

## Middle East & Eastern Europe Region

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June 16, 2015

Re: Neighbourhood Strategy Consultations

Dear Sir / Madam:

We welcome the European Commission's consultation and strategy process towards a new European Neighbourhood Policy and thank you for the opportunity to submit our ideas and observations.

World Vision is a child focused relief and development organisation working in more than 100 countries worldwide, with our headquarters in London. World Vision's partner offices are present in six EU Neighbourhood countries.<sup>1</sup> This contribution provides recommendations to deepen the relationship between the EU and civil society using Neighbourhood policy.

The EU and many members of civil society are natural partners in the Neighbourhood region because together we seek to eliminate inequalities, poverty and deficiencies in democracy and the rule of law with an end towards greater stability, prosperity and security. Although there are also other policy partnerships necessary to achieve these goals, civil society is ready for shared ownership with the right support from the EU. Recommendations will be tailored to the EU's goals of Differentiation, Focus, Flexibility and Ownership & Visibility.

**Recommendation #1: Create a tiered approach to the Neighbourhood framework that assigns goals, targets and incentives according to the political, social and economic landscape in each country.** There are reasons to group countries by stages of political, social and economic reform as well as a country's interest in a special relationship with the EU. A tiered approach offers *flexibility* and *differentiation* of response as a high performing country seeks entry into another tier of EU engagement. The tiered approach can have valuable incentives in each category that are tailored to the nation-building needs of particular countries. Yet a tiered approach also provides a framework to coordinate work and engagement across borders. For civil society, such an approach offers a strategic means towards regional cooperation. Commonly situated countries can group and engage together for cooperation and learning. In this way, bridges can be built across the greater neighbourhood region to link similar landscapes and perhaps, unlikely partner countries. Regional cooperation is an essential component towards reform where various and similar actors learn from each other. The road to systematic political, social and economic reform is difficult and non-linear; regional relationships can offer new perspectives and innovations. Such an environment also provides space for countries to "compete" for tiers and compare various paths toward reform. This approach can build on the assets of the EU's *More for More* approach because there are different incentives at different tiers.

**Recommendation #2: Value and promote various elements and levels of civil society as joint partners for stability, prosperity and security – they all have a role to play.**

There are different and valuable layers of civil society that are natural partners for the EU. Reviewing current Neighbourhood policy, the EU has supported CSOs at the grassroots level. Here, CSOs can partner with government to develop and scale needed services and mechanisms for greater social protection and economic development. Health, education, child protection, youth empowerment and economic development are essentials for all citizens, without discrimination of class, gender, race, ethnicity, religion or status. Neighbourhood policy has also encouraged CSOs to organize, monitor and assess government policy and implementation. Watch dog

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<sup>1</sup> Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Jordan, Lebanon and Palestine with support to Syrian refugees in Lebanon, Turkey, and Jordan.

organizations and policy making organizations are necessary elements for the rule of law, good governance and implementation of government commitments.

These two components should be strengthened through increased funding and diversity of actions and partners.

Diversity of actions includes:

1) Partnerships between government, civil society and academia to increase data collection and analysis to understand need and next steps for reform.

A review of situations of discrimination and vulnerability verify a common theme: **a lack of information and evidence of the depth and scope of need**. There are innovative ways to collect this data with strong partnerships between government, civil society and academia. Investment in data collection can enlighten and build strong bonds between various actors to yield local *ownership* of problem and plausible solutions; and

2) Building capacity and mentoring relationships between CSOs.

World Vision is a coordinated federation with national partners throughout the region. In the last few years, it has played a substantial role in mentoring, building the capacity and uniting CSOs at the national and regional levels. ChildPact, as an independent regional coalition of child protection CSOs, has developed through this mentoring role. Federations such as World Vision can **host strong coordination mechanisms that can unite CSOs for advocacy, monitoring and needed cross-border and regional partnerships**. The convening power of big organizations and in-depth focus of small organizations are equally important to support EU values.

Diversity of partners includes:

1) Investing in advocacy and civic engagement of discriminated classes of citizens.

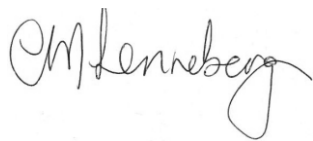
**Those most affected by discrimination or vulnerability have a distinct and credible voice worthy of support**. For example, in just this last year, World Vision has witnessed a youth-led campaign on the Sustainable Development Goals called *The World We Want* and a movement started by care leavers of residential institutions in EU, Enlargement and Neighbourhood Countries. There is no other tool so powerful than giving voice and opportunity to those who face discrimination or vulnerability. We welcome engagement from the EU to determine possible pathways for greater public engagement of discriminated classes of citizens.

2) Investing in civil society actors involved in policy debates.

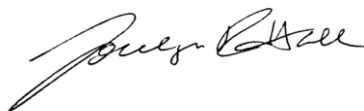
Entrenched political parties minimize policy debate and maximize corruption. Witnessed across both South and East Neighbourhood regions, **reform efforts hinge upon greater and more effective policy debate by a diversity of actors and levels**. The EU can support more robust policy debates by building CSO capacity to monitor and assess current policy and supporting increased policy innovation and analysis.

World Vision, as a civil society organization in seven EU Neighbourhood Countries, welcomes further engagement with the EU to create a better future for all.

Sincerely,



with



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