

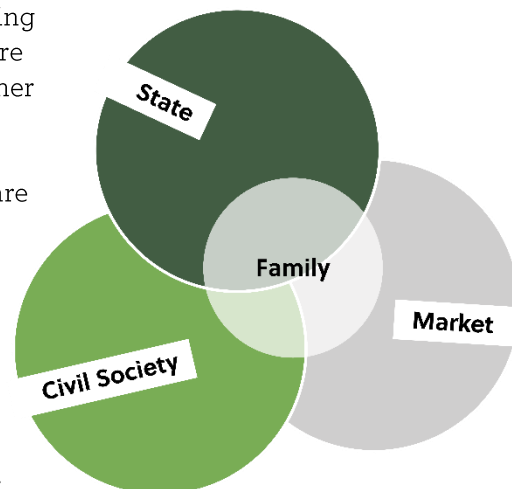
# PMU's Policy on a Strengthened Civil Society

*Approved by PMU's management team 17/12/2020*

This policy describes PMU's view on civil society and provides guiding principles for the work towards a strong and viable civil society, where individuals and groups have the space to organise themselves together with others and to carry out activities with a common goal.

PMU defines civil society as all types of associations of people that are not the state, the market or individual families (the latter can also include households, extended families, clans and groups associated through actual or perceived kinship, origins, etc.). These spheres often overlap and relate to each other in different ways.

In the following sections, we describe how PMU wants to strengthen civil society at different levels. The foundational values and the points of departure of this policy are described on pages 3–5.



*PMU wants to strengthen civil society and its opportunities to play a positive role in the following ways:*

## *At the individual level*

- Support interventions contributing to creating the right conditions for individuals to be able to organise themselves and to act together towards a common goal, ideal or interest.

## *At the level of civil society*

- Support the development of a stronger democratic culture within PMU's partner organisations as well as other actors of civil society, so that these can be role models for the rest of society.
- Promote cooperation across borders and between different actors in order to reduce antagonism and link people from different groups together in an effort to prevent conflict and contribute to peace, reconciliation and a positive societal development.
- Strengthen the capacity of local partners to use a rights-based approach, to be representative and legitimate voices for people living in vulnerability and organisers of public services, and to assume other roles of the civil society (some examples can be found on pages 3–4).
- Particularly support the organisation of women, girls, children, youth and different minorities and vulnerable groups, and strengthen their opportunities to engage in civil society and to influence society.
- Increase the knowledge of local partners in terms of methods for influencing and changing communities and contexts, as well as their knowledge on working together with others to find new solutions to address challenges in their own groups and in society.
- Strengthen civil society in working with advocacy to put pressure on authorities to fulfil their obligations, and in formation of opinion through public debate and dialogue.
- Support partners to have good administrative capacity and good systems, to have good knowledge in thematic areas and to use efficient strategies.

## *At the structural level*

- Support the capacity building of civil society actors to take action and to cooperate, in order for this capacity to be used to promote a positive transformation of the state, the market, the laws and their enforcement, as well as to counter and change negative traditions, corruption, etc.
- Support interventions characterised by democratic principles, cooperation and transparency in order to contribute to a good governance, lower levels of corruption, a functioning judicial system and respect for the human rights among decision makers at different levels.
- Promote a favourable environment for civil society and an increased diversity among its actors. This requires advocacy in Sweden and globally. In this work, PMU wants to cooperate with institutional donors, people in power, networks, local partners and Swedish Pentecostal churches.

- Encourage and develop the large potential existing within the Pentecostal/Charismatic church movements and in other churches and Christian organisations, not to focus solely on existential health, identity formation and inner motivation, but to also turn outwards and develop in their role as a conscious actor in terms of influencing society in a positive direction. This may also include cooperating with other actors of the civil society and influencing the structural level in their own country and internationally, something that is more closely described under *Foundational values of PMU*.
- Support partners, especially in failing states and in conflict-affected countries, to play a positive role in peacebuilding and in the construction of a better society.

#### Within the organisation of PMU

- Continuously process, together with PMU's partners, the areas included in PMU's work for strengthening civil society, both on a theological and on an ideological level, to make it possible for PMU's partner to strategically play their role for a positive societal development.
- Tap into and share the knowledge of local partners and other religious actors concerning local religious contexts, in order to contribute to the understanding of religion and religious life (what PMU calls religious literacy), especially among institutional donors.
- Ensure that PMU's work and interventions are characterized by a rights-based approach (RBA), as described under *Foundational values of PMU* and in the *PMU Policy on a Rights-Based Approach*
- Maintain an approach based on partnership, in accordance with *PMU's policy on partnership*. A good partnership includes cooperation in areas of common interest and for mutual development. The different parties have different roles and responsibilities, but everyone contributes with resources and competence based on their conditions.
- Work in accordance with the *Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability (CHS)* and encourage PMU's partners to do the same.
- Promote the development of partnerships between civil society actors in Sweden and other countries, as well as a global cooperation around common challenges.
- Create platforms where local partners from different countries and different contexts can support and learn from each other. In this work, PMU especially wants to prioritise partners from repressive environments.
- Actively seek cooperation across borders, whether geographical, thematic or religious or having arisen between civil society, state and market, for the objectives of Agenda 2030 to be obtained.
- Generate resources for PMU's operations and contribute to an increased knowledge of and a stronger commitment to the development of the civil society in our countries of cooperation through communication, formation of opinion and advocacy, in Sweden and in Europe.

#### Scope of the policy

The policy applies to all PMU-supported interventions and shall influence the strategies, global programs, guidelines and templates created by PMU. It shall have an impact on the learning processes and the networking of PMU, as well as our communication and fundraising. The policy applies to PMU's development activities, humanitarian activities, and communication and fundraising activities.

# Foundational Values and Points of Departure of the Policy

## Foundational Values of PMU

For PMU, the key factors in bringing about change are the following:

- taking a human rights approach in all fight against poverty.
- acknowledging that the people and local communities are capable and have their own driving force and knowledge to be able to change their situation if conditions are favourable, even though additional knowledge and resources must sometimes be provided. The primary change actors are therefore the people who are living in poverty and our local partners.
- understanding that the real potential for change arise when people come together as a group and act collectively.
- having a holistic view of poverty, where access to resources, influence and security are key – as is the promotion of existential health. It is also important to bridge short-term and long-term processes (humanitarian interventions and long-term development interventions).
- making sure that external support is always based on local ownership – building on change processes that are already under way among target groups and people concerned.

PMU is a rights-based and a faith-based organisation. A rights-based approach (RBA) has a strong focus on raising public awareness, advocacy and the autonomy of each individual, and on the responsibility of duty bearers towards rights holders. As a rights-based organisation, PMU works according to the principles of non-discrimination, participation, transparency and accountability. The faith-based foundation is about core values, driving forces and an approach characterized by a hope for and belief in the future, justice, righteousness, care for others, reconciliation and the conviction that all people are created in the image of God, with the same value and the same rights. Ever since the birth of the Christian church, fellowships that are independent from the state and the market – entities of the civil society – have been at the centre of the practice of faith.

Existential health<sup>1</sup>, inner motivation and identity formation are important prerequisites for faith-based actors in their work of assuming responsibility for and changing the situation in the surrounding communities. One of PMU's roles is to encourage faith-based actors to play an increasingly active role in societal development and to work with advocacy in relevant areas. This work often begins with a support to people living in vulnerability, and with mobilisation and cooperation with other actors of the civil society. Thereafter, the need for a transformation of the state, the market and the laws and the need to counter negative traditions and corruption, etc., become more and more obvious. In countries where the space of civil society is restricted, attempts to put pressure on the government from an international level might be necessary in order to obtain change. In such cases, PMU and other Swedish and international partners and organisations can take an active part in advocacy in cooperation with local partners.



## Points of departure of the policy

PMU defines civil society as all types of associations of people that are not the state, the market or individual families. These spheres often overlap and relate to each other in different ways. Civil society

<sup>1</sup> PMU's definition of existential health is a combination of areas presented by World Health Organization – WHO (e.g., WHOQOL SRPB) and research on existential health. Good existential health is an important prerequisite for people to have the will and the capacity to take responsibility for situations in their communities and in society. The concept is more closely described in *PMU's Policy on Poverty Eradication and the Promotion of a Holistic Life Quality*.

is made up by people organising themselves and acting together for a common goal, ideal or interest of some kind. Congregations, churches and religious organisations, non-profit organisations, foundations, social enterprises, different forms of networks and social media are all parts of civil society. The actors of civil society are independent and often driven by ideology and volunteerism.

Civil society with its different actors can play many different and important roles in society. Some of these roles are listed below:

- Both churches and other civil society actors can offer a *place for people to meet* across generational, gender, ethnic and socioeconomic lines. They are often good at including people that otherwise live in exclusion.
- *Social innovators*, skilled at identifying societal problems and finding solutions to these, can often be found within civil society.
- Actors of civil society can also be *organisers and providers of important social services* at a low cost, in domains such as health, education and livelihoods for the most vulnerable people and in areas that are difficult to reach.
- Contemporary public institutions have often been started by civil society actors in the past, meaning that these can also be viewed as *community builders*.
- Civil society actors can also be *pioneers* paving the way for other actors within civil society.
- Civil society actors, especially religious associations and popular movements, are usually skilled *actors of mobilisation* that can gather and organise people and generate interest, commitment and a will to change.
- Many civil society actors are *bridge builders* and *messengers* with a high credibility among local populations as well as authorities and can therefore play a determining role in making the voices of people living in vulnerability heard and taken into account.
- Civil society actors can play an important role in *scrutinising authorities, defending human rights* and *working with advocacy and opinion formation*.
- Many civil society actors are *carriers of ideas* and have an influence over the values in society and can therefore play a role in establishing norms and transforming harmful practices.
- Civil society actors can be important in *humanitarian work* as they are often the first responders in case of a crisis. They work close to the people affected and are often present before, during and after the crisis.

A strong, vibrant and bridge-building civil society also increases the resilience of the society in case of crises, as well as contributes to a *democratic development, an increased social capital* (which can be defined as the number of contacts multiplied by the level of trust within these contacts) and *an increased trust*.

Civil society actors can also play other roles, depending on their capacity and on the context. This policy is thus connected to many of PMU's other policies.

The number of democracies in the world have more than doubled in the past 40 years. However, since a few years back, the civil and political freedoms and rights as well as the space for the civil society is shrinking in many countries. The freedom to act for civil society actors is considered threatened and limited in more than a hundred countries, and women working for change are often particularly exposed. When the societal climate in a country becomes harsher, it often becomes more important to be able to relate to international networks. The possibility of civil society actors to work freely varies between the different countries of cooperation of PMU. The support must therefore be adapted to each specific country.

#### *Religion and the role of religious actors*

In most parts of the world, the practiced religion is extremely important. The Church and other faith-based actors have an important role to play and is an influential voice in many countries, both in civil society and in society in general. Consequently, PMU believes that development actors must possess an understanding of religion, religious language and life to be able to maintain a constructive dialogue on societal development.

The cost to reach the global objectives of Agenda 2030 exceeds the total aid budget of the world. Therefore, a support from different kinds of actors is needed for the goals to be obtained and for every person everywhere to be included and benefit from development. Here, churches and other faith-based actors have a large potential to contribute to societal development through an efficient use of development funding and through their own contributions to societal development without the use of external funds.

PMU's local partners have established networks both with people that live in poverty or that live close to these, and with authorities and other local actors. This is important in order to be able to act as bridge builders between decision makers and people living in vulnerable situations, and to achieve a good effect from implemented interventions.