

The Istanbul Principles

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BRIEF HISTORY | TIMELINE

In the early 2000s, development actors gathered in high-level forums to find ways to improve the performance of aid. At that time, CSO advocacies on the issue largely revolved around donor countries aid effectiveness commitments. As global civil society asserted its position as an independent development actor, state actors challenged CSOs to work on their own effectiveness.

2008

Civil society organisations (CSOs) formed the **Open Forum on CSO Development Effectiveness and Enabling Environment**, which aimed to build consensus on the role and effectiveness of CSOs in development.

2008 - 2010

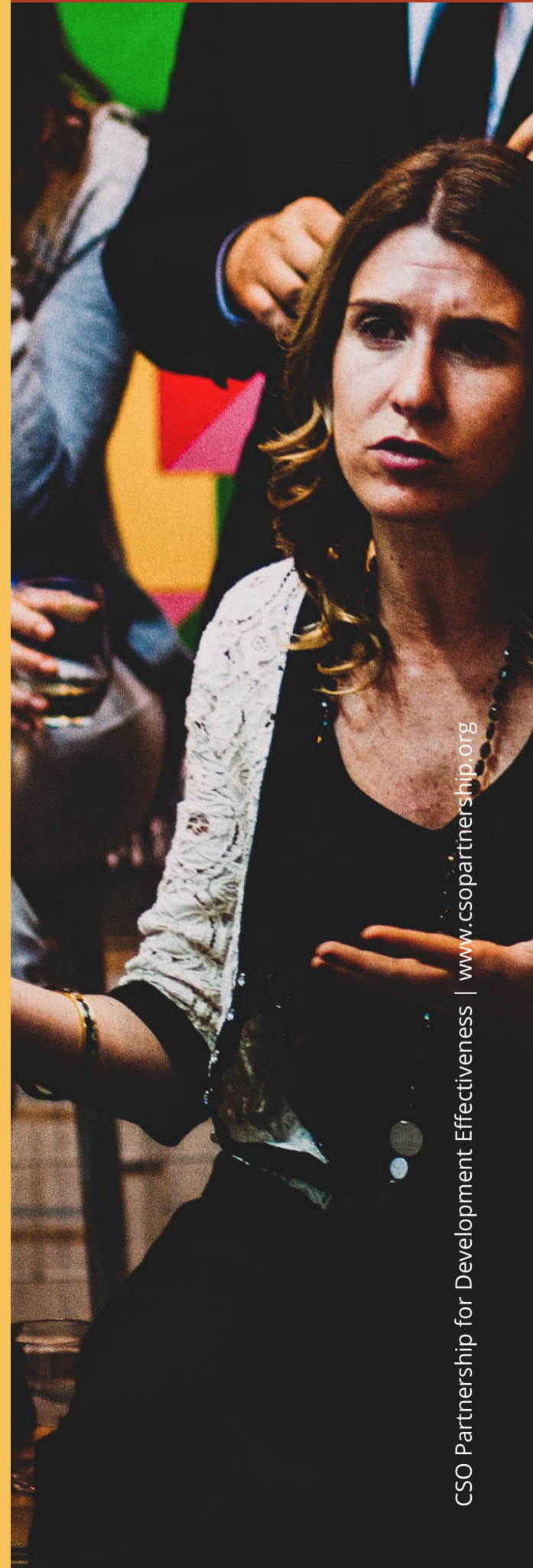
The **Open Forum** facilitated consultations with CSOs around the world on the standards that guide their work. Their efforts resulted in the **International Framework for CSO Development Effectiveness**, which also outlined the guiding values for the development work of CSOs.

These values would form the 8 **Istanbul Principles for CSO Development Effectiveness**, adopted by the Global Assembly of the Open Forum in Istanbul, Turkey.

2011

At the **4th High-Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness in Busan**, civil society officially took part in negotiations on aid effectiveness on an equal basis with partner governments and donors. The forum's outcome agreement included both the International Framework for CSO Development Effectiveness and the Istanbul Principles.

The Istanbul Principles recognise civil society organisations as a vibrant and essential part of democratic life in countries across the globe.



CSOs collaborate with the full diversity of people and promote their rights.

The characteristics that make CSOs distinct development actors are the foundation for the Istanbul Principles. These principles guide the work and practices of CSOs wherever they operate. This can be in both peaceful and conflict situations, in different areas of work from grassroots to policy advocacy, and on a continuum from humanitarian emergencies to long-term development.

When CSOs sign on to the Istanbul Principles, they commit to:

1 RESPECT AND PROMOTE HUMAN RIGHTS AND SOCIAL JUSTICE.

CSOs must develop and implement strategies, activities and practices that promote individual and collective human rights, including the right to development, with dignity, decent work, social justice, and equity for all people.

3 FOCUS ON PEOPLE'S EMPOWERMENT, DEMOCRATIC OWNERSHIP, AND PARTICIPATION.

CSOs must support the empowerment and inclusive participation of people to expand their democratic ownership over policies and development initiatives that affect their lives, with an emphasis on the poor and marginalised.

5 PRACTICE TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY.

CSOs must demonstrate a sustained organisational commitment to transparency, multiple accountability, and integrity in their internal operations.

7 CREATE AND SHARE KNOWLEDGE AND COMMIT TO MUTUAL UNDERSTANDING.

CSOs must enhance the ways they learn from their experience, from other CSOs and development actors, integrating evidence from development practice and results, including the knowledge and wisdom of local and indigenous communities, strengthening innovation and their vision for the future they would like to see.

2 EMBODY GENDER EQUALITY AND EQUITY WHILE PROMOTING WOMEN'S AND GIRLS' RIGHTS.

CSOs must promote and practice development cooperation embodying gender equity, reflecting women's concerns and experiences, while supporting their efforts to realise their individual and collective rights, participating as fully empowered actors in the development process.

4 PROMOTE ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY.

CSOs must develop and implement priorities and approaches that promote environmental sustainability for present and future generations, including urgent responses to climate crises, with specific attention to the socio-economic, cultural and indigenous conditions for ecological integrity and justice.

6 PURSUE EQUITABLE PARTNERSHIPS AND SOLIDARITY.

CSOs must commit to transparent relationships with CSOs and other development actors, freely and as equals, based on shared development goals and values, mutual respect, trust, organisational autonomy, long-term accompaniment, solidarity and global citizenship.

8 COMMIT TO REALISING POSITIVE SUSTAINABLE CHANGE.

CSOs must collaborate to realise sustainable outcomes and impacts of their development actions, focusing on results and conditions for lasting change for people, with special emphasis on poor and marginalised populations, ensuring an enduring legacy for present and future generations.



Through the Istanbul Principles, CSOs commit to take proactive actions to improve and be fully accountable for their development practices.

Equally important to CSOs development effectiveness are enabling policies and practices by all development actors. Through actions consistent with these principles, donor and partner country governments can demonstrate their Accra Agenda for Action pledge that they share an interest in ensuring that CSO contributions to development reach their full potential.

All governments have an obligation to uphold basic human rights — among others, the right to association, the right to assembly, and the freedom of expression.

Together these are preconditions for effective development.

In the latest CPDE 2020-2023 Strategic Plan, the platform commits to continue to work on its own effectiveness guided by the Istanbul Principles.





The **CSO Partnership for Development Effectiveness**

is an open platform uniting civil society organisations (CSOs) around the world on issues of effective development cooperation.

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