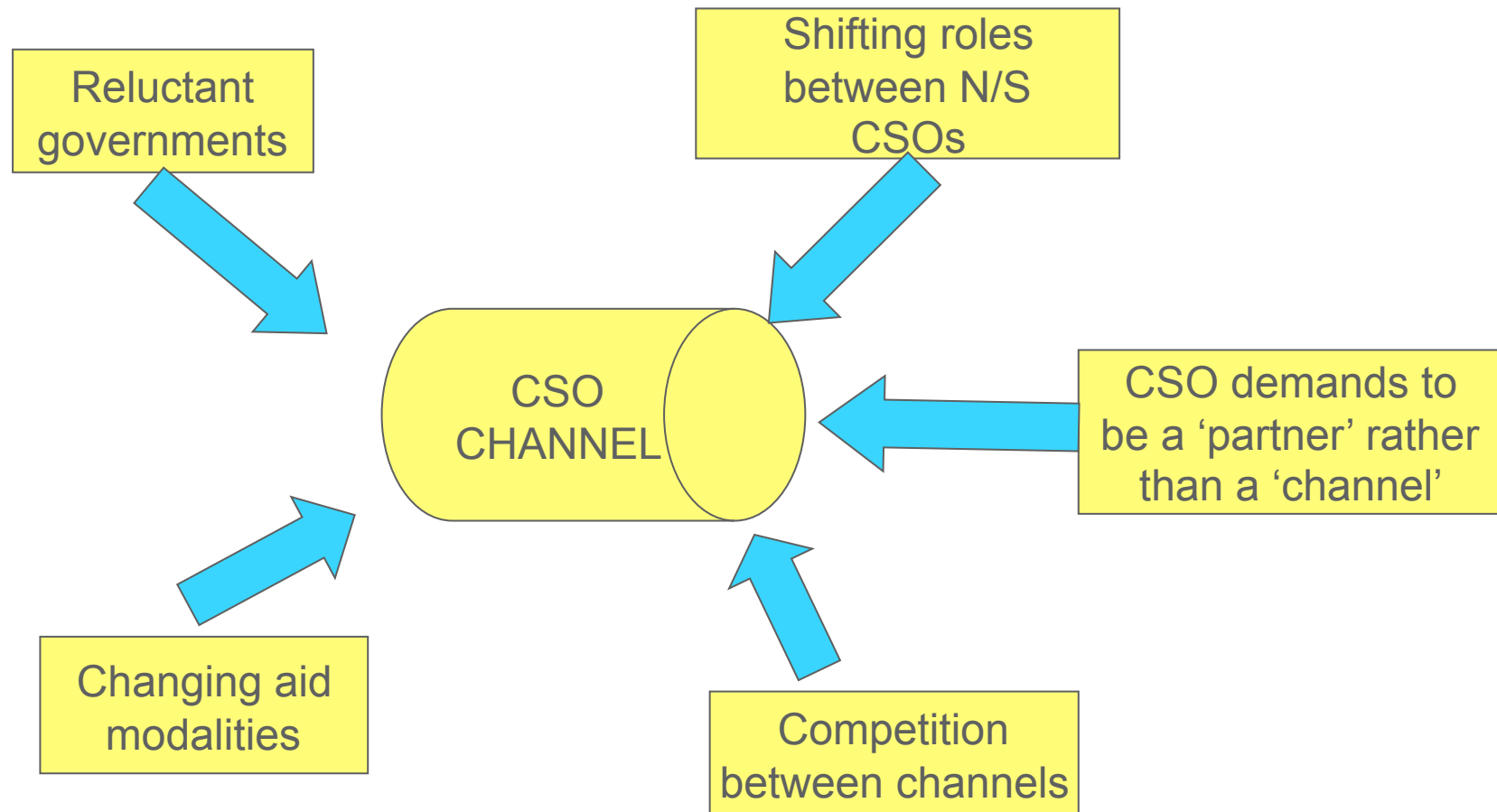


Implications for CSO channel

- CSOs no longer “beneficiaries” of aid but “actors” and/or “partners” in development
- The policy shift requires major changes in mindset, strategies and working methods
- EC (like other donors) finds itself in transition period towards implementing participatory development
- Evaluation period coincides with this transition period



Pressures on the CSO channel





A few pointers on methodology

Tools and techniques used :

- Detailed statistical analysis
- Comprehensive desk study
- Analysis of 33 questionnaires (EC Del)
- Review of 22 CSP and 3 RSP
- 6 field studies (including 6 case studies)
- 2 focus groups
- Instruments analysis



Main limitations of the evaluation

- Thin line between EC support *to* and support *through* CSOs
- Difficulties in obtaining reliable figures from EC databases (primary channeling only)
- Large variety of (diverging) perspectives on CSO issues (HQ vs. Delegations)
- Huge diversity of country contexts (general conclusions)



Main limitations (Contd.)

- Limited institutional memory (high turnover of staff)
- Limited coverage of CSO channel issues in EC Evaluations
- Focus on EC side instead of on CSO organisational capacity (although this affects channel effectiveness and efficiency)



Evaluation team

- Partnership between Particip and ECDPM
- 15 international experts
- 5 national experts



Session 2

MAIN FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS



POTENTIAL
ADDED VALUE
AND
COMPARATIVE
ADVANTAGE

CONSISTENCY
WITH POLICY
OBJECTIVES

IMPACT AND
SUSTAINABILITY

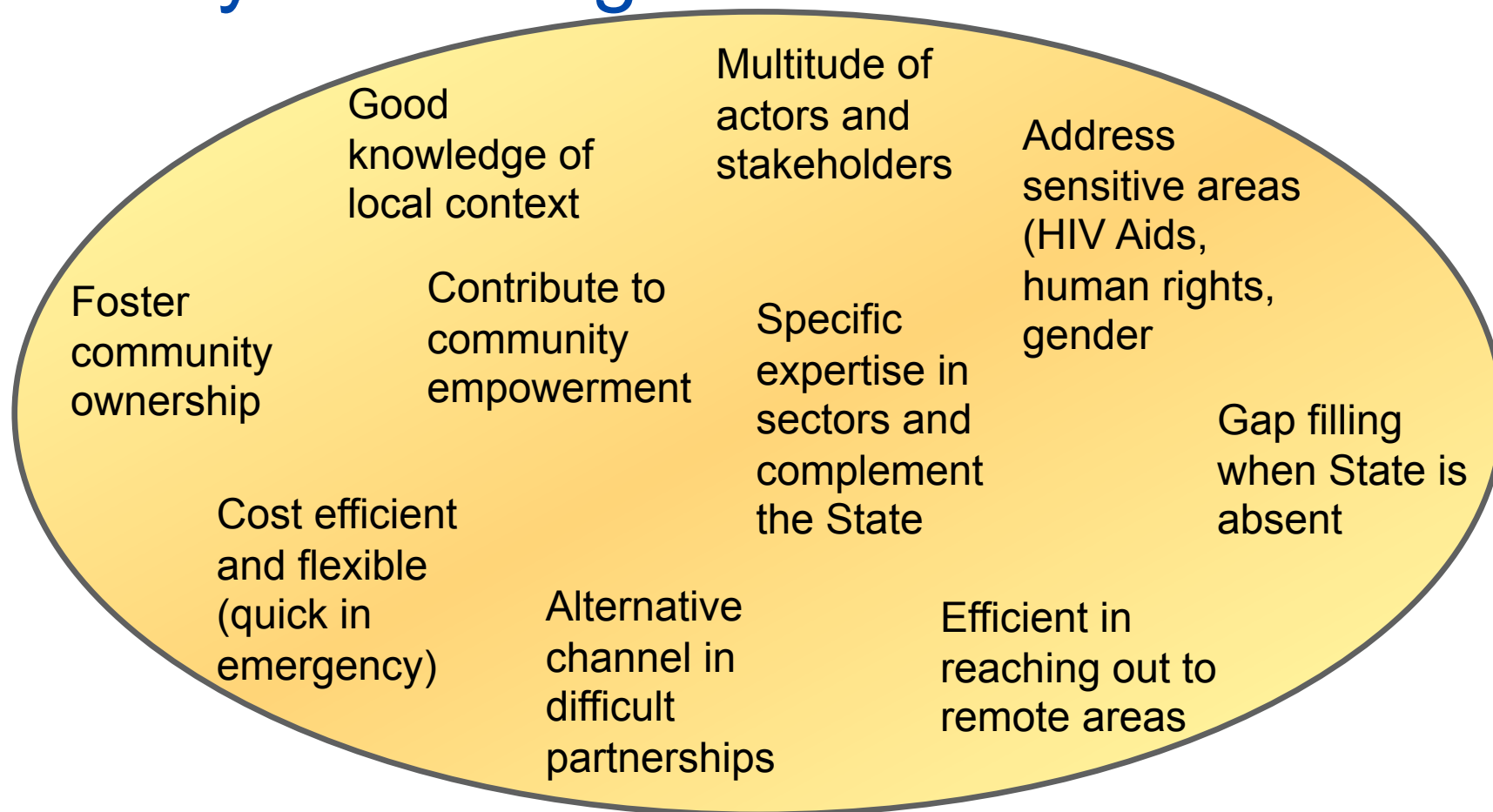
MANAGEMENT
ISSUES



MAIN FINDINGS ON ADDED VALUE CSO CHANNEL



Perceptions on value of CSOs by EC Delegations





EC policy framework

- ✓ Regional, sectoral and thematic policy documents reaffirm principle of participation

BUT:

No clear vision on added value of different CSO categories of CSOs



Operational guidance

- ✓ Major efforts by key units to provide guidance and tools

BUT:

Limited guidance on key operational aspects
(choice of actors, capacity needs,
complementarity with other channels)



Programming process

- ✓ Evidence of strategic, proactive and often innovative approaches (Somalia, Zimbabwe, Congo, North Korea...)

BUT:

Generally, poor quality of programming processes with regard to CSO channel



MAIN FINDINGS ON CONSISTENCY WITH POLICY OBJECTIVES

*(regarding roles, actors, approaches
and instruments)*



With regards to CSO roles

- Consistency at general level

BUT in practice:

- Participation of CSOs often limited to implementation, mainly service delivery
- Potential to engage with CSOs in advocacy/dialogue partner not fully exploited
- Innovative CSO capacity support programmes (ACP)
- Limited effectiveness of current political dialogue to protect space for CSO participation



With regards to actors and approaches/instruments

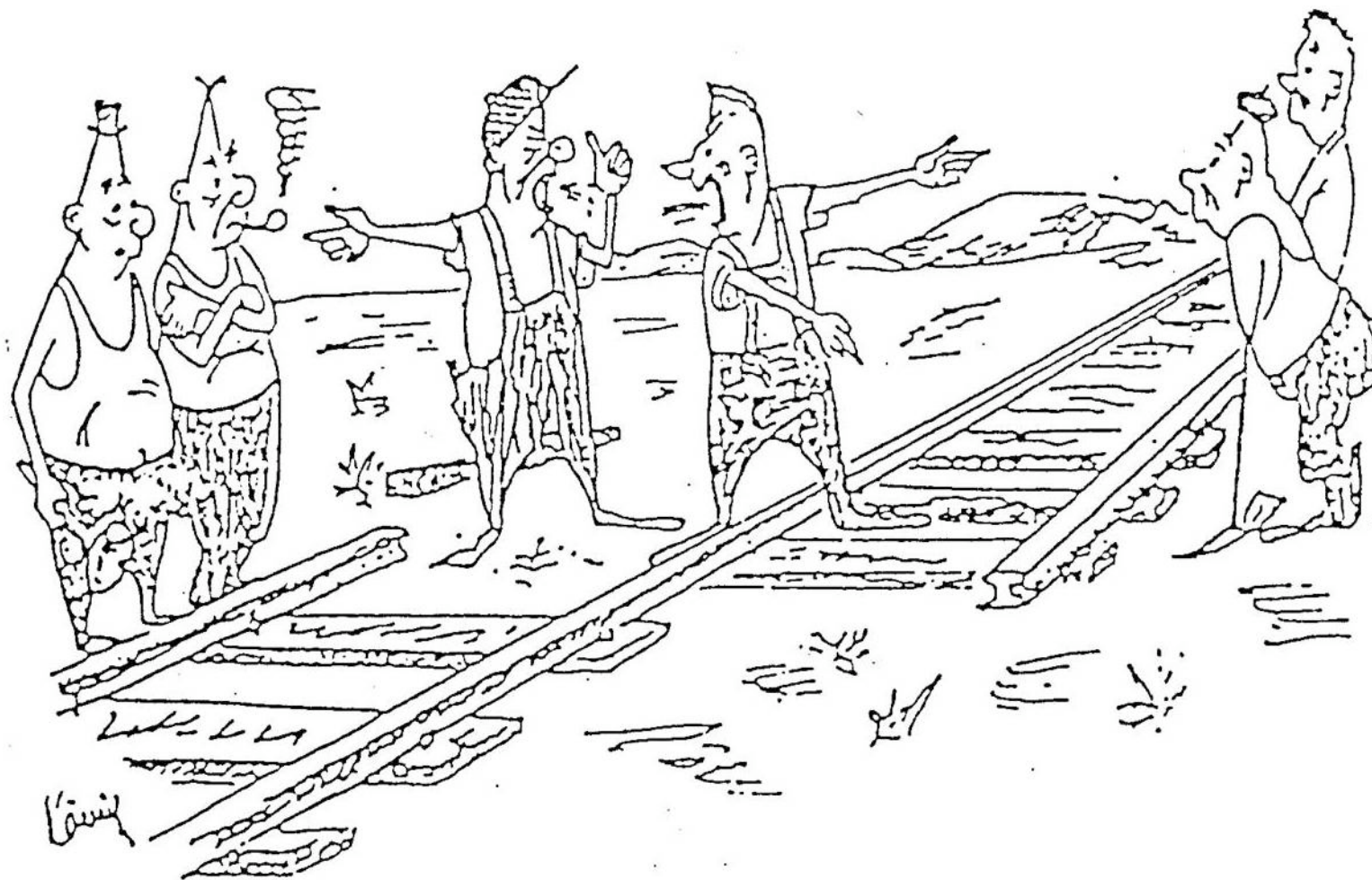
- ✓ Formal recognition of the importance of engaging with multiple actors, **BUT in practice, mainly (EU) NGOs**
- ✓ Steady move towards programme-based modalities **BUT in practice, project is the preferred modality**
- ✓ Growing use of geographic instrument to fund CSOs **BUT in practice, limited reflection on complementarity instruments.**



With regards to Paris Declaration commitments... possible incompatibility with the participatory agenda

Friction points:

- Paris Agenda does not say when to use what channel
- It is not explicit on what is meant by civil society participation
- It is not explicit on the roles of CSOs + no indicators
- Limited application Paris principles to CSO support
- SWAP and budget support are preferred modalities
 - Focus is on UPWARD ACCOUNTABILITY
 - Risk of RECENTRALISATION
 - May reduce financial avenues for CSOs





MAIN FINDINGS ON IMPACT AND SUSTAINABILITY



Focus on three impact areas

- 1) Using the CSO channel to deliver services to poor and marginalised communities
- 2) Using the CSO channel to promote governance
- 3) Using the CSO channel to foster local (economic) development

>>>> Evidence of positive contributions in different geographic/political contexts, themes, sectors and instruments



Broader development outcomes achieved in difficult countries

Two examples:

SOMALIA: Inclusion of CSOs in national peace conferences, local CSOs function as regional peace and dialogue centers. Gradual transformation of local CSO environment.

COLOMBIA: CSOs are strategic actors that monitor human rights and are partners at the local level for building peace. State includes outcomes in national plans

BUT also major challenges to use CSO channel in authoritarian countries (huge risks for CSOs)



Major doubts on systemic impact and sustainability

- short duration of projects
- discontinuity in support
- limited linkages with programmes and processes
- inadequate procedures
- risk aversion
- CSO sustainability



MAIN FINDINGS ON MANAGEMENT ISSUES



Moves in the positive direction

- Participatory programming on rise
- In-house capacity
- Provision of guidance to EC Delegations
- Deconcentration of thematic budget lines
- New instruments (PADOR, DECIM)

Major institutional constraints

- Prevailing administrative culture (focus on spending and management)
- Inadequate procedures (e.g. use CfP in support of 'governance' CSOs)
- M&E systems are weak
- Limited time to invest in actors, dialogue, donor harmonisation....



**Endless
paperwork**





Overall assessement

- Since the adoption of the participatory development as a key principle ...

progress has been achieved on many fronts in terms of adapting the use of CSO channel

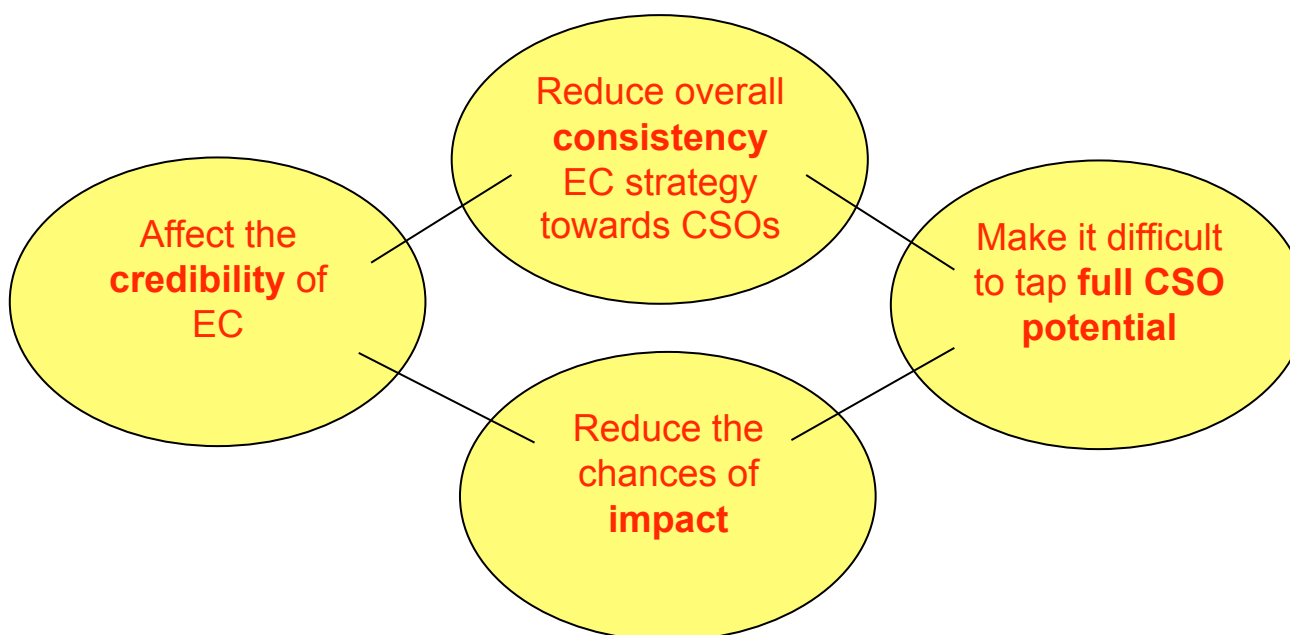


GOOD PRACTICES:

- ① **DEVELOPING A STRATEGIC VISION DURING PROGRAMMING** in Mozambique, South Africa, Ethiopia, RDC, Afghanistan, Mozambique
- ② **ARTICULATING STATE AND NON-STATE ACTORS FOR SUSTAINABLE SERVICE DELIVERY** in Bangladesh
- ③ **EMPOWERING CSOs TO PARTICIPATE IN SECTOR AND GENERAL BUDGET SUPPORT** in Zambia, Ethiopia, Uganda.
- ④ **FOSTERING LOCAL GOVERNANCE THROUGH JOINT ACTION BETWEEN CSOs and LOCAL AUTHORITIES** in Madagascar
- ⑤ **ENGAGING CREATIVELY WITH CSOs in FRAGILE CONTEXTS** in Somalia and Zimbabwe



... YET ALSO MAJOR GAPS:





**With risk of
money going
down the drain...**





Conclusion 1

EC participatory development agenda is gradually changing use of CSO channel



Conclusion 2

The EC has not yet developed a clear, consistent and institutionalised strategy for using CSO channel in line with stated policy objectives:

- Confusion on notion of CSO channel
- Lack of clear strategy and operational guidance for using CSO channel
- Coexistence of strategic and instrumental approaches
- Difficulties to ensure consistency with Paris Declaration commitments
- Lack of clarity of EC as a donor/political player



Top of the ice berg...

Need to address a wide range of implementation challenges



Conclusion 3

Added value of CSO channel is not optimally used by the EC

Some good practices but many missing links

Example

Inadequate procedures to attract and support relevant CSO initiatives



Conclusion 4

Mixed record with regard to impact and sustainability:

- positive contributions, effects and outcome
- less evidence of sustainable impact on wider processes



Conclusion 5

The overall institutional culture within the EC is not conducive to a strategic management of the CSO channel.

Disincentives:

- rather diffuse political backing for coherent application of participatory development agenda towards CSOs
- prevailing culture and incentive system focused on disbursements/financial management/short term visible results
- Environment not conducive to strategic partnerships
- staff constraints/disincentives for quality work
- institutional fragmentation



Session 3

RECOMMENDATIONS

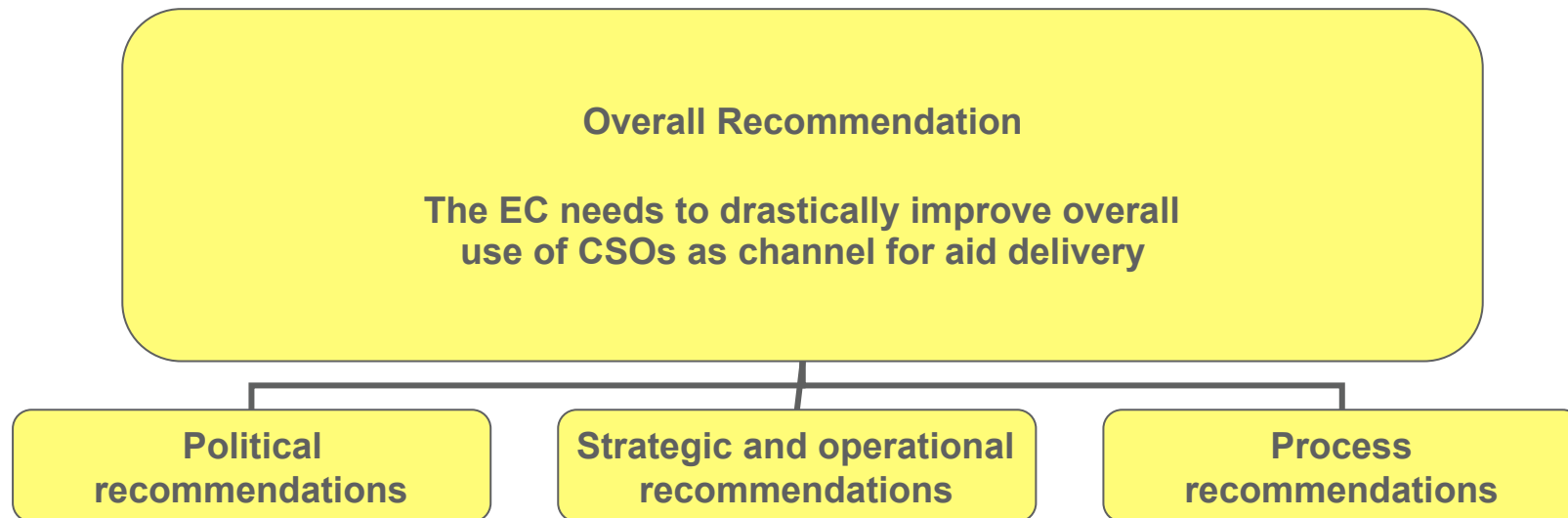


Recommendations...in order **not to get stuck** in the middle of the road





Four types of recommendations...



... translated into 8 specific recommendations



Overall recommendation

= Improve the overall use of CSO as aid delivery channel

This implies:

- (i) Ensuring greater **consistency** with stated policy objectives
- (ii) Making better use of **added value** of CSOs
- (iii) Improving conditions for achieving **sustainable impact**
- (iv) **Removing political and institutional barriers** for a strategic, effective and efficient use of CSO channel

A person wearing a beige suit and a watch is crawling on a sandy surface. Their head is buried deep in the sand, and they are using their hands and feet to move forward. The scene is set outdoors on a bright, sunny day, with shadows cast on the sand. The text "Avoid the denial strategy" is overlaid in yellow at the bottom of the image.

Avoid the denial strategy



Stronger political leadership to champion space for civil society





STRATEGIC AND OPERATIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4) Enhance through genuine participatory processes, the overall quality of programming aid through civil society
- 5) Search for more realistic and effective implementation strategies
- 6) Manage the channel in a results-oriented way



**Think out of
the box!!**



PROCESS RECOMMENDATION

- 7) Provide ongoing support to EC delegations committed to engage in an institutional change process
- 8) Establish the Civil Society Help Desk as a knowledge hub and catalyst for change

Seeds...

A close-up photograph of a dandelion seed head. The seed head is white and fluffy, with a green stem. Several seeds are blowing away from the head, leaving a trail of white fluff against a clear blue sky. The seeds are small and dark, with long, feathery white parachutes.

for behavioural,
administrative and
institutional change....

The challenges are serious...

EC still needs to ensure:

A coherent political support from the top

Clarity on the added value of CSOs

Operational guidance

Suitable partnership approaches

Adequate support modalities

Right mix of institutional incentives for staff to manage CSO
channel in a strategic way....





Thank you!

