

IBIS' Global Strategy for Democratic Governance, Citizens' Rights and Economic Justice 2012 - 2017

1. Introduction

IBIS believes that the direct participation and influence of a well organised, competent and legitimate civil society constitutes a fundamental precondition for developing transparent and accountable democracies, where citizens' individual and collective rights are fulfilled. The present strategy takes its point of departure in a rights-based approach to development and establishes the overall framework for IBIS' Country Strategies, Governance programmes and projects worldwide. The objective is to strengthen the voice and influence of civil society and thereby transform the developing countries into genuinely democratic societies, that aim at social and economic equality, equal rights, intercultural democracy¹ and political inclusion at all levels².

In many developing countries citizens, women and men are demanding changes towards genuine and inclusive democratic models. The existing political parties and systems have not succeeded in reducing the level of inequality and exclusion. IBIS understands democracy as a way of political coexistence that goes beyond a formal democratic system. It includes the right for all citizens to information, to freedom of expression, and to exert influence in all aspects of politics and governance,³ also in between elections.

It is crucial to IBIS that the implementation of this strategy leads to concrete democratic change for citizens in IBIS' countries of collaboration, with a special focus on women, youth, and indigenous peoples, who constitute the most marginalised groups in IBIS' programme countries.⁴ Democratic development is a broad and ambitious agenda, and IBIS will seek to cooperate with Alliance 2015 partners, INGOs and relevant governmental and private sector stakeholders in order to increase development effectiveness, and focus on quantitative and qualitative results.

Overall objective

Civil society is empowered and has built legitimacy to bring about democratic change, including the fulfilment of individual and collective rights and economic justice at the local, national and international level, within a framework of sustainable development.

Specific objectives

- Empower civil society to conduct local, national and international advocacy for democratic reforms, fair economic redistribution and full transparency and accountability of public and private sector budgeting and expenditure.

- Participation and influence of civil society in governance, with focus on women, indigenous peoples and youth at local, national and international levels, including indigenous territories.
- Equitable access to natural resources, influence on extraction and climate change policies and support to adaptation initiatives.

2. Strategic Lines of Action

In the coming years, IBIS will strive to achieve the objectives of this strategy through focusing governance programmes in Africa and Latin America on three lines of action.

The purpose of defining the strategic lines of action is to create a framework for developing global expertise in IBIS within specific governance areas. This will enable IBIS to add important value to civil society's efforts to achieve political and economic change in the countries of collaboration through organisational capacity building and professional development. The focus will enable IBIS and partner organisations to document and disseminate results and models for democratic change that can be used for advocacy initiatives towards duty bearers and for replication in other contexts. It will also provide IBIS with a clear profile when coordinating with members of the Alliance 2015 or other international NGOs, and for fundraising activities and communication work in the programme countries, at international level, and in Denmark.

The three selected global lines of action are outlined in the sections below and refer back to each of the three specific objectives.

2.1 Democratic Reforms and Economic Redistribution

IBIS and partners will seek direct influence on crucial issues related to local, national and global governance. IBIS will strengthen national and international civil society organisations, indigenous peoples' organisations and coalitions to engage in research and modelling of alternative democratic solutions, and advocate for national and international economic redistribution. Further, IBIS will engage in selected advocacy and information activities in Denmark and at EU level to influence aid, trade, investments, and development policies in a fair and sustainable direction.

A number of developing countries, such as IBIS' programme countries in Latin America as well as Ghana and Mozambique, have experienced economic growth during the last decade. However, the concentration of economic wealth of a relatively small elite and a limited number of international and national private companies continues to produce a vast poverty gap. Most countries have adopted rather progressive legislation and ratified international declarations and conventions on citizens' rights, but the implementation of the legislative framework remains a challenge due to lack of political will, discrimination, limited economic resources and institutional and human capacity. Corruption is also one of the major hindrances for economic growth and fair distribution of wealth. Besides, reforms related to economic redistribution, transparency, company taxation, and property and income taxation, is rarely driven by elites in power. Reforming these areas is of crucial importance for civil society's

opportunities to challenge national and international power holders to re-prioritize and re-distribute resources to the benefit of the entire population.

Government budgets reflect social and economic policy priorities. A focus on budgets is therefore crucial to influence government policies, development and planning, and to ensure that peoples' rights and needs are reflected in local and national planning and expenditure. Budget work, as well as resource tracking and management, is a key element to strengthen civil society's capacity to advocate for change. Citizens and their organisations' engagement through participative planning, direct accountability mechanisms and advocacy processes, are key elements in the work for economic redistribution, fiscal decentralization, increasing democratic governance, transparency and poverty alleviation.

Engaging in these complex issues requires a thorough contextual understanding. The success of achieving democratic reforms and economic redistribution through advocacy and dialogue with duty-bearers, will depend on IBIS, the governance programmes and partners' capacity to form coalitions and coordinate with a range of other stakeholders. These could be universities, research institutions, INGOs, IBIS' education and advocacy programmes, Africa Against Poverty (AAP) and Latin America Against Poverty an Inequality (LAPI), as well as relevant governments, EU, UN, and private sector actors.

Areas of intervention

- Advocate for economic redistribution, e.g. through progressive income taxation, private property taxation, taxation on natural resource exploitation and company tax.
- Advocate for fiscal decentralization and devolution.
- Support partners to carry through resource tracking of public and private sector revenues and spending, in coordination with networks.
- Advocate for transparency of private companies at national and international levels e.g. legislation on the Right to Information and Country by Country reporting.
- Advocate for open budgeting, transparency and information on public sector budgeting.
- Influence legislation processes selected by IBIS' programmes, related to national and global governance issues that are crucial to strengthen individual and collective rights.
- Support and document selected autonomy or self-determination processes and advocate for improved conditions for indigenous autonomies.
- Resource tracking of foreign aid and advocacy in Denmark and towards the EU, UN, World Bank and IMF regarding development policies and funding modalities.

2.2 Political Participation

Participation of women, indigenous peoples and youth in decision making processes is of high priority in IBIS' governance strategy. IBIS will promote and support women's active participation in governance and decision-making through civic education and affirmative actions, with individual women involved in politics and with female civil society representatives. In addition, legal, social, institutional and cultural barriers preventing women from achieving equal respect, influence and opportunities to participate in the democratic

process will be confronted. This includes applying gender criteria for partner selection, in programme monitoring, in advocacy activities and internally within IBIS.

Indigenous peoples are marginalized in contemporary societies although they are bearers of ancestral and collective rights, established in international conventions and declarations. Their inclusion and participation will have special focus in the countries where IBIS historically has supported the indigenous movements and organisations. IBIS will work to ensure that their rights are respected and that they are included in political processes, including in the establishment of political autonomies.

Young people are often relegated from decision-making and social and political influence. IBIS recognizes the potential for change in young women and men and will seek actively to empower youth to claim acknowledgement as citizens and enable them to achieve social and political influence. A focussed civic education approach, supplemented with initiatives for income generating activities, can empower youth to exercise active citizenship. IBIS sees a potential for change in young women and men influencing the development agenda of their country.⁵

Areas of intervention

- Develop strategies to remove barriers and ensure political participation of women, indigenous peoples and youth.
- Build capacity of the next generation of civil society leaders with special emphasis on youth leaders (women and men).
- Strengthen indigenous peoples' organisations and influence on political processes, working actively with collective rights and international legal instruments.
- Promote political processes which respect cultural diversity (interculturality).
- Mobilize youth and facilitating spaces for youth to meet and discuss rights, responsibilities and their views on and demands for democratic development.
- Strengthen the organisation and voice of women and youth in existing and new partnerships.
- Use information technologies and social media to mobilize people, especially youth, for political participation.

2.3 Natural Resources and Climate Change

In developing countries, vulnerable people are suffering from lack of access to natural resources such as water, land and energy. At the same time, they are often affected by the industries related to the unsustainable extraction of these resources, and involved in conflicts related to pollution and land disputes. According to international conventions⁶, indigenous people have the right to Free, Prior and Informed Consent before industries start operations in their territories; a right that should apply to all local populations living in exploitation areas. IBIS will work for the fulfilment of these rights and ensure that states and companies live up to their responsibilities and obligations⁷.

Vulnerable populations are also most vulnerable to climate change, which in the years to come will have severe effects on their living conditions and social and economic rights. Although problems are fast augmenting, little progress has been made at the international level to reach an agreement on a legally binding convention. The institutional setup for international climate funding is also a major issue of controversy. The support for adaptation⁸ is increasingly funded by reallocated ODA instead of additional funding, and private sector funds, which entails transparency and efficiency problems. IBIS and alliance partners will seek to monitor and influence climate funding and its effect.

Carbon emission reduction initiatives are a significant foreign policy priority of Nordic countries and in early stages of implementation, but they have consequences for local populations' rights to the use of land and territories, when implemented without any consultation or invitation to participate in decision processes. IBIS will support partners to claim a participative elaboration of conservation and land management initiatives related to carbon reduction with respect for territorial and land rights, and integrating local knowledge and experiences.

Finally, resource rich countries lack regulations on disclosure of information that can help civil society monitor the effects of operations related to resource extraction and climate change. International initiatives and conventions exist, such as the EITI⁹, but rarely impact at local level. IBIS will, actively and by strengthening civil society organisations, support advocacy initiatives for transparency for states and companies to make full disclosure of information related to natural resource extraction and climate change.

Areas of intervention

- Support indigenous peoples and other affected populations in their right to free, prior and informed consent in relation to industries extracting resources, influence on national policies and inclusion in the design of climate initiatives.
- Support civil society and its organisations to monitor the economic and social impact and advocate for transparency and accountability on the extractive industries.
- Advocate for the use of natural resource revenues for development, integrating civil society into transparency and influencing processes.
- Use selected cases of national and international resource tracking and advocacy related to specific extractive industries in programme countries for evidence based advocacy.
- Build international alliances and campaign on specific issues around extractive industries and climate change.
- Budget monitoring and advocacy related to international and national climate funds for a fair allocation.
- Strategic synergy with AAP and LAPI, Alliance 2015 and Global Campaign for Education.

3. Partnership and Programme Approach

The overall approach to achieve change will take its point of departure in IBIS' Partnership Strategy¹⁰ and focus on strengthening civil society partners' thematic competences and

organisational capacity, aiming at advocacy processes at different levels, as unfolded in The Change Triangle¹¹, IBIS' Advocacy Tool¹², and the Territorial Governance methodology¹³.

Civil society organisations are the natural partners of IBIS in the efforts to promote empowerment, participation and influence of marginalised people. Civil society organisations act as the voice of their constituencies and as change agents by formulating alternative democratic models, influencing decision making, and through dialogue with duty bearers and active engagement in advocacy and campaigning. In addition, IBIS will collaborate with private sector and government institution when relevant for improving the conditions and rights of civil society.

IBIS' programmes will apply advocacy as a primary tool to achieve the expected results. IBIS considers advocacy a planned process of strategic activities of one or more civil society organisations aiming at social, legal, economic or political changes at local, national or international levels. It is crucial for IBIS to apply resources strategically in order to optimize results. This strategy therefore emphasises the importance of selecting themes for advocacy in close coordination with IBIS' education programmes, advocacy programmes or likeminded organisations at national and international level.

The role and responsibilities of IBIS staff will, depending on the context, include a combination of the following elements:

- Support planning and facilitation of advocacy processes with clear expected results, including analysis of power relations, and short and long term objectives.
- Prioritize and focus on a few selected change objectives in IBIS' Governance programmes, in order to invest efficiently the time and resources to achieve the expected results.
- Strategic support and facilitation of platforms or coalitions constituted by a combination of local, national and international civil society organisations that represent important complementary skills and competencies related to the concrete objective.
- Document, disseminate and communicate results and alternative and innovative development practices.
- Support strategic media engagement with individual journalist, newspapers, social media, radios, and television.
- Take initiative to harmonize closely with other international or national NGOs around the support to coalitions or platforms in their aspirations for change.

IBIS' governance programmes will work closely together with IBIS' education programmes on initiatives related to civic education and advocacy, e.g. with budget tracking, decentralization and resource allocation within the education sector. IBIS will facilitate knowledge and capacity building based on IBIS' own experiences and on best practises from other national and international organisations.

In Denmark, IBIS will communicate to the public and to important stakeholders on the Strategy's strategic lines of action with a double purpose: to raise funds and public support to IBIS' work, and to influence political agendas to enable the achievement of programme objectives and results in Africa and Latin America. To this end, documentation of results achieved and development challenges addressed must be communicated to the Danish and international audience in a clear and engaging way, enabling them to follow the progress of IBIS' governance activities.

Planning of the necessary documentation is required to engage and convince the different audiences and achieve the desired changes and support. These communication needs will be integrated into the strategic lines of action and concrete programme activities.

4. Context Diversity

IBIS works in a range of different contexts that are all specific and must be analyzed thoroughly and respected when developing the thematic governance programmes. A number of context specific issues, listed below, constitute the operational environment for the implementation of IBIS' governance strategy in the countries of collaboration in Latin America and Africa.

Poverty and inequality are main factors affecting civil society in all the countries where IBIS works. In Sub-Saharan Africa, it is estimated that 47,5% of the population live in condition of extreme poverty and 69,2% in poverty¹⁴. In Mozambique, the 3rd National Poverty Assessment of 2010 shows an unchanged poverty rate of 54% despite the annual average economic growth rate of around 8% in the past two decades¹⁵. The inequality in income distribution, in e.g. Liberia, is striking as 30% of income is accrued to the top 10% of the population and only 2,4% to the lowest 10% of the population. In comparison, economic growth and redistribution has improved in the Latin American region, leading to a drop in moderate poverty by 73 million since 2003¹⁶. Critical analysts point out that the poorest countries in the region, e.g. Bolivia and Nicaragua, show a significantly lower poverty reduction of extreme and moderate poverty of only 1% in 2007.¹⁷ Even so, it is a context of relative wealthy societies, in which poverty of marginalized groups is sustained by exclusion, discrimination and severe inequality in income distribution. Income distribution figures from Bolivia (2007) show that over 45% of the income is accrued to the top 10% of the population, while only 1% is shared among the bottom 10%.

Multicultural societies and plurinational states are characteristic for several IBIS countries, which presents a challenging reality. The coexistence of different social and political cultures and systems of authority, indigenous peoples and European and African descendants, globalization and ancestral rights, creates a need for intercultural democratic solutions. Although indigenous peoples mainly in **Latin American** countries have gained political power, in other contexts they are disrespected and face the deterioration of their economic and cultural spaces, and the related consequences of migration.

In some **African** countries, **relatively stable democracies** and structured administrative legislation and systems calls for support to institutionalized development dialogue between civil society, traditional authorities and local and national government. Other African countries have recently come out of long, exhausting civil wars as **fragile states**, where the lack of a functional governance system, weak institutions and poor infrastructure pose enormous challenges to the new governments and to civil society alike, with an urgent need for addressing the democratic vacuum created by the wars. In countries like Mozambique and Nicaragua a **shrinking space for civil society** is a growing problem for the individual citizen, for civil society organisations and for indigenous peoples. The control and repression from authoritarian systems of the freedom of expression and towards civil society and opposition leaders call for a coping strategy in these contexts. **Violence**, and especially violence against women, is a major issue of concern that in some cases becomes a major hindrance to women's participation and democratic development as such. A specific **demographic** issue severely influences the political landscape: young people (under 15) constitute around 30% in Latin America, and reach over 40% in West Africa.¹⁸ This on one hand could indicate opportunities for a new political agenda through the conquering of political space, but on the other hand, the severe lack of education and employment opportunities contribute as an aggravating factor to already unstable situations.

The issues around **natural resources** and the related **extractive industries** are urgent and highly relevant in most IBIS countries. The processes of globalization, reform of the state and economic transformation steps to liberalize economies for foreign investment may improve economic growth, but simultaneously aggravate poverty and inequality problems. In many countries revenues from extractives are confined to benefit for a small local elite or international companies. This entails a deepening of social gaps and aggravates the situation of unequal rights between the ruling elites and the majority of the population. The impacts of **climate change** also have an aggravating effect on economic and political inequality. Direct effects of changing climate and production conditions create a higher degree of social vulnerability and instability in many African countries. In Latin America, indigenous peoples experience the effects of international emission reduction activities, as conservation programmes are carried out without involving the local population who is dependent on the land use.

The governance strategy and the lines of action presented in this document are valid for all the specific contexts in which IBIS works in Latin America as well as Africa. The different governance programmes will focus on implementing the lines of action that are most applicable in their specific context and most likely to yield results through policy and structural changes.

¹ The concept of "Interculturality" is defined as a political process of building new power relations, that pursues the establishment of states and societies respectful of cultural diversity and includes peoples and communities which historically have been marginalized.

² This strategy adheres to all IBIS' strategy and policy framework, especially the documents on Rights Based Approach, Extractive Industries, Education for Change, Partnerships, Gender Equality, Youth, Budget Work and Resource Tracking, Communication, Fundraising and Anti-corruption.

³ Governance is the process of managing societies and organisations. Governance is about power, relationships and accountability. (Inspired by Plumptre 1999: 3).

⁴ IBIS is aware of the arguments for differentiating between civil society and indigenous peoples. In this Strategy however, indigenous peoples are included in our concept of civil society, meaning all actors that are not part of the state or the market.

⁵ IBIS' Position Paper on Youth states: "IBIS aims at contributing to the empowerment of youth as active citizens of society with equal enjoyment of rights, responsibilities, and participation in decision-making as well as access to and control over resources".

⁶ ILO Convention 169 and UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

⁷ See "IBIS Policy on Extractive Industries", 2009.

⁸ Adaptation: Practical steps to protect countries and communities from the likely disruption and damage that will result from effects of climate change. (Website of the UNFCCC Secretariat)

⁹ Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative

¹⁰ See IBIS Partnership Strategy, 2007.

¹¹ See The Change Triangle, 2010.

¹² IBIS' Advocacy Tool will be published in 2012.

¹³ See Aparicio (ed.) 2011, in "Derechos de los pueblos indígenas a los recursos naturales y al territorio (...)", Icaria Editorial, Barcelona, 2011.

¹⁴ World Bank (2008)

¹⁵ Poverty and wellbeing in Mozambique. 3rd National Poverty Assessment, October 2010, Ministry of Planning and Development.

¹⁶ World Bank (2010)

¹⁷ Helwege and Birch: "Declining Poverty in Latin America?" GDAE working paper no. 07-02.

¹⁸ Unstats/unsd/demographic/products/dyb/dyb2009-2010/Table02/pdf.