

TERMS OF REFERENCE

Democratic Development through Strong,
Locally Led Civil Society Ecosystems

Consultancy for strategic positioning, programme development and future Norad funding

Maximum level of effort	Working modality	Core allocation
Up to 60 working days	At least 10 days face-to-face	50% strategy / 50% proposal

1. Background

About ADRA Norway

ADRA Norway is part of the global Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) network, one of the world's largest faith-based humanitarian and development organizations. ADRA Norway works with locally governed ADRA country offices and local civil society organizations to address poverty, inequality and vulnerability through long-term development and humanitarian action. Its experience includes education, vocational skills development, food security, livelihoods, civil society strengthening, humanitarian response and localization in fragile and conflict-affected contexts.

About the ASPIRE Programme

ASPIRE (Action to Strengthen Partnerships for Inclusion, Resilience and Education) is ADRA Norway's flagship multi-country development programme, implemented with ADRA country offices and local organizations in Somalia, South Sudan, Ethiopia, Mali, Niger, Uganda and Myanmar. It supports education, technical and vocational education and training (TVET), livelihoods and resilience, while strengthening civil society actors. Gender equality, inclusion, safeguarding, localization and community participation are cross-cutting priorities.

Emerging Norwegian policy and funding context

Available policy information indicates that future Norwegian support to civil society will be more sharply oriented toward democratic development. The expected focus is on enabling civil society in partner countries to promote democratic participation, protect human rights and hold decision-makers accountable. Increased emphasis is also placed on locally led development, transfer of decision-making power, collaboration among complementary actors, and investment in wider civil society ecosystems.

Service delivery may remain relevant where it enables civil society actors to operate or contributes clearly to the democratic-development purpose. Education, TVET and jobs, livelihoods and food-security activities must therefore be connected to strengthened agency, organization, participation, rights, accountability and influence - rather than presented only as services or sector outputs.

For ADRA Norway, this requires a more explicit theory of change for how our ASPIRE program contributes to democratic development through strong, locally led civil society ecosystems. It also requires meaningful co-creation with country offices and local partners, clearer local decision-making, stronger collaboration with other actors, and evidence of how marginalized groups participate and influence decisions.

2. Purpose of the Assignment

The consultancy will support ADRA Norway to position and develop our new program approach around the overarching objective of democratic development through strong, locally led civil society ecosystems, and to prepare a competitive future Norad application. The assignment will preserve key ASPIRE's sector strengths while clarifying how they strengthen civil society, expand civic participation, protect rights, advance inclusive decision-making and improve accountability.

The consultant must bridge policy analysis, programme design, partnership and ecosystem development, evidence building and proposal writing.

3. Specific Objectives

- Analyse emerging Norwegian development policy, the forthcoming civil society mechanism and implications for ADRA Norway and ASPIRE.
- Assess how ASPIRE currently strengthens local civil society and contributes to democratic participation, human rights, accountability and inclusive decision-making.
- Identify gaps in ASPIRE's civil society, civic participation, rights and accountability pathways, including barriers faced by women, youth, persons with disabilities and other marginalized groups.
- Articulate credible pathways from education, TVET and jobs, livelihoods and food security to stronger civic agency, organization, participation, influence and accountability.
- Facilitate a co-development process between ADRA Norway and its partners to define a locally led partnership approach that clarifies decision-making power, partner roles, resource sharing, risk management, representation and mutual accountability.
- Support steps to strengthen collaboration across formal and informal civil society actors, including community groups, parent and youth groups, faith actors, networks and other organizations working in the same contexts.
- Position ADRA Norway and lead development of a competitive future Norad application aligned with confirmed requirements.

4. Scope of Work

Component 1: Policy Analysis, Strategic Positioning and Programme Development

- Monitor and analyse relevant policy developments, Norad guidance and the final call, clearly distinguishing confirmed requirements from emerging indications.
- Review ASPIRE strategies, programme documents, results, evaluations and partner documentation.
- Conduct a diagnostic of ASPIRE's contribution to civil society strength, civic space, democratic participation, human rights, accountability, equality and local leadership.
- Analyse power and decision-making within the partnership model, including who defines priorities, controls resources, manages risk, leads learning and represents the programme.
- Map relevant civil society ecosystems in selected programme contexts, including relationships, complementary roles, gaps, informal actors, networks and opportunities for collaboration.
- Assess when service delivery creates access, trust, legitimacy or organizing space for civil society, and define the necessary democratic-development pathways and evidence.
- Lead the development of a Democratic Development and Locally Led Civil Society Ecosystems Framework for ASPIRE through a co-creation process with ADRA Norway, country offices, local partners and selected ecosystem actors, including theory of change, results pathways, assumptions, risks and measurement directions.

- Facilitate strategic reflection and co-creation with ADRA Norway, country offices, local partners and selected ecosystem actors.

Component 2: Proposal Development and Writing

- Translate the final call and Norad requirements into a proposal plan and compliance matrix.
- Refine programme logic and intervention design around strong local civil society, democratic participation, human rights, accountability and locally led development.
- Frame equality and inclusion as essential conditions for democratic development, ensuring that marginalized groups can organize, participate, influence decisions and exercise rights.
- Ensure education, TVET and jobs, livelihoods and food security are justified through their contribution to civil society strength and democratic-development outcomes.
- Define complementary actor roles, local leadership arrangements, power-sharing commitments, co-creation processes and coordination mechanisms.
- Draft and revise the concept, problem analysis, theory of change, results framework, narrative sections and supporting documents.
- Facilitate structured reviews, incorporate partner input and prepare a coherent final application package aligned with confirmed requirements.

5. Expected Deliverables

No.	Deliverable	Minimum content
1	Inception report and workplan	Method, review plan, stakeholder engagement, milestones.
2	Policy and funding analysis	Confirmed and emerging priorities, implications, risks, opportunities and positioning recommendations.
3	Program diagnostic and gap analysis	Assessment of current civil society and democratic-development contribution, partnership power, evidence and programme gaps.
4	Civil society ecosystem and partnership strategy	Actor mapping, complementary roles, local leadership and power-sharing recommendations, collaboration and co-creation approach.
5	Democratic Development and Locally Led Civil Society Ecosystems Framework	Theory of change, results pathways, service-delivery linkages, equality and inclusion pathways, assumptions, risks and measurement directions.
6	Co-creation workshop outputs	Facilitation materials, inputs, agreed decisions and documented contributions from country offices, partners and selected actors.
7	Proposal development package	Compliance matrix, proposal outline, drafts and revisions of required application components and supporting documentation.

6. Approach and Working Principles

- Locally led and power-aware: local partners must meaningfully shape analysis, priorities, design, decisions, learning and representation.
- Ecosystem-oriented: the work should strengthen complementary roles and relationships across diverse formal and informal civil society actors.
- Rights-based and inclusive: gender equality and inclusion must be integrated as dimensions of participation, voice, representation and accountability.
- Evidence-based: recommendations and proposal language must be grounded in programme evidence, context analysis and confirmed donor requirements.
- Adaptive and conflict-sensitive: approaches must be realistic for fragile and restrictive contexts and adjusted as policy and call documents develop.
- Practical and collaborative: outputs must provide implementable choices, responsibilities and next steps, developed through co-creation.

7. Consultant Profile and Qualifications

Essential qualifications

- Advanced degree in political science, development studies, governance, public policy, international development, human rights or a related field.
- Minimum 10 years of relevant professional experience.
- Demonstrated expertise in democratic development, civil society strengthening, civic space, human rights, governance and accountability.
- Strong expertise in locally led development, power analysis, equitable partnerships and civil society ecosystems.
- Strong understanding of gender equality, inclusion and rights-based approaches as dimensions of democratic participation.
- Extensive knowledge of Norwegian development cooperation, Norad, the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and civil society funding mechanisms.
- Proven experience developing successful proposals for Norad and/or comparable institutional donors.
- Demonstrated ability to connect education, TVET, livelihoods, food security and economic inclusion with civil society and democratic-development outcomes.
- Strong analytical, facilitation and English-language writing skills.

Highly desirable qualifications

- Experience supporting Norwegian civil society organizations in strategic adaptation to changing donor priorities.
- Experience with ecosystem mapping, localization measurement and transfer of decision-making power.
- Experience in fragile and conflict-affected contexts, including East Africa, the Horn of Africa and the Sahel.
- Experience developing theories of change and results frameworks for civic participation, accountability, human rights and civil society strengthening.
- Experience facilitating co-creation with international, national, local and informal civil society actors.

Preferred consultant profile

ADRA Norway is seeking a consultant who combines strong policy understanding with practical programme and proposal-development experience. The consultant must work independently while enabling meaningful partner leadership; distinguish confirmed requirements from policy signals; analyse institutions, power and ecosystem relationships; translate sectoral interventions into credible democratic-development pathways; and guide a collaborative process toward a competitive funding application.

8. Level of Effort, Duration and Working Modality

The assignment will require a maximum of 60 working days, allocated approximately as follows:

Component	Share	Working days
Policy analysis, positioning and programme development	Approx. 50%	22-23
Proposal development and writing	Approx. 50%	22-23

The consultant will take overall responsibility for planning and delivery within the agreed timeframe and budget, while working closely with ADRA Norway staff, country programme teams, local partners and selected ecosystem actors. At least 10 working days must be face-to-face with the ADRA Norway team through agreed workshops and working sessions focused on analysis, co-creation, framework development and proposal preparation. Remaining days may be remote, with regular coordination.

Interested consultants are invited to submit a brief technical and financial proposal, including a CV or profile of relevant experience, proposed approach, indicative workplan and daily rate. Proposals should be submitted to ADRA Norway at cato.steinsvag@adranorge.no with a copy to elidon.bardhi@adranorge.no by 7 October 2026 at 16.00 CET.

9. Management and Coordination

The consultant will coordinate with the designated ADRA Norway focal point. The inception phase will confirm sequencing, review arrangements, deliverable dates and participation. The workplan must be updated when formal Norad policy, call and guidance are available. ADRA Norway will facilitate access to relevant documents, staff and selected partners.

10. Confidentiality and Ownership

All documents, analyses and materials produced under this assignment will be confidential and remain the property of ADRA Norway. Programme or proposal information must not be shared externally without prior written authorization.