

# **International Monetary Fund**

## **Guide for Staff Relations With Civil Society Organizations**

International Monetary Fund  
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INTERNATIONAL MONETARY FUND

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20431

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MANAGING DIRECTOR

CABLE ADDRESS  
INTERFUND

October 10, 2003

TO: Members of the Staff

Dear Colleagues,

I am pleased to transmit the attached Guide for Staff Relations with Civil Society Organizations (CSOs).

I welcome the extensive outreach, including to CSOs, that the Fund staff is already undertaking. The review earlier this year of the IMF's external communications strategy (SM/03/69, 2/13/03) revealed the increasing depth of outreach by staff. The Fund's evolving dialogue with CSOs has long covered a wide range of issues at the global level. Increasingly the dialogue is taking on a country focus, driven in part by the participatory process associated with the PRGF and PRSPs, and the IMF's increased emphasis on national ownership of policies.

In the Board discussion earlier this year, Executive Directors welcomed the proposal to prepare guidance for staff outreach to civil society organizations that would focus specifically on issues arising in interaction with civil society that influence the Fund's operational work (Buff/03/32, 3/12/03). The attached guide, which is the result of extensive consultation with departments and with CSOs themselves, is the result.

The Guide offers a framework of good practices. It is intended to supplement the sound judgment that arises from staff's experience and knowledge of specific situations. Therefore, it is not mandatory and will not apply in all situations.

Over time, it is envisaged that the Guide will be revised in light of experience and comments received. To this end, the Guide will be posted on the Fund's external website with an invitation to comment.

If you have any comments or questions about the Guide, please do not hesitate to contact Mr. Dawson (ext. 39660) or Mr. Bell (ext. 38670).

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "H. Köhler".

Attachment

UNDOC/03/208



# **International Monetary Fund**

## **Guide for Staff Relations With Civil Society Organizations**

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The IMF acknowledges with gratitude the integral role of Professor Jan Aart Scholte, Centre for the Study of Globalisation and Regionalisation, University of Warwick, Coventry, UK in the preparation of this guide. The guide was drafted by Prof. Scholte and IMF staff, in consultation with civil society representatives.



# **International Monetary Fund**

## **Guide for Staff Relations with Civil Society Organizations**

### **Summary**

The IMF is committed to being transparent about its work, to explaining itself, and to listening to the people whom it affects. Increasingly, public outreach is an integral part of IMF country work. This guide aims to assist IMF staff in their efforts to build positive relationships with civil society organizations (CSOs). Since individual circumstances surrounding civil society vary enormously between countries, staff must rely substantially on their own assessments of the specific situations that they face. The guide offers a framework that is intended to supplement—not replace—sound judgment and experience.

#### **Definition: What Is Civil Society?**

CSOs are highly diverse, so it is very difficult to generalize. For IMF purposes, civil society actors include business forums, faith-based associations, labor movements, local community groups, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), philanthropic foundations, and think tanks.

#### **Aims of the IMF's Relations with CSOs**

- Public outreach: explaining the Fund and its activities
- Policy inputs: obtaining information and insights from nongovernmental sources
- Political viability: gauging forces for and against IMF-supported policies
- Ownership: building national support and initiative toward IMF-backed policies

#### **Basic Parameters**

- Priorities: treat public outreach as vital, but (given resource constraints) do not compromise other tasks or hamper relations with government.
- Responsibilities: determine the division of labor for CSO liaison between EXR officials, mission chiefs, and resident representatives on a case-by-case basis.
- Selection: make strategic selections as to which CSOs to engage, but attempt to interact with a broad range of CSOs.
- Timing: meet with CSOs early enough in policy processes that the consultation is meaningful; meet ahead of and between as well as during missions.
- Location: select appropriate sites for meetings, whether IMF offices, government bureaus, CSO premises, or more neutral venues.
- Substance: be as forthcoming as possible with CSOs while strictly respecting confidentiality; don't overplay issues of confidentiality to avoid tough questions.
- Cooperation: consult and collaborate with other multilateral institutions like the World Bank and UNDP that have extensive interaction with civil society.

#### **Process of Meetings**

- Preparations: be well briefed about the CSOs to be met; agree a precise agenda in advance; agree explicit ground rules at the outset.
- Proceedings: ensure ample opportunity for questions and comments; debate options; be sensitive to cultural differences; use plain language; if possible use the first language of the

majority of participants; avoid impressions of arrogance. Listening is crucial in a good working relationship.

- Follow-up: make a short note of meetings for IMF records; consider a follow-up note to the CSOs; publicize discussions with CSOs (subject to ground rules established); check with CSOs to gauge their impressions of meetings with the Fund.

### **The Government-IMF-CSO Triangle**

The IMF is accountable to its member governments. Dialogue with and transparency toward citizens are important complements to this accountability.

- Keep the initiative with government, whose responsibility it is to engage CSOs. IMF contacts with CSOs supplement, and do not substitute for, government dialogue with citizen groups.
- Handle links with CSOs in ways that do not alienate government. Do not use relations with CSOs to put indirect pressure on governments.
- If a government raises objections to IMF-CSO relations, explain the rationale in terms of the aims identified above. If government resistance persists, refrain from the contacts and refer the matter to headquarters for possible follow-up.
- Where a government is sensitive about IMF engagement with CSOs: (a) inform the national authorities of planned contacts; (b) encourage government officials to help arrange meetings; and (c) invite government representatives to attend the meetings.

### **Legitimacy Concerns**

- In principle, maintain an inclusive approach. Do not deny access without good reason (e.g., a CSO with malicious intent or a seriously distorted account of itself).
- The legitimacy of CSOs can be assessed in relation to: (a) legality—i.e., they are officially recognized and registered; (b) morality—i.e., they pursue a noble and right cause; (c) efficacy—i.e., they perform competently; (d) membership base; and (e) governance—i.e., they operate in a participatory, tolerant, transparent and accountable manner.
- In assessing the legitimacy of CSOs consult government officials, bilateral donor agencies, embassies, local staff in IMF offices, staff of other multilateral institutions, apex civil society bodies, academic specialists, other professional consultants.

### **Other Important Challenges**

- Avoid being manipulated in political struggles. Be aware of CSOs that are closely tied to governments, political parties, commercial enterprises, or media operations.
- Be sensitive that the selection of CSOs to meet—as well as the ways that the Fund conducts and follows up contacts—can have the (unintended) effect of reinforcing (often arbitrary) divisions and inequalities in society.
- Building trust with CSOs can take time and patience. In the beginning, it is usually better to focus discussions on finding and consolidating common ground rather than highlighting areas of disagreement.
- Temper expectations. Encourage CSOs to be realistic about the extent and speed of IMF capacity to solve problems. Be realistic about the degree to which CSO consultations will yield immediately applicable specific policy inputs. Don't expect outreach to win all CSOs over to IMF positions. Some criticism will always exist.

# **Guide for Staff Relations with Civil Society Organizations**

## **I. Introduction: Nature and Purpose of this Guide**

1. This guide aims to assist IMF staff in building positive relationships with civil society organizations (CSOs).<sup>1</sup> In particular, it sets out to help staff to develop interaction with CSOs in a way that enhances the Fund's operational work and contributes to the effectiveness of its support for its member countries.
2. As its designation indicates, the 'guide' offers a framework of good practices. It is not mandatory, and will not apply in all situations. IMF resource constraints in particular may prevent full realization of the aspirations laid out here. In general, the guide is intended to supplement, not replace, sound judgment and experience.
3. Nor does this guide impose a universally and rigidly applicable blueprint. Concrete circumstances of civil society vary enormously among countries, cultures, social sectors, and political climates. The document sets out general principles, but in everyday practice staff must substantially rely on contextual assessments of the specific situations that they face.
4. This guide is not a sole source of advice. IMF staff can also usefully consult—and cooperate with—other multilateral institutions like the World Bank and United Nations agencies that have substantial experience and expertise in civil society liaison.
5. Dialogue with civil society groups is only one part of the Fund's public outreach. By highlighting relations with CSOs, this guide in no way downgrades the importance of IMF contacts with parliamentarians, political parties, subnational authorities, the mass media, and citizens at large.
6. This guide is a living document, subject to periodic amendment in the light of accumulating experience and evolving practices in IMF-civil society relations.

## **II. Definition: What is Civil Society?**

1. Theorists propose widely varying and hotly contested concepts of civil society.
2. For IMF purposes, civil society can be defined as an arena where voluntary associations of citizens seek to shape governance structures and policies.

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<sup>1</sup> On March 5, 2003, the Executive Board of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) reviewed the IMF's external communications strategy. Directors expressed views on relations with civil society organizations, which are reflected in Public Information Notice No. 03/33, available at <http://www.imf.org/external/np/sec/pn/2003/pn0333.htm>.

3. Civil society actors include business forums, faith-based associations, labor movements, local community groups, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), philanthropic foundations, think tanks, and more. The present guide does not include political parties as part of civil society, given that—unlike the other citizen groups just named—political parties aim to occupy public office. The communications media also are not covered in this guide.
4. CSOs manifest huge diversity in terms of their constituencies, functions, sizes, resource levels, organizational forms, geographical scopes, historical experiences, cultural contexts, agendas, ideologies, strategies, and tactics. It is therefore very difficult to generalize about civil society.
5. Civil society activities are not inherently good or bad. Many CSOs make positive contributions to the political process, but some elements (like racist groups) can be ‘uncivil’ in their views and conduct.

### **III. Aims: Why does the IMF Engage with CSOs?**

1. Active civil society involvement with global institutions like the IMF is not only an inescapable fact of life in 21<sup>st</sup>-century politics, but there are also significant reasons for the Fund to welcome and nurture these relationships.
2. Public outreach (including contacts with CSOs) is an integral part of IMF country work. As a public institution, the IMF is committed to being transparent about its work and to explaining itself to the people whom it affects. Moreover, dialogue with CSOs offers important opportunities to dispel public misconceptions regarding the Fund and its activities.
3. Policy inputs. CSOs can highlight important issues for the formulation, implementation, and review of Fund and Fund-supported policies and programs. CSOs can give the IMF helpful information to supplement official data and insights that may differ from perspectives in official circles. Challenges from CSOs can provoke the Fund to sharpen its thinking and improve its policy advice.
4. Political viability. Discussions with CSOs provide an important gauge of forces for and against IMF-supported policies in a given context. Constructive dialogue with CSOs can help to build mutual understanding and to increase support for Fund-backed measures.
5. Ownership. Dialogue with CSOs can—as an important adjunct to the Fund’s accountability to its member governments—significantly enhance ‘ownership’ of the policies that the IMF advances.

### **IV. Basic Parameters: How Much, Who, When, Where, What**

#### **A. How much does the Fund engage with CSOs?**

1. The IMF staff is expected to develop constructive relationships with CSOs, together with other forms of outreach such as to the media and parliaments. Staff members should make the necessary judgments to ensure that their other responsibilities do not suffer.
2. Although it is vital for the Fund to extend its relations with a member country beyond public officials, contacts with CSOs must not go so far that they interfere with the IMF's primary relationship with the national government. Discussions of policy alternatives with CSOs should not generate an impression that the Fund is negotiating with CSOs rather than the government.

#### B. Who in the Fund staff interacts with CSOs?

1. IMF staff members are encouraged to meet with CSOs in order to advance one or more of the aims set out in Section III.
2. General coordination of IMF relations with CSOs occurs through the External Relations Department (EXR).
3. Contacts with CSOs concerning general lines of IMF policy are normally handled through the relevant functional and service departments of the Fund, with backing from EXR.
4. Contacts with CSOs concerning the IMF's country-specific surveillance and financial and technical assistance are normally handled through the relevant area department, especially the mission chief and (where one exists) the resident representative for the country, with backing from EXR.
5. The precise division of civil society liaison tasks for a country between the mission chief and the resident representative (where one exists) is determined on a case-by-case basis. In general the resident representative is better placed to develop relations with CSOs.
6. Although this guide focuses on the professional staff of the IMF, the Governors, Executive Directors, and Management of the Fund also have relations with CSOs. The Independent Evaluation Office, too, takes inputs from CSOs.

#### C. Which CSOs do Fund staff contact?

1. In principle, staff can meet with any and all CSOs in order to advance one or more of the aims set out in Section III.
2. In practice, staff cannot meet all CSOs that have an interest in IMF activities. Nor can the Fund respond positively to every request from CSOs for meetings. In making a strategic selection that ensures that all relevant interests are heard, staff can invoke the following broad considerations:
  - (a) Engage with diverse sectors of civil society.
  - (b) Aim to alternate the Fund's contacts between different CSOs, rather than always and only meeting the same organizations and individuals.

- (c) Contact locally based associations as well as the local offices of transnational CSOs—the former are often less assertive in approaching the Fund. In particular, staff should not rely on North-based groups to speak on behalf of South-based stakeholders.
  - (d) Extend the Fund’s dialogue with CSOs beyond elite circles. Contact small enterprise as well as big business, peasants as well as commercial farmers, poor people as well as the affluent, etc.
  - (e) Meet with CSOs across the political spectrum. Include critics as well as supporters of the IMF. Consider meeting opponents as well as backers of the current government of a country.
  - (f) Reach out beyond civil society circles that look familiar. Formally organized, western-type associations are not always representative of the mainstream in some cultural contexts. In any event, avoid inadvertent favoritism to English speakers in places where English is not the principal language.
3. To attain this diversity of civil society relations, staff may need to undertake proactive outreach. Many CSOs assume that the IMF is not accessible to them and so will not make the first move to seek contact.
  4. Some CSOs may decline an invitation to meet with Fund staff. Their reasons might be logistical or principled. It is worth subsequently repeating an invitation as a signal that the IMF’s door remains open.
  5. Approach umbrella or apex bodies like business federations, labor confederations, NGO forums, and inter-faith councils, including for advice on which among the multitude of CSOs the Fund should meet.
  6. Maintain up-to-date lists of names and contact details of the Fund’s interlocutors in civil society, particularly at a country level through the resident representative’s office. Such lists can be made available to management, missions, EXR (for example, to distribute its *Civil Society Newsletter*), and to inform an incoming resident representative.

#### D. When does the Fund interact with CSOs?

1. In principle, IMF engagement with CSOs can be relevant at all stages of policy formulation.
2. It is important to consult CSOs in the earlier phases of policy formulation, rather than after the key decisions have been taken. Many CSOs respond negatively if they feel that they are being asked to rubberstamp a fait accompli.
3. Peak occasions for Fund contacts with CSOs include the Annual and Spring Meetings, and ad hoc conferences and workshops to discuss general IMF-related policies like Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) consultations and the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) initiative.
4. Many missions allot time to meetings with CSOs: Article IV missions; Use of Fund Resources (UFR) missions (especially as they concern longer-term programs of structural reform); EXR missions; Financial Sector Assessment Program (FSAP) missions; and some technical assistance missions.

5. The resident representative (in countries where one exists) can usefully consult with CSOs ahead of a mission and feed their information and views into the mission's preparation. Such an exercise can broaden the range of options considered and help to assess the viability of proposed policies and programs.
6. It is good to develop relations with CSOs on an ongoing basis—hence between as well as during missions and major conferences. For example, a resident representative could establish a local CSO consultation group and meet with it several times a year.
7. It is fruitful to establish contacts with CSOs outside the mission cycle, so that a relationship already exists when more substantive consultations are undertaken. Well-grounded relations of trust and understanding with CSOs can also have major payoffs when the IMF is called in to address an economic crisis.

#### E. Where does the Fund meet with CSOs?

1. IMF contacts with CSOs can be direct (face-to-face, telephone, email, etc.) or indirect (through the mass media, public speeches, distribution of documents, street demonstrations, etc.). In general, meetings in-person are the best way to set up frank and detailed exchanges.
2. Fund officials can also meet CSOs at events organized by other agencies that have well-developed civil society liaison in many countries, such as the World Bank and the United Nations Development Program (UNDP).
3. Meetings could also take place at CSOs' own premises and events. Many CSOs appreciate staff initiatives to bring the IMF to civil society venues. Such visits can also help staff understand the CSO, its size, relations with stakeholders, etc.
4. Sometimes communication may be more constructive if staff meet CSOs at more neutral venues, such as a convention center or a university.
5. Civil society liaison should extend beyond the national capital to other cities, and to rural areas as well as urban centers. CSOs in the national capital sometimes poorly reflect the priorities and perspectives in the country at large.

#### F. What does the Fund discuss with CSOs?

1. First encounters between the Fund and CSOs often cover general matters: the nature and purpose of the IMF; its organizational structure; concepts and theories of economics that inform the IMF's work; etc. Likewise, in first meetings CSOs often relate basic information about their organization and views.
2. Many conversations with CSOs address broad questions of IMF policy: debt relief programs, capital account liberalization, poverty reduction strategies, exchange rate regimes, control of inflation, etc. EXR can provide staff with summary statements of the latest Fund positions on general policy issues.

3. Many exchanges with CSOs concern country-specific IMF advice related, for example, to macroeconomic targets, adjustments of taxes and subsidies, civil service reform, changes to labor legislation, etc.
4. In discussions with CSOs, staff cannot divulge confidential information and should explain that they are not in a position to do so. Similarly, staff will not be able to discuss sensitive points regarding the state of the Fund's negotiations with a government. Nor can they release market-sensitive information. However, staff should not overplay issues of confidentiality to avoid tough questions.

## **V. Challenges: Common Problems and How to Handle Them**

### **A. Keeping initiative with government**

1. The IMF is accountable to the governments of its member countries. Dialogue with and transparency toward citizens represent important complements to this accountability.
2. However, the Fund cannot replace governments in relating with CSOs. IMF contacts with CSOs are a supplement to, and not a substitute for, government dialogue with citizen groups.
3. IMF staff relations with CSOs, therefore, do not substitute for the government's own responsibilities for consultation with civil society. Determining macroeconomic policies and justifying them in discussions with the public (*inter alia* through CSOs) is the responsibility of the national government concerned.
4. Likewise, staff should encourage CSOs to take views and proposals to the relevant national authorities.

### **B. Maintaining good relations with government**

1. The IMF has its primary relationships with member governments, and staff should handle links with CSOs in ways that do not alienate the national authorities.
2. IMF discussions with CSOs should not create additional difficulties for the government. Staff should in general not broach issues or make remarks that could put the government in an awkward position.
3. Increasingly, governments understand and accept that the IMF needs to have relations with CSOs; and some governments positively encourage such contacts. If a government raises objections to Fund relations with certain or all CSOs, staff should explain the rationale for such contacts along the lines of Section III. If the difference of views persists, staff should refrain from the contacts and refer the disagreement to headquarters for possible follow-up with the government concerned.
4. Where a government is sensitive about IMF engagement with CSOs, it can be constructive for staff: (a) to forewarn the national authorities of planned contacts; (b) to have government officials help arrange the meetings; and/or (c) to invite government representatives to attend the discussions. With time and experience of IMF-civil society

relations, the government may adopt a more relaxed position regarding these exchanges. (In certain contexts, however, close government involvement may deter some CSOs from attending or speaking frankly.)

### C. Getting mired in politics

1. IMF activities inevitably have political implications. The impacts vary, and may include some consequences that staff do not foresee. Both Fund personnel and CSOs may overestimate the influence of the IMF. However, most CSOs react skeptically to claims from staff that the Fund is an apolitical institution.
2. That said, IMF officials should strive to be non-partisan and politically non-interventionist. Staff can listen to all sides of debates and avoid the appearance of taking sides.
3. Staff should avoid being manipulated by one side or the other in political struggles: for example, one state against another; government against opposition political parties, or vice versa; employers against trade unions, or vice versa; one religious community against another; one NGO coalition against another; and so on. In this regard, staff should be able to distinguish CSOs that have close ties with governments, political parties, commercial ventures, or media operations.
4. Staff should not use their relations with CSOs to put indirect pressure on governments.
5. Although relations with CSOs can expose the IMF to the political process more directly, these risks are normally well outweighed by the gains of this engagement (as laid out in Section III).

### D. Building trust

1. Some CSOs harbor considerable suspicion about the IMF and blame the institution for many ills. Conversely, some Fund staff have limited confidence in some or all CSOs.
2. Building trust in these situations takes time and patience. Neither side should expect that a single contact will dissipate accumulated wariness. Indeed, some parties may for some considerable period continue to grasp every opportunity to confirm their suspicions of the other.
3. It is usually better to focus discussions on finding and consolidating common ground rather than emphasizing clashing interpretations and prescriptions.
4. Although polarized confrontations with angry civil society critics of the Fund can be uncomfortable, these exchanges can be useful opportunities to specify differences. Staff can show themselves ready to listen to vociferous opponents, while at the same time politely defending IMF policies. With this clarification of perspectives, third parties are in a better position to decide their own positions for themselves.
5. In circumstances where mutual trust is especially low and opinions are deeply divided, IMF meetings with CSOs might be more constructive when an outside facilitator respected by all sides is used.

6. Trust can also be fostered over time by following many of the ‘how-to’ suggestions offered in Section IV.

#### E. Tempering expectations

1. Both Fund staff and CSOs can expect too much from their exchanges with each other.
2. CSOs may hold unrealistic expectations about the extent to which and/or speed at which the IMF can solve problems. It is important that staff in these situations explain the depth and complexity of many economic issues, as well as the complexities of decision making at an institution like the IMF. Otherwise CSOs can become disillusioned with the Fund when major improvements are not immediately forthcoming.
3. CSOs may have unrealistic expectations regarding the degree that contacts with Fund staff will influence policy. The fact that staff are open to discussions with CSOs should not be misconstrued to mean that the IMF will necessarily adopt their positions.
4. Fund staff may have unrealistic expectations regarding the degree to which consultations with CSOs provide immediately applicable specific input to the IMF’s policy advice. Many of the substantive gains from these exchanges come incrementally and over the long term.
5. Staff should not expect consultations with CSOs to win everyone over to a complete societal consensus behind IMF positions. Some level of critique from civil society circles will always exist.

#### F. Assessing the legitimacy of CSOs

1. IMF staff are often cautious about engaging with CSOs because of concerns about the possible lack of legitimacy of these bodies.
2. CSOs can accrue legitimacy, and the ability to represent concerns of groups within societies, from a variety of sources. In assessing the extent to which CSOs represent legitimate concerns, it is relevant to consider such issues as their legal status, moral authority, efficacy, membership, and governance.
3. In assessing the legitimacy of CSOs, staff could consult with a wide range of sources, including government officials, bilateral donor agencies, embassies, local staff in IMF resident representative offices, staff of the World Bank and other multilateral institutions (especially their civil society specialists where these exist), apex civil society bodies, relevant academic specialists, and other professional consultants.
4. In a few countries, CSOs operate self-regulatory codes of conduct or certification schemes that can help to identify bona fide associations.
5. The Fund’s capacity to assess the legitimacy of CSOs are enhanced to the extent that staff (especially resident representatives, mission chiefs, and EXR officials) build up records of civil society contacts.

6. Outgoing mission chiefs, resident representatives, and other principal Fund contact points with civil society should make a point of giving their successors a briefing on their relations with CSOs.

#### G. Finding/making time

1. Building relations with civil society requires time and resources, which must be balanced with other priorities. This is especially challenging in an environment in which IMF member governments expect the Fund to operate within existing staff resources.
2. Staff should treat public outreach (including contacts with CSOs) as an integral part of their overall country work, not as a dispensable lower priority when time is short.
3. Engagement with CSOs can correct misunderstandings, improve policy content, and enhance the political viability of IMF advice. These relations can contribute substantively to the effectiveness of core policy work, and may, over time, actually save staff time and resources.
4. Article IV and program missions could consider adopting a practice of blocking out at least half a day for meetings with CSOs.
5. Resident representatives are likely to undertake the lion's share of relations with CSOs, but it is also highly desirable for their outreach to be supplemented by direct contact between missions and CSOs.

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## **Annex**

### **Process: Holding Meetings with CSOs**

This annex contains a number of suggested good practices for running effective meetings and contacts with CSOs. Not all will be practicable or necessary in all circumstances. Many may seem to be “common sense” or “common courtesy,” but it is helpful to bear them in mind. These are put forward for the benefit of IMF staff; many of the practices, if adopted by CSOs would also contribute to more productive contacts with the Fund.

#### A. Preparations

1. Well planned meetings can go a long way toward building a productive working relationship.
2. Reply promptly to requests for consultations from CSOs.
3. Maintain an inclusive approach; only deny a CSO access with good reason (for example, if the organization has malicious intent or presents a seriously distorted account of itself).
4. Be well briefed. Review information about the CSOs that will attend. Consult notes of any previous IMF encounters with these groups. Track relevant views and proposals that emanate from civil society congresses. Request relevant materials prepared by CSOs.
5. Agree a fairly precise agenda in advance of the meeting, to encourage a focused discussion of specific questions and propositions.
6. Let both sides have a say in what is discussed. Allow CSOs to raise their issues of concern, even when these matters might not be priorities for, or even seem directly relevant to, the IMF.
7. Distribute relevant IMF documentation to CSOs in advance of a meeting, where possible in the local language(s). Provide CSOs with the names and job descriptions of the staff that they will meet.
8. Agree explicit ground rules for the meeting at the outset, including how far, in what form, and with whom the proceedings may be discussed outside the meeting. Neither the Fund nor CSOs should misrepresent to others the nature and substance of their consultations.

#### B. Proceedings

1. Where possible, conduct meetings in the first language of the majority of the civil society participants. Linguistic minorities usually appreciate the provision of separate translation.
2. It is normally more time-efficient—especially in the context of mission visits—to meet representatives of a number of CSOs together. However, in-depth and more discreet discussions of specific concerns may require smaller or even one-on-one meetings.
3. Ensure ample opportunity for comments and questions from the CSOs in attendance. Avoid one-way presentations. Take the initiative to ask questions of CSOs about their

views and activities. Discussions with CSOs are an occasion for staff to listen, learn, and be influenced as well as to speak and teach.

4. Give all attendees a chance to participate: women as well as men; minority as well as majority ethnic and religious groups; critics as well as supporters of Fund-backed policies, etc.
5. Remember that some CSOs work in new and fragile democratic environments. CSOs that advocate for vulnerable groups can feel at particular political risk. Respect these insecurities and do not expose participants in consultations to reprisals. Report to management any evidence of intimidation of CSO interlocutors.
6. Address CSOs in plain language. Avoid technical terms, institutional acronyms, professional jargon, and other specialized vocabulary.
7. Don't underestimate cultural differences. Without extra efforts at cross-cultural communication, CSOs and Fund officials can leave a meeting with very different understandings of the conversation.
8. Debate options (rather than sell pre-established positions). Frankly discuss the trade-offs between policy alternatives. Honestly explore the negative as well as positive consequences of the various approaches.
9. Be ready to admit ignorance when the answer to a question is not known. Where appropriate, promise to look into the matter and supply a response later.
10. Dress comfortably. Somewhat more casual attire may help to relax the atmosphere in some settings. That said, artificial 'dressing down' can provoke a skeptical reaction. Knowledge of local customs is essential.
11. Avoid impressions of overconfidence. Take the time to answer questions fully, plainly, and patiently. Few things alienate CSOs (and citizens generally) more than officials who appear arrogant, even if unconsciously.

### C. Follow-up

1. Make a short note of meetings with CSOs. Briefly record who was met, what was discussed, what main complaints and/or proposals were heard, and general impressions of the encounter. These notes should be included in the compilation of mission minutes, and briefly summarized in back-to-office reports and periodic reports of resident representatives. The accumulation of data on contacts helps the Fund to build up its capacity for civil society liaison.
2. Mention exchanges with civil society bodies in the formal Staff Reports on missions (or indicate reasons why no such meetings were held).
3. Subject to any ground rules established (see A8 above), publicize discussions with CSOs: on the main IMF website and/or relevant country webpages; in country newsletters where these exist; in EXR's *Civil Society Newsletter*. Consider a follow-up note of thanks for CSOs' input, acknowledging the main points that they have made, informing them of any steps that have been taken or are intended in response to their concerns, and inviting their further comment.

4. Do periodic follow-up checks with CSOs to gauge their impressions of meetings with Fund officials.
5. Conduct periodic reviews through EXR of general IMF liaison with CSOs.
6. The provision of feedback is important. If CSOs perceive that their input is not taken seriously and has no impact, then they are less likely to pursue further consultations with the Fund.



