



# 2020 CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATION SUSTAINABILITY INDEX

FOR THE MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA  
9th EDITION – OCTOBER 2021



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## Developed by:

United States Agency for International Development  
Bureau for Democracy, Conflict and Humanitarian Assistance  
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**Disclaimer:** The opinions expressed herein are those of the panelists and other project researchers and do not necessarily reflect the views of USAID or FHI 360.

Cover Photo: A staff member of the Baghdad Mayorality Public Awareness Department encourages a resident in al-Tobji District to beautify and clean the surroundings as well as conserve water during a campaign dubbed #Baghdad\_Is\_My\_Responsibility, an activity supported through the USAID Iraq Governance and Performance Accountability (IGPA/Takamul) Project.

Photo Credit: USAID IGPA/Takamul

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION..... i

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS..... ii

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY ..... I

2020 CSO SUSTAINABILITY INDEX COUNTRY REPORTS

    Egypt ..... 7

    Iraq ..... 17

    Jordan ..... 28

    Lebanon..... 37

    Libya ..... 47

    Morocco ..... 56

    Tunisia ..... 65

    Yemen..... 76

ANNEX A: CSO SUSTAINABILITY INDEX METHODOLOGY ..... 85

ANNEX B: STATISTICAL DATA..... 104

ANNEX C: REGIONAL MAP ..... 106



# INTRODUCTION

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) is pleased to present the ninth edition of the *Civil Society Organization (CSO) Sustainability Index for the Middle East and North Africa*, covering developments during the unprecedented circumstances of 2020, during which the COVID-19 pandemic affected all aspects of life around the globe.

This year's Index reports on the state of CSO sectors in eight countries in the Middle East and North Africa: Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Tunisia, and Yemen. It addresses both advances and setbacks in seven key components or "dimensions" of the sustainability of civil society sectors: legal environment, organizational capacity, financial viability, advocacy, service provision, sectoral infrastructure, and public image. The Index is intended to be a useful source of information for local and international CSOs, governments, multilateral institutions, donors, academics, and other stakeholders who want to better understand and monitor key aspects of sustainability in the CSO sector.

The Index's methodology relies on CSO practitioners and researchers, who in each country form an expert panel to assess and rate these dimensions of CSO sustainability during the year. The panels in each country—most of which met virtually this year—agree on scores for each dimension, which range from 1 (the most enhanced level of sustainability) to 7 (the most impeded). The dimension scores are then averaged to produce an overall sustainability score for the CSO sector in each country. A Washington DC-based editorial committee composed of technical and regional experts reviews each panel's scores and the corresponding narrative reports, with the aim of maintaining consistent approaches and standards in order to facilitate cross-country comparisons. Additionally, electronic surveys were carried out among active CSOs in Egypt, Libya, and Morocco in order to increase the representativeness and quality of these reports. Further details about the methodology used to calculate scores and produce narrative reports are provided in Annex A.

The *CSO Sustainability Index for the Middle East and North Africa* complements similar publications covering other regions. The various regional editions of the *2020 CSO Sustainability Index* assess the civil society sectors in a total of seventy-three countries, including thirty-two in Sub-Saharan Africa; twenty-four in Central and Eastern Europe and Eurasia; eight in Asia; and Mexico.

A publication of this type would not be possible without the contributions of many individuals and organizations. We are especially grateful to our local implementing partners, who play the critical role of facilitating the expert panel meetings and writing the country reports. We would also like to thank the many CSO representatives and experts, USAID partners, and international donors who participate in the expert panels in each country. Their knowledge, perceptions, ideas, observations, and contributions are the foundation upon which this Index is based.

In addition, special thanks goes to Eka Imerlishvili from FHI 360, the project manager; Jennifer Stuart and Stewart Chisholm from ICNL, the report's editors; and Najiyah Alwazir from USAID. A full list of acknowledgments can be found on page ii.

Happy reading,

Michael Kott

Director, Civil Society and Peace Building Department

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Normal life came to an abrupt halt in the first quarter of 2020 as the COVID-19 virus spread around the globe. Confronted by myriad unprecedented challenges, including political and economic unrest, the closure of civic space, and a decline in financial viability, CSOs in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) demonstrated remarkable resilience. They reacted quickly to the constantly changing circumstances by providing critical services, thereby demonstrating their value to the societies in which they are based. In addition, CSOs increasingly adopted new technologies, allowing them to develop new ways of working, providing services to their constituents, and increasing their own capacities. The pandemic thus served as a litmus test, both exposing CSOs' vulnerabilities and highlighting their resilience. This year's *CSO Sustainability Index for MENA*, which reports on the state of CSO sectors in Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Tunisia, and Yemen, describes both these opportunities and challenges.

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## UNPRECEDENTED CHALLENGES

The COVID-19 virus was first detected in Wuhan, China in November 2019. By March 11, 2020, over 118,000 cases of the illness had been identified in over 110 countries and territories around the world, leading the World Health Organization (WHO) to declare COVID-19 a pandemic. The official death toll from COVID-19 exceeded 1.8 million by the end of 2020.

According to the Brookings Institute, in comparison to other parts of the world, the number of deaths from COVID-19 in MENA remained relatively low both in terms of total numbers and per capita rates. This is at least partially attributed to the region's demographics, which boast relatively young populations with less susceptibility to the virus than other age groups. Nonetheless, the spread of COVID-19 was a constant challenge to the region's health-care systems, particularly in those countries where health-care facilities were already poor or lacking, including war-torn and conflict zones, such as Yemen, Libya, and Iraq. Doctors and medical practitioners were also vulnerable to infection. In Egypt, for example, over 200 doctors died from COVID-19 over the course of the year as a result of the lack of needed personal protective equipment (PPE) and overcrowding in medical facilities.

As in other parts of the world, governments in MENA quickly instituted a variety of policies to stem the spread of the virus. These generally included restrictions on public gatherings and travel, in addition to the closure of schools and non-essential businesses. Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, and Morocco instituted nationwide lockdowns that lasted for several months. Restrictions were eased and then reinforced at various times throughout the year in response to the virus's spread. Countries such as Jordan and Tunisia faced significant spikes in infections during a second wave of COVID-19 in the summer and fall of 2020 after prematurely lifting quarantine and lockdown restrictions.

All countries in the region faced economic hardships—including steep increases in unemployment and drops in gross domestic product (GDP) growth rates—in 2020 as a result of the pandemic. The loss of tourism had a detrimental effect on the economies of Egypt, Jordan, Tunisia, and Morocco, while in Libya and Iraq, the fall in oil prices caused a significant drop in overall revenues. Countries such as Yemen and Lebanon were already facing severe economic crises, which were compounded further by COVID-19. The economic decline exacerbated the need for humanitarian assistance in the region. In Iraq, for example, UNICEF reported that the number of those in need of humanitarian assistance jumped to 2.4 million in 2020-21 compared to 1.8 million the previous year.

In addition to the COVID-19 pandemic, other crises also continued to impact the societies in which CSOs in the region are embedded. Yemen and Libya continued to be plagued by ongoing conflicts and humanitarian crises. The armed conflict in Yemen, ongoing since 2014, has resulted in what the United Nations (UN) has deemed “the worst humanitarian crisis of our time,” with over 80 percent of the country's thirty million people in dire need of humanitarian assistance. The internationally recognized government of Yemen remained in exile in Riyadh for most of 2020. The country also continued to be politically divided, with three different political forces claiming control over various parts of the country.

In Libya, an armed conflict that began in April 2019 continued throughout the first half of 2020. According to reports from Human Rights Watch and the UN, the conflict resulted in over 1,000 civilian casualties. In addition, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) estimated that there were over 390,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) in the country at the end of 2020. While fighting ceased in June, a ceasefire was not signed until

October. The ceasefire paved the way for peace talks to begin in November 2020; these were still ongoing at the end of the year.

In Lebanon, an explosion in August caused by ammonium nitrate that had been stored for too long in Beirut's main port killed over 200 people, wounded 6,000, and left thousands more homeless. The explosion also destroyed one-third of the city's hospitals and dispensaries, as well as countless schools and universities.

In these difficult circumstances, CSOs demonstrated their resilience and value by stepping in to provide aid to beleaguered populations.

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## CLOSING CIVIC SPACE

The closing of civic space in the MENA region has been well documented in the last several editions of the *CSO Sustainability Index*. This trend continued in 2020, with governments across the region imposing restrictions in response to the pandemic that limited civil liberties. The shrinking of civic space is reflected in the fact that the legal environments governing CSO sectors deteriorated in 2020 in six of the eight countries included in this edition of the Index, with the largest declines in Jordan and Yemen. While Egypt did not record a deterioration in its legal environment, Egyptian CSOs continue to operate under one of the most restrictive legal environments of any country covered in any of the regional editions of the Index.

While governments in the region were prompted by legitimate health concerns to issue lockdown measures and other restrictions during the pandemic, many governments—both in MENA and around the globe—seemingly used the crisis as a pretext to significantly curtail civil liberties, including the freedoms of expression, association, and assembly. The International Center for Not-for-Profit Law's COVID-19 Civic Freedom Tracker noted that, in 2020, the governments of the eight countries included in this edition of the *CSO Sustainability Index* adopted a total of thirty-two new measures aimed at combating the virus that had a negative impact on civil liberties in the region.

Many countries announced states of emergency that gave the government, including the armed forces and police, additional powers. For example, the Egyptian government extended its existing state of emergency because of the pandemic. Presidential Decree No. 176 of 2020, which renewed the state of emergency, included a specific provision related to the pandemic, stipulating that the armed forces and police are to take all necessary measures to confront terrorism, maintain security, and protect private and public installations, as well as citizens' lives. In Jordan, the government declared an official state of emergency, thereby activating Defense Law 13 of 1992 for the first time. This move provided the government with sweeping powers to pass further measures (known as Defense Orders) to address the COVID-19 crisis. In Tunisia, at the beginning of the pandemic, the parliament adopted a law giving the prime minister the autonomy to issue decrees for two months without referring them to the legislature for approval; during this two-month period, the office of the prime minister issued over thirty-five decrees.

Lebanon declared a medical state of health emergency to stem the spread of COVID-19. After the explosion in the port of Beirut, a state of emergency decree was also issued, which gave sweeping powers to the army to ban gatherings “deemed threats to national security” and restrict freedom of expression if needed. It also expanded the jurisdiction of military courts over civilians.

Virtually all of the countries in the region imposed restrictions on public gatherings and demonstrations to curb the spread of COVID-19. Despite this, many demonstrations were organized to protest the deteriorating socioeconomic conditions and the governments' handling of the crises facing the region. Enforcement of the restrictions on protests led to violent clashes between demonstrators and police and other security forces in all eight of the countries covered in this report. In Iraq, for example, a series of protests and demonstrations were met with violent attacks from security forces and unidentified gunmen that, according to an Iraqi government spokesman, killed at least 560 demonstrators. In addition, the Commission for Human Rights in Iraq estimated that more than 10,000 people were wounded while many others disappeared or were kidnapped. In Lebanon, security forces reacted with force to mass protests over the government's handling of the explosion and what was seen as increased corruption and ineptitude. According to the Lebanese Red Cross, 728 people were injured, at least 153 of which were taken to the hospital. In another protest, Human Rights Watch reported evidence of security forces firing tear gas and metal bullets at protesters. In Libya, demonstrators, including youth activists, took to the streets

for the first time in many years to protest the growing economic deterioration in the country. These groups were also violently dispersed by authorities, who then imposed a four-day lockdown to squelch further unrest.

Governments also increasingly clamped down on individuals who criticized their response to the pandemic in other ways. In Jordan, Defense Order No. 8 made it illegal to spread any news or information about the pandemic that would “cause panic,” thereby restricting the ability of both private and public media to report on the government’s response to the pandemic. In addition, the Jordanian government used the Cybercrime Law, which called for an immediate mandatory three-month sentencing of anyone accused of defamation, slander, or libel, to limit criticism of its handling of the crisis. The Egyptian government embarked on a systematic campaign of repression against its critics, particularly doctors and other members of the medical community. Several activists were also arrested for social media posts criticizing the government’s human rights record or for “violating family values.” In Morocco, many journalists and human rights defenders who criticized the government, including for its response to the health crisis, were arrested. In addition, both Morocco and Tunisia attempted to pass new laws that would ban critical speech and disinformation online, including on social media platforms; however, widespread CSO outcry eventually stopped the passage of the proposed bills.

Human rights CSOs raised additional concerns regarding the growing level of surveillance resulting from governments’ attempts to monitor the spread of the virus. In Tunisia, for example, the government used robots to conduct street surveillance and identify individuals who ventured outside during the lockdown without permission, leading to the initial arrests of hundreds of residents, particularly in the capital of Tunis. COVID-19 contact-tracing apps were introduced in both Tunisia and Morocco. While the use of these apps was voluntary, they both raised concerns about data protection.

CSOs across the region also continued to face other legal issues that affected their operations, including their ability to register and seek foreign funding. CSO sectors in countries such as Egypt, Jordan, Libya, Morocco, and Yemen continued to face lengthy registration processes. In countries that are politically divided, including Libya, Yemen, and Iraq, CSOs faced duplicative registration requirements forcing them to register with or receive approvals from multiple governmental bodies or rival authorities to begin or continue their operations. In Jordan, in the culmination of a long-running dispute over teachers’ salaries, the Attorney General issued an order to close down the independent Teachers’ Syndicate for a period of two years. According to Human Rights Watch, “there appears to be no basis in Jordanian law for him to issue the closure order.” Mass demonstrations were organized to protest the arbitrary closure of the union and mass arrests of its leadership, which were forcefully dispersed.

CSOs also continued to face restrictions on their ability to receive foreign funding. In Egypt, Jordan, and Libya, CSOs must register or seek government approval before receiving foreign funding or working with international partners. In Iraq, a new policy issued in 2020 requires international organizations to seek assessments from the NGO Directorate about the financial and legal status of a local organization before contracting with it, indicating that this information should be verified every three months. However, no instructions or criteria were provided as to what constitutes a legally and financially sound organization and the NGO Directorate’s responses to requests for assessments were often slow. As a result, many local organizations experienced delays in signing contracts, while some lost grants entirely due to the drawn-out procedures. CSOs in Morocco and Tunisia can receive foreign funds but must declare them to the government; CSOs in Tunisia must additionally publish information regarding the source, value, and purpose of any donation or grant received from foreign sources in print media and on its website.

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## DECREASED FUNDING

Financial viability has long been one of the weakest dimensions of CSO sustainability in MENA. The availability of funding declined in 2020 as a result of the pandemic and the resulting global economic crisis, spurring deteriorations in this dimension in five out of the eight countries surveyed in this edition of the Index—Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Yemen, and Tunisia. In the other three MENA countries covered by the Index—Egypt, Libya, and Morocco—financial viability stagnated.

CSOs in the region continue to be heavily reliant on foreign funding. Although exact figures on foreign funding levels are often unavailable, decreased availability of foreign funding accounted for most of the declines in financial viability. In Tunisia, for example, many foreign donors ceased their funding efforts as the pandemic took hold or targeted smaller levels of support towards pandemic relief. In Jordan, CSOs struggled to obtain government

approval to receive foreign funding, as the government prioritized funding for projects that were expected to have a significant positive impact on addressing the pandemic, while postponing decision making on other projects. Foreign funding also decreased in Yemen, Iraq, and Morocco, while Libyan CSOs faced barriers to receiving foreign funding due to duplicative approval processes from the rival governments in the country. These trends left many organizations in the region without any funding.

In contrast to most other countries in the region, foreign funding was reported to have increased in Lebanon and Egypt in 2020. Despite these increases, financial viability in Lebanon still decreased due to the worsening economic conditions and increased demand for assistance resulting from the pandemic and explosion, while it remained stable in Egypt as the process of receiving government approval to access this funding continued to be unclear and bureaucratic.

The economic crisis also took a toll on fundraising in most countries, especially from businesses and commercial entities, which also suffered financially from the crisis. However, there were some bright spots in this field. In Lebanon, for example, CSOs have traditionally received minimal support from local funding sources. After the Beirut blast, however, CSOs had access to multiple and diverse sources of funding, including through crowdfunding efforts targeting the diaspora. For example, Impact Lebanon, a CSO that brings the community together to pursue initiatives that deliver impact for Lebanon, raised over GBP 6.6 million (approximately \$9.3 million), which it distributed to a number of CSOs based on proposals they submitted to address the crisis. While crowdfunding is still new and rarely used in Tunisia, in 2020 some CSOs launched open calls for funding on their Facebook pages or in other media such as radio or television to attract individual donations. In Egypt, CSOs increasingly relied on local funding opportunities and donations to continue implementing their activities and initiatives.

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## AT YOUR SERVICE

CSOs faced a number of challenges when providing services in 2020, including the lack of financial resources described above, as well as pandemic-related restrictions on movement and the types of activities that could be safely implemented. Despite this, CSOs across the region showed their resilience and provided critical services during the year, driving an improvement in the service provision dimension in six of the eight countries surveyed—all but Jordan and Morocco.

Much of the improvement in service provision was fueled by the important role CSOs played in responding to the pandemic. In all six countries recording improvements in this dimension, CSOs played a role both in the distribution of humanitarian aid, food support, and PPE, and in raising awareness about the virus and measures to mitigate its spread. CSOs also responded to other crises in the country. In Lebanon, CSOs reacted quickly after the explosion, providing all kinds of support ranging from cleaning the debris and providing food to renovation and psychosocial assistance, while in Libya, CSOs provided humanitarian relief to victims of the ongoing conflict. CSOs also developed new services in other areas. In Yemen, for instance, many CSOs introduced new services, such as institutional support for governmental institutions, community media, and the preparation of development plans for local communities.

The active engagement of CSOs in pandemic relief efforts also contributed to a significant improvement in the public image of CSO sectors in the region. Largely because of their increased visibility in providing aid and relief services, five countries—Egypt, Iraq, Libya, Morocco, and Tunisia—recorded slight improvements in the sector's public image. Governments recognized and even praised the efforts of CSOs in assisting the public during the pandemic, and the media provided more positive coverage than in the past, improving public perceptions of the sector. In Morocco, for example, CSOs received extensive media coverage in public media outlets and on influential websites about their efforts to raise public awareness about COVID-19 and their provision of humanitarian aid to the more vulnerable members of society, while authorities considered CSOs reliable partners in raising public awareness about COVID-19 protocols. CSOs around the region also increasingly used social media to promote their activities more proactively.

Such improvements in public image, however, were generally limited to CSOs involved in service provision, while those engaged in human rights continued to be the subject of smear campaigns and other forms of harassment. In Egypt, for example, the government continued to block some independent news and human rights websites and detain activists and critics. In Libya, CSOs that work on issues related to human rights, women's rights, and

democracy are commonly perceived as promoting foreign agendas or using grant funds for their personal use. The Morocco report notes that the government and the public continue to view human rights CSOs negatively.

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## TECHNOLOGICAL ADVANCEMENTS

The physical constraints that CSOs faced in reaching out to their stakeholders during the pandemic led many to embrace new technologies to enhance their work. CSOs increasingly used videoconferencing tools like Zoom to stay in touch with and meet the needs of their constituents, while also taking part in online training themselves. However, these opportunities were not equally available as affordable internet services and the equipment needed to make use of such services are not readily available to all CSOs or their stakeholders.

Organizational capacity improved in Egypt, Libya, and Iraq, in part because of advances in CSOs' use of technology. In Egypt, the significant advancements CSOs made in their use of technology allowed the majority of CSO programs and projects to be implemented online during the pandemic. In addition, CSOs used social media platforms and their websites to communicate with beneficiaries, while the boards of directors of various CSOs met online to ensure that their activities were aligned with pre-determined structures and plans. In Libya, efforts by the government to improve broadband access enabled CSOs to adapt swiftly to remote working conditions and use Facebook, Zoom, and other social media and communication platforms to reach their beneficiaries and constituencies to the extent possible. While the improvement in organizational capacity in Iraq was largely driven by CSOs' increased abilities to assess the needs of and build relationships with their target groups, CSOs also used online resources to work remotely and communicate with and reach out to their beneficiaries.

These same technological advancements were used to make training available to CSOs in the region during the year. In Egypt, the only country reporting an improvement in sectoral infrastructure, CSOs developed online training courses and resource centers to support the development of other CSOs. In Iraq, while there were fewer capacity-building opportunities overall, local organizations developed new methods of providing training online, giving them the ability to reach larger and more diverse groups than they otherwise would have been able to. CSOs in Jordan, Morocco, and Tunisia also had access to online training opportunities through Zoom and other technologies on topics including project development, monitoring and evaluation, grants management, and strategic planning.

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## REGIONAL TRENDS IN CSO SUSTAINABILITY

CSO sustainability in the MENA region remains somewhat limited. Half of the countries covered by this edition of the Index—Lebanon, Tunisia, Iraq, and Morocco—have overall CSO sustainability scores that fall within the middle range of sustainability, Sustainability Evolving. The other half—Jordan, Yemen, Egypt, and Libya—have scores within the Sustainability Impeded range, the lowest category of sustainability. Lebanon continued to have the highest level of sustainability in the region, while Libya continued to have the lowest level of overall sustainability.

The improvements in overall CSO sustainability in both Libya and Egypt were fueled by advances in organizational capacity, service provision, and public image; Egypt also reported an improvement in sectoral infrastructure, while Libya reported a decrease in the legal environment. Despite these improvements, these two countries have the weakest levels of CSO sustainability in the MENA region.

In contrast, sectoral sustainability decreased in Jordan and Yemen. Jordan's score declined the most, as its government sidelined CSOs in its response to the pandemic and limited their access to foreign funding, leading to declines in every single dimension of sustainability. As a result, overall sustainability in Jordan fell back into the Sustainability Impeded category, after briefly rising to Sustainability Evolving in 2019. In Yemen, the ongoing armed conflict, political divisions, the pandemic, cuts in donor aid, and the worsening humanitarian crisis resulted in a downgrade in CSO sustainability, with the legal environment, organizational capacity, financial viability, and advocacy dimensions all deteriorating, and only CSO service provision improving slightly.

Overall sustainability remained unchanged in the other four countries, with positive and negative developments balancing each other out. In Lebanon, the legal environment, organizational capacity, financial viability, and sectoral infrastructure all deteriorated, while service provision improved. In Iraq, three dimensions of sustainability—legal

environment, financial viability, and advocacy—worsened. However, organizational capacity, service provision, and public image improved as CSOs took the lead in providing relief services to the public during the pandemic. In Tunisia, improvements in service provision and public image were canceled out by declining financial viability and sectoral infrastructure. Finally, in Morocco, the legal environment deteriorated due to increased harassment of human rights CSOs and activists and the limitations on the freedoms of expression and association imposed by the government under the pretext of combatting COVID-19, but the public image of CSOs improved slightly, due to the increased visibility and effectiveness of CSOs' actions during the pandemic; all other dimensions of sustainability remained unchanged.



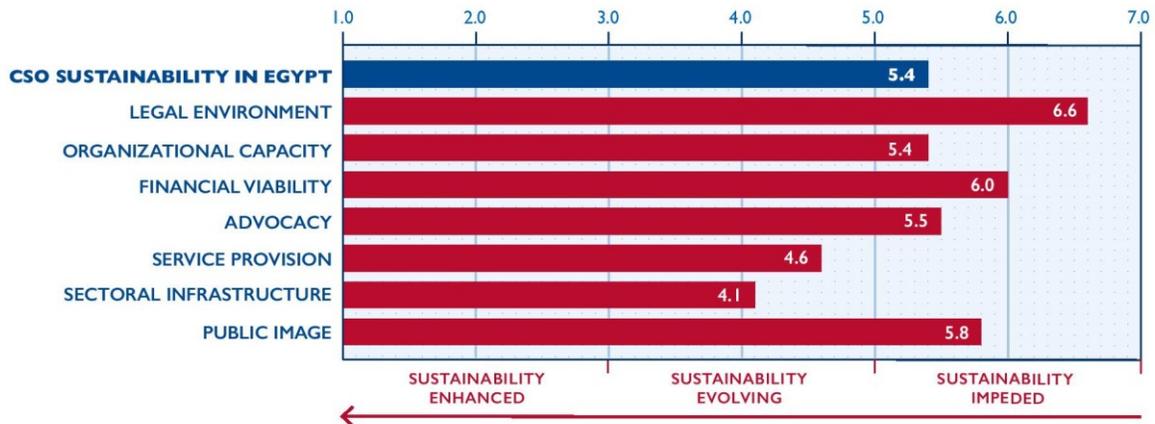
## CONCLUSION

The country reports that follow provide an in-depth look at the state of CSO sectors in eight countries across MENA during 2020, a year unparalleled in recent history. This year's reports provide a valuable opportunity to view CSOs' efforts to grapple with the challenging circumstances during the global pandemic, which were marked by closing civic space and deteriorating financial viability. The reports document CSOs' resilience, including their ability to provide critical services, prove their value to local communities, and adopt new technological solutions. We hope that this annual survey continues to capture important lessons and trends for CSOs, governments, donors, and researchers and that it can be used to support the further development of civil society in the region.

# EGYPT

**Capital:** Cairo  
**Population:** 106,437,241  
**GDP per capita (PPP):** \$11,763  
**Human Development Index:** High (0.707)  
**Freedom in the World:** Not Free (18/100)

## OVERALL CSO SUSTAINABILITY: 5.4



In 2020, Egypt reestablished a bicameral parliamentary system, including the house of representatives and a newly restructured senate, which was established by Law 141/2020 issued in June. The senate serves primarily as an advisory body providing expertise and has no legislative power. Two-thirds of the 300-member senate are elected by the public, while the remainder are appointed by the president. In 2020, Egypt’s parliament also approved amendments to the House of Representatives Law 46/2014, which stipulates that 50 percent of those elected to the 568-member house of representatives should be chosen through closed party lists (up from 20 percent), while the rest should be elected by voters as individual candidates. The president’s right to appoint up to twenty-eight members of the house of representatives remains unchanged. The senate elections took place in August and the run-off was held in September, while elections for the house of representatives were held in October with the run-off taking place in November. In both chambers, supporters of the pro-government Watan Future Party secured the majority of seats.

The first cases of COVID-19 were identified in Egypt in mid-February. By the year’s end, the country had recorded roughly 138,000 COVID-19 cases and over 7,000 related deaths. However, critics have argued that testing for the virus was limited and thus official data on infections and deaths most likely undercounts actual numbers.

With only a few brief intervals, Egypt has been largely under a state of emergency for several decades. Throughout the pandemic, the government extended the latest state of emergency, which has been in effect since April 2017, citing “health and security concerns.” In mid-March, the government began to close down restaurants and religious establishments (mosques and churches) and issued social-distancing rules to curb the spread of the virus. A nationwide lockdown was imposed in April, although it was partially lifted during the summer.

Egyptian authorities continued to detain and imprison critics of the regime, even during the COVID-19 pandemic. In November 2020, the Cairo Criminal Court placed twenty-eight Egyptians, including prominent activists, on a terrorist watchlist. For example, key staff from the Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights (EIPR) were arrested and detained over charges such as joining a terrorist organization and spreading false news. Crackdowns on human rights organizations critical of the government continued in 2020 with many organizations facing harassment,

\*Capital, population, and GDP for all country reports are drawn from the Central Intelligence Agency, The World Factbook, available online at <https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/>. Human Development Index data available at <http://hdr.undp.org/en/composite/HDI>. Freedom in the World data available at <https://freedomhouse.org/report-types/freedom-world>.

investigations, and travel bans. In addition, critics of the government’s handling of the pandemic, in particular doctors and journalists, faced harassment and even arrests throughout the year.

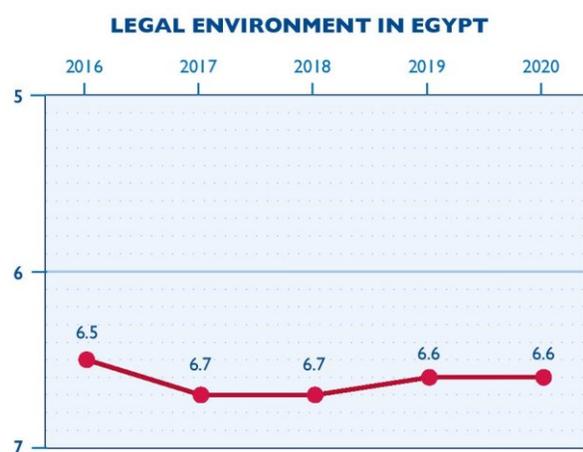
Poverty has long been a problem in Egypt, with a poverty rate of 32.5 percent in 2017/18 and 29.7 percent in 2019/20. The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated this problem, contributing to a rise in unemployment and poverty. Many people found themselves jobless after their companies were forced to cut costs. Furthermore, the employment prospects for youth who were transitioning into the labor market became more precarious due to the economic slowdown caused by the pandemic. Key sectors, such as tourism and natural gas, witnessed a slowdown due to restricted international travel and a crash in oil prices.

The economic impact of the COVID-19 crisis accelerated the expansion of the Takaful and Karama (Solidarity and Dignity) cash transfer program first implemented by the Ministry of Social Solidarity (MoSS) in 2015. The program provided financial subsidies to 3.4 million families and 5.3 million children in 2020, an increase of 1.2 million families since December 2019. Furthermore, in June 2020, President Abdel-Fattah al-Sisi approved an EGP 100 billion (approximately \$6 billion) plan to stem the economic fallout of the pandemic. The plan included subsidies for businesses most impacted by the crisis, as well as for the health sector. The stimulus package also paid the salaries of furloughed staff and initially provided EGP 500 per month for three months (which was then renewed for another three months) to workers in the informal sector who were not registered on social insurance rolls. The government also launched an online system to help irregular workers apply for monthly unemployment payments. The system, however, was difficult to use and many people who should have benefitted from it lacked both the technical know-how and the computer technology to do so.

Overall CSO sustainability in Egypt improved slightly in 2020. Service provision improved, with many CSOs providing support for COVID-relief efforts. The sector’s public image improved slightly as the media provided positive coverage of these efforts. CSOs also made significant advancements in their use of technology, fueling an improvement in organizational capacity. The infrastructure supporting the sector also improved due to the increased use of technology, which increased remote learning opportunities; partnerships both within and between sectors also expanded.

According to the General Federation of NGOs, the total number of registered non-governmental organizations (NGOs) with MoSS in 2020 was 55,000. Approximately 2,200 NGOs were registered in 2020, while 2,800 were dissolved either by request from their boards or upon request to merge with other NGOs. No legal action was taken to dissolve any NGOs during 2020, according to the same source.

## LEGAL ENVIRONMENT: 6.6



The legal environment for CSOs remained largely unchanged in 2020. CSOs’ complaints about the 2017 Law 70 on Associations and Other Foundations Working in the Area of Civil Work led to a lengthy government deliberation and the eventual passage in 2019 of Law 149 Regulating the Exercise of Civil Work, commonly referred to as the NGO Law. However, the government’s delay in issuing the executive regulations for the law, largely due to the pandemic, resulted in bureaucratic confusion in the interpretation of some articles of the law throughout 2020.

Registration became slightly easier for some CSOs after the passage of the new law, leading to an increase in the number of CSOs registered in 2020. Despite the lack of executive regulations, all new CSOs are registered

according to the new law, which allows CSOs to be established through a notification process. However, the process requires the submission of extensive documentation, including registration documents, organizational bylaws, personal information and criminal records of all board members, property contracts, receipts of the registration payment, and policies and procedures related to volunteers. While all CSOs are required to re-

register under the new law, there were no established procedures in place by the end of the year to enable them to do so.

CSOs faced other impediments in 2020 resulting from the law's lack of effective executive regulations. For example, donors—particularly foreign donors—were not able to award grants to CSOs in 2020 due to the lack of executive regulations. MoSS resorted to applying Law 84 on Community Development Associations and Civic Foundations instead, which resulted in a number of inconsistencies concerning which directorates were responsible for the law's oversight. Furthermore, while NGOs are permitted to establish commercial companies under the new law, this was impossible due to the lack of implementing procedures.

Law 149 dispensed with prison sentences that were provided for in Law 70 but maintained harsh penalties in the form of fines, ranging from EGP 50,000 to EGP 1 million (approximately USD 3,000 to USD 60,000) primarily for receiving or disbursing foreign funds without approval or engaging in other unlawful administrative procedures. Nevertheless, organizational leaders that failed to pay their fines for various violations were still subject to imprisonment, according to the Penal Code. The new law also provides for numerous acts and omissions upon which MoSS may suspend an organization's activities or seek a court-ordered dissolution of the board or the whole organization. However, no CSOs were closed down for violating these procedures in 2020.

Law 149 also defines a procedural framework that international NGOs (INGOs) must follow in order to obtain a permit to operate in the country. Currently, there are approximately ninety-five INGOs registered in Egypt, of which less than a dozen work in the development field.

In December 2020, the Cairo Appeals Court dropped charges against twenty NGOs, entities, and organizations that had been accused of accepting foreign funding without a license. Officially, the groups were charged in 2011 with "receiving money from abroad with the intent to harm national interest," "establishing and managing branches of international organizations without a license," and "receiving and accepting funds and benefits from bodies outside of Egypt to establish branches of international organizations." Critics, however, note that the acquittals only applied to the more neutral development organizations and foundations, some of which were close to the government, while the cases against thirteen of the country's leading human rights organizations remained open.

Despite this limited and selective opening of civic space, the few remaining human rights activists and other critics of the government are still subject to significant state control and harassment. Egypt continues to be under a state of emergency; the emergency law, which provides the mandate for the state of emergency, continued to require organizers of demonstrations to receive prior security clearances from the security authorities in 2020. Presidential Decree No. 176 of 2020, which renewed the state of emergency, included a specific provision related to the pandemic, stipulating that the armed forces and police are to take all necessary measures to confront terrorism, maintain security, and protect private and public installations, as well as citizens' lives. According to the decree, anyone who violates the orders will be penalized.

According to a report published by the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace in July 2020, titled "Repression and Coronavirus Response in Egypt," the Egyptian government embarked on a systematic campaign of repression against its critics, particularly doctors and other members of the medical community. In July 2020, several news outlets and human rights groups reported that ten doctors and six journalists were arrested for speaking out against the Egyptian government's handling of the pandemic and the lack of personal protective equipment (PPE) available to medical workers. In December 2020, Human Rights Watch reported that a total of 218 doctors, 58 pharmacists, and at least 57 nurses were reported to have died of COVID-19 over the course of the year.

The Carnegie report also cited the Egypt-based Arab Network of Human Rights' estimate that approximately 500 people, including eleven journalists, had been arrested for violating pandemic-related restrictions by mid-2020. According to international groups monitoring press freedoms, such as the Committee to Protect Journalists and the International Press Institute, between thirty and sixty journalists were imprisoned in Egypt at any given time in 2020. On April 3, 2020, the Supreme Council for Media Regulation blocked or limited access to dozens of news websites and social media accounts for allegedly spreading false information about COVID-19. In November 2020, over twenty-five prominent local and international human rights and freedom of expression organizations published an open letter to Egyptian authorities, expressing concern with the growing number of banned websites in the country, which the group said exceeded 600. Although the majority of these sites were tied to news media outlets, according to Amnesty International, around 15 percent of the blocked sites were run by human rights

organizations, while others attempted to provide critical coverage of human rights topics deemed to be offensive by the authorities.

Social media outlets were not spared the authorities' wrath either. In August 2020, Bahey el-Din Hassan, a prominent human rights defender and co-founder of the Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies (CIHRS), was sentenced in absentia to fifteen years in prison over critical tweets he had published. In February, Patrick George Zaki, a researcher with EIPR, was detained and reportedly tortured for his postings on Facebook. In April, the Egyptian authorities arrested ten female TikTok influencers, sentenced two of them to two years in prison, and fined them the equivalent of EUR 16,000 for violating the cybercrimes law and other legal provisions related to "decency" and "inciting immorality." On April 29, 2020, shortly after the first arrests of TikTok influencers, the public prosecution issued a statement "reaffirming its commitment to continue fighting shameful crimes violating the principles and values of our society."

The 2019 NGO Law retains very restrictive regulations regarding domestic and foreign funding. The law still provides the government with the right to block foreign or local CSOs from receiving or using funds and still allows the government to dismiss CSOs' boards and fine individuals for violating funding rules. CSOs receiving foreign funding are required to inform the authorities in advance and wait sixty days for MoSS to approve the transaction, during which time they may not spend the funds. CSOs are also required to notify MoSS when receiving or collecting donations from domestic sources. CSOs must obtain a license from MoSS to engage in fundraising activities by submitting a written request; such licenses are fairly easy to obtain.

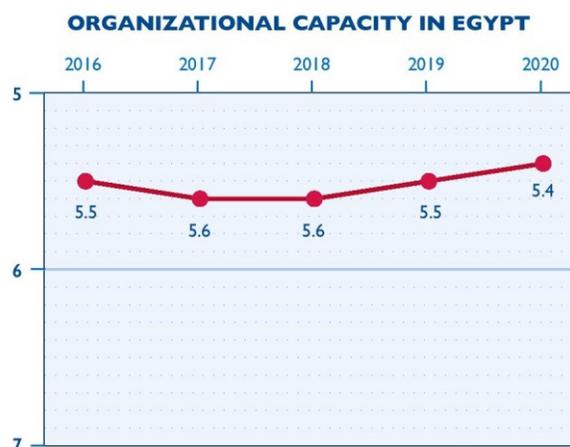
The tax framework for CSOs remained unchanged in 2020, although the lack of executive regulations to implement Law 149 made implementation problematic. In principle, CSOs are exempt from certain taxes, including stamp duties on documents, real estate tax, income taxes on donations, and customs taxes. CSOs may claim exemptions for only one piece of property, while any additional premises owned are treated as commercial properties. Corporate donors that fund CSOs receive deductions of up to 10 percent of their taxable income. When filing lawsuits, legal and service providers working in the CSO sector must present tax forms in order to be exempted from paying large fees.

Some legal entities provide legal assistance to CSOs and CSOs specializing in legal matters offer legal awareness training on specific legislative issues impacting the sector. However, legal experts in MoSS were unable to provide assistance to CSOs in 2020 due to the fact that the implementing regulations for the new NGO law had not been issued yet.

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## ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY: 5.4

The organizational capacity of CSOs slightly improved in 2020 as CSOs witnessed significant advancements in technology due to the rise of digitization in Egypt, allowing the majority of CSO programs and projects to be implemented online during the pandemic. For instance, Al Korra Foundation for Sustainable Development initiated online training on a variety of topics including helping small and medium enterprises (SMEs) overcome obstacles enhanced by COVID-19. CSOs were heavily reliant on social media platforms such as Facebook and updated their websites in order to communicate with beneficiaries. CSOs also used their social media platforms to spread awareness about the risks of COVID-19 in Egypt. However, CSOs in remote areas and those with limited access to technological resources, such as those providing basic services in health care and education, were often unable to make this transition effectively.



In 2020, many CSOs focused on combatting COVID-19 through activities such as awareness-raising campaigns, providing protective supplies to vulnerable groups, and donating food and other supplies to families. Cooperation between CSOs and local communities was heightened throughout this period, with much of the funding and

assistance for combatting the consequences of the pandemic coming from local communities. Salah Al-Din Charitable Development Association in Fayoum is a case in point: when the local community suffered from high rates of COVID-19 infections, philanthropists from the area provided financial aid to the association, which used the funds to support the local community.

Several CSOs altered their structures in 2020 to have more direct relationships with the local communities that they serve. Misr El Kheir Foundation, for example, established more direct relationships with local organizations rather than relying on indirect service provision mechanisms, enabling it to better understand local community needs. At the same time, as work moved online, some CSOs lacked access to technological resources and therefore struggled to maintain relationships with their constituencies.

CSOs effectively adjusted their goals and missions to reflect the impact of COVID-19 on their work. As a result, the focus of a number of CSOs shifted, and some initiatives that were not focused on alleviating the impact of COVID-19, such as entrepreneurship training, civic engagement programs with youth, and workshops on gender equality, were halted. Throughout 2020, CSOs were heavily reliant on following their newly adapted missions and strategic plans to address the impact of the pandemic.

CSOs' internal management systems were strengthened during the year. Throughout the pandemic, the boards of directors of various CSOs actively met online more frequently than usual to ensure that their activities were aligned with pre-determined structures and plans. CSOs without adequate technological resources, on the other hand, experienced difficulties managing their work and communicating with their staff members and volunteers.

CSO staffing changed significantly in 2020. Many CSOs were not able to retain their full-time, paid staff due to financial challenges resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite this, CSOs did not experience vast difficulties in their ability to implement projects due to a corresponding rise in volunteer work throughout the pandemic. For example, through the Volunteer in Every Street campaign launched by the Egyptian Red Crescent in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, over 3,000 volunteers helped raise awareness about the pandemic through targeted information campaigns.

## FINANCIAL VIABILITY: 6.0



CSOs' financial viability remained the same in 2020. While foreign funding for the CSO sector increased significantly in 2020 compared to 2019, most resources were allocated to pandemic relief. However, the absence of executive regulations, along with the government's utilization of the bylaws of Law 84 as an alternative, made it difficult for some CSOs to obtain needed financial resources. The provision of domestic funds for COVID-19 relief efforts by local philanthropists also grew.

According to a survey conducted by the Egyptian Center for Women's Rights in June 2020, 64.4 percent of the 100 CSOs surveyed stated that they depended on financial contributions from their boards of directors; 56.9 percent stated that they depended on donations; 49.1 percent stated that they raised their own funds; and

47.4 percent stated that they partially, or fully, lost their funding.

In 2020, CSOs increasingly relied on local funding opportunities and donations in order to continue implementing their activities and initiatives. The Arab Council for Childhood and Development provided three Egyptian CSOs with EGP 100,000 (approximately \$6,300) each to support their efforts to address the impact of the pandemic on children in Egypt. The Egyptian Food Bank launched a campaign in March 2020 called Supporting Daily Laborers: A Social Responsibility. Through the campaign, donations were collected, resulting in the distribution of 500,000 food cartons to those affected by the pandemic, especially day-wage laborers. The government continues to provide some contracts and grants to CSOs, primarily through MoSS.

Local community foundations were integral in raising funds to address community needs related to the pandemic. For instance, Sawiris Foundation for Social Development, a local grantmaking organization, donated EGP 100 million (approximately \$6.4 million) to various CSOs and charitable organizations to support Egypt's fight against COVID-19, out of which EGP 40 million (approximately \$2.5 million) was allocated to the rapid relief initiative and EGP 60 million (approximately \$3.8 million) was donated to sustain the preventative measures undertaken by the Ministry of Health and Population. As part of the broader Takaful and Karama initiative, the Arab African International Bank's Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) program donated EGP 6 million (approximately \$380,000) to support the People of Egypt are Up to the Responsibility initiative, which was implemented by a group of CSOs; these funds were used to purchase medical equipment for hospitals to combat COVID-19.

According to a December 2020 interview with an official from MoSS, CSOs in Egypt received approximately EGP 1.8 billion (around \$115.2 million) in foreign-funded grants in 2020, a significant increase from EGP 1.016 billion (around \$63.5 million) received in 2019. Some experts, however, note that foreign funding has become less important as a funding source over the past several years, given the increase in the amount of governmental funding and donations by local philanthropists. In addition, the process of receiving government approval to access foreign funding continues to be unclear and bureaucratic.

CSOs struggled to generate steady income in 2020 due to the pandemic and the absence of executive regulations for Law 149. For example, the Salah El Din Charitable Development Association had to seek funding from its board members in order to continue to run its affiliated school and hospital due to a decrease in earned income. The absence of executive regulations for Law 149 also hindered CSOs' ability to establish their own companies.

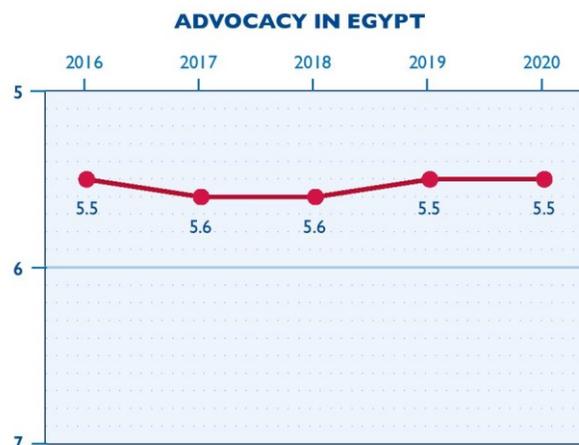
In order to remain active and operational, CSOs are required to maintain proper accounts and financial systems. CSOs need to keep both electronic and hard copies of financial records, bank books, and registers of revenues and expenses, fixed assets, cash and in-kind donations, and domestic and foreign funds. These registers must be kept in accordance with templates that should be provided in the executive regulations that have not yet been issued. Many CSOs still lack the financial capacity to meet these new requirements. CSOs are also required to undergo annual external financial audits under Law 149.

## ADVOCACY: 5.5

CSO advocacy remained the same as in 2019. CSOs whose agendas aligned with the government's development plans were promoted by the state and praised publicly in the President's speeches. CSOs working in the health sector proved to be especially effective during the pandemic as they were able to complement the government's efforts in managing the crisis. For instance, the Egyptian Association for Comprehensive Development implemented a health awareness campaign to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

On the women's rights front, after pressure from civil society, Egypt's government announced in 2020 that it had approved legal amendments toughening the penalties for female genital mutilation (FGM). The new amendment to Article 242 increased both the minimum and maximum punishment for FGM. In addition, medical professionals who perform the procedure can face up to ten years in prison. If the victim dies as a result of the procedure, medical professionals involved can face between fifteen and twenty years, depending on their role and profession.

Public awareness about sexual harassment and abuse improved significantly following a highly successful campaign organized by a student on her Instagram account. The campaign, called Assault Police, pursued justice for victims of sexual violence. Following a mass movement and immense pressure, the campaign resulted in the arrests of a group of men allegedly involved in a gang rape known as the Fairmont Incident. As a result, Al-Azhar, Egypt's highest religious authority, published a statement encouraging women to report incidents, stating that silence



posed a threat to society and would lead to more violations. This in turn prompted an amendment to the law in August 2020 that allows victims reporting sexual assault to remain anonymous.

On July 20, 2020, following attacks and arrests of a number of female activists who were protesting both the inhumane conditions in pre-trial detention facilities and their inability to communicate with family members, the International Service for Human Rights (ISHR), together with CIHRS, Nazra for Feminist Studies, and the Egyptian Front for Human Rights, demanded that the government immediately and unconditionally release all those detained for exercising their human rights, stop using pre-trial detention as a punishment, and allow detainees to communicate regularly with their families. These advocacy efforts were given a boost internationally when the Spokesperson of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights expressed in November “that the targeting of human rights defenders and other activists, as well as further restrictions on freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly imposed in the country, are having a profound chilling effect on an already weakened Egyptian civil society.” The report “What do I care if you die?: Negligence and denial of health care in the Egyptian prisons,” which was released by Amnesty International in early 2021, documented the detention experiences of sixty-seven individuals held in three women’s prisons and thirteen men’s prisons in seven governorates. It argued that prison conditions, including the use of prolonged solitary confinement, coupled with the deliberate denial of adequate health care, especially during the COVID-19 crisis, may have contributed or led to multiple deaths. Although the government did not release any prisoners as a result of these efforts, a delegation of the Egyptian National Council for Human Rights and foreign journalists conducted a visit to one of these prisons and noted in its statements that prison conditions have improved.

In the last weeks of September 2020, according to Amnesty International, small and scattered demonstrations took place in several villages, towns, and poor urban communities in Egypt to protest the government’s law and policy of demolishing unregistered houses. The protests were met with unlawful force. On September 26, there were also protests in a village in Giza focused on economic concerns.

On November 19, 2020, EIPR said in a statement that security forces had arrested three of its members and employees. On the same day, judicial authorities added human rights defender and founder of the Adalah Center for Rights and Freedoms, Mohamed al-Baqer, to the “terrorist list” for five years, along with activist Alaa Abdelfatah and other opposition politicians. The arrests drew condemnation from human rights defenders and global leaders, including the U.S. Secretary of State, the British Foreign Office, the Canadian government, and leading UN bodies such as the UN Human Rights Council’s Special Rapporteur on Extrajudicial Killings and Executions and the UN Human Rights Commission. Many local Egyptian organizations and activists also joined in the campaign and on social media, a petition with the hashtags #FreeEIPRstaff and #FreeKarimEnnarah went viral. The international advocacy campaign induced celebrities such as Scarlett Johansson and Emma Thompson to post videos of themselves on YouTube urging the release of the EIPR staffers. As a result, on December 3, 2020, EIPR confirmed that all three men had been released from Tora jail.

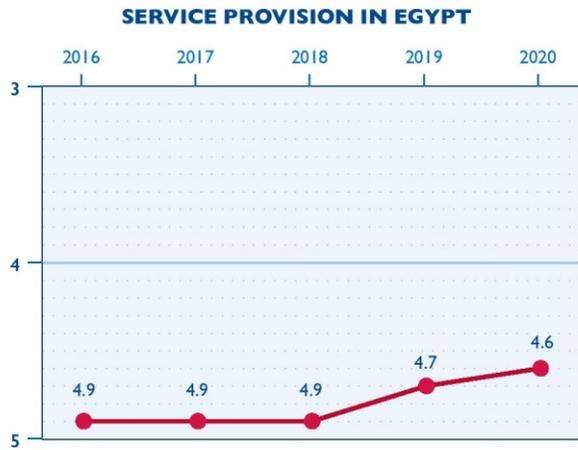
CSOs did not engage in any significant advocacy efforts in 2020 since Law 149 had already been ratified in 2019 and its executive regulations were yet to be announced by the government.

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## **SERVICE PROVISION: 4.6**

CSO service provision improved slightly in 2020. Given the urgency of the pandemic, many CSO services were focused on curbing the spread of COVID-19 throughout the year. For example, Misr El Kheir Foundation provided quarantine hospitals all over Egypt with medical supplies and PPE for doctors and nurses. The Egyptian Cure Bank launched an initiative, in partnership with the Federation of Egyptian Industries, called Repairing a Life-Saving Device. During the initiative’s first phase, 122 ventilators in more than thirty-one hospitals all over Egypt were overhauled and repaired. The Advance Society for Autism and Other Disabilities issued a set of instructions on how to communicate with non-verbal COVID-19 patients, which they distributed to hospitals.

The Egyptian Center for Women’s Rights conducted a study titled “NGOs’ Efforts to Support Women During the Pandemic,” which included a questionnaire that was completed by 100 NGOs from nineteen governorates. The questionnaire assessed the impact of the virus on NGOs’ ability to carry out their work and provide support to women. According to the survey results, NGOs played a vital role in combatting the effects of the pandemic through a number of activities such as raising and spreading awareness among the population by providing information about the virus and how to avoid being infected (77.6 percent of respondents), providing financial



support to the groups most affected by the pandemic (69 percent), providing psychosocial support (42.2 percent), providing beneficiaries with online training sessions in order to raise their skill sets (28 percent), providing legal support (14.7 percent), and recording the number of COVID-19 patients (11.2 percent).

CSOs also continued to provide services in other areas, such as skill building, education, and the care of persons with disabilities. Although these were provided to a smaller extent in 2020 than in previous years, many CSOs, particularly large ones, were able to adapt to the circumstances and provide services by adhering to social distancing measures and using digital platforms. For example, the Egyptian Center for Women’s Rights launched three online training courses on topics such as

establishing CSOs, political participation in local councils, and leadership skills. Another foundation, which preferred to remain anonymous, implemented a series of workshops to train female entrepreneurs on effective strategic planning in the business sector.

In North Sinai, Al Gora Community Development Association implemented the USAID-funded project Empowering Youth: Promoting Social Responsibility in Northern Sinai. This project aimed to promote the participation of youth in the public sphere, while developing their skills in certain fields such as entrepreneurship, leadership, and civil work, and designing and implementing local community-based youth initiatives. Through its cadres, partner CSOs, and executive agencies, the association was able to launch fourteen community-based youth initiatives during the year that addressed several challenges, including the spread of COVID-19, mental and physical health, youth empowerment, economic empowerment, and employment.

The goods and services that CSOs provide reflect the needs and priorities of their constituencies, which CSOs identify through their presence on the ground and direct communication with local communities. CSO services are generally provided without discrimination with regards to race, gender, religion, or ethnicity, as demonstrated in their efforts to address the COVID-19 pandemic.

The pandemic negatively impacted CSOs that rely on income-generating activities. However, some CSOs like Fair Trade Egypt and the Egyptian Foundation for Integrated Development – El Nidaa, promoted a variety of handmade products, as well as online shopping and home delivery alternatives, through their social media platforms. In October 2020, the Medium, Small, and Micro Enterprises Development Authority (MSMEDA) hosted the Our Heritage exhibition for the second consecutive year, which featured more than 600 projects and exhibitions, several of which included members of CSOs working in handicraft production.

In 2020, the Egyptian government maintained cooperative relationships with reputable, large-scale CSOs that aligned with its agenda, indicating the government’s acknowledgement of some CSOs’ ability to positively impact society, particularly through their efforts to limit the spread of COVID-19. The Public Authority for Health Care signed a protocol with the General Federation of NGOs with the aim of raising awareness about the virus and preventative measures needed to combat it, through which it provided in-kind support such as PPE.

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## SECTORAL INFRASTRUCTURE: 4.1

The infrastructure supporting the CSO sector improved slightly in 2020. Partnerships both within and between sectors expanded to ensure the implementation of activities, while technological advancements increased the availability of training opportunities for hundreds of CSOs.

In 2020, over thirty CSOs created online resource centers to support the development of other CSOs. The Gerhart Center at the American University in Cairo, for example, provided CSOs with training to develop the technical and management capacities of CSOs. Likewise, throughout the pandemic, Al Korra Foundation for Sustainable Development provided online training and support for CSO board members and leaders on topics such as project management, governance, community participation, and leadership.

Networking and cooperation within the CSO sector increased during 2020 as common interests arose. For instance, a partnership among several organizations, including Plan International, Egyptian Red Crescent, Scout, Sofara ‘Ambassadors of Voluntary Work’ NGO, Tanmiyet Watan Association, Coptic Evangelical Organization for Social Services (CEOSS), and MoSS’s Beena Initiative, was created to celebrate International Volunteers’ Day, which recognized the significant role played by volunteers throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.

Several CSOs provided online training courses, making such opportunities easier for CSOs to access. Some of these online trainings, such as the crisis management training offered by Al Korra Foundation for Sustainable Development, were free of charge. The Gerhart Center Webinar Series helped individuals working in CSOs to understand vital issues such as the United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals.

The Civil Society Organizations Forum under the National Council for Women (NCW), which is composed of eighty CSOs, provided training opportunities in addition to enhanced partnerships and networking between member CSOs. During 2020, NCW held thirty-one meetings that focused on identifying challenges faced by women, especially as a result of COVID-19. Topics of discussion included combatting violence against women, the importance of the media, confronting COVID-19 repercussions, and adapting to the age of digitization. NCW collaborated with the Arab Council for Childhood and Development (ACCD) to conduct a session to raise awareness of issues faced by women and children. This forum also used virtual sessions to discuss the role of CSOs in addressing the COVID-19 pandemic.

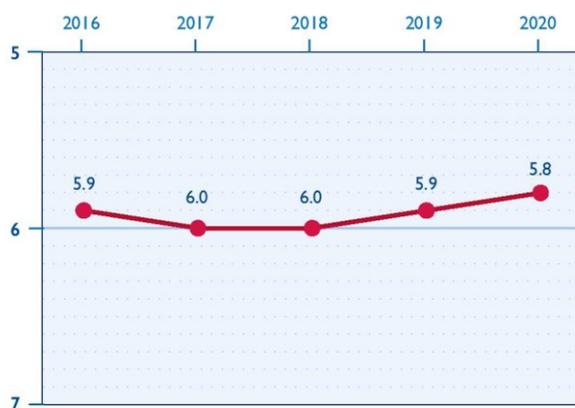
Intersectoral partnerships also increased in 2020 due to the interlinked missions and objectives imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic. For instance, Orange Egypt, Misr El Kheir Foundation, and Prime Speed Medical joined forces to provide hospitals with rapid COVID-19 testing kits. Similarly, the People of Egypt are Up to the Responsibility campaign was effective due to financial collaboration between the Arab African International Bank and Ahl Masr. Tanmiyet Watan Association created cooperative relations with public and private institutions. Working with the National Bank of Egypt, for example, it was able to offer entrepreneurs free feasibility studies, access to work incubators, as well as soft loans for SMEs. It also worked with the Aga Central Hospital in Daqahliya to ensure the provision of adequate COVID-19 related services under Hayah Karima (Dignified Life Initiative).

**SECTORAL INFRASTRUCTURE IN EGYPT**



## PUBLIC IMAGE: 5.8

**PUBLIC IMAGE IN EGYPT**



Overall, the public image of CSOs improved slightly in 2020. Media coverage and public perception of CSOs were, to some extent, more positive in 2020 than in the previous year, although only towards those CSOs that provided assistance to the public during the pandemic. Meanwhile, the government continued to block some independent news and human rights websites and detain activists and critics.

During 2020, the media provided positive coverage of CSOs’ efforts to mitigate the adverse effects of the pandemic. There were several advertisements—both paid and unpaid—on local and satellite television about the activities of CSOs such as Misr El Kheir Foundation and Resala Charitable Organization, as well as smaller associations that undertook initiatives to mitigate the

negative impact of the pandemic on local communities, such as the Mashrou Watan Association. These advertisements usually involved highlights and short clips about activities such as the distribution of masks and sanitizing supplies. On the other hand, more sensitive issues, such as women's rights and the arrest and detention of activists, received less attention in the local media. For example, although international media covered the arrests and detention of EIPR staff, the independent news and information website Al-Masry Al-Youm was one of the few local media outlets to report on the incident. The local website Mobtada also covered the issue but supported the government's position, stating that EIPR had "attacked the state under the pretext of human rights."

According to an online survey conducted as part of the CSO Sustainability Index process, 64 percent of respondents reported a significant or slight improvement in the perception of CSOs in 2020. This improvement is attributed to the increased visibility of CSOs in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The government's perceptions of CSOs that supported the Egyptian government's charitable efforts improved in 2020. This paved the way for further collaboration between the government and those CSOs willing to support its efforts. For example, various CSOs collaborated with MoSS on the Hayah Karima (Dignified Life) initiative that targeted the neediest villages across the country. The minister of MoSS also emphasized that "the advancement of society cannot take place without close partnership with NGOs." At the same time, the government continued to crack down on organizations that criticized its policies through a variety of means, including blocking their websites and detaining activists.

CSOs increasingly engaged in efforts to promote their organizational image in 2020. As people were forced to stay at home for parts of the year, CSOs made effective use of online campaigning and television advertisements to showcase their activities and efforts. For example, Resala Charitable Organization initiated an online campaign on social media and paid for satellite television coverage to highlight the Al Kheir Challenge, in which renowned celebrities recorded videos of themselves while social distancing at home and challenged one another to donate and sponsor families that had been negatively affected by COVID-19. These videos were uploaded on personal accounts on social media platforms such as Facebook and Instagram. According to Al Ahram online, within the first month of the campaign, 8,499 families were supported.

Article 67 of Law 149 requires CSOs to publish data about their activities. This has increased CSOs' transparency and allowed the public and media to learn more about their work.

# IRAQ

Capital: Baghdad  
Population: 39,650,145  
GDP per capita (PPP): \$10,881  
Human Development Index: Medium (0.674)  
Freedom in the World: Not free (29/100)

## OVERALL CSO SUSTAINABILITY: 4.6



Large-scale protests that began in November 2019 in Baghdad and the central and southern governorates continued in 2020. These grassroots protests were led largely by young, non-sectarian demonstrators who demanded improvements in the delivery of basic services, job opportunities for youth, a new election law, early elections, and the end to rampant government corruption. Some CSOs and civic activists played a major role in mobilizing the protesters and organizing the rallies. According to a report from the Carnegie Middle East Center, the demonstrations led to “the largest grassroots movement in Iraq’s modern history.” The demonstrations were met with violent attacks from anti-riot forces and unknown groups that, according to an Iraqi government spokesman, killed at least 560 demonstrators. The Commission for Human Rights in Iraq estimated that more than 10,000 were wounded while many others disappeared or were kidnapped.

The protests led to the prime minister’s resignation in November 2019 and the appointment of a temporary new prime minister, Mustafa al-Kadhimi, in May 2020. Demonstrators viewed the six-month delay in appointing the temporary government as evidence of the political corruption in the country. Following public pressure, Iraq’s parliament also approved significant changes to the election law, including a new redistricting plan and provisions allowing for the election of independent (i.e., not party-affiliated) candidates. However, elections were delayed until 2021. Other than these limited political changes, the demonstrators’ demands—which also expanded to include the disclosure of the names of those who killed demonstrators, the release of detainees, investigations into the cases of those who had been forcibly disappeared, and financial reparations to the victims’ families—were not met.

Meanwhile, the COVID-19 pandemic further exacerbated the socioeconomic conditions in the country. In the beginning of March, the Iraqi government imposed a full, nationwide lockdown to stop the spread of the COVID-19 virus. For three months, economic activity and social interaction came to a virtual halt. Markets and shops were closed, many people lost their jobs, and the poverty rate doubled, particularly among people who subsisted on daily wages. The Ministry of Health was unable to provide needed medical equipment, address the poor conditions of emergency and isolation rooms in the country’s hospitals, or supply basic protection and safety supplies against COVID-19 for medical workers or their patients.

The lockdown reduced access to employment opportunities, directly impacting nearly every household and forcing families to resort to coping strategies such as borrowing money or purchasing less expensive food items in order to meet their most basic needs. As the state failed to provide any financial support to mitigate the economic impact of the pandemic, CSOs, youth groups, and charitable institutions launched a series of humanitarian relief efforts that served as a lifeline for the beleaguered Iraqi population. According to the UNICEF Iraq 2020

Displacement Crisis Humanitarian Situation Report, the number of those in need of humanitarian assistance jumped to 2.4 million in 2020-21 from 1.8 million the previous year.

During the lockdown and extended stay-at-home requirements, there was an increase in the number of domestic violence cases, some of which resulted in suicides or murders. For example, a man in Karbala Governorate killed his four sons, and a man in Najaf Governorate burned his wife to death. Despite such troubling incidents, a draft law to combat domestic violence continued to languish in the Council of Representatives (COR), Iraq's parliament.

The Iraqi Kurdistan Region (IKR) is an autonomous region within Iraq governed by the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG). As in the rest of the country, COVID-19 exacerbated what was already a severe economic crisis in the region. Furthermore, the central government in Baghdad refused to disburse the region's budget allocation in 2020 after KRG authorities failed to hand over a share of locally generated oil revenue to the central authorities. As a result, state employees in IKR received only partial salaries from the regional government, which further exacerbated the financial uncertainty within the region. Unlike other parts of the country, demonstrations did not take place in IKR at the end of 2019 and early 2020 largely due to the region's preemptive crackdown on freedom of expression. While the region's Journalism Law No. 35 of 2007 states that "no journalist may be arrested except with the approval of the Kurdistan Press Syndicate or its representative," many individuals and journalists were arrested in May in the city of Dohuk simply for registering to hold a protest to highlight the fact that the government had not paid salaries to government employees, including teachers, since February 2020.

The overall sustainability of the CSO sector did not change in 2020. As CSOs faced new reporting requirements, the overall legal environment governing CSOs deteriorated slightly. While funding for COVID-19 activities increased, the sector's financial viability diminished due to an overall decrease in international funding, which made it difficult for CSOs to cover their core costs. Advocacy also deteriorated slightly, with many advocacy initiatives failing to have any impact, as access to legislators and communication with the government deteriorated. At the same time, organizational capacity and service provision both improved as CSOs took the lead in reaching out to new constituents and provided relief services to the public during the pandemic. CSOs' public image also improved slightly due to their increased visibility in responding to the pandemic and the media's subsequent interest in covering their activities. Sectoral infrastructure remained largely unchanged.

Registered non-governmental organizations (NGOs) constitute the majority of entities within Iraq's civil society sector, which also includes trade unions and research centers. As of the end of 2020, 4,620 NGOs were registered with the NGO Directorate in the federal government, 151 of which were newly registered during the year. In IKR, approximately 5,300 NGOs are registered, although figures were not available as to how many of these were newly registered in 2020. The majority of registered organizations in both federal Iraq and IKR are considered inactive and thus have no real impact on the ground. In addition, unregistered youth entities and coalitions constitute an important part of Iraqi civil society. These informal, grassroots groups generally provide small-scale relief efforts at the community level, often with funding from local groups. Some of these youth initiatives lack the institutional capacity to establish formal organizations, while others do not wish to register in order to avoid the bureaucratic procedures that this would entail.

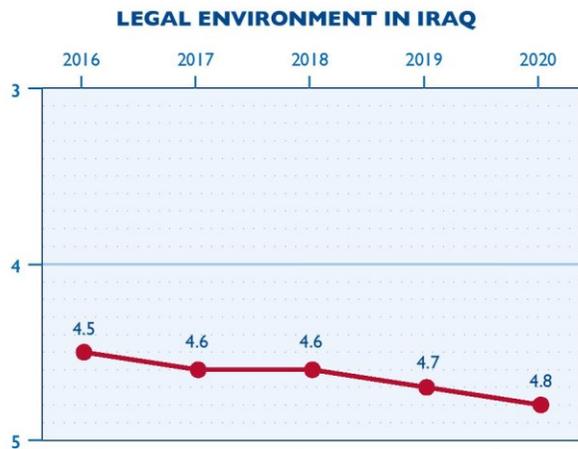
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## LEGAL ENVIRONMENT: 4.8

The legal environment governing CSOs deteriorated slightly in 2020 due largely to increased oversight and harassment of CSOs.

Article 39/1 of the Iraqi constitution guarantees the right to form associations. Law No. 12 of 2010 and its implementing instructions remained unchanged in 2020 and continued to serve as the basic legal framework for CSO operations in Iraq. On the federal level, the NGO Directorate in the Council of Ministers General Secretariat (COMSEC) oversees the implementation of Law No. 12, as well as the registration procedures and relations between CSOs and the government. In IKR, the Law on Non-Governmental Organizations (Law 1 of 2011) continues to govern NGOs operating in areas under the control of KRG, while the Kurdish NGO Directorate (housed in the region's Council of Ministers) remains in charge of implementing the law.

The process of registering is burdensome and time-consuming. According to the NGO Directorate, the average registration time is between three and four months. CSOs registered in IKR must additionally register in federal Iraq to operate in areas governed by the federal government. While in principle Kurdish Law No. 1 allows for



federally-registered NGOs to automatically be considered registered in IKR, in practice, these NGOs must officially notify the Kurdish NGO Directorate in order to operate in IKR through a process that is essentially the same as the registration process.

Some national and local directives were issued in 2020 that limit the freedom of CSOs to operate and highlight a dangerous shift in the nature of interventions and requirements developed outside the framework of the law. On July 5, 2020, for example, the National Operations Center (NOC), which coordinates security matters, and the prime minister's office issued Letter No. 372/2 requiring the United Nations (UN) mission and all other international organizations working in Iraq to seek an assessment from the NGO Directorate about the

financial and legal status of any local organization before contracting with it. The letter indicated that a registration certificate is no longer sufficient proof of a local organization's legal status. Rather, the NGO Directorate should verify the financial and legal status of all CSOs every three months. However, no instructions or criteria were provided as to what constitutes a legally and financially sound organization. The NGO Directorate's responses to requests for assessment were often slow. As a result, many local organizations reported that they experienced delays in signing contracts, while some lost grants entirely due to the drawn-out procedures. The Al-Taqwa Association for Women in Basra Governorate, for example, reported that it lost many projects during the year as a result of this requirement after the NGO Directorate requested that the organization's bank freeze its account as the organization had allegedly not fulfilled its financial reporting requirements.

With the support of USAID, many provincial governments established new CSO Offices in 2020 to oversee the work of local CSOs. This complicated the legal and administrative requirements for CSOs, since there was often a conflict between the role of these offices and that of the federal government's NGO Directorate. Many organizations were forced to go through sometimes identical assessments with the central NGO Directorate and the local governments' CSO Offices, and it was unclear which took precedence. In Babil Governorate, for example, the new CSO Office requested that local organizations not communicate with the NGO Directorate in Baghdad and instead inform the NGO Directorate that this office was now the only official body allowed to oversee CSOs' affairs in the region. In Diyala, the CSO Office requested that organizations renew their work permits every three months. In addition, organizations operating in disputed areas in Diyala were forced to obtain additional local work approvals from both IKR officials in Erbil and federal authorities in Baghdad before they could engage in any activities. In Maysan, the governor issued a decree that all local organizations must present their projects and budgets for approval directly to him.

Freedom of movement was significantly impacted in 2020. Due to security issues in the country, CSOs were required to obtain official access letters to move throughout federal Iraq. However, following the federal government's suspension of the national-level mechanism to authorize CSO access in late November 2019, there was no formal process for organizations to receive these letters for most of 2020. By late September 2020, the NGO Directorate began to issue some access letters. According to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) Humanitarian Access Severity Overview (November 2020), however, in October 2020, 47 percent of conflict-affected districts in north and central Iraq still showed moderate to high levels of access difficulties, including armed actors, checkpoints, lack of security, administrative barriers, or other impediments. By November 2020, more regular issuance of access authorizations had resumed, though some governorate-level Operations Commands, particularly in Kirkuk and western Ninewa, were still demanding separate authorizations.

Visa policy affected the work of international CSOs in 2020. In February, the CSO visa application and renewal process for federal Iraq was suspended by a decree from the prime minister, with visas only being issued to diplomats and UN staff. This forced many international CSOs to adopt a remote management system for their programming in federal Iraq, primarily from the IKR capital of Erbil. In July 2020, a survey of NGOs conducted by the NGO Coordination Committee for Iraq (NCCI) indicated there were 561 aid workers in immediate need of visas, which was expected to increase to 930 by the end of 2020 if the visa process was not reinstated. In

September 2020, USAID began receiving reports from partners that some visas were being issued, though it took several months before this happened regularly again. The visa process for IKR was also suspended for several months in 2020.

CSOs were subject to significant state harassment in 2020. Several civil activists, including Tahseen Al-Shahmani and Riam Yaqoub, were assassinated, while other activists, professors, and journalists known for being in opposition to the government, including Sajad Al Iraqi, Majid Al-Dhafiri, Qutaiba al-Sudani, Abd al-Masih Romeo Sarkis, Osama Al-Tamimi, Mazen Latif, and Tawfiq Al-A-Tamimi, were kidnapped. Many believe that the perpetrators of these crimes have ties to the government or militia forces. CSOs often faced additional scrutiny from the Iraqi National Security Service, which closely monitors the work of local organizations and verifies their papers. For example, the National Security Service visited Al-Taqwa in Basra Governorate on a monthly basis and requested all of its legal documents, including those related to its workers and beneficiaries, thereby violating confidentiality and privacy principles. The National Security Service also asked the NGO Directorate to provide a list of the names of all organizations that issued reports on alleged violations during the demonstrations, and then placed these organizations under additional surveillance. For example, the government security services paid frequent visits to the Iraqi Al-Amal Association allegedly for criticizing the security forces' role during the demonstrations. The Joint Operations Command, also, impeded the work of CSOs through its own security measures and prevented aid and relief services from reaching beneficiaries in the liberated areas, under the pretext that this aid might also reach ISIS families.

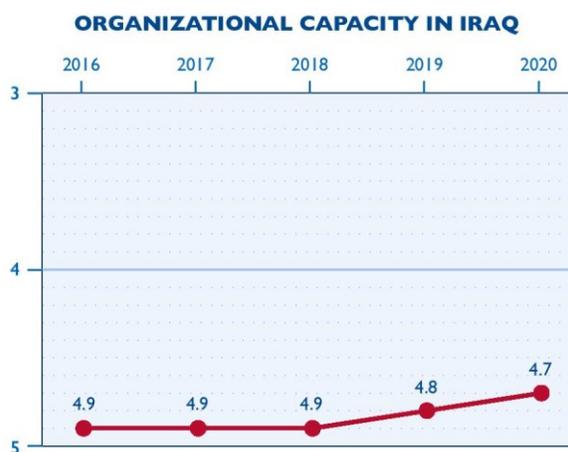
NGOs are legally allowed to compete for government contracts, receive foreign funding, and engage in fundraising campaigns. Neither Federal Law No. 12 nor Kurdish Law No. 1 clearly specify whether registered NGOs can generate income for their nonprofit purposes. In practice, NGOs are not prevented from generating income, although few do so.

Tax policies affecting CSOs remained unchanged in 2020. In federal Iraq, only NGOs with a “public utility” purpose are exempt from income tax, value-added tax (VAT), customs duties, and sales tax. NGOs must apply to the Council of Ministers to obtain public utility status. NGOs in IKR are not required to pay tax on their income or property. According to representatives of the Kurdish NGO Directorate, this policy has led some private companies to request registration as NGOs. NGOs in IKR are obliged to pay income tax for their employees every three months if the employees fail to do so; a lack of compliance may result in cancellation of their registration.

Local organizations still do not have access to legal experts or lawyers trained in the laws that affect them. Most CSOs lack sufficient legal knowledge or are simply too afraid to file any lawsuit or complaint against the NGO Directorate. CSOs are concerned that any such effort would negatively affect their registration and funding given the NGO Directorate's increasing oversight of their operations.

## ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY: 4.7

The organizational capacity of national and local CSOs improved slightly in 2020, driven by an improvement in CSOs' abilities to assess the needs of and build relationships with their target groups. As part of their active response to the COVID-19 crisis, many local organizations supported the Ministry of Health's outreach efforts by providing relief aid and medical services, including sanitation materials and masks, while also raising public awareness about the pandemic. Through these efforts, CSOs proactively engaged in outreach to various sectors of society that they had not reached previously. By responding to society's needs during the lockdown period, they also gained more experience in networking with each other and coordinating their activities with a variety of groups, such as tribal sheikhs, as well as religious and academic



institutions. At the same time, many organizations still lack databases of their stakeholders and beneficiaries. Generally speaking, only larger organizations with more expertise maintain integrated databases of clear target groups, while newer organizations often still lack a clear sense of their constituents.

Few national and local organizations in federal Iraq or IKR have strategic plans. Instead, most organizations adjust their activities according to the shifting priorities of donors and the types of projects they offer. However, in 2020, a few organizations, including Bent Al-Rafedain Organization (BROB) and Sawa Organization for Human Rights in federal Iraq, and the Rwanga Foundation and Public Aid Organization (PAO) in IKR, were able to adjust their strategic plans and programs in light of the new reality on the ground.

Most national and local organizations continue to lack specific and clear democratic governance structures. There is still confusion between the roles of administrative and governing bodies, and many organizations lack financial and human resources policies as well as internal rules and regulations.

Many CSOs rely on funding from international donors to support staff salaries. Despite the suspension of work during the lockdown, many local organizations were able to continue covering the salaries of their employees through funded projects. However, after these projects ended, most organizations were no longer able to retain their staff.

There has been remarkable development in gender mainstreaming in recent years, with many organizations showing an eagerness for women to take on more leadership roles. According to local CSO experts, this has allowed the share of women and girls to reach almost 50 percent of the total number of staff in many organizations.

The number of volunteers increased significantly in 2020. However, the public's interest in participating in CSO activities and volunteering varies according to geography, customs, and traditions. In some areas, such as Basra, CSOs find it difficult to recruit volunteers, especially females, as residents equate CSOs with the former women's and students' trade unions, which were widespread but unpopular under the previous regime. In other regions, such as Najaf, Babil, and Anbar, the number of young people interested in volunteering in youth organizations and coalitions increased significantly in 2020. These volunteers played a major role in the humanitarian response efforts.

Internet usage in the country has grown significantly over the past year. According to the Digital Media Center, "Iraq recorded 30 million Internet users or 75 percent of the country's citizens during 2020," indicating growth of 11 million users within a single year. CSOs generally have easy access to the internet. During the lockdown, CSOs developed expertise in working remotely and developing mechanisms to communicate with and reach out to their beneficiaries through the use of online resources. Most organizations started using virtual platforms, such as Zoom, to hold meetings, trainings, workshops, and seminars. Many groups also used Facebook and WhatsApp both as a means of communicating with their beneficiaries during the lockdown and as advocacy tools for disseminating information and organizing signature-gathering campaigns. For example, the Gender-Responsive Crisis Room used these digital tools in its Safe Return is a Right for Every Displaced Person campaign, while the Iraqi Women's Network made use of social media in its campaign on the National Initiative to Support the October Uprising. In cases where internet connectivity was a problem, CSOs maintained regular contact with their constituents via mobile phones.

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## **FINANCIAL VIABILITY: 5.6**

CSOs' financial viability deteriorated slightly in 2020, mainly due to a decrease in foreign funding. There are no notable differences in financial viability between CSOs in federal Iraq and IKR.

CSOs continue to rely on foreign funding as their main source of financial support. Neither the federal government nor the KRG provided CSOs with any funding in 2020. Most organizations do not have any commercial projects that are able to contribute financially to their activities or programs.

According to the UN's Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA's) Financial Tracking Services (FTS), foreign funding for humanitarian assistance reported by partners and donors in Iraq amounted to approximately \$615 million in 2020, down from roughly \$689 million in 2019. Much, but not all of this funding,



goes to CSOs. This figure does not include funding outside of the humanitarian aid sector, for which there is no consolidated information available.

Given the importance of foreign funding for CSOs in the country, this decrease greatly affected the work of local organizations. Some organizations, such as the Southern Youth Organization, were unable to obtain any funding during the year and instead relied on volunteers to implement their programs. Some of the funding that was available was focused exclusively on dealing with the pandemic, while other funds were reallocated to address the crisis. Donors have stressed the fact that CSOs must adapt their fundraising strategies to find other, more sustainable sources of funding as humanitarian funding continues to decrease in line with decreased

humanitarian needs.

In previous years, CSOs in some parts of the country benefited significantly from so-called social benefit funds, donations typically provided by large companies in the oil and telecommunications industries. By 2020, however, a number of governorates had taken control of these funds, allocating the money to entities other than CSOs. In Kirkuk, for example, the social benefit funds went to the government or political bodies supported by the government. In Karbala, CSOs received little support from private sector companies in 2020; instead, local organizations there relied primarily on volunteer work and non-cash donations for their survival.

Some organizations that offer humanitarian services, such as caring for orphans and providing health and relief services to needy families, traditionally rely upon donations from businessmen and philanthropists. In 2020, these organizations witnessed a significant decrease in those donations due to COVID-19 and the deteriorating economic conditions in the country.

As a result of the pandemic and the worsening economic climate, there was also a significant decrease in the number of fundraising campaigns carried out by CSOs in 2020. The few contributions that were made were primarily of symbolic value and contributed little to CSOs' overall level of funding. The only fundraising campaigns that proved to be somewhat successful were those led by CSOs in response to the pandemic with the approval of local governments.

In contrast to previous years, in 2020 local organizations earned virtually no revenue from the services or products they provided, most likely as a result of the pandemic and the ensuing economic crisis. Local companies do not usually contract CSOs to provide services such as training and consultations.

National and local CSOs still have weak financial management capacities. Most national and local CSOs do not have electronic financial management systems. Although many organizations are subject to annual external audits and are required to send their reports to the NGO Directorate, they prefer not to publish these reports for fear of being subject to accusations of being foreign agents for accepting foreign funding or blackmail by armed factions or other groups.

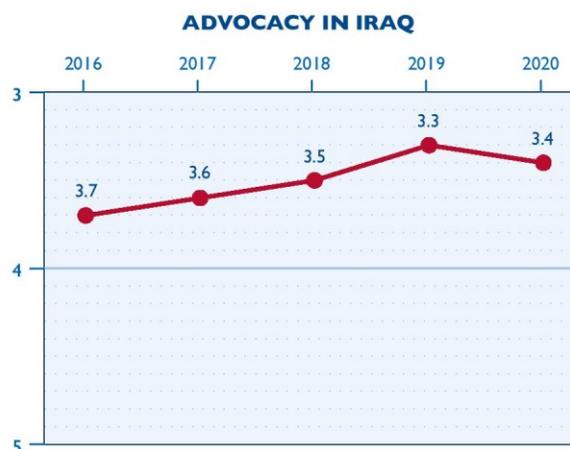
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## ADVOCACY: 3.4

CSO advocacy declined slightly in 2020. Although there were a few successful campaigns, other key initiatives—such as the campaign to adopt the proposed Law on Protection against Domestic Violence—failed to make any headway. In addition, access to legislators deteriorated as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, while the tension stemming from the demonstrations hindered communication with legislators.

CSOs engaged in a few successful advocacy campaigns in 2020, including efforts to stop the information technology crime law and amend the election law. The information technology crime law (also known as the cybercrimes law) would have significantly restricted freedom of expression by allowing Iraqi authorities to harshly punish expression they deem as a threat to governmental, social, or religious interests. The campaign against the information technology crime law was supported by a group of organizations led by the Iraqi Human Rights Watch Association

and included a series of targeted meetings with the Iraqi parliament, as well as select parliamentarians in Najaf, Diwaniyah, and Baghdad. The campaign emphasized how the draft law directly violated the basic tenets of freedom of expression guaranteed by the Iraqi Constitution and warned that it could be used as a repressive tool against journalists and bloggers. As a result of this ongoing pressure, the bill was withdrawn from further legislative review following its first reading in parliament. In another effort, the country's electoral law was revised as a result of public pressure through the demonstrations at the beginning of the year. The new law divides the country into eighteen voting districts, while also seeking to end political party domination by allowing for the election of independent political candidates. To lobby for the law, CSOs mobilized public opinion on the importance of changing the law, organized workshops, and used social media to promote alternative policies. On the local level, CSOs in Karbala successfully persuaded the local government to provide financial support to the Karbala Cancer Center.



In IKR, the Rwanda Foundation has been leading an ongoing campaign to get the government to provide employees from private companies with the same social security benefits as those received by employees working for government institutions. The campaign will likely continue into 2021.

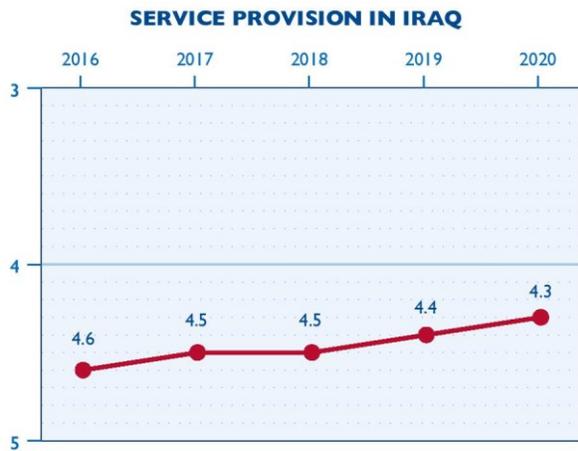
On the other hand, CSOs' advocacy efforts calling for the passage of the Law on Protection from Domestic Violence in early 2020 were unsuccessful. While a number of recommendations from CSOs and the international community—including provisions on services and protection mechanisms for victims of domestic violence—were included in the draft law, the bill's passage has been stalled as some COR members are reluctant to take on what they see as largely internal family matters, while some Islamic political parties in the COR state that the law violates the basic tenets of their faith. While there is no information as to when the first reading might take place, some organizations remain hopeful it will be raised by the parliament in 2021, as the topic has since elicited a great deal of discussion and debate within Iraqi society.

The Safe Return is a Right for Every Displaced Person campaign, which was launched by the Gender-Responsive Crisis Room and supported by a number of other local and international CSOs, faced a lack of cooperation from key government officials in 2020. The campaign called upon the government to ensure that internally displaced people (IDPs) only be returned to their respective homes if the conditions are safe. Despite this, many IDPs were sent back under unsafe conditions. Organizations working with IDPs also faced criticism from both the government and local residents, who often blamed the IDPs for fomenting unrest and being sympathetic towards ISIS.

Protests continued to be organized throughout the year, calling attention to the government's inability to provide basic services, a problem exacerbated by the pandemic. The first wave of protests began on October 1, 2019, and, after a brief break, continued in sporadic intervals throughout 2020. The demonstrations were notable for the sheer volume and diversity of protesters, who represent many different classes and segments from Iraqi society including religious and sectarian groups, as well as strong representation from women and local communities from all over the country. CSOs and civil society activists participated in these demonstrations and organized some events and activities during the protests. As noted above, the violent security response to the protests resulted in a significant number of casualties and injuries, while others were kidnapped, detained, or disappeared. The government's failure to properly investigate these incidents, despite continuing promises by the new prime minister, further increased many Iraqis' dissatisfaction with the government.

CSOs did not make any efforts to advocate for an improved legal environment for the CSO sector in 2020. Some organizations are concerned that attempts to amend the existing laws could result in the passage of even more restrictive laws.

## SERVICE PROVISION: 4.3



In 2020, CSOs in both federal Iraq and IKR stepped up and provided much needed services to the population. According to statistics from the NGO Directorate, nearly 920 organizations provided relief services to citizens in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, including food and cash assistance as well as medical and protection services and hygiene support to IDPs.

CSOs provide a variety of services in the fields of humanitarian relief, health care, education, the environment, and psychosocial and legal support. During the demonstrations at the beginning of 2020, some organizations provided legal support to activists and demonstrators who were arrested. Given the pandemic-related restrictions, some CSOs developed new methods of providing services, such as communicating

with beneficiaries by phone and organizing meetings and other activities through applications such as Zoom and Microsoft Teams.

The volume of relief services provided by CSOs increased in 2020 in response to people's greater need for them. Support for these relief efforts was often provided through donations from local communities, in which case CSOs played the role of facilitator and mediator between the local community and the beneficiaries. At the same time, some services traditionally provided by CSOs, including those focused on economic empowerment, vocational training, and capacity building, decreased in 2020 as a result of the pandemic.

Many CSOs attempt to adapt the services they provide to meet the needs of their communities based on their assessments of the gaps and areas that need to be filled. During the pandemic, several organizations launched field surveys and electronic questionnaires to assess needs, especially of women and girls affected by the pandemic and those who were threatened by domestic violence. In some cases, these studies became references for other local organizations to determine what services they might be able to provide to their target groups. For example, a study prepared by the Women's Leadership Institute that assessed the impact of the pandemic on women and girls in five governorates led to successful interventions by other CSOs, including the provision of remote gender-specific psychosocial support services.

During the lockdown, there was a significant increase in domestic violence against women and children, which prompted CSOs specializing in women's issues and domestic violence to find new methods to communicate with and provide services to women and children. The UN Development Programme worked in partnership with five women's organizations to provide remote psychosocial support through online platforms in all governorates in Iraq. In 2020, BROB produced two innovative local training guides in Arabic: one focused on raising awareness of gender-based violence among men and the other focused on women. The guides were produced with the assistance of volunteers and self-funding efforts.

According to OCHA's January 28, 2020, Status Report: Humanitarian Access Letters, a survey conducted in January 2020 found that at least 2.2 million people in Iraq who were in need of humanitarian assistance were negatively affected by the difficulties CSOs faced in getting official letters authorizing them to move throughout the country. As a result, nearly 4,000 missions that were planned to distribute aid and support services were canceled over a two-month period. While many organizations found workarounds, including implementation by local staff, governorate-level access permissions, and COVID-19 movement exemptions for life-saving humanitarian assistance, roughly 88 percent of CSOs surveyed by OCHA in mid-September indicated that the lack of access letters had seriously impeded their operations.

While the law allows CSOs to generate income for their non-profit purposes, most organizations still provide their services free of charge, through projects and programs funded by donors or by raising funds from local communities.

Central and local governments recognized the important role CSOs played in responding to the pandemic. The NGO Directorate in Baghdad issued letters of thanks to 491 organizations—including the Al-Khair Humanitarian Organization, the Sumer Organization, the Blood Plasma Campaign, and the Rwanga Foundation—that contributed to crisis relief efforts by distributing food baskets, providing health-care facilities with needed medical equipment, and engaging in public awareness campaigns. Local governments often depended on CSOs to respond to the pandemic and issued them official internal domestic travel books to facilitate their work and movement during the lockdown.

## SECTORAL INFRASTRUCTURE: 5.0

The infrastructure supporting the CSO sector did not change in 2020.

The most important intermediary support organization (ISO) in the country is NCCI in Baghdad. There are no ISOs in IKR.

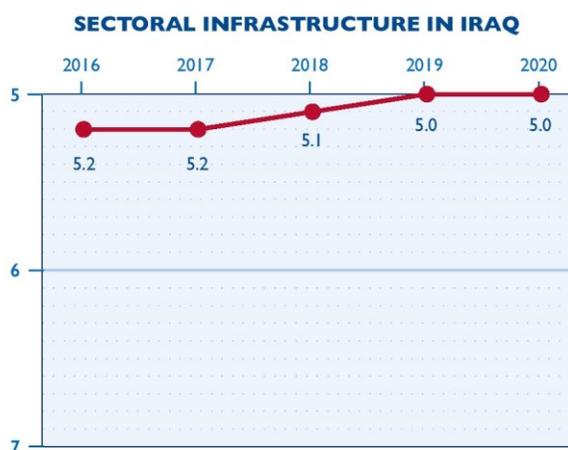
In 2020, some organizations, such as the Iraqi Al-Amal Association and BROB, used foreign funding to provide small grants ranging from \$500 to \$1,000 to newly formed youth coalitions for community-building initiatives. Other than these isolated examples, there are no local grant-making organizations that support the work of CSOs on the local level.

Some existing networks and alliances, such as the Iraqi Women's Network, the 1325 Resolution Alliance, the Iraqi Network for Education, the Iraqi Network for the 1325 Resolution, and the Sustainable Development Network (TM), continued their work in 2020. In addition, a group of female leaders of women's organizations came together to form the Gender-Responsive Crisis Room during the year. In IKR, the Partnership for Finding a Balanced Way regarding Social Security for Civil Sector Workers—which includes the Rwanga Foundation, Barzani Charitable Foundation, Kurdistan Human Rights Watch Organization, Civil Development Organization, and Harikar Organization—came together to advocate to provide benefits to CSO employees.

Some local organizations, such as BROB, the Iraqi Al-Amal Association, and the Sawa Organization for Human Rights, have specialized trainers on their staff who provide training to other organizations in specialized fields. These range from basic trainings on internal management issues to sessions on how to provide psychological support or raise awareness of international mechanisms for human rights. Traditionally, most training events are organized in larger cities such as Baghdad, Erbil, and Sulaymaniyah, due to the availability of hotels, training rooms, and large restaurants. Most training materials are available in Arabic, but not in Kurdish.

Overall, training opportunities for CSOs were reduced in 2020 due to the COVID-19 restrictions. However, local organizations also developed new methods of providing training online giving them the ability to reach larger and more diverse groups than they otherwise would have been able to reach. For example, BROB provided numerous training programs in the field of project management and remote psychosocial support to dozens of workers specializing in this field. Sawa Organization for Human Rights provided training to eighty CSOs on international human rights mechanisms. In addition, some CSO staff members were able to take part remotely in regional and international professional development training programs to increase their competencies in specific fields.

CSOs and their networks continued to form partnerships with different sectors in 2020. Al-Taqwa Association in Basra cooperates with the Department of Women Empowerment in the prime minister's office on the implementation of the agenda for women, security, and peace in the southern governorates. In IKR, KRG authorities, together with the UN, brought together companies, CSOs, and academics to draft Vision 2030, the regional strategic plan. The plan incorporates the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and identifies key reforms in areas such as service delivery; democratic, economic, and financial development; and human rights.



## PUBLIC IMAGE: 4.7



The public image of CSOs in federal Iraq and IKR improved slightly in 2020 due to the increased visibility of the extensive relief services provided by local organizations in response to COVID-19. At the same time, disinformation efforts by some partisan media outlets prevented a more significant improvement in the score for this dimension.

In 2020, Iraqi organizations were able to develop good working relationships with the media, which highlighted the services they provided, particularly in terms of pandemic relief. Many CSOs also invited the media to participate in advocacy campaigns they launched. For example, both male and female media figures from various governorates took part in the Safe Return is the Right of Every Displaced Person campaign developed by

the Gender-Responsive Crisis Room.

Many media outlets were eager to interview civic activists in 2020, especially regarding their role in providing relief and health services during the pandemic. However, regional media outlets varied in their work with CSOs, based on the geographical regions and the types of issues they covered. In Basra, for example, some journalists used pictures of CSO representatives posing with the German ambassador to label them as foreign agents, which increased the risks these organizations faced. In addition, partisan media outlets controlled by various political parties attempted to distort the image of civil society, especially after the Iraqi demonstrations, as they hosted figures who spread disinformation about the movement and issued reports accusing the organizations of being agents aiming to sabotage the political process in Iraq.

Much of the population believes that the main role of CSOs is to provide relief services. Therefore, the significant role that CSOs played during the year in assisting various groups in society, including IDPs, returnees, and those affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, helped improve the public's perception of civil society. On the other hand, people who were not direct beneficiaries of the aid or services that CSOs provided had a more pessimistic view and believed that these organizations fell short of their goals.

According to a public survey conducted by BROB in 2020, 47.8 percent of respondents believed that CSOs had the ability to address important issues impacting Iraqi society during the year. Of those polled, 41.1 percent agreed that CSOs had played a major role in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic by providing economic and financial relief, raising awareness about the pandemic, and supporting the work of the Ministry of Health. More than half (51.1 percent) agreed that CSOs played an important role in meeting the needs of society during the year. At the same time, nearly half of respondents (47.8 percent) thought that the threat of violence and limitations on CSOs' freedom in 2020 negatively impacted their ability to participate as actively as they would have preferred or otherwise done. Many of those surveyed also agreed that CSOs would be able to work more effectively if they developed their skills and capabilities in management, organizational planning, networking, and fundraising.

Government perceptions of civil society improved in 2020 as a result of CSOs' efforts to support society after the outbreak of COVID-19. This was demonstrated by the increasing number of government departments—particularly health institutions—requesting support from CSOs to fill gaps in their own response. The private sector's perception of civil society improved slightly in 2020 but is still largely undeveloped. Businesses in IKR seem to have a more positive perception of CSOs than those in federal Iraq, and there were some examples of businesses and CSOs in the region collaborating and the private sector disbursing some funds to CSOs to implement activities.

Given the pandemic and related restrictions on movement, CSOs relied heavily on social media to publicize their activities, advocate for their respective positions, and promote their programs and projects throughout the year.

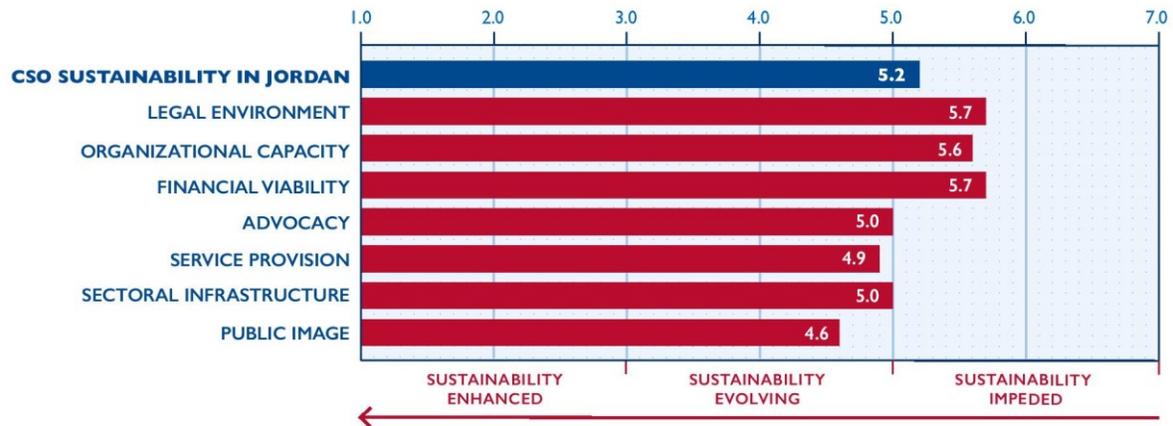
Larger, more experienced organizations possess codes of conduct and publish annual reports about their programs and activities, but, for the most part, these CSOs only make financial reports available internally and to their

donors. Smaller CSOs, on the other hand, generally take part in community accountability activities only when they are part of a larger coalition of organizations.

# JORDAN

Capital: Amman  
Population: 10,909,567  
GDP per capita (PPP): \$10,071  
Human Development Index: High (0.729)  
Freedom in the World: Not Free (34/100)

## OVERALL CSO SUSTAINABILITY: 5.2



In 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic shaped social, political, and economic events in Jordan with the virus claiming over 3,000 lives during the year. The government issued numerous decrees and restrictions to mitigate the health risks associated with the virus and manage the crisis. These decisions negatively impacted both the economy and human rights, in particular the freedoms of expression and association.

The country registered its first case of COVID-19 in March. On March 17, 2020, the government declared an official state of emergency, thereby activating Defense Law 13 of 1992 for the first time. Defense Law 13 provided the government with sweeping powers to pass further measures (known as Defense Orders) to address the growing COVID-19 crisis. For example, Defense Order No. 2 prohibited movement and travel in all regions and cities of the country, while Defense Order No. 16 banned all social gatherings that exceeded twenty people. Defense Order No. 8 made it illegal to spread any news or information about the pandemic that would “cause panic.” Defense Order No. 6 regulated labor rights during the pandemic and allowed employers to reduce their employees’ full-time salaries by up to 20 percent for July and August 2020 to help keep key businesses and organizations open. This multitude of laws and orders gave the authorities the pretext to further crack down on CSOs, even in cases where such restrictions were not mandated by law.

Restrictions were slowly eased by late August. However, after the country faced a sharp uptick in new cases in October 2020, the government once again instituted nightly and weekend curfews and strengthened the penalties, including fines and imprisonment, for refusing to abide by the ban on social gatherings.

The government provided cash and in-kind assistance to families impacted by the crisis. As part of these efforts, the government launched the Himmat Watan Fund (A Nation’s Effort) to receive donations from the private sector and individuals to support the country’s efforts to combat the COVID-19 crisis and mitigate its repercussions. Some of the collected funds were used to provide cash assistance to day laborers affected by the lockdown. The Central Bank also provided funding to cover operating costs for small and medium-sized companies most impacted by the crisis.

Public freedoms and civil liberties, including the freedoms of expression and assembly, declined significantly in 2020, as the government used the pandemic as an excuse to crack down on these rights. The Secretary General of the Jordanian Democratic Popular Unity Party, Saeed Thyab, was detained for seven days following the publication of his article about Jordan’s alleged political and economic dependency on the West. In July, the Court of Cassation, the highest judicial authority in Jordan, legally dissolved the Muslim Brotherhood for failing to rectify its legal status under Jordanian law. Jordanian cartoonist Emad Hajjaj was arrested but later released on bail after the State Security Court charged him with “disturbing relations with a friendly state” for publishing a cartoon critical of the

Israel-United Arab Emirates (UAE) normalization agreement. In a similar case, the government arrested the executive director of the Islamic Action Front Party's central election committee, Badi al-Rafiah, on charges of "insulting the president of a friendly state" (i.e., Egyptian President Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi) for a post he had published years ago on social media. In an unprecedented move, the Amman Magistrates Court issued a decision dissolving the Teachers' Syndicate and imprisoning its council members for a year. The court's decision followed the Syndicate's demand for a pay hike that was agreed upon with the government in October 2019 but had remained unfulfilled.

Jordan faced an economic crisis in 2020, with public debt exceeding the country's gross domestic product. As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, unemployment rates reached a record high, spiking to 23 percent by the second quarter of 2020. The rising unemployment rates encouraged the government of Prime Minister Omar Al Razzaz to reactivate mandatory military service. However, the conscription was rescinded in October, when King Abdullah II appointed his advisor, Bisher Al Khasawneh, to form a new government in order to tackle the growing challenges facing the country.

The parliamentary elections in November were controversial given that the government offered no options for early or remote voting despite the health risks posed by the pandemic. The Washington Post described the election as "one of the least democratic in the country's recent history." According to the Civil Coalition for Monitoring Elections and the Performance of Elected Councils (Rased), fifty-one cases of corruption and vote buying were reported to the government security services and the prosecutor's office. Voter turnout was a dismal 29 percent and some of the country's political parties failed to reach the minimum threshold needed to maintain their positions in parliament. The minister of the interior resigned out of "moral responsibility" after the King admonished people for gathering to celebrate and protest the election results in violation of the government-imposed lockdown.

In this context, overall CSO sustainability deteriorated moderately, with decreases recorded in all dimensions.

As of the end of 2020, there were a total of 6,808 societies registered with the Ministry of Social Development (MoSD) under the Law on Societies 51 of 2008. During 2020, 174 societies were newly registered, while 166 were dissolved. Some organizations registered as civil, non-profit companies with the Company Control Department of the Ministry of Industry Trade and Supplies (MOITS) to avoid the countless government approvals that societies must seek to register and operate. According to data from 2015, there were around 600 civil, non-profit companies registered at MOITS. There are also approximately ten Royal Non-Governmental Organizations (RNGOs) that were established based on royal decrees and parliamentary endorsement, rather than through the standard registration procedures. RNGOs tend to have strong organizational capacities. Some RNGOs enjoy direct budget allocations from the government for their operations. In addition, some RNGOs receive funds from ministries to implement specific government projects. For example, the Noor Al Hussein Foundation, the Jordan River Foundation, and the Jordanian Hashemite Fund received funding from the Ministry of Planning to implement the Poverty Pockets Program through 2015. RNGOs are generally subjected to less government control and scrutiny than other CSOs.

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## LEGAL ENVIRONMENT: 5.7

The legal environment governing the CSO sector deteriorated moderately in 2020 as CSOs and activists faced increased harassment and setbacks to the freedoms of association and expression as a result of restrictions imposed by the government to curb the spread of COVID-19.

The Law on Societies 51 of 2008 continues to be the primary law governing the registration and operation of local and foreign organizations in Jordan. Both the law itself and the way it is implemented impose a number of restrictions on the work of most CSOs, including the need to register and seek approval to receive foreign funding. Societies are also not allowed to engage in political or religious activities. Other CSOs register under Labor Law 8 of 1996, which along with union-specific laws regulates the work of trade unions and employers' associations, or as civil companies under the Companies Law 22 of 1997 and the Regulation for Non-Profit Companies 73 of 2010.

In 2020, the government prepared a new version of the Law on Societies aimed at targeting money laundering and addressing corruption by improving governance provisions. However, it did not effectively address issues such as

## LEGAL ENVIRONMENT IN JORDAN



criteria for rejecting registration applications, overlapping supervision between different government agencies, and improving the mechanism for receiving foreign funding. Public consultations with societies on the draft law began in 2021.

Registration procedures did not change in 2020. All local CSOs are required by law to register, although some of the actual processes and mechanisms for doing so are still unclear and not mandated in the law. Fewer CSOs were able to register in 2020 due to the COVID-19 lockdown and the government's preoccupation with managing its response to the crisis. Foreign CSOs are not required to register; they simply notify the government that they operate on the ground.

MoSD continued to actively monitor the work of CSOs through "verification committees" that were first established in 2019 to confirm the legal existence of all registered societies and monitor their financial and administrative performance. Based on such monitoring, in 2020, MoSD dissolved 166 CSOs for violating laws, regulations, and instructions, or failing to comply with their statutes and achieving the goals for which they were established.

CSOs must receive government approval in order to receive foreign funding. In December 2019, the government approved new approval procedures for local CSOs to receive foreign funding that are more detailed. According to the procedures, all requests for foreign funding are considered approved if the CSO does not receive any response from the government within thirty days. However, the government constantly violates this deadline and banks require written approval to make transfers. As a result, CSOs are left with no way to access funds if they have not received a formal response. Although the government promised to create a new electronic platform that would help resolve this problem by the beginning of 2020, this system had still not been created by the end of the year.

CSOs claim that the decision-making procedures for foreign funding are opaque and lack transparency, making it difficult for many to access foreign funding. Although the law states that the government should always provide an explanation when a request for foreign funding is denied, the ministry's funding committee failed to fulfill this obligation in 2020. There also appeared to be a number of arbitrary rejections in 2020 related to women's empowerment, human rights, and media projects.

Signs of a new crisis between the Teachers' Syndicate, which represents over 140,000 teachers in the country, and the government began to appear when the union announced its plan to demand the wage increases that the government had committed to in 2019 but were frozen due to the pandemic. The Teachers' Syndicate organized a demonstration in front of its office where its vice president criticized the government for refusing to honor the agreement. On July 25, 2020, police raided and shut down the Teachers' Syndicate headquarters in Amman and eleven of its branches across the country and arrested a number of the syndicate's board members for violating restrictions on the right to assembly. The Attorney General then issued an order to close down the independent union for a period of two years. According to Human Rights Watch, "there appears to be no basis in Jordanian law for him to issue the closure order." Since the Syndicate was formed by the National Assembly, legally, it can only be shut down by a vote from both chambers of that legislative body. Although the arrested board members were released from jail, the government has since replaced the entire board with a temporary acting committee, in what many argue is simply a government attempt to take over the organization.

Freedom of assembly was limited during the year. Defense Order No. 16 prohibited gatherings of more than twenty people. The government used this restriction to forcefully disperse nationwide public protests against the arbitrary closure of the Teachers' Syndicate, arrest its leaders, and detain a number of teachers involved in the protests. This harsh reaction dissuaded others from organizing protests during the year.

Freedom of expression was also restricted in Jordan in 2020. On April 15, 2020, the government issued Defense Order No. 8, which made it illegal to spread any news or information about the pandemic that would "cause panic." This restricted the ability of both private and public media to report on the government's response to the pandemic. Since the state of emergency was declared on March 17, Jordanian police have detained two prominent media executives, a foreign journalist, and a former member of parliament, apparently due to their public criticism

of the government’s response to COVID-19. The general manager and the new director of Roya TV were also arrested after the channel aired a news report depicting Jordanian day laborers’ dissatisfaction with working conditions. In addition, Amman’s Magistrate Court ruled that the publication of any details related to the closure or court case of the Teachers’ Syndicate was prohibited, citing Article 255 of the Penal Code along with Article 39B of the Press and Publications Law.

The government also used the Cybercrime Law to limit criticism of its handling of the crisis. That law called for an immediate mandatory three-month sentencing of anyone accused of defamation, slander, or libel, which is harsher than similar provisions in the country’s Penal Code. As a result, CSOs were afraid to criticize the government because of concerns that their criticism could be interpreted as “threatening national security.”

There were no changes regarding the taxation of CSOs in 2020. Tax exemptions are still limited and only granted to orphanages, associations for people with disabilities, and “public interest” organizations. However, even these CSOs sometimes have problems obtaining the exemptions. Societies with religious, charitable, humanitarian, scientific, cultural, sports, or professional purposes are eligible to apply for charitable status. Donations made to societies with charitable status are exempted from income tax; the exempted income, however, should not exceed one-quarter of the taxable income of the donor. There is no legal framework regulating social entrepreneurship institutions.

The Justice Center for Legal Aid (JCLA) offers CSOs some legal services; however, its mandate is to provide legal services more broadly to those who cannot afford them in order to ensure that the poor and vulnerable receive access to justice in Jordan. Not all CSOs are able to hire and pay for lawyers directly. Some CSOs prefer to remedy their legal problems by means of personal relationships rather than going through the proper legal channels. Jordan lacks appropriate legal awareness-raising programs.

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## ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY: 5.6

The organizational capacity of the CSO sector deteriorated moderately in 2020, as many CSOs were unable to make full use of new technologies to implement programs during the lockdown.

Many CSOs attempted to extend their outreach efforts to the broader population during the crisis. CSOs monitored how their constituents were being affected by the pandemic, and where possible, developed appropriate interventions. Although restrictions on movement limited outreach, a number of organizations were able to successfully tailor their programs to work with vulnerable populations during the pandemic. For example, Sana for People with Mental Disabilities was able to offer online psychological and social support to families of the disabled and teach them how to use Zoom and Facebook Live.

CSOs are required to have strategic plans in order to register and obtain foreign funding. They have varying abilities to follow their strategic plans and to measure their level of achievement and impact. Generally speaking, large organizations with boards of trustees have more capacity to do so. Large and small CSOs alike generally depend on donors to allow them to change their strategies. In 2020, some RNGOs and other large organizations revised their strategic plans in light of the pandemic. Some donors allowed RNGOs and other CSOs to modify how they implemented their projects or extended deadlines, while others cut funding quite drastically.

By law, a society is required to have a governing board, while a non-profit company is required to have an executive board. There is a great disparity between large, medium, and small organizations in terms of their abilities to define appropriate roles, responsibilities, and job titles. Moreover, CSOs of all types and sizes often operate as “one man/woman shows.”



When the lockdown began on March 21, 2020, many CSOs stopped operating, even though they are generally expected to be on the front line during humanitarian crises. Unlike other sectors, CSOs were not allowed to apply for or receive special movement permits during the initial months of the crisis, greatly restricting their activities and operations. These limitations, in turn, reduced some CSOs' ability to retain their employees or forced them to reduce salaries. Defense Order No. 6 also affected CSOs' staffing situations. For example, revisions to Defense Order No. 6 allowed employers to negotiate with workers on their hours of work, salaries (i.e., whether they agreed to salary reductions of 20 percent for July and August), and means of working (i.e., remotely or in the office). Other provisions in Decree No. 6 required CSOs to extend contracts to all existing temporary staff, even in cases where the projects or grants had ended. This had a devastating blow on many CSOs that were struggling to cover costs just to survive. Despite the importance of using volunteers to assist in their efforts, CSOs' engagement of volunteers was very limited in 2020.

With a few limited exceptions, CSOs were unable to effectively harness the full potential of the digital and technical tools needed to adjust to the new working conditions during the pandemic's lockdown period. Some CSOs lacked the financial resources to upgrade their information and communications technology (ICT), while others lacked the technical expertise to use this technology. In other cases, using technology proved to be less effective. For example, the use of Zoom and other technologies was not as effective as face-to-face learning. In addition, some potential beneficiaries did not have the ability to access these online services.

## FINANCIAL VIABILITY: 5.7



CSOs' financial viability deteriorated moderately in 2020 due to the scarcity of foreign funding, complications in seeking government approval for foreign grants, and newly imposed pandemic-related funding guidelines. The private sector faced economic setbacks as a result of the pandemic that limited its role in supporting civil society. In this context, competition between CSOs intensified, as they vied for the limited available funding.

At the end of April 2020, the Cabinet of Ministers directed the Committee for Studying Foreign Funding Requests to resume its work following a month-long suspension resulting from the lockdown. In the month prior, all CSOs were required to submit their partnership agreements as well as project implementation plans, including lists of the key staff that

they were requesting permission to retain to implement projects. The Funding Committee ultimately prioritized funding for projects that were expected to have a significant positive impact on addressing the pandemic and its health, economic, social, and cultural consequences, while postponing decision making on other projects. As a result, many organizations were left without any funding. The government also made unrealistic demands on foreign NGOs operating in the country. For example, the Canadian organization Journalists for Human Rights (JHR) was forced to close its office in Jordan when it was unable to access foreign funds because of government interference in its work, including demands to reduce its budget.

Much of the funding allocated by the government via the Himmat Watan Fund to address the economic and health-care needs resulting from the pandemic was provided to state institutions. This negatively affected CSOs' opportunities to obtain support from the government.

Overall, corporate funding for CSOs declined significantly over the course of the year due to the private sector's economic struggles. An assessment conducted by the International Labor Organization (ILO), in cooperation with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Norwegian Fafo Institute for Labor and Social Research, showed that half of all businesses were confident they would weather the current crisis. However, a number of enterprises were facing difficulties before the crisis began; one-quarter of them mentioned that they were already losing money, and over half indicated that they were barely covering their expenses. Some larger

companies contributed to the Himmat Watan Fund, which further reduced private sector funding that might otherwise have been available to CSOs.

Almost no CSOs were able to generate income through the provision of products and services during the pandemic, which had a major impact on the work of community-based organizations that often relied on this funding to survive. In addition, income from renting facilities was lost as activities such as training or conferences were shifted to electronic platforms.

During 2020, there was no change in CSOs' financial management systems, operations, or procedures. Large and medium organizations have computerized financial systems that are linked to other systems, such as human resources. However, most smaller organizations use manual systems to manage their funding.

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## ADVOCACY: 5.0

CSO advocacy deteriorated moderately in 2020, largely because the pandemic limited advocacy opportunities and CSOs were generally unable to use unconventional methods, such as mobilization campaigns and digital tools, to influence decision-makers and reach grassroots constituencies. In general, most CSOs, as well as the government, were too preoccupied with responding to the pandemic to engage effectively in broader legislative reform efforts.

Most CSOs felt that the government marginalized their role during the pandemic. The National Center for Security and Crisis Management's Crisis Response Unit was in charge of making decisions and issuing declarations related to the pandemic, such as mandating full or partial lockdowns and updating statistics about the number of COVID-19 cases and vaccinations. Several organizations called on the government to involve them in the unit to ensure that the needs of CSOs, their employees, and grassroots organizations were considered. However, these efforts were not successful.

The government's responses to CSO advocacy campaigns varied. For example, the government took CSOs' recommendations into consideration when deciding to reopen daycare centers. The government also responded favorably to the recommendation of Rasheed Jordan, a CSO focused on transparency, on the importance of establishing the Himmat Watan Fund to coordinate and finance the crisis response. However, the government virtually ignored advocacy campaigns related to the Teachers' Syndicate and combating femicide, which increased in 2020.

Informal coalitions of CSOs also played an active role during the pandemic. For example, at the end of the year, the Sadaqa Coalition Towards a Safe Return to Our Schools called for the reopening of schools and kindergartens, while adopting the necessary procedures to ensure physical distancing and public safety to give parents the choice whether to send their children to kindergartens and schools. Some in-person learning resumed in February 2021.

CSOs played an important role in the parliamentary elections in November. For example, before the election, a series of training workshops were held that targeted women who were seeking to run for office. CSOs working with disabled people were able to ensure that people with disabilities could observe the electoral process in twenty-six polling stations throughout the country.

Tamkeen for Legal Aid and Human Rights, a Jordanian CSO that promotes and protects the rights of the country's more vulnerable populations, provided a forum on its website for Jordanian and migrant workers to post complaints about infringements of their labor rights, while offering resources and tools for them to seek legal redress. Tamkeen issued a report on the conditions of workers during the COVID-19 pandemic and the abuses of their rights. Moreover, Tamkeen began sending the complaints it received to the Ministry of Labor, which initially responded but stopped doing so as the crisis worsened. Tamkeen, also, assisted workers in registering with the appropriate government platforms to receive the services that they needed.

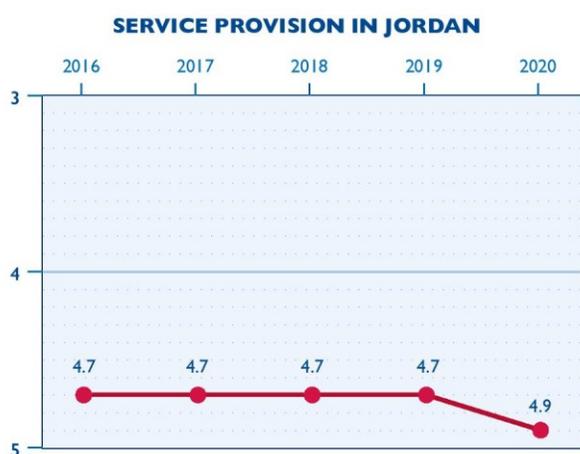


Many CSOs working with disabled people collaborated with educational institutions in 2020 to ensure that distance-learning resources were adapted and made available to people with disabilities, especially those with hearing and visual impairments. They, also, conducted advocacy efforts to ensure that the rights of the disabled were considered in the development of the Darsak Platform, a distance learning resource that was made available to primary and secondary school students. Despite these efforts, students with visual and hearing disabilities were generally unable to access or use the online learning platform, even if they had good internet connections.

Concerns over the lack of accountability for gender-based violence in the form of “honor killings” and other incidents of domestic violence and murder were brought to center stage following a string of killings that rocked the country over the course of the year. The circulation of a video showing the murder of a woman by her father spiked a sit-in by human rights and women’s rights organizations, including Solidarity is Global Institute (SIGI) and the Jordanian National Commission for Women (JNCW), demanding that the perpetrators of all violent crimes against women be held accountable and that laws be enacted to increase penalties for such crimes. To date, however, the government has not responded to these calls or calls to amend the Law Regarding Protection from Domestic Violence (Law No. 6/2008), which does not provide adequate protection or recourse for victims of domestic violence.

There were no advocacy efforts during 2020 to amend Law 51 or the other laws and regulations governing the sector.

## SERVICE PROVISION: 4.9



CSOs offer a wide variety of services in areas including charity, education, health, culture, children, women’s rights, orphans, people with disabilities, and Syrian refugees. However, CSO service provision suffered a moderate deterioration in 2020 as the lockdown and lack of mobility caused by the pandemic, combined with CSOs’ lack of technical prowess, severely limited CSOs’ ability to reach out to their beneficiaries.

In mid-May, the Committee for the Sustainability of Work, Production, and Supply Chains authorized CSOs to resume their physical operations in authorized sectors under certain conditions, although many organizations continued to employ hybrid modes of work. MoSD’s Registry Council sent the Committee’s circular to all ministries and governmental institutions overseeing

CSOs, stipulating that the organizations should be allowed to receive social security benefits and obtain approval to receive foreign funding and other approvals necessary to conduct their projects, while complying with the appropriate health standards to prevent the transmission of COVID-19 among their workers. A maximum of 30 percent of CSOs’ employees were allowed to work and obtain movement permits within the framework of the organization’s and respective project’s workplans. The circular further stated that international organizations and branches of foreign institutions operating in Jordan should obtain movement permits from the relevant ministry.

The lengthy and cumbersome procedures needed to resume physical operations forced many CSOs to continue to provide their services via online communication channels. For example, during the COVID-19 pandemic, the Institute for Family Health – Noor Al Hussein Foundation, created an online service to report cases of domestic violence and offer psychological counseling to victims of abuse, thereby eliminating the need to obtain movement permits for their employees and beneficiaries.

The Jordanian Women’s Union (JWU), which operates the only physical shelter for female victims of violence in the country, was unable to receive abused women during the first three months of the lockdown. While it continued to operate a hotline instead, it received fewer domestic violence claims as many victims noted that they did not feel safe calling the hotline, because they were in the same premises as their abusers. Once the lockdown ended and women were able to physically visit the centers, the number of cases increased again.

Some organizations provided training for their constituents through Zoom or Microsoft Teams. This was successful for some types of training but less so in areas that required on-site work, such as training focused on cell phone and computer repair and food production. CSOs faced setbacks in working in rural communities or with vulnerable groups, which often lacked access to the internet, either because they were unable to pay for it or did not have smartphones or computers.

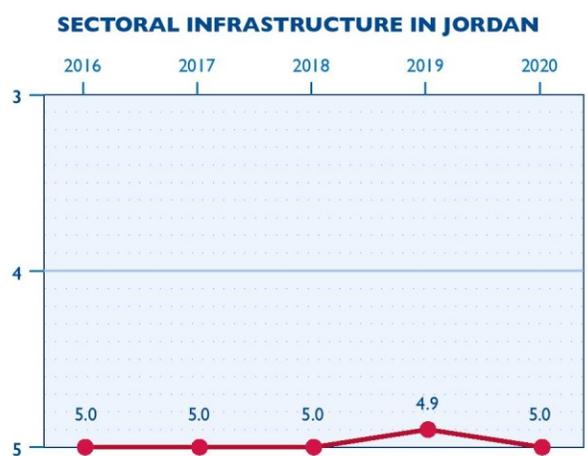
In light of these circumstances, it was difficult for CSOs to recover costs or to have the ability to generate revenue through service provision.

The government did little to acknowledge the services provided by CSOs during the year.

## SECTORAL INFRASTRUCTURE: 5.0

The infrastructure supporting the CSO sector deteriorated slightly in 2020. Due to the decrease in the availability of foreign funding, the ability of intermediary support organizations (ISOs) to provide grants to small CSOs decreased. The ability of large organizations to provide technical support to other CSOs was also limited due to the suspension of activities and the temporary closure of their offices.

ISOs provide a range of technical, financial, training, evaluation, and consultancy services to CSOs throughout the country. Most ISOs are RNGOs, such as the King Hussein Foundation (which the Noor Al Hussein Foundation falls under), King Abdullah Fund for Development, and the Jordanian Hashemite Fund for Human Development (JOHUD). In general, ISO services are available in all governorates. However, the level of technical and financial support offered by ISOs to CSOs was much lower in 2020 than in previous years.



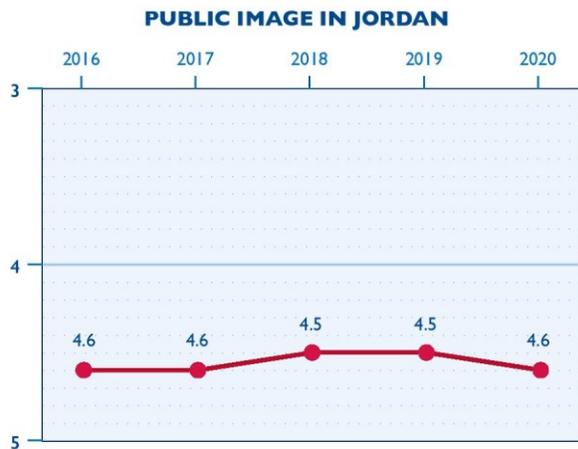
At the same time, there was an increase in the number of CSOs that came together to work on joint projects. For example, the Arab Local Development Corporation formed a partnership with a number of trade unions to help them develop strategic plans and mechanisms to monitor their implementation. SIGI established the Hayat (Life) Coalition to reduce and ultimately end the use of the death penalty by applying alternative penalties. Partnerships with the private sector, however, were negatively affected due to the limited opportunities available to work with large private enterprises.

Numerous efforts aimed to coordinate CSOs' humanitarian responses to the pandemic and provide additional support to the government. For example, the Jordanian National NGO Forum (JONAF), a coalition of over forty local organizations from around Jordan, came up with a plan to respond to the second wave of COVID-19, which allowed them to provide aid to over 100,000 people from the most vulnerable groups, including women, children, people with disabilities, the elderly, day laborers, migrant workers, refugees, and immigrants.

CSOs also established several partnerships at the local level over the course of the year. For example, the Mubaderoon (Entrepreneurs) Project, implemented by Ruwwad Al-Tanmeya Organization, Plan International, and Alfanar Organization and funded by the European Union, funded social entrepreneurial initiatives in Ajloun.

CSOs had access to training opportunities through Zoom and other technologies on topics ranging from project development, monitoring and evaluation, grants management, and strategic planning. However, most CSOs noted that both the number and effectiveness of online training decreased significantly in comparison to the in-house training provided in 2019.

## PUBLIC IMAGE: 4.6



The public image of the CSO sector deteriorated slightly in 2020. The government did not acknowledge the role of CSOs during the pandemic, and some government officials attempted to distort the image of CSOs. This negatively affected the public's perception of CSOs, since they expected civil society to play a more proactive role in responding to the pandemic and were unaware of the restrictions the government imposed upon them. At the same time, both private and public media coverage focused largely on the government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic, rather than the work CSOs were doing.

Only a few CSOs continued to maintain some level of public support. For example, the public appeared to appreciate the efforts of organizations defending labor

rights, advocating for the reopening of daycare centers, and promoting the return to face-to-face education in elementary schools. However, CSOs' reputation overall declined owing to government restrictions that impeded their access to constituents and vulnerable populations.

As noted above, the government did not acknowledge the important role that CSOs play within society. The government neutralized the role of the sector by virtually cutting off its own funding to CSOs, while controlling their access to foreign funding and other means of support. In addition, the government did not engage CSOs as equal and effective partners in responding to the pandemic, excluding them, for example, from the Crisis Response Unit.

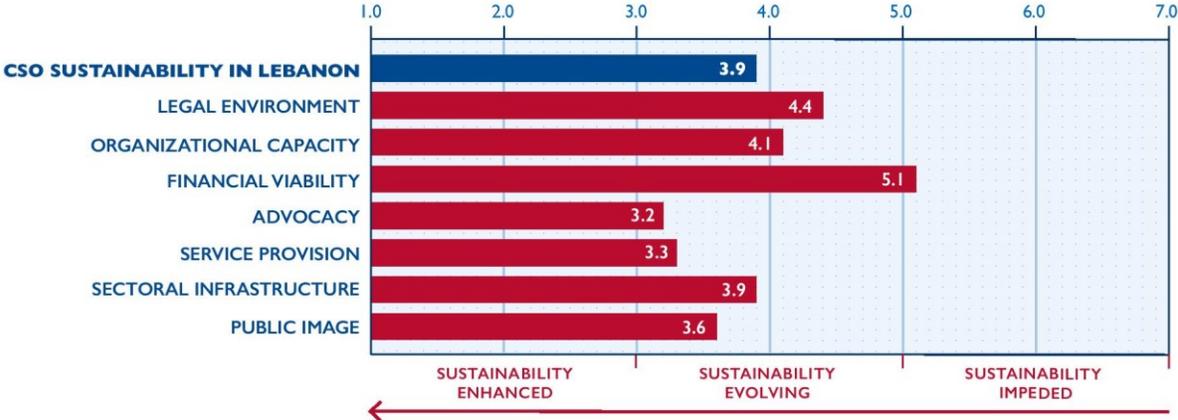
The private sector's perception of CSOs did not differ significantly in 2020 from the previous year. Private sector institutions, especially large ones, such as telecommunications companies, banks, and many factories, consider CSOs as partners, particularly in helping them to identify the needs of local communities while planning their corporate social responsibility programs. At the same time, partnerships between the two sectors suffered as a result of the economic setbacks faced by the business community in 2020. Businesses also failed to acknowledge publicly the role that CSOs played during the crisis.

CSOs continue to depend on social media platforms to publicize their activities, given that these platforms are free of charge. Most CSOs publish annual programmatic and financial reports, but they could be more proactive in sharing the results of their work with the public.

# LEBANON

**Capital:** Beirut  
**Population:** 5,261,372  
**GDP per capita (PPP):** \$14,552  
**Human Development Index:** High (0.744)  
**Freedom in the World:** Partly Free (43/100)

## OVERALL CSO SUSTAINABILITY: 3.9



Since the end of 2019, Lebanon has faced a series of man-made and natural disasters, which wreaked havoc on all aspects of the country’s economic and political life and impacted civil society in 2020. Starting with the ongoing economic and financial crisis, followed by the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in February, and culminating in the massive Port of Beirut explosion in August 2020, these crises have placed the country in what the World Bank describes as a “deliberate depression with unprecedented consequences for its human capital, stability and prosperity.”

The country experienced a systemic economic tailspin after both the banking system and exchange rates collapsed, leading to an estimated 19.2 percent decline in gross domestic product (GDP) in 2020, following a 6.7 percent contraction in 2019. Lebanon’s currency, the lira, devalued by over 80 percent, aggravating risks to the country’s financial stability, while banks illegally froze withdrawals from U.S. dollar (USD) accounts. The World Bank estimated that, in addition to the approximately 1.5 to 2 million Syrian refugees and 330,000 Palestinian refugees, half of Lebanon’s 6 million people would live below the poverty line by the end of 2020. The economic crisis also had a negative impact on the financial sustainability of CSOs.

The first cases of COVID-19 in Lebanon were detected in February 2020 and nearly one hundred cases had been reported by mid-March. To stem the spread of the virus, on March 15 the government declared a medical state of emergency, officially known as a “general mobilization.” The minister of interior imposed a curfew that was not explicitly mentioned in the decree, and later implemented a system only allowing cars to be on the roads on alternating days according to their license plate numbers. These measures had a negative impact on CSOs. CSOs working with the most vulnerable communities were particularly impacted as they were unable to completely shift their work online since their constituencies did not have reliable access to the internet and other information technology (IT) services.

On August 4, 2020, 2,750 tons of ammonium nitrate that had been stored for too long in Beirut’s main port exploded, destroying one-third of the city’s hospitals and dispensaries, 129 schools, and eight universities. All told, over 200 people were killed, 6,000 wounded, and thousands more left homeless. Civil society actors mobilized immediately after the explosion, providing much needed services to the city’s wounded and displaced population much faster than the government. The day after the explosion, however, the Lebanese government illegally (i.e., without waiting for parliamentary approval) imposed a two-week state of emergency, placing undue restrictions on movement and the ability of CSOs to respond to the crisis. On two separate occasions after the explosion, security forces reacted in force to mass protests over the government’s handling of the crisis and what was seen as increased corruption and ineptitude.

Facing intense public pressure, the government of Prime Minister Hassan Diab resigned less than one week after the explosion. The state of emergency decree, which parliament endorsed only a week after the blast, gave sweeping powers to the army to ban gatherings “deemed threats to national security” and restrict freedom of expression if needed, and expanded the jurisdiction of military courts over civilians. The compounded impact of these crises made it virtually impossible for the incumbent government to implement the economic reforms required by the international community, including the International Monetary Fund.

CSOs supporting refugees faced difficulties in 2020 as the government continued its 2018 policy of returning Syrian refugees to Syria. Authorities forcibly deported over 2,500 refugees during the year.

The overall sustainability of the CSO sector in Lebanon remained unchanged in 2020, although deteriorations were noted in four dimensions. The legal environment deteriorated as the registration process for CSOs became more complicated and the state and security forces began to exert more pressure on civil society actors. The sector’s organizational capacity decreased as CSOs turned to emergency response, causing them to divert from or abandon entirely their initially planned missions and strategies. Despite an increase in foreign funding, CSOs’ financial viability also suffered as most organizations were not able to access the full level of funding needed to meet the growing demands of their constituents. CSOs also struggled with the new banking restrictions and the inability to access their funds. Sectoral infrastructure deteriorated as training and capacity building efforts became less of a priority in the sector, although networking and alliances between CSOs improved. Service provision is the only dimension that improved in 2020. CSOs’ advocacy and public image remained largely unchanged.

Experts estimate the number of CSOs in 2020 to be between 14,000 and 16,000. However, only 200 or 300 CSOs are thought to be independent, sustainable, and operating effectively. The CSO sector in Lebanon is diverse and vibrant with the ability to mobilize quickly and respond to emerging needs faster than most government agencies and international organizations. This was especially true in 2020.

## LEGAL ENVIRONMENT: 4.4



The legal environment governing CSOs deteriorated in 2020 as the registration process for new CSOs became more complicated; political activists, in particular, faced lengthy delays and even denials when attempting to register new organizations. The regression of freedom of expression and the excessive use of force against protesters also contributed to the shrinking of civic space in the country in 2020.

According to the 1909 Law on Nonprofit Organizations, CSOs are able to register by notifying the government of their establishment. While most CSOs notify the Ministry of Interior of their establishment, others notify the Ministry of Social Affairs or the Ministry of Youth and Sports. The respective ministry must formally acknowledge a new organization by giving its founders a

registration receipt, which allows them to prove the organization’s legal status to third parties. Registered CSOs must submit, on an annual basis, the previous year’s budget along with a financial forecast for the coming year to the ministries of interior and finance. They may face a fine for each day that the report is late.

CSOs faced difficulties obtaining legal status in 2020, in part because registration processes were complicated by new requirements for CSOs to file additional documents with detailed information on all sources of revenue with the Ministry of Finance. The founder of Empower, a CSO focused on creating a unified Lebanon, started its registration process in 2017 but was still awaiting the final outcome at the end of 2020; it had not received any justification for the delay. The same founder also applied to register another CSO, the Beirut Center for Middle East Studies. He received a file number but then was refused registration after General Security initiated a background check on him. Although no reason was given, the likely basis for denying the registration was the founder’s political activity. In another case, Inara, a local branch of an international organization supporting refugees, started the registration process in 2018. After engaging six lawyers to pursue the case, it finally received

its approval in late 2020. It took Generous Hands, a CSO supporting orphans and operating in Beirut, Bekaa, Saida, and Irsal, fifteen months to receive notification that it had been registered. Its efforts were supported by a lawyer who advised it not to include support for other nationalities in its mission, as this would further delay the process. Eventually, the founders and the lawyer used personal connections to ensure the organization's registration was finally approved.

In light of these challenges to obtaining legal status, some international NGOs (INGOs) supported small grassroots CSOs to register as civil companies, which entails a much less cumbersome process. However, civil companies—like other entities—faced problems opening bank accounts because of the banking and financial crisis, making it difficult for them to receive funds.

CSOs also faced new challenges following the Beirut explosion. The state of emergency imposed the day after the explosion gave the Lebanese army the authority to manage the response to the Beirut explosion; therefore, CSOs had to obtain clearance from the army for all interventions, including actions like bringing in cranes to provide rescue services. Some organizations acknowledged the need to coordinate interventions in this manner, while others felt that the interference by the state and the army impeded their work. Additional restrictions were also imposed on all bank accounts, even for registered CSOs, such as not being able to pay contractual workers or third-party beneficiaries, due to strict extra-legal capital control measures and discretionary regulations governing the deposit and withdrawal of funds. It also became even more difficult for CSOs with foreign staff to open bank accounts.

International organizations working with Syrian and Palestinian refugees regularly faced interference from the Ministry of Interior and Ministry of Finance. CSOs working with refugees faced harassment—including recurrent and invasive inspections—from a wide variety of security bodies including General Security, Lebanese army intelligence, and the information division of internal security forces.

Most public demonstrations were effectively banned during the year due to COVID-19 restrictions. However, protests broke out on August 8 following the Beirut explosion. Security forces attacked the protesters. According to the Lebanese Red Cross, 728 people were injured, at least 153 of which were taken to the hospital. In another protest on September 1, Human Rights Watch reported evidence of tear gas and metal bullets being fired at protesters, again by security forces.

In October 2020, Maharat Foundation released a report entitled "[Freedom of expression and the media during the Lebanon protest](#)." The report highlighted increased restrictions on freedom of expression, the freedom to protest, investigative journalism, and access to information, while highlighting the growing level of impunity surrounding attacks on journalists. This led to the creation of a [coalition to defend freedom of expression](#) in July by fourteen local and international organizations.

CSOs are exempted from taxes on income as they do not have profits, but they are still required to declare their employees and enroll them for social security benefits. The majority of CSOs do not comply with these regulations, either out of negligence, because of a lack of resources, or due to the lack of a culture of paying taxes. Due to COVID-19, the deadlines to pay taxes were extended, which gave CSOs that pay taxes on their employees some financial reprieve.

CSOs face no legal limitations on fundraising or receiving foreign funds. To the contrary, the government encourages CSOs to bring cash into the country. However, due to the strict banking requirements that make it difficult for new CSOs to open bank accounts, some small, new CSOs, particularly in Bekaa and the North, formed partnerships with other CSOs that had already fulfilled registration and banking requirements, in order to use their bank accounts. While CSOs are able to earn income, they must spend all income on activities supporting their missions.

Most CSOs lack sufficient resources to hire lawyers. Some CSOs rely on reputable lawyers who offer their services on a volunteer basis, but this means that their cases often do not receive full attention. There are no lawyers who specialize in the work of CSOs. Some INGOs such as Hivos provide their local CSO partners with legal support.

## ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY: 4.1

CSOs' organizational capacity declined slightly in 2020. The economic crisis, the pandemic, and the devaluation of the currency negatively impacted CSOs' abilities to adhere to their strategic and organizational goals and support and maintain their staff. The inability to conduct physical activities and in-person meetings also negatively impacted some CSOs' efforts to engage effectively with their constituencies. At the same time, CSOs' technical advancement improved, with many CSOs successfully shifting their work to remote formats in response to the COVID-19 restrictions in place.

Only larger organizations can build constituencies effectively as they have the privilege of thinking strategically about the needs of their stakeholders. The fluctuating situation resulting from the social, political, and economic crises in 2020 negatively affected the ability of many CSOs focused on democratic development issues, such as elections, freedom of expression, and government accountability and transparency, to fulfill their strategic goals and meet the needs of their constituencies. At the same time, women's rights CSOs were able to reach out to women during the pandemic and raise the alarm on the increase of domestic violence that accompanied the lockdowns. A number of local CSOs, such as Beit Al Barak and Farah al Ataa, reached out to relevant constituents affected by the blast and played a significant role in responding to the crisis. The Lebanese Union for People with Disabilities (LUPD) conducted a rapid needs assessment of the over 6,000 injured people who may become disabled as a result of the explosion. At the same time, while many CSOs responding to the Beirut explosion were able to identify their constituencies, they were often unable to respond to their needs because of limited funding.

After the Beirut blast, most CSOs were eager to provide support to those who were most impacted. Most CSOs have flexible mission statements that allowed them to provide relief support, while others adapted their missions to support relief activities when possible. For example, a CSO working on mother and child-care shifted its approach to focus on mothers and children directly affected by the blast. A media development organization refocused its efforts on monitoring media coverage of the blast. Inara, which normally provides medical assistance to refugee children, initiated a program responding to the blast, calling it the Beirut Emergency Relief, which supported vulnerable communities affected by the blast, including refugees.

Most local organizations need assistance in strategic planning. CSOs have long built their strategies around the availability of donor funding due to the lack of alternative funding opportunities. Many donors prioritize imminent economic and relief needs, which have been further exacerbated by the influx of refugees, leading many CSOs to focus on these areas. At the same time, in 2020, CSOs proved that they were able to sustain and maintain their operations and overall missions, while tailoring their responses to address the most important needs arising from the pandemic and the Beirut explosion.

Larger CSOs in Lebanon have functional management structures and boards, but mid-sized organizations generally do not. Sometimes the board chair also serves as the chief executive of the organization. This might be due to lack of resources, especially among local CSOs that rely on project-based funding. CSOs that spend their time constantly searching for funding are also much more likely to lack effective structures and policies related to procurement, logistics, or workplace harassment. At the same time, some activists have used board positions at CSOs as a springboard into politics, further muddying the line between politics and activism.

CSOs try to sustain a constant level of staffing but their ability to do so depends on available resources. Most CSOs recruit staff based on project needs. With the change in both CSOs' and donors' priorities after the Beirut explosion and ongoing constraints from COVID-19, such as having to work remotely, some CSOs—especially those working at the grassroots level—had to let go of staff during the year. In addition, many had to suspend their activities completely as they were unable to shift their operations and staff online.

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY IN LEBANON



CSOs mobilized volunteers in 2020 at an unprecedented level both in response to the explosion and the COVID-19 pandemic. For example, UNICEF mobilized volunteers to help with the public awareness campaigns it organized to inform society about COVID-19. CSOs such as Arcenciel, the Lebanese Red Cross, Amel, Abaad, Embrace, Beit El Baraka, and Farah Al Ataa mobilized volunteers to respond to the needs of the victims of the Beirut explosion.

COVID-19 forced CSOs to increase their use of technology, but this was only possible for those with the resources needed to shift their work online. Not all CSOs were able to buy laptops for their staff. Purchasing equipment became very challenging as only cash payments in USD were accepted. Another challenge resulted from the lack of internet infrastructure and high connectivity costs, particularly in regions outside of Beirut and for marginalized communities. Some CSO members lacked digital literacy skills and needed time and training to adapt to the new online tools and methods. Most CSOs working in Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon continued operating despite COVID-19. Although they tried to use online tools, it was difficult, for example, to connect with their beneficiaries through Zoom, due to their constituents' lack of internet access and technological skills.

## FINANCIAL VIABILITY: 5.1



Although foreign aid increased significantly, the financial viability of CSOs decreased in 2020 due to the worsening economic conditions and increased demand for assistance. According to an assessment conducted by Impact Lebanon, the need for funding to address all the respective crises and continue regular activities was so immense that it was estimated to be between “four to six times greater than the total amount of aid committed to Lebanon,” thereby leaving a significant funding gap. The banking crisis further exacerbated the situation, as CSOs were unable to open or access their accounts, while contending with currency fluctuations and rampant inflation. CSOs also were constantly forced to change their financial procedures because of the uncertainty in the banking sector and the never-ending economic and financial crises facing the country.

The CSO sector still relies heavily on international funding, which increased substantially in 2020. According to the [United Nations \(UN\) Lebanon Aid Tracking 2020 report](#), the total amount of humanitarian funding reported for Lebanon in 2020 amounted to USD 1.53 billion, compared to USD 1.1 billion in 2019. The top three sources of reported humanitarian funding included the United States, the European Commission, and Germany. CSOs' main funds come via the UN and larger INGOs that collaborate with Lebanese governmental agencies. CSOs working in the field of humanitarian assistance and those working with vulnerable communities are generally more able to find funding than CSOs working on political and social participation. However, access to funding is expected to drop dramatically after the immediate crises related to COVID-19, the Beirut explosion, and the refugee influx end.

In previous years, CSOs received minimal support from local funding sources. After the Beirut blast, however, CSOs had access to multiple and diverse sources of funding, including from the diaspora. Most of the funds received after the blast went to Beirut, whereas areas like Bekaa or the North, which were in imminent need of aid due to increased poverty levels, were often neglected.

Most of the financial support after the Beirut explosion came from the diaspora to address immediate short-term needs, such as food, temporary housing and shelter, funding for reconstruction and development, and psychological counseling. However, after it became apparent that the government was not able to effectively coordinate efforts, articulate an overarching relief plan, or propose any systematic reform efforts to improve transparency and combat corruption, diaspora funding began to dissipate.

Crowdfunding efforts became a popular method of raising funds from both the diaspora community and local sources to support relief efforts after the Beirut explosion. For example, Impact Lebanon, a CSO that brings the community together to pursue initiatives that deliver impact for Lebanon, raised over GBP 6.6 million

(approximately \$9.3 million), which it distributed to a number of CSOs based on proposals they submitted to address the crisis.

CSOs also began to receive more direct contributions from political groups formed by coalitions of businessmen after the Beirut explosion. However, given their ties to political actors, accepting such funding could easily jeopardize CSOs' independence.

Political affiliations also play a role in access to government funding. For example, some CSOs run by wives of politicians have access to national governmental funding, while many others do not. Issues of transparency over which CSOs benefit from governmental support and the criteria for selection were raised following a cut in the national budget and a debate about whether or not to reduce the amount of support provided to CSOs by the Ministry of Social Affairs.

Only a few CSOs try to generate their own revenues. For example, the Society of St. Vincent de Paul operates a catering service. Empower CSO wanted to earn revenue through the provision of training on advocacy, communications, and media relations, which would have in turn provided funding for its advocacy activities. However, these plans were canceled when the organization was forced to curtail its registration process. CSOs' efforts to charge for services are hampered by the fact that people are not used to paying for services provided by CSOs and, because of the economic situation, have been largely unable to afford them.

CSOs faced challenges with the financial system and the country's transformation into a cash economy in 2020. CSOs had to explain to donors that they had to make payments in cash so as not to lose the value of their money. They also had to negotiate with banks to pay contractors in cash, since issuing checks decreased the value of their funds. Most beneficiaries no longer have bank accounts.

Although some CSOs have financial management systems, most organizations failed to comply completely with these systems in 2020 because of the banking restrictions and the inability to access bank deposits and withdraw money. CSOs have tried to adapt to the banking situation and stay as compliant as possible, while adjusting to various donors' new financial requirements.

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## ADVOCACY: 3.2

CSO advocacy remained largely unchanged in 2020. Despite CSOs' inability to engage with legislators and the increasing gap between civil society and ruling public officials, the sector showed increased solidarity and successfully led a number of important campaigning efforts.

When thousands of people took to the streets on October 17, 2019, to express their discontent with the plummeting economy, they also started a trend of advocating for various causes, such as early elections, anti-corruption, a civil state, judicial independence, social benefits, gender equality, sustainable solutions for electricity, and waste management. However, CSOs have not been able to influence the policy-making process or to ensure that necessary laws are adopted to respond to the multiple crises confronting the country. Although CSOs were not able to achieve concrete changes at the policy level, they made use of resources and studies to identify problems and attract people to their causes and to put more pressure on decision makers. It was not possible to apply pressure on the government by protesting on the streets during 2020 because of the COVID-19 health crisis.

Advocacy is complicated by the lack of coordination between different governmental bodies and agencies, and the fact that the government does not consider public opinion when developing policy. For example, in September 2020, after a year of lobbying with the labor ministry, domestic and international CSOs were able to convince the Minister of Labor to issue two decisions that would have given more rights to domestic workers through a unified contract. However, the Shoura Council issued a verdict in October 2020 that annulled the ministerial decisions on



the grounds that they would have made it more difficult to recruit domestic workers. The government did not object to the decision, stating that the dire economic conditions would make such changes impossible to implement at that time.

Despite the challenges, CSOs were able to achieve some major successes in 2020, including the issuance of decrees to implement access to information and eliminate bank secrecy. The latter was adopted after pressure from CSOs as well as the international community, which demanded increased bank transparency in exchange for additional support from the donor community. However, these decrees were not implemented effectively after being issued. Another win was the adoption of provision 47 of the penal code, which guarantees the right to have a lawyer present during investigations at police stations. This came about as a result of the October 2019 anti-government protests and the effective lobbying of both the committee of lawyers protecting protesters and the bar association to ensure that Lebanon lives up to the well-developed international standards on this issue. International pressure also played a role in these victories.

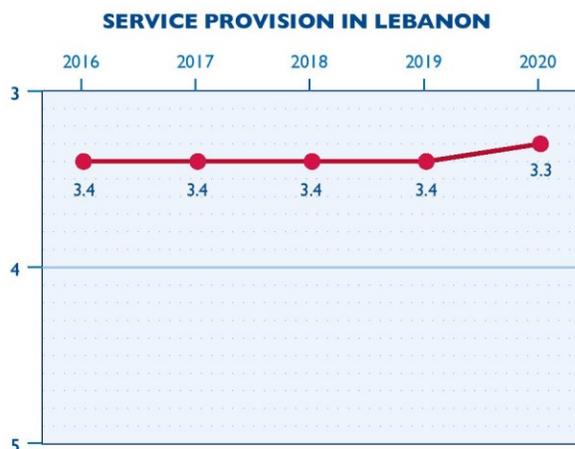
Solidarity between CSOs increased in 2020, enabling joint advocacy initiatives. Key advocacy groupings include the coalition for freedoms, the coalition for the independence of the judiciary, the alternative journalists', lawyers', and doctors' syndicates, and CSOs working on women's rights. Women's rights groups, in cooperation with UN Women, developed a charter recognizing the importance of addressing the needs of girls and women in the provision of humanitarian aid.

CSOs were also able to leverage their relationships with international institutions as a means of engaging in effective advocacy efforts domestically. For example, a coalition of environmental CSOs raised serious safety concerns about the proposed building of the Bisri dam, while also noting the negative impact that the project would have on biodiversity and farming in the area. Their combined efforts ultimately led the World Bank to suspend a loan in June 2020 to build the dam. In order to address concerns about the level of government corruption, a coalition of leading international financial institutions, including the World Bank and the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD), invited representatives from leading Lebanese CSOs to take part in a working group to monitor and provide advice on Lebanon's Reform, Recovery, and Reconstruction Framework (3RF). This will allow CSOs to have a more prominent role in monitoring government transparency and accountability going forward.

CSOs did not engage in any direct campaigns to challenge the existing laws governing CSOs during 2020. Campaigns by various depositors' groups and CSOs did, however, attempt to address the problems with the banking system.

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## SERVICE PROVISION: 3.3



CSO service provision increased slightly in 2020, with CSOs providing a wide range of services in response to the various health, economic, and political crises facing the country.

The Inter-Agency Lebanon Crisis Response Plan (LCRP) is an assessment tool used to analyze the current operational environment in Lebanon and its impact on service delivery and protection risks. LCRP partners in the country use the analysis to continuously adapt their existing interventions and to seek funding for their respective causes. At the end of 2020, a number of programs identified in the LCRP remained underfunded, leaving major gaps in vulnerable populations' access to basic survival services, thereby increasing tensions within communities over who would receive access to these

limited resources. The \$1.69 billion available in 2020 was not enough to cover the \$2.67 billion needs-based appeal.

The August 4th explosion in Beirut dramatically shifted the focus of CSOs to the provision of goods and services that respond to the mass destruction of the city and the needs of those most affected. CSOs were involved in all kinds of support from cleaning the debris and providing food to renovation and psychosocial assistance. This type of immediate response by local CSOs was not new; they mobilized in much the same way after the 2006 war and nearly every other crisis in the country as they are much more flexible and adaptable than INGOs and governmental agencies. However, CSOs found themselves unable to respond to all of the needs and did not have time to reflect on how best to provide their services as they had to intervene immediately. Further, the relief efforts suffered from a lack of coordination. As a result, some families took ten food portions from different CSOs, while others were not reached at all.

Outside of Beirut, including in Bekaa, CSOs were often unable to respond to the needs of local communities, which increased in 2020, simply because they did not have the capacity to do so. For example, some CSOs tried to provide psychosocial support through hotlines, receiving literally thousands of calls. In addition, CSOs providing psychosocial support reported that it was next to impossible to provide this type of service to someone who was constantly suffering from hunger.

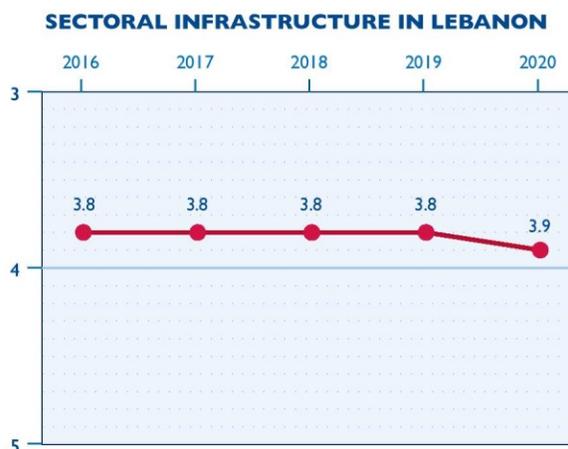
CSOs also provided many services in response to the pandemic, including awareness raising on protection measures, and distributing masks and hygienic supplies, especially in poor and marginalized communities. CSOs also tried to respond to misinformation related to COVID-19 through engagement and sensitization addressing stereotypes and misperceptions with their constituents.

CSOs were largely unable to generate revenue through their service provision in 2020 due to the worsening socio-economic conditions in the country.

The government relies extensively on the services provided by CSOs, especially because it is not able to provide them itself. Thus, CSOs largely took the place of state institutions when it came to providing services in response to COVID-19, as well as to the explosion.

## SECTORAL INFRASTRUCTURE: 3.9

Although networking and alliances between CSOs increased, the overall infrastructure supporting the CSO sector deteriorated slightly in 2020. In the past, CSOs had access to stable services through initiatives such as the Beirut digital district, which fostered the growth of digital platforms; the Banque du Liban (BDL) circular, which provided incentives for startups; the World Bank, which supported knowledge-based economy initiatives; and co-working spaces, such as Antwork, which housed a number of CSOs. These services provided CSOs with opportunities for training, mentorship, networking, and partnerships with private startups that were creating applications and websites. As the various crises began to impact the population, however, this kind of infrastructure support declined significantly.



A few limited programs continued to provide support services to local CSOs after the Beirut explosion. For example, the USAID-funded Building Alliances for Local Advancement, Development, and Investment – Capacity Building (BALADI CAP) project aims to build the capacity of selected CSOs to manage and implement grants, in addition to building the capacities of municipalities and their CSO partners to strengthen citizen-municipality cooperation in local policy and decision-making. In a new trend, donors engage consultants to support and guide local CSOs. For example, one donor hired a consultant to help a local coalition to undertake a stakeholder analysis, and to help another group design a code of ethics for the media and vulnerable communities. Such efforts, however, can weaken local ownership.

Capacity building became secondary to addressing the many crises that impacted CSOs' work in 2020. Rather than capacity building, CSOs expressed the need for more knowledge sharing to help them coordinate their efforts and

share relevant information online. Acknowledging the lack of support centers, some INGOs like Hivos tried to provide online support to their partner organizations, but such efforts remained very limited.

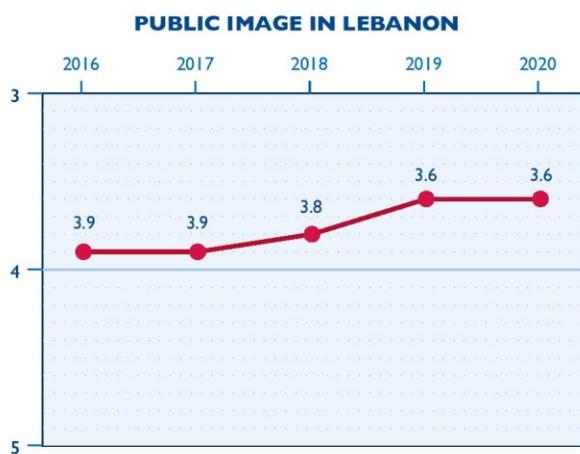
Networking and coalition building efforts are improving with the potential to grow further. Most coalitions are still predominantly donor-driven, although the approach of donors has changed as they now encourage, rather than demand, their CSO partners to take part in such coalitions. Organic coalitions tend to be more effective than funded coalitions; the Bisri Dam coalition, for example, was an organic coalition that succeeded in getting the construction of the dam suspended.

While a number of training opportunities on topics such as report writing, fundraising, financial procedures, compliance and policies, and social media (and increasingly digital services) are offered to CSOs, not all organizations have access to this training. This is particularly an issue for newly formed CSOs. Some CSOs do not know how to define their needs. For example, an advocacy expert delivered an advocacy training four times to the same organization simply because it requested it.

Before the economic collapse, CSOs formed partnerships with the private sector. Now, however, private companies often view CSOs as competitors as they are vying for the same funds under their corporate social responsibility (CSR) labels. Public relations companies sometimes compete with CSOs for grants in areas such as public awareness campaigning or partner with CSOs but take the majority of the funds.

Local CSOs cooperate with INGOs. In response to the Beirut blast, for example, INGOs mainly relied on local CSOs as they were the first to mobilize on the ground. The recent cooperation between the World Bank, IBRD, and local CSO partners to monitor reform efforts is another positive example.

## PUBLIC IMAGE: 3.6



The public image of CSOs did not change in 2020, as the impact of positive changes was offset by setbacks. Although public perceptions of CSOs improved, CSOs continued to be the target of some smear campaigns and it became more difficult to access the media. In addition, CSOs' relations with the government soured as a result of CSOs' increasing visibility during the respective crises, which often overshadowed the role of the government.

The media often reference or quote CSOs that have specific areas of expertise that are relevant to the issues they are covering, such as elections, women's rights, and transparency. These CSOs produce studies and data that are useful for journalists. Other CSOs are not able to get media coverage unless they go to the streets and become the news story. However, this was not always easy in

2020, given the restrictions on protests stemming from the pandemic. Otherwise, few CSOs are able to access the media for free. Some organizations have been known to pay for media coverage or to be invited to speak on talk shows.

CSOs found it more difficult to get media coverage for their events in 2020, with journalists rarely responding to CSOs' invitations to report on their activities. However, a number of media outlets, such as LBCI, MTV, and Al Jadeed, began to provide positive coverage of CSO interventions after the Beirut explosion, which in turn helped to attract more support and aid. At the same time, other media launched attacks against CSOs. Al Akhbar newspaper, for example, questioned whether CSOs serve foreign agendas. Since access to traditional media became increasingly difficult in 2020, many CSOs turned to social media to increase awareness of their work. However, boosting their posts (i.e., paying for posts to reach wider targeted audiences) became more difficult due to the inability to pay online with Lebanese bank cards.

In 2020, public perceptions of CSOs improved due to CSOs' response to the crises facing the country. More members of the public began to rely upon CSOs, leading to increased levels of public trust in their work. This was evident following the waves of public appreciation for CSOs' effective responses to COVID-19 and the Beirut

blast, which were often expressed during television interviews. Even in the refugee camps, Palestinians sought the support of Lebanese CSOs as trust in their own government declined. Support from the diaspora also helped to put the work of CSOs on the map and in the media, both in Lebanon and abroad. Public opinion was mixed, however, when CSOs that participated in protests in 2020 were wrongly accused by other protesters of being members of political parties.

The trust of the government towards CSOs decreased in 2020. One of the reasons is that politicians in Lebanon consider CSOs as competitors in the area of service provision, especially as their own elections are often based upon “clientelism,” (i.e., services they promise to provide to the electorate in return for their votes). CSOs continue to be subject to accusations that they are agents representing “foreign agendas.” Certain municipalities refused to work with the CSO sector in 2020 because of the foreign agenda allegations. Overall, though, the smear campaigns had limited impact.

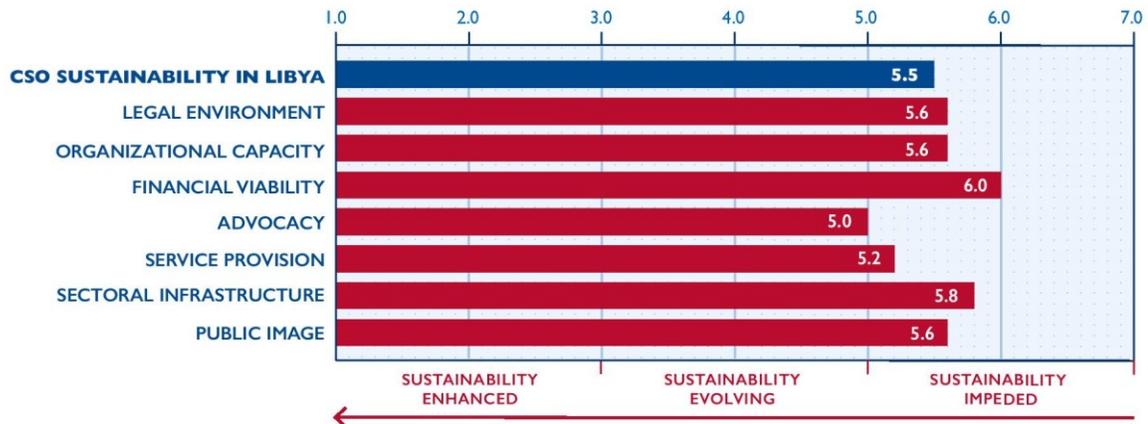
The business sector’s perception of CSOs changed dramatically in 2020. Given the amount of humanitarian aid flowing into the country, businesses began to believe, albeit incorrectly, that CSOs were becoming richer and that they would have access to more resources by partnering with them.

Given the challenges the country faced in 2020, transparency initiatives were not a priority for CSOs. In addition, CSOs struggled to secure funding for publications and to find the time to report about their activities.

# LIBYA

**Capital:** Tripoli  
**Population:** 7,017,224  
**GDP per capita (PPP):** \$15,174  
**Human Development Index:** High (0.724)  
**Freedom in the World:** Not Free (9/100)

## OVERALL CSO SUSTAINABILITY: 5.5



CSOs in Libya continued to operate in a difficult environment in 2020, exacerbated by an armed conflict in the capital, Tripoli, and the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The armed conflict in Tripoli began in April 2019 when forces from the Libyan Arab Armed Forces (LAAF), in conjunction with the rival Interim Government based in the eastern city of Al Bayda, began a campaign to capture the western region of the country from the internationally recognized Government of National Accord (GNA). Although the armed conflict ended in June 2020, when GNA-linked armed groups and their foreign backers, including Turkey, pushed the LAAF forces back into central Libya, the two sides to the conflict did not sign a ceasefire until October. The ceasefire, which was brokered by the United Nations (UN), paved the way for peace talks to begin in November 2020; these were still ongoing at the end of the year. According to reports from Human Rights Watch and the UN, the conflict resulted in over 1,000 civilian casualties. The International Organization for Migration, in the meantime, estimated that there were over 390,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) in the country at the end of 2020.

The first cases of COVID-19 were detected in Libya in late March 2020. The two rival governments responded quickly, with both allocating resources to support the health sector and mandating strict lockdown measures to limit the spread of the virus. In the east, the lockdown ended officially in May, while in Tripoli it was eased in June and ended in August. However, the authorities' response plans were inadequate and the country's dysfunctional institutions, including the already over-burdened health-care system, were unable to provide sufficient support to the country's population. Therefore, the pandemic deepened the existing humanitarian crisis in the country. By the end of 2020, Libya reported a cumulative total of 95,708 cases of COVID-19 and approximately 1,470 related deaths. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), Libya had the highest number of confirmed COVID-19 cases in North Africa, with approximately 1,405 infections per 100,000 people.

During the conflict, there were many attacks on health-care facilities, including the Al Khadra General Hospital in Tripoli, which was dedicated to the treatment of COVID-19. The LAAF banned doctors from voicing any criticism of its handling of the virus. Concerns over outbreaks of COVID-19 in the country's already overcrowded detention facilities led the GNA-government to release 466 detainees in March 2020.

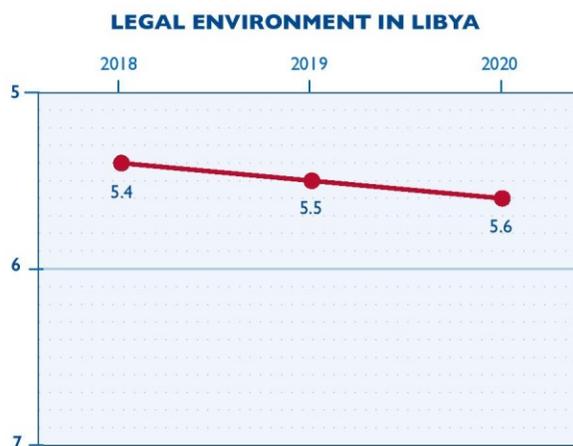
Libya's economic hardships deepened in 2020 with the suspension of oil production, the military escalation, and the pandemic. The World Bank Group reported that the Libyan economy shrank by around 31 percent in 2020. The population suffered from insufficient cash liquidity in the banks, high inflation, and a lack of basic public services.

As a result of the deteriorating situation in the country, demonstrations were organized in Libya for the first time in many years. On August 23, 2020, Hirak August 23, a newly established youth movement, organized protests in Tripoli, Misrata, and Zawiyah to criticize the dire living conditions in the country, including power outages, lack of cash liquidity, high inflation, and rampant corruption, while calling for the departure of the GNA. According to Human Rights Watch, armed groups in Tripoli linked with the GNA reportedly used lethal force to disperse the peaceful protests, allegedly killing one victim. The GNA imposed a four-day curfew, which was then extended to ten days, to effectively stop the demonstrations.

Despite the difficult circumstances in the country, the overall sustainability of Libyan CSOs improved slightly in 2020. The sector increased its overall organizational capacity, especially in the area of constituency building. At the same time, CSOs' ability to provide much needed humanitarian aid and relief services during the pandemic boosted their service provision score. CSOs' public image also improved slightly as they began to receive more recognition from the government and were more visible in the mass media and on social media platforms. CSOs continued to operate in a challenging legal environment, which became even more difficult in 2020 as both governments cracked down on demonstrations. The scores for financial viability, advocacy, and sectoral infrastructure remained unchanged.

As a result of the political division in the country, CSOs in different parts of Libya are overseen by separate Civil Society Commissions (CSCs). The CSC was established in Benghazi by government decree No. 12-2012 and initially served the entire country, even after the political conflict that started in 2014. However, in 2018, the GNA issued a decree forming a new CSC in Tripoli. Currently, the CSC in Benghazi governs CSOs in the east while the CSC in Tripoli governs CSOs operating in the west. CSOs in the south must report to both CSCs. As a result of this division, there is no recent data on the number of registered CSOs in Libya.

## LEGAL ENVIRONMENT: 5.6



The legal environment governing CSOs deteriorated slightly in 2020. The political division in the country impeded any real reforms of the legal environment and CSOs continued to struggle to navigate the administrative and reporting processes of the two rival governments. At the same time, the two rival governments cracked down on protests, using armed security forces to disperse crowds. As a result, CSOs increased self-censorship practices.

The 2011 Constitutional Declaration guarantees Libyans' freedom to form CSOs, effectively annulling the restrictive provisions of the 2001 Law 19/2001 that had previously regulated CSOs' formation and registration. However, with the exception of a few executive regulations and decrees issued by the two rival

authorities, no alternative law has been adopted to govern the sector. In practice, therefore, many of the provisions of Law 19/2001 are still in place. When there are conflicts between the regulations and the provisions of Law 19/2001, the law prevails. In addition, the GNA's Decree No. 286-2018, issued in 2018, restricts CSOs' activities in the western region, as well as those operating in the south, effectively subjecting them to government control when receiving funding and opening bank accounts.

CSOs must register to operate, organize activities, and receive funds and donations. The registration process for CSOs remains complicated by the fact that, beginning in 2019, the CSC in the west has required CSOs registered before 2018 to have ten founding members instead of three. Affected CSOs therefore must undergo registration processes again to renew their licenses and add these additional members, thereby imposing an additional financial burden on them. This requirement was increasingly enforced in 2020. In October, the CSC in Tripoli announced the freezing of organizations that had operated for more than five years without registering with or reporting to it; however, this decision had not yet been enforced by the end of the year. According to relevant experts, the new policy of the CSC in Tripoli has no legal basis as Decree No. 286-2018 does not oblige CSOs to annually renew

their registrations. On the other hand, CSOs in the eastern region reported that the registration process was swift and straightforward. However, they are still obliged to obtain security approvals from the Interim Government.

The armed conflict that started in 2019 complicated the registration process for CSOs that work on the national level. These organizations still need to register with both the CSCs under the GNA and the Interim Government. International non-governmental organizations (INGOs) and organizations in the south of the country must also register with both authorities.

The regulations that exist in the different regions impose unnecessary requirements on CSOs and restrict their ability to operate. CSOs are required, for example, to inform the CSC about their general assembly meetings and provide annual reports, including lists of trainings and workshops attended by their members. Decree No. 286-2018 controls the ability of CSOs operating in parts of the country under the control of the GNA to receive funding from local and international donors by requiring them to receive prior approval from the CSC before they can accept any grants. The decree, however, fails to establish clear conditions for refusing to grant this approval. The CSC has the right to dissolve a CSO if it does not comply with this requirement. Although there are no known examples of CSOs being denied funding in 2020, this requirement poses a serious threat to CSOs' work in the west and the south. Decree No. 286-2018, also, requires CSOs to receive prior approval from the CSC before organizing fundraising events and opening bank accounts. In 2020, the Tripoli-based CSC began to enforce these requirements on CSOs operating under its jurisdiction. CSOs in other regions of the country do not experience any limitations on their right to receive funding.

Other laws also continue to pose threats to CSOs. For example, Article 208 of the Libyan Penal Code states that if a Libyan citizen establishes or joins an international association without permission, he or she could be subject to imprisonment. While there are no known instances of this provision being enforced in 2020, it continues to present a risk to CSOs with international ties.

CSOs and activists continued to be subject to state harassment in 2020. In August, the UN Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) issued a statement expressing concerns over the country's deteriorating human rights situation and highlighting the increasing harassment of CSOs and human rights defenders. In August 2020, HIRAK August 23 organized public protests in Tripoli and two other cities over the lack of public services and the extended power cuts, as well as the government's poor management of the COVID-19 pandemic. According to Human Rights Watch, during the demonstrations, Tripoli-based armed groups linked with the GNA rounded up protesters, a number of whom subsequently disappeared; one protester was allegedly killed. Because of this incident, many CSOs and activists began to practice self-censorship. Human Rights Watch, also, reported that in September, armed groups affiliated with the LAAF and the Interim Government cracked down on anti-corruption protests in the eastern towns of Al-Marj and Benghazi, reportedly killing one protester and arresting an unknown number of people. On the international level, the UN Human Rights Council established a fact-finding mission on June 22 to investigate violations of international humanitarian law by all parties involved in the Libyan conflict since the beginning of 2016. However, due to COVID-19, the mission was postponed until 2021.

No changes were made to the taxation of CSOs in 2020, and CSOs are still exempt from taxes.

Local legal capacity did not change in 2020. Only a small number of lawyers specialize in the work of CSOs. The requirements of Decree No. 286-2018 made access to legal services increasingly important for CSOs. The few legal experts that exist are expensive and mainly work with INGOs.

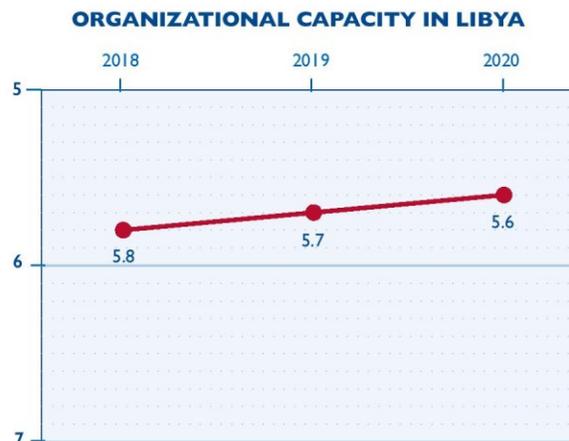
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## **ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY: 5.6**

Despite the critical conditions in the country caused by the ongoing armed conflict and COVID-19, the organizational capacity of CSOs improved slightly in 2020 as their ability to mobilize resources and reach out to their constituencies increased. In general, however, the organizational capacity of many CSOs remains weak, with only those that benefit from collaboration with or funding from INGOs demonstrating greater capacities.

During the pandemic, coalitions such as the Libyan Women's Network for Peacebuilding were able to mobilize many volunteers across the country to raise awareness about the virus and provide personal protective equipment (PPE) to vulnerable groups. Similarly, the Tripoli University Debate Club launched a campaign named I Volunteer that raised awareness about COVID-19 and organized volunteers to help sanitize public places. The CSO Moomken produced educational videos for students to use as online learning tools during the pandemic.

In the past two years, a number of initiatives have aimed to improve internet access and the telecommunications infrastructure in the country, including by lowering internet tariffs. Of particular note, the government issued a decree in February 2020 requiring all internet service providers, including state and private providers, to offer a 50 percent discount on internet subscription services, thereby ensuring increased broadband access for much of the country's population. As a result of such improvements, CSOs were able to adapt swiftly to remote working conditions and use Facebook, Zoom, and other social media and communication platforms to reach their beneficiaries and constituencies to the extent possible. CSOs also used a number of local workspaces, including Nuqta and Hive Space in Tripoli, Tatweer Space in Benghazi, and Eylyes Space in Sabha, to maintain communication with their constituents.



During the year, CSOs improved their outreach to marginalized constituencies, including women, IDPs, and people with disabilities. For example, some CSOs like the Libyan Scout Movement, the Libyan Red Crescent, and the Taher Al Zawi Foundation (STACO) conducted extensive outreach activities that targeted IDPs in Tripoli. CSOs like Zaikum Zaina reached out to people with disabilities to protect them from COVID-19 by producing awareness-raising materials, including a video in sign language that discussed the virus and prevention methods. In most cases, CSOs' constituents were able to access online services provided by CSOs through their mobile phones, which were the most reliable means of communication due to the ongoing power outages.

Most CSOs in Libya do not follow their mission statements and instead shift between different priorities due to the constant changes on the ground and their dependence on foreign funding. Some organizations like Jusoor and Tanmia 360 modified their activities in the first half of the year from economic empowerment and capacity building to focus more on advocacy and policy dialogue around COVID-19. This included analyzing and discussing the impact of the pandemic on small and medium enterprises (SMEs) and ensuring that a gender perspective was considered while addressing the health crisis. More experienced CSOs engage in strategic planning, however, most CSOs respond to donors' funding priorities. Furthermore, the majority of CSOs do not develop or make use of evaluation tools to assess the implementation or impact of their activities.

Many CSOs continue to lack governance structures. All CSOs are legally required to define the roles and responsibilities of their boards in their articles of associations; however, these roles and responsibilities are not always clear. CSOs rarely hold or record annual meetings with members. At the same time, experienced organizations continued to respect democratic processes. For example, in 2020, H2O held an internal election and appointed a new board of directors and new members to its management team in order to demonstrate their adherence to democratic procedures and introduce new people into the organization. The organization also published the results on its social media platforms.

COVID-19 did not significantly impact the staffing situation of CSOs in Libya as most struggled to retain permanent staff even before the crisis. CSO staff are commonly hired on a short-term basis in line with project funding, which prevents employees from benefiting from employment rights, such as social security, which CSOs are legally required to offer only to longer-term employees. CSOs generally cannot afford the cost of professional services of accountants, information technology (IT) experts, or lawyers and there are no pro bono services offering such services to CSOs.

Volunteerism is quite common in CSOs engaged in providing charity, relief, and aid. However, not all CSOs understand the importance of engaging volunteers in their projects. H2O organizes monthly meetings for its volunteers to broaden their expertise and keep them engaged in its activities, including their observation of local elections throughout the year.

As noted above, in 2020, CSOs increased their use of modern technologies, especially to reach their beneficiaries and supporters. The digital tools most commonly used by CSOs included platforms like Zoom and Viber. However, CSOs faced a number of hurdles in these efforts. Most donors do not allow CSOs to use project funds

to buy or upgrade their computers and other equipment. While internet access has improved, long power cuts and high prices for quality services still posed significant challenges to some CSOs seeking to implement online activities. Most organizations, however, found innovative ways around these obstacles. For example, CSOs often used cheaper and more widespread mobile 3G services to reach out to their constituents or accessed available hubs with power generators to avoid power outages.

## FINANCIAL VIABILITY: 6.0



The financial viability of CSOs continued to be weak in 2020. CSOs are still almost entirely dependent on international donors to fund their operations, while support from local donors is almost non-existent and their funding decisions are not transparent. Only a few organizations conduct income-generating activities.

The legal restrictions imposed by the CSC in Tripoli limit CSOs' opportunities to receive both foreign and local funding. CSOs in the western region must get approval from the CSC before receiving any grants and donations and before organizing any fundraising events. While this requirement is not systematically enforced, CSOs such as Moomken, Adassa, and Israr noted that they had to notify and receive approval from the CSC before receiving funds in 2020. This procedure is particularly

burdensome on the CSOs that receive funds from multiple donors. The regulations do not give any details on the approval process, like the conditions for refusal or the appeal process.

CSOs continued to encounter challenges in opening bank accounts and conducting banking transactions in the country in 2020. In addition, many CSOs in Libya retain foreign bank accounts in Tunisia or Turkey. COVID-19 related travel restrictions and the lockdown prevented these organizations from being able to access these funds, particularly when the border with Tunisia was closed. A few INGOs struggled to deliver money and in-kind support to their beneficiaries due to the lockdown measures. Overall, CSOs faced a severe cash liquidity crisis during the year.

The main foreign donors providing assistance to CSOs in Libya include the Delegation of the European Union (EU), USAID, and the German Embassy. In addition, many INGOs and UN agencies receive direct support from diplomatic missions to Libya, including those from Canada, Italy, Sweden, Japan, and France; local CSOs operate as local partners in some of these projects. In 2020, many CSOs received small grants from the World Food Program (WFP), the International Organization for Migration, the UN Development Programme (UNDP), and the UN Population Fund (UNFPA) to support their communities during the lockdown period. Meanwhile, donors like USAID continued their support for local elections, which were held in some areas during the year. With USAID funding, the National Democratic Institute (NDI), for example, offered support for CSOs to observe local elections. The International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) awarded small grants to CSOs to run public awareness campaigns about the pandemic in their local communities. Taqarib, another project funded by USAID, awarded many CSOs with small grants to conduct small-scale local delivery projects in local communities, such as street cleaning and environmental awareness-raising programs for children.

The role of local funding in financing CSOs' activities continues to be limited. The government did not offer any funding to CSOs in 2020 except some support provided through public companies like the telecommunication companies Libyana and Madar, which mainly sponsored technology events during the year. CSOs rarely engage in fundraising or philanthropic efforts and do not make sufficient use of mechanisms to garner financial support, such as crowdfunding, fundraising websites, or subscription fees. The small amount of local donations during the year was directed to humanitarian and charity work to support COVID-19 relief, IDPs, and other disadvantaged people. For example, charity organizations, like Mahbaa to Support Orphans in Tripoli and Ataa Alkhayr, which is based in the south, managed to collect donations during religious holidays to support their charitable work and to provide in-kind support and humanitarian assistance to those impacted by COVID-19. However, donations were generally

limited to specific activities and did not include support for training or economic development. CSOs only receive support from the Libyan diaspora when they have personal connections. Local private sector funding for CSOs was severely restricted due to the conflict and the pandemic. CSOs rarely collect membership dues.

Due to the lockdown and social distancing restrictions in place in 2020, few CSOs were able to generate revenue from the sale of services, including renting out their premises, conducting training activities, or providing consulting services. This situation improved slightly when the lockdown measures eased in the second half of the year, although the revenue earned still comprised a small share of CSOs' income overall. The government still does not contract with CSOs to provide services.

The majority of CSOs still lack financial management systems because they are expensive and would require permanent professional employees to use them effectively.

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## ADVOCACY: 5.0

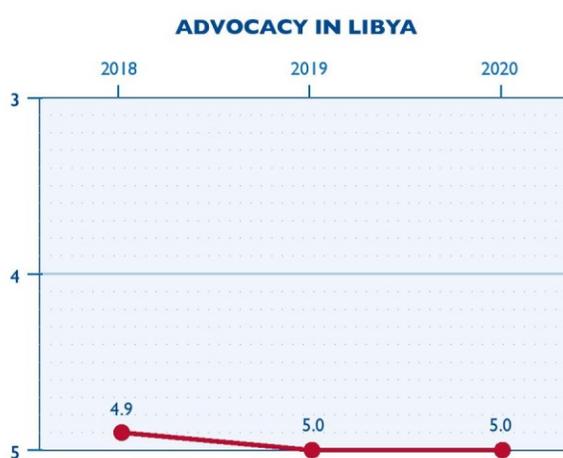
CSO advocacy did not change notably in 2020. While some advocacy efforts were successful, others were ineffective. In light of the pandemic and the fighting in the west during the first half of the year, advocacy activities were not seen as a priority. In addition, the legislative authority did not meet at all during the year, making legal-focused advocacy impractical.

Cooperation between CSOs and local and central government officials was limited in 2020. Women's rights CSOs formed an alliance, led by Jusoor, the Tamazight Women's Movement, and Hakki for Women's Rights, to lobby for women's participation in Libya's COVID-19 Scientific Advisory Committee, which was formed by the GNA in March 2020. The alliance contacted the GNA and the High Council of State, an advisory body that was formed under the terms of the 2015 Libyan Political Agreement, to create more pressure to include women in the response committees and to provide a more balanced gender perspective in developing response plans and policies. However, the group was unsuccessful in its efforts and no CSOs were invited to participate in the advisory committee. Other than this effort, CSOs did not engage in any advocacy focused on government accountability during the pandemic.

CSOs were able to engage in a few impactful lobbying initiatives in 2020 despite the difficult circumstances. The 30 Quota Alliance successfully campaigned for a 30 percent quota for women's representation in government as part of the new peace negotiations. As a result of the online campaigns and lobbying with other alliances and actors, the roadmap produced by the Libyan Political Forum Dialogue committed the designated executive authority to appoint women to at least 30 percent of positions in the new government. This was a significant victory, given that only three ministers in the previous government were women.

After first initiating its activities online, the Hirak 23 August movement organized the first public demonstrations in Libya in several years. The protests took place in many cities across Libya to decry the economic hardship, poor public services, long power outages, and poor management of the COVID-19 response in the country. The movement's main demands were to dissolve all political bodies, fight corruption, and improve living conditions. After the protesters were attacked by armed groups in the eastern and western regions, the government in the west declared a curfew that lasted ten days in an attempt to control the demonstrations. The head of the GNA issued a statement in which he committed to take measures to combat corruption and improve public services; however, nothing tangible had resulted from these promises by the end of the year.

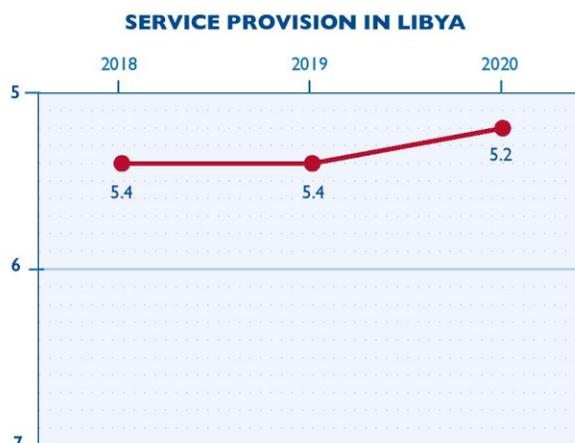
CSOs also carried out public awareness campaigns on different topics in 2020. UNFPA partners Huna Libya, International Medical Cooperation, and Women Safe Spaces developed a local initiative called We All Have a Role to support the international 16 Days of Activism campaign to address gender-based violence. As a result of these efforts, the Women's Empowerment Unit in the GNA joined the campaign and organized a closing ceremony in



Tripoli. While the event did not lead to any direct legislative changes, it significantly raised public awareness about the issue and encouraged more discussion on what had previously been a taboo subject.

CSOs did not engage in any advocacy in 2020 related to the legal environment governing the sector.

## SERVICE PROVISION: 5.2



CSO service provision improved moderately in 2020. Despite the critical challenges during the year, the CSO sector provided a diverse range of services, including public awareness campaigns about COVID-19 and humanitarian relief to victims of the pandemic and the ongoing conflict. While CSO service provision increased in 2020, CSOs were still not able to provide services to all who needed them.

CSOs led numerous public awareness campaigns to educate the population on how to stop the spread of COVID-19 in 2020. With support from NDI, organizations working on minority rights helped spread awareness about COVID-19 preventative measures, including the use of PPE and social distancing practices, in their local communities. Both Tira and At Willul

translated COVID-19 updates from the National Health Authorities into the Tamazight language and posted them on their social media platforms. In the city of Ajdabia, Nessa Raedat (Pioneer Women) organized a COVID-19 awareness campaign in cooperation with the Red Cross; it also assisted in sanitizing public locations and called on people to stay at home during the pandemic. The popular CSO H2O launched a weekly report called Eye on Corona that compiled and disseminated information from various reliable sources related to the COVID-19 outbreak in Libya. It also launched a public health awareness campaign about the spread of the virus on social media using infographics designed by H2O members. The Unite Against the Virus effort became an important awareness-raising campaign led by The Platform, a Facebook page supported by UNDP.

CSOs also played an increasing role in distributing humanitarian aid and basic goods and services throughout the country. For example, Libyan aid organizations continued to provide aid to those affected by the armed conflict in southern Tripoli after the attack on the capital. Many families were forced to take refuge in one of the city's schools; organizations such as the Libyan Scouts and the Red Crescent provided them with necessary materials, such as blankets, household goods, and medical needs.

CSOs also continued to provide other types of services. Through a joint project with UNFPA, the Psychosocial Support Group (PSS) ran a Psychosocial Support Hotline that fielded hundreds of calls and provided psychosocial support and legal consultations to victims of emotional, domestic, and physical abuse throughout the pandemic. In Sirte, Tracks Organization for Peace & Development delivered training workshops for young activists in the city on so-called soft skills ranging from effective communication to leadership and time management. UNICEF and Almobader partnered to provide 800 young women and men in Sirte with similar soft skills training, as well as civic education.

Organizations like Hakki, Development Libya (Inmaa), and Juosor for Legal Aid offered free legal aid and raised legal awareness of women, poor people, and IDPs. In the east, organizations like Mizaan and Tanmia 360 ran projects on civic education and capacity building for CSOs on topics such as fundraising and strategic planning. Other organizations like Hexa Connection, Fab Lab, and Alber W Taqwa supported economic empowerment training for women through the Reyada 6x6 Women Entrepreneurs projects funded by the European Commission.

Many local CSOs supported women's rights. The UNFPA Women and Girls Safe Spaces program continued to provide remote and in-person services, including psychosocial support and livelihood training sessions, throughout the country. Twelve CSOs were awarded grants from UNDP and UN Women to reduce gender inequality and improve the lives of women and migrants in the west, east, and south of Libya.

Most CSOs lack data collection and evaluation capacities. Many CSOs still work as service providers to INGOs instead of true local partners. Beneficiary needs are still likely to be determined by international implementers and donors. Only a few CSOs even informally conduct needs assessments about the main issues facing their constituents.

Most CSOs do not discriminate in the provision of services. However, most CSO activities are not held in spaces or venues that are accessible to people with disabilities. Also, most projects target Libyans as beneficiaries, excluding non-Libyans from participating in these projects. A few CSOs provide services to refugees and migrants, but these programs exclude those officially residing in the country.

CSOs still rely almost solely on funding from international donors to provide services. Most services provided by CSOs are made available for free and are extended to non-members. Decree No. 286-2018 prohibits CSOs from providing services for profit. Typically, a few experienced organizations are able to rent out training and meeting space. However, the war and resulting economic crisis, as well as the pandemic, made it almost impossible for these organizations to generate any meaningful income through such services in 2020.

The government's recognition of CSO services improved in 2020. The GNA's minister of interior met twice with CSO representatives to consult with them on the needs of their local communities, while the National Center for Disease Control (NCDC) worked closely with CSOs when developing its COVID-19 public awareness campaigns.

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## SECTORAL INFRASTRUCTURE: 5.8

The infrastructure supporting the CSO sector remained largely the same in 2020, although some new capacity-building programs were initiated and cooperation within the sector improved slightly. While CSOs have access to various support services like training, advisory services, and mentorship, there are still no long-term, comprehensive programs that support different types of CSOs.

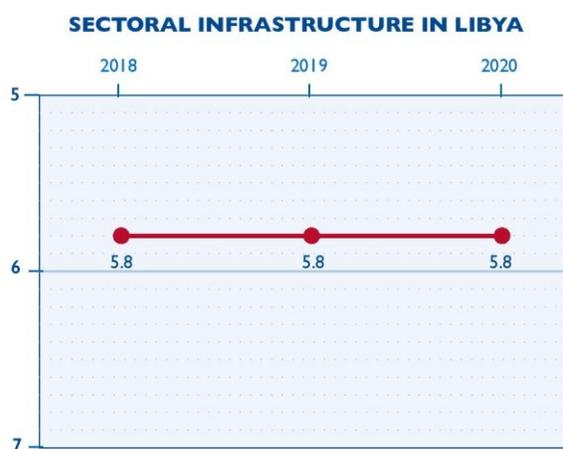
Intermediary support organizations (ISOs) still do not exist in Libya. In addition to its oversight role, the CSC in Benghazi provides legal, accounting, and operational support to CSOs. However, most CSOs are still not aware of the CSC's advisory role.

Several new grant programs were initiated in 2020 that focused on building the capacity of CSOs. In early 2020, with funding from the EU, the Agency for Technical Cooperation and Development (ACTED) and the British Council launched a program to strengthen the institutional capacity of local CSOs. UN Women ran several programs to enhance the capacity of women's organizations and networks across the country. Also, the UN Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) helped to strengthen the conflict assessment skills of local CSOs. These programs are all managed by INGOs; there are no local grantmaking organizations in Libya.

Larger organizations were limited in their ability to provide office space to smaller CSOs free of charge or even for a limited fee in 2020 due to the lockdown and social distancing rules. For example, LEAP, a women's space operated by Jusoor that housed other CSOs, was closed down because of the conflict and the pandemic.

A few programs were initiated in 2020 that focus on building the capacity of CSOs. With funding from the EU, the British Council launched a program to build the capacity of CSOs in Libya to deliver services; the program will also build resource centers in the three main regions of the country. INGOs like NDI and IFES continued working with CSOs with a focus on enhancing their operational skills during the pandemic.

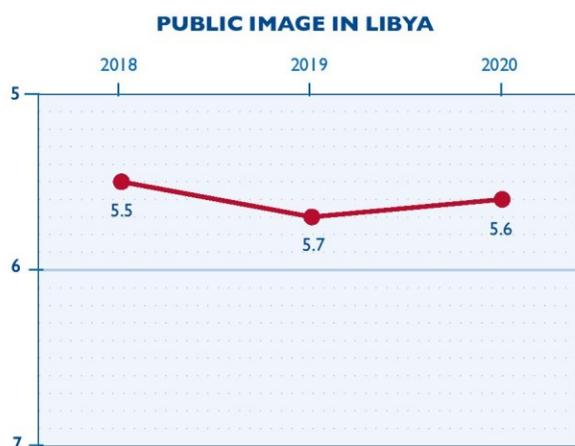
Cooperation within the CSO sector improved slightly in 2020. In response to the pandemic, some CSO coalitions and networks shifted their focus to spread awareness about the pandemic with support from international donors and INGOs. Some of these initiatives included the Coalition of Libyan Women Pioneers, funded by the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office, and the I Am volunteer awareness campaign, organized by debate clubs supported by



NDI. Other CSOs took part in a joint action that called for an immediate ceasefire to the armed conflict in the lead-up to the signing of the final agreement in October. As noted earlier, a new alliance of CSOs led by UNFPA was formed around the 16 Days of Activism campaign against gender-based violence.

CSOs developed some limited intersectoral partnerships with local governments in response to the pandemic. For example, organizations like the Libyan Women's Union in the South (LWUS) and the Fessato Foundation carried out joint projects with municipal councils to raise awareness about COVID-19. Some projects, such as the USAID-funded Taqarib service delivery program, which is implemented by DAI, required CSOs to have an affiliation with the municipal councils. As a result, the councils increasingly recognized the importance of collaborating with local CSOs to help them carry out their work during the pandemic. CSOs did not form any concrete partnerships with local businesses or media in 2020.

## PUBLIC IMAGE: 5.6



CSOs' public image improved slightly in 2020.

Media coverage of CSOs' activities slightly improved in 2020, particularly in the areas of the country controlled by the GNA. Both private and public media outlets provided wide coverage of CSOs' events and highlighted their prominent role in responding to the pandemic. For instance, Salam Media Network's weekly program "Sharik" reported on civil society activities in Libya. In 2020, some private media outlets, such as Al-Kul Channel, Al-Waw, and Al-Wasat Newspaper, provided more coverage of issues raised by CSOs, including human rights abuses. However, journalists in general still have limited expertise on topics related to democracy and human rights and coverage of the demonstrations in the public media was largely negative.

Generally, the mass media and social media platforms in Libya are filled with hate speech and disinformation campaigns, some of which attempt to discredit CSOs and civil society actors. According to the Stanford Internet Observatory, these disinformation campaigns are perpetrated by all sides in the conflict, as well as foreign supporters of the rival regimes. For the first time, CSOs developed a few initiatives focused specifically on combating this phenomenon in 2020. For example, the Falso platform, which was funded by the German Embassy and implemented by the Libyan Center for Freedom of the Press, exposed disinformation and hate speech in Libyan social media.

Charity and humanitarian relief organizations are generally viewed positively by the public. Perceptions of these CSOs improved further in 2020 as the public recognized their increased aid efforts during the pandemic. However, CSOs that work on issues related to human rights, women's rights, and democracy are commonly perceived as promoting foreign agendas or using grant funds for their personal use.

The GNA's perception of CSOs improved somewhat in 2020 as evidenced by the fact that more CSOs were included in governmental meetings. For example, the minister of interior in the GNA met with CSO representatives to discuss the needs of their local communities, while NCDRC worked closely with CSOs on its COVID-19 public awareness campaigns and outreach efforts. The private sector distrusts CSOs that receive foreign funding and remains dismissive of the important role that CSOs play in supporting and working with local communities.

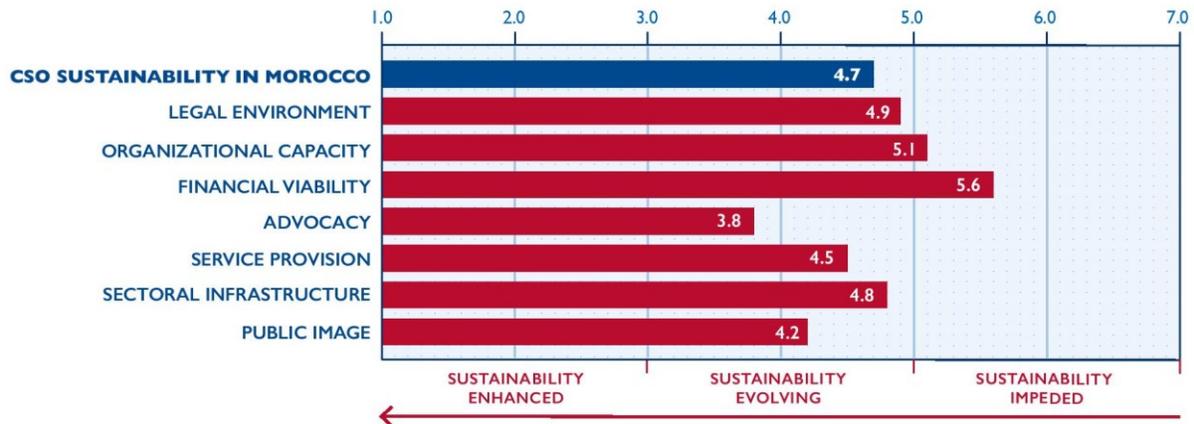
CSOs continued to rely on social media platforms to promote their activities and events and to improve their image, due to the platforms' low cost and popularity among Libyans. Nevertheless, CSOs still lack a systematic approach to promoting their image and few engage professionals to manage their public relations and outreach efforts.

While CSOs are required to submit reports to the CSC, only a few publish annual reports and no organizations publish financial statements.

# MOROCCO

Capital: Rabat  
Population: 36,561,813  
GDP per capita (PPP): \$7,515  
Human Development Index: Medium (0.686)  
Freedom in the World: Partly Free (37/100)

## OVERALL CSO SUSTAINABILITY: 4.7



The COVID-19 pandemic had a huge economic and social impact in Morocco in 2020, as it did in the rest of the world. During the year, a total of 439,139 people in Morocco were infected with COVID-19, 7,388 of whom died. The government imposed a lockdown for the first three months of the pandemic, from March 20 to June 10. A state of health emergency, which imposed travel restrictions between certain cities and regions and a nationwide mandatory curfew, remained in effect for the entire year. To stem the spread of the virus, the government called on the army and the police to enforce compliance with these regulations. By the end of May, over 90,000 individuals had been prosecuted for violating the provisions of the health emergency, primarily those related to the restrictions on movement and large meetings or gatherings.

Despite the strict enforcement of the restrictions, demonstrations focused on various issues—including demands that journalists be released from prison, the country's normalization of relations with Israel, and the declining socio-economic conditions in the country—continued to take place both during and after the lockdown. CSOs contributed to these demonstrations by mobilizing people through social media and other means. The authorities banned the majority of these protests due to alleged health concerns. In some cases, such as during a teachers' protest in Rabat in March, police, as well as a few civilians, violently dispersed the crowds.

The pandemic also had a significant impact on the economy. According to Morocco's High Commission for Planning, over the course of the year, the unemployment rate increased from 9.4 percent to 12.7 percent due to the health crisis and the related restrictions. The Brookings Institute noted that the trade deficit grew by 23 percent in the first quarter of the year. Projections estimated that the decrease in tourism, normally the country's largest source of revenue, would lead to a \$14 billion loss in revenue between 2020 and 2022. To mitigate the economic impact of the pandemic, the government gave all households an emergency grant during the three-month lockdown. This amounted to roughly \$200 per month for formally employed workers and between \$90 to \$134 a month for workers employed in the informal sector.

Because of the COVID-19 crisis, Morocco's King Mohammad VI extended the work of the Special Commission on the Development Model (CSMD), which he established in July 2019. The body's objective is to develop recommendations for a new development model that would address the fields of education, agriculture, health, investment, and taxation, among others. Over the course of 2020, dozens of online and face-to-face meetings were organized with civil society, business leaders, and other experts to produce the final report, which will include the outlines of the new model and will be presented to the King in early 2021.

Overall CSO sustainability remained the same in 2020. The legal environment deteriorated due to increased harassment of human rights CSOs and activists and the limitations on the freedoms of expression and association

imposed by the government under the pretext of combatting COVID-19. The public image of CSOs improved slightly, due to the increased visibility and effectiveness of CSOs' actions during the pandemic. All other dimensions of sustainability remained unchanged.

Morocco hosted more than 220,000 registered associations in 2020. Most CSOs work on local development; only 1.4 percent of associations work in the field of human rights. According to a statement issued by the minister for parliament-civil society relations in April 2020, CSOs contributed about 1 percent to the country's gross domestic product (GDP) in 2019 and have become an important source of jobs. Many CSOs are local cooperatives focused on the economic development of their village or region. These organizations have commercial objectives and operate like companies. While there are many unions, only the top three elected representatives in each union have the right to negotiate with the government about measures related to improving workers' rights.

## LEGAL ENVIRONMENT: 4.9



The legal environment governing CSOs deteriorated slightly in 2020 due to the increased harassment of some CSOs and activists, the arrests of protesters and government critics, and a clampdown on the freedoms of assembly and expression.

Associations and foundations continue to be regulated by Dahir (royal decree) on the Right to Create Associations (1-58-376 of 1958), as amended, and Application Decree No. 2-04-969 of 2005 on the Implementation of Decree No. 1-58-376 governing the formation of CSOs. Cooperatives are governed by Law No. 112-12, while the Dahir of July 16, 1957, governs professional unions. A new law on unions, which was drafted in 2019, was still pending before parliament in 2020. Unions strongly oppose the proposed law, which aims to prohibit all

types of general strikes, either by garnishing the strikers' wages or by expelling the strike initiators from the union, which all unions refuse to do. The Ministry of the Interior is the line ministry for all CSOs.

To gain legal status, CSOs must formally notify the government of their establishment. Dahir 1-58-376 clearly stipulates that any association that has submitted its application should be given a registration receipt on the spot. In reality, however, the authorities ask associations to return after several weeks or months to get this receipt and in some cases do not give it at all. In addition, various government entities impose different requirements, such as the number of copies of the application and supporting documents that must be submitted. In some cases, local authorities ask CSOs to provide additional documents that are not required by law. Although the majority of CSOs agree that amendments need to be made to the Dahir, this is not currently on the agenda of the government or parliament.

Associations that focus on advocacy and human rights continue to have problems with registration. A number of associations such as the Association for the Taxation of Financial Transactions (Association pour la Taxation des Transactions financières, ATTAC), Citizen Action (Action Citoyenne), and the Moroccan Movement for Human Rights (Instance Marocaine des Droits de l'Homme, IMDH) have been unable to receive their registration receipts. According to Human Rights Watch, authorities continue to impede the work of the Moroccan Association for Human Rights (Association Marocaine des Droits Humains, AMDH), the country's largest human rights group. AMDH said that, as of September 2020, seventy-nine of its ninety-nine local branches had been unable to get registration receipts from the authorities, impeding their ability to carry out functions like opening new bank accounts or renting space. In January 2020, twenty prominent human rights associations created the National Initiative to Defend the Right to Organize (Droit à l'organisation) to advocate for the government to address these problems with obtaining legal status.

Media freedom and freedom of expression were threatened during the year. Many journalists and human rights defenders who criticized the government were arrested, as were some rappers who addressed particularly sensitive political topics. For example, activist Ghassan Buddha was charged with "insulting the emblems of the

Kingdom of Morocco,” while the rapper Hamza Sabaar, also known as Stalin, was arrested for “offending public officials or institutions.” In May 2020, journalist Soulaïmane Raïssouni, who is known for his editorials critical of the authorities, was arrested after an activist from the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI) community accused him of sexual assault. Given the unusually lengthy legal investigation period, Raïssouni’s attorneys suspected that the arrest was retaliation for the journalist’s work.

People who questioned the existence of COVID-19 or who criticized the government’s response to combating the health emergency were also arrested in 2020. In April 2020, AMDH’s vice president was charged with defamation for criticizing the COVID-19-related confiscation of street merchants’ goods in the city of Nador, while a member of AMDH was arrested for incitement in May after publishing comments online in support of expanded rights for teachers. Both were acquitted in November 2020. Such arrests sparked indignation from CSOs working on human rights; they organized sit-ins and increasingly called for the release of all activists who had been arrested.

The Penal Code still maintains prison as a punishment for a variety of offenses related to insulting Islam, public officials, and state institutions, as well as “inciting against” Morocco’s “territorial integrity.” A draft law on social media (Law No. 22-20), that would have restricted freedom of expression on social networks, sparked significant public protest in 2020. The bill, which would have given social networks broad censorship powers, banned calls for the boycott of specific goods or services online, and criminalized the spread of false information, was finally withdrawn as a result of the public outcry. In spite of this, Freedom House still noted that “state surveillance of online activity and personal communications is a serious concern” in the country.

Freedom of assembly was also negatively impacted in 2020 by the COVID-19 restrictions and health measures. Several sit-ins and marches were banned because they violated these measures. At the same time, however, gatherings that supported state positions, such as the normalization of relations with Israel, were allowed to take place.

Dahir No. 1-58-376 states that CSOs can apply for public benefit status in order to receive tax benefits and qualify for government funding. However, the application procedure is complicated and requires CSOs to provide a number of certified documents. In addition to this, the authorities generally grant this status at their own discretion. As a result, only a few CSOs, usually those with political connections, have successfully obtained this status. In 2020, only two associations—the Moroccan Telemedicine Society (Société Marocaine de Télémédecine) and the Moroccan Education Foundation for Employment (Fondation Marocaine de l’éducation pour l’emploi)—were granted public benefit status. Sports federations authorized under Article 17 of Law No. 06-87 on physical education and sports automatically receive public benefit status.

CSOs are exempt from income (profit) tax. All CSOs are required to keep accounting records and to submit financial reports to the Moroccan General Tax Administration at the end of each fiscal year. Like all employers, CSOs are subject to withholding of income tax from salaries or compensation paid to third parties, such as experts and trainers. Taxes paid late are subject to financial penalties. Only services provided by nonprofit associations with public benefit status are exempt from the value-added tax (VAT). CSOs have only a limited understanding of their tax rights and obligations. With USAID support, the Movement of Initiatives for the Reform of the Laws of Associations in Morocco (Mouvement des initiatives pour la réforme des lois des associations au Maroc, MIRLA) was formed in 2019 to advocate for a reduction of taxes on CSO services and staff salaries, which are currently applied at the same rate as corporations. A number of progressive amendments proposed by MIRLA were included in the proposed 2021 finance bill. These include tax relief for young professionals (up to age thirty-five) hired by CSOs, an exemption from a new solidarity tax, and a one-year income tax exemption for CSO workers rehired after losing their jobs in 2020 as a result of the pandemic.

CSOs can receive foreign funds but must declare them to the General Secretariat of the Government (GSG) within thirty days. Two activists were charged with the inappropriate use of foreign funding in 2020. In one case, Omar Radi, an outspoken journalist and activist, was charged with receiving funds for espionage and undermining state security. A few weeks later, Radi was charged in a second case for the rape of a colleague. Radi issued a press release denying all of these accusations and insisting that the relationship between him and his colleague was consensual. Radi’s attorneys feel that these accusations were politically motivated and that Radi was targeted for his criticism of government corruption and its infringement of human rights.

Many CSOs are unaware of their legal rights and obligations. This problem is exacerbated by the fact that CSOs lack legal expertise and do not have access to competent lawyers in the field. In addition, there is a dearth of specialized training about CSOs’ legal rights and obligations.

## ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY: 5.1

The organizational capacity of CSOs remained largely unchanged in 2020. The majority of CSOs continue to have limited organizational capacities. Most do not even have office space, and if they do, they are unlikely to have the financial resources needed to maintain a team to handle the administrative and financial management of projects. Restrictions related to COVID-19 prevented CSOs from improving their organizational capacities in 2020, making it more difficult for them to develop their internal structures, expand their membership, or attract new supporters.

Most CSOs work with different interest groups to address local issues. A few associations work in the fields of entrepreneurship, public policy monitoring, or human rights. They have clearly defined interest groups and target their potential constituents with different recruitment strategies, although their outreach relies primarily on social networks and personal relationships. In 2020, various associations addressed issues surrounding COVID-19, including educating the public about ways to combat or avoid the virus and tracking the government's management of the pandemic.

Very few CSOs have clear strategic visions to which they adhere. In these organizations, the executive committee prepares the strategic plan and presents it to the other members. However, many CSOs either work on local, time-sensitive issues that are not planned in advance or prioritize donor-funded projects over their own strategic plans.

Most CSOs have weak governance structures. According to the latest official statistics from the High Commission for Planning (HCP), in 2017 only 1.1 percent of CSOs had a board of directors elected by a regular assembly and only 3 percent had an executive committee and a board of directors. Most organizations depend on an individual leader and there is little turnover in the leadership of most Moroccan CSOs.

The capacity of some cooperatives improved in 2020. During the year, the A4Community program of the Cherif Phosphates Office (Office Chérifien des Phosphates, OCP) provided training to twenty-eight cooperatives aimed at developing and improving the cooperatives' production and business skills. As a result of the training, some cooperatives were able to decrease their production times, while others reoriented their activities to better meet the region's needs. In addition, some began producing protective masks, thus earning unexpected income during the pandemic. In addition, the Ayadi Al Fath program persuaded more than 5,000 employers to make purchases from cooperatives rather than from large businesses based in Morocco or Europe. This was achieved through educational efforts that stressed the benefits to the local economy.

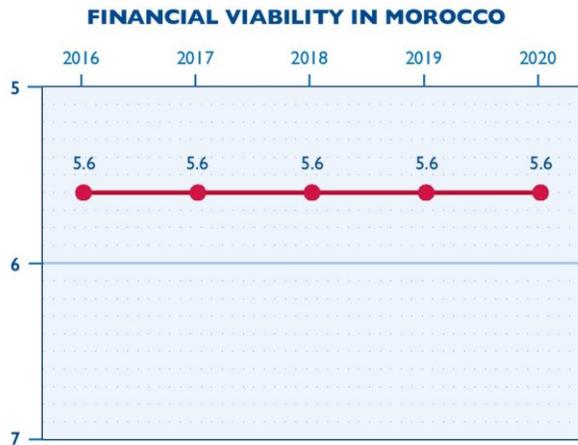
Foreign donors rarely support CSOs' operational costs, which makes it difficult for CSOs to retain stable premises and staff. CSOs also have high staff turnover as they are unable to ensure employment over the medium or longer term; as a result, their staff is always searching for more stable employment.

The lack of operational funding forces CSOs to rely on volunteers to complete tasks that staff are unable to handle. But volunteers require more time and energy to train and reduce the effectiveness of CSOs' work as they often have other professional commitments. During the pandemic, the number of volunteers increased, as the public became more aware of the important role associations played in responding to the pandemic and its health consequences.

High-quality internet access is available in most of Morocco's major cities, and decent internet connections are even available in villages. This enabled CSOs to improve their technological skills and manage their online presence more actively during the pandemic, thereby allowing them to better promote their image via social networks and increase sponsorships.



## FINANCIAL VIABILITY: 5.6



CSOs' financial viability did not change notably in 2020.

The state is still the primary donor for CSOs, contributing more than 80 percent of the sector's funding, according to a speech by the minister for parliament-civil society relations in 2019. The level of public funding for CSOs did not change in 2020 in comparison to the previous years. The government did not provide significant funding to CSOs to help with its COVID-19 response.

The National Initiative for Human Development (INDH), which is part of the Ministry of Interior, is one of the largest distributors of government funds in Morocco. In its third phase of activity between 2019 and 2023, it had a budget of MAD 18 billion (approximately \$1.88 billion) to support civil society, including MAD 4 billion for

infrastructure and basic services in the most disadvantaged areas. However, INDH continues to be subject to criticism, primarily for allocating several billion dirhams to construction every year, instead of using these funds for human development. In addition, it has been criticized because the criteria for selecting CSOs are not transparent and there is a lack of clarity in its oversight of the administrative and financial management of projects and the final evaluation requirements. Furthermore, critics have noted that a majority of CSOs supported by INDH were created just to receive funding from the initiative.

According to the GSG, in 2020, a total of MAD 310 million (almost \$33 million) in foreign funding was received by over 273 Moroccan CSOs, a decrease of MAD 5 million in comparison to 2019. Some donors continued to support programs that they had already planned in 2020, while others created new initiatives to address the COVID-19 pandemic. For example, USAID allocated approximately \$6 million to local CSOs to fight COVID-19. In 2020, the second phase of the Moucharaka Mouwatina program was launched. Funded by the European Union (EU) and implemented by the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS), the EUR 12.5 million program seeks to strengthen Moroccan CSOs' contributions to the rule of law, democracy, and development. The first phase of the program reached hundreds of CSOs.

The lockdown and other restrictive measures introduced to control the spread of COVID-19 forced several CSOs to return funds to donors because they could not spend their entire allocated budgets. As there were few possibilities to hold onsite training and events, line items for accommodation, transportation, coffee breaks, and room rental were often underspent.

CSOs generally respond to donors' calls for projects, although some CSOs take the initiative and contact embassies, international organizations, or businesses directly to ask for funding. The use of crowdfunding is still almost nonexistent in Morocco. Corporate support declined during 2020 because most companies' income was negatively impacted by COVID-19. However, some government corporations such as OCP made funding available to Moroccan cooperatives.

Associations are not able to generate income through their activities, while cooperatives are legally able to do so. In 2020, some cooperatives' ability to earn income improved, as described above, while others were challenged by COVID-19, the lockdown, and the resulting economic slowdown. A few were able to survive on donations or funding from the OCP program.

In general, Moroccan CSOs do not have sufficient knowledge about their financial obligations. CSOs generally maintain simple accounting records. Government oversight bodies and donors sometimes order audits of programs they fund.

## ADVOCACY: 3.8

CSO advocacy did not change in 2020. CSOs maintained the same limited pace of advocacy during the year due to complicated procedures and the continued lack of interest by political actors in working with them in a meaningful manner.

Both CSOs and citizens have the right to submit legislative motions and petitions to public authorities. Law 64-14 of 2016 defines legislative motions as “any initiative submitted by citizens...with the goal of participating in a legislative initiative.” The law requires the signatures of 25,000 registered voters in order to introduce a legislative motion. Law 44-16 of 2017 defines petitions as “any written request that includes demands, proposals, or recommendations, sent by citizens who reside in Morocco or in other countries, to the

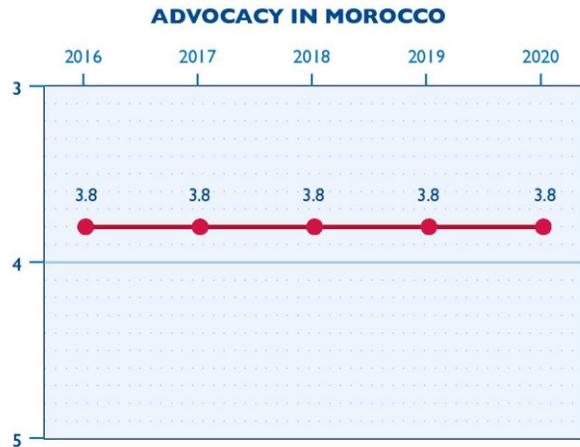
appropriate government entity in order to take appropriate measures.” Petitions require 5,000 signatures from registered voters for presentation to local governments or parliament. In 2020, two petitions were filed; one was focused on free cancer care and the other was related to gender parity in government positions. Only the petition calling for free cancer care, which was supported by more than 40,000 people, was deemed to be in conformity with the law; in the end, however, this did not lead to any legislative change as the government decided that the request was not feasible. The Moroccan Outlaws initiated a petition in 2020 asking for the criminal code to be revised by removing Article 489, which calls for imprisonment for those who engage in premarital sexual relationships. Despite its popularity and its large support base on social networks, the petition was unable to collect the minimal number of signatures. Some who signed were not registered to vote, while others who may have favored the measure did not want to provide their personal information.

According to the government minister responsible for human rights and parliament relations, “Despite the efforts to implement the right to petition, progress is still modest, and remains below expectations and aspirations.” At the local level, CSOs filed 166 petitions and citizens filed 46 petitions. However, these petitions were submitted to only 97 municipalities out of the 1,590 in the country, or just 6 percent of the total number of municipalities.

Given the difficulties with initiating petitions and motions, most CSOs prefer to pursue their advocacy goals directly through meetings with party presidents, parliamentary deputies, presidents of local and regional councils and commissions, and higher councils.

In 2020, CSOs engaged in advocacy in several areas. Local activists and social media influencers conducted a large-scale campaign against the draft social media bill. The bill was eventually withdrawn as a result of the public outcry. Other activists criticized the government’s COVID-19 contact tracing app due to concerns it might be used to conduct undue surveillance and undermine the right to privacy. The government did not take any action in response to this criticism.

Since August 2018, Morocco has been a member of the Open Government Partnership (OGP), an international platform aimed at strengthening transparency, equity, integrity, and participatory democracy. Morocco adopted an action plan based on eighteen commitments it made to the OGP for the period from August 2018 to August 2020. During this period, the Moroccan government claims that it achieved more than 98 percent of the objectives relating to access to information, 80 percent in integrity and the fight against corruption, 97 percent in communication and awareness of the importance of the OGP, 72 percent in citizen participation, and 74 percent in budget transparency. All the achievements are shared on an online platform ([www.ogp.ma](http://www.ogp.ma)). CSOs are involved in this process through an intermediary forum that allows them to participate in discussions, make recommendations, and propose solutions for the implementation of the action plan, while also conducting their own parallel evaluation of the plan. In line with its commitment to transparency and cooperation with civil society, the government established a virtual space on the website to co-create the new national plan of action for 2021-2022 and to develop new joint projects and initiatives with CSOs.



One successful advocacy campaign in 2020 was the feminist Parity Now initiative, which brought together women from different political parties and CSOs to increase the representation of women in elections and within political party bodies. After multiple meetings, pressure from women’s rights groups, and discussions with the Ministry of the Interior and political parties, Parity Now proposed amendments to the electoral law that would establish quotas for women’s participation in municipal councils. The changes were expected to be passed in early 2021.

The Sim-sim association organized several activities to analyze the electoral law in 2020, resulting in several recommendations to increase transparency and fairness during the 2021 general elections, such as the introduction of electronic voting procedures. An advocacy campaign to implement these procedures will take place in parallel with the presentation of the newly revised electoral law to parliament.

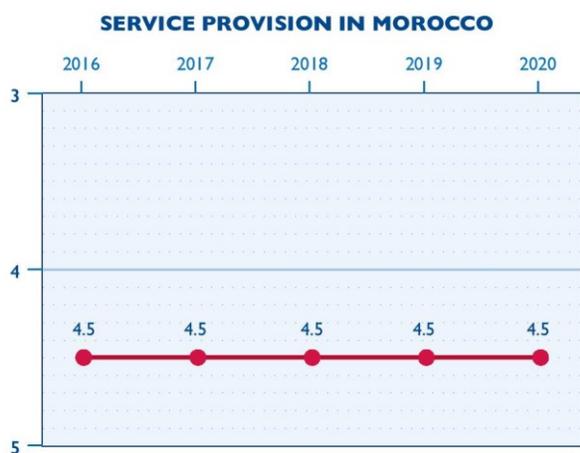
Some human rights CSOs and activists, such as AMDH and Human Rights Watch, advocated to free political prisoners in 2020. In response to the wave of arrests of activists and journalists that continued in 2020, almost 400 cultural and artistic actors signed a petition called *This Shadow is There*, which criticized the heavy-handed approach of the state’s security apparatus. The petition had no real impact; the government did not respond to it, and some government-aligned media attacked some of the petition’s instigators in various news articles. Another petition signed by nearly 700 cultural and artistic actors defended the Moroccan state’s actions, as a form of response to *This Shadow is There*.

A number of groups proposed that the government adopt new social and economic measures to provide financial relief to some of the country’s residents in light of the economic fallout resulting from the pandemic. Led by CSOs such as Prometheus, this campaign noted that “those at the bottom of the ladder, such as migrants, have not yet been taken care of by the government.”

With the support of USAID, CSOs continued to advocate for changes to the finance law, specifically focused on reducing the taxes and duties imposed on CSOs. This became increasingly important in 2020 as a result of the economic crisis exacerbated by the pandemic.

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## SERVICE PROVISION: 4.5



CSOs’ service provision remained largely unchanged in 2020. CSOs offer diverse services in a variety of areas, including culture, art, politics, human rights, sports, health, and education. This range of services has expanded over the past ten years as the number of associations has grown dramatically. For example, environmental services have grown in importance in recent years. During the pandemic, a number of CSOs raised awareness about the importance of the lockdown and social distancing measures, while others provided the homeless with food and shelter. Overall, however, CSOs were not able to provide all the services needed during the crisis, and some were forced to halt their activities altogether because of the pandemic-related restrictions.

Most service-providing CSOs are local organizations formed to respond to clearly defined needs of the most disadvantaged people in specific geographic areas. CSOs identify local needs by contacting people directly and organizing listening sessions with them. Especially when working with INDH, CSOs’ work on the local level is effective and their efforts benefit the local population.

Most CSO services are provided for free. Many cooperatives, which earn their own income, closed in 2020 due to the economic impacts of the lockdown. In addition to affecting the financial position of the cooperatives’ employees and families, this had a ripple effect on the economic situation in the villages where cooperatives play an important role in providing goods and services.

Although they did not provide significant funding to CSOs, the government and local authorities still coordinated their mobilization and public awareness campaigns with CSOs in order to effectively address the COVID-19 crisis in the country. Otherwise, the government and authorities do not significantly support CSOs.

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## SECTORAL INFRASTRUCTURE: 4.8

The infrastructure supporting the CSO sector did not change in 2020. While a variety of training programs were available online, networking between and among CSOs was still quite rare.

CSOs have access to a number of capacity-building programs both online and offline. The French Embassy supports a program in partnership with the Association Intersection (Carrefour Associatif) that aims to strengthen the capacities of CSOs through training in administrative and financial management. The EU's Moucharaka Mouwatina program trained a large number of CSOs to prepare quarterly and annual financial and narrative reports for the first time.

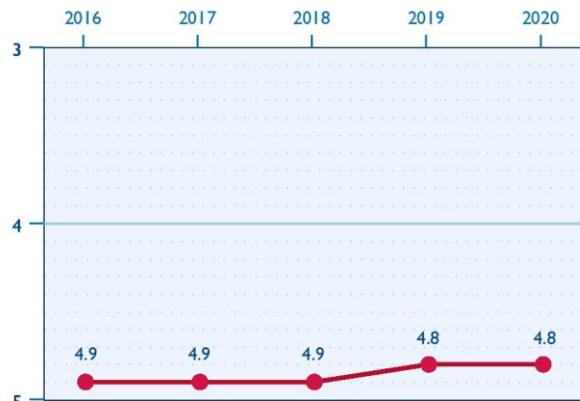
Organizations such as ALCI, Ezzahra Forum for Moroccan Women, the White Dove Association for People with Disabilities, AMSED, and Ennakhil continue to provide advocacy training and support to local CSOs. Some larger CSOs re-grant some of their funding to smaller associations. For example, with funding from the EU and other foreign donors, the Union for Feminist Action (Union de l'Action Féministe) signed grant agreements with more than thirty Moroccan associations to organize activities focused on women's issues, with individual grants ranging in size from USD 1,500 to USD 3,000.

Networking in Morocco remains very limited. Networks lack legal status and CSOs struggle to define joint objectives and strategies to achieve them. CSOs working in the field of human rights, including the rights of the Amazigh, engage in slightly more networking than other CSOs. CSOs that want to come together often simply form new associations rather than networks. For example, Espace Associatif and Carrefour Associatif were each formed by about ten CSOs.

In 2020, CSOs had access to training on COVID-19 and related issues, including the socio-economic situation, mental health, family violence, violence against women, human rights during the lockdown, and the potential negative impact of the social media bill. The majority of trainings and activities during the year were held online as it was not possible to organize in-person events due to health-related restrictions. Internet access is robust in Morocco's largest cities and decent in villages. As a result, these trainings had fairly broad reach, and many people who were not able to participate before were able to do so, as travel was not required. In addition, information about these activities was advertised extensively on social media.

Many CSOs partnered with state actors on government-run programs. As noted above, during the COVID-19 pandemic, the state worked with some CSOs to coordinate its public awareness efforts during and after the lockdown. In 2020, the Forum of Young Journalists in Morocco partnered with media outlets to educate young journalists about how to write effectively about human rights issues.

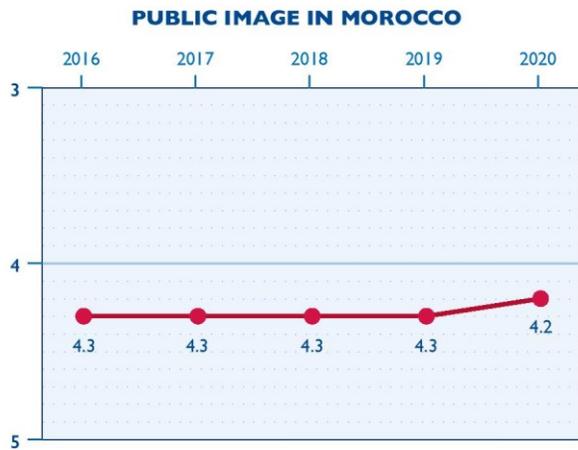
SECTORAL INFRASTRUCTURE IN MOROCCO



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## PUBLIC IMAGE: 4.2

The public image of CSOs improved slightly in 2020 as a result of the effective role they played during the pandemic. During the year, CSOs received extensive media coverage in public media outlets and on influential websites about their efforts to raise public awareness about COVID-19 and their provision of humanitarian aid to the more vulnerable members of society. With USAID funding, Internews continued to work with journalists to enhance their understanding and coverage of CSOs' work, including on the civil society legal environment. In addition, CSOs were more visible on social media and were able to reach out to more people across the country. For example, leading CSOs such as Prometheus, the Modernity and Democracy Forum, and the Morocco Association for Women's Rights became even more visible on social networks in 2020 and, as a result, were able to establish an even greater following than in the past.



Authorities collaborated with CSOs during 2020 and considered them reliable partners in raising public awareness about COVID-19 protocols. This work was done primarily at the grassroots and local levels and, therefore, even neighborhoods that did not previously recognize the impact of CSOs felt it during the lockdown.

However, the government and the public continued to view human rights CSOs negatively. These groups faced criticism from the government for their role in challenging government-mandated COVID-19 restrictions and the subsequent crackdown on civil liberties during the pandemic. At the same time, many members of society were displeased by CSOs' activism against the increase in domestic violence against women,

as large segments of the population continued to deny the severity of the crisis.

The business sector's perception of CSOs did not change much in 2020. Corporations' budgets were negatively impacted by COVID-19. As a result, there was little collaboration between the two sectors and previously planned initiatives were cancelled due to the pandemic and its repercussions.

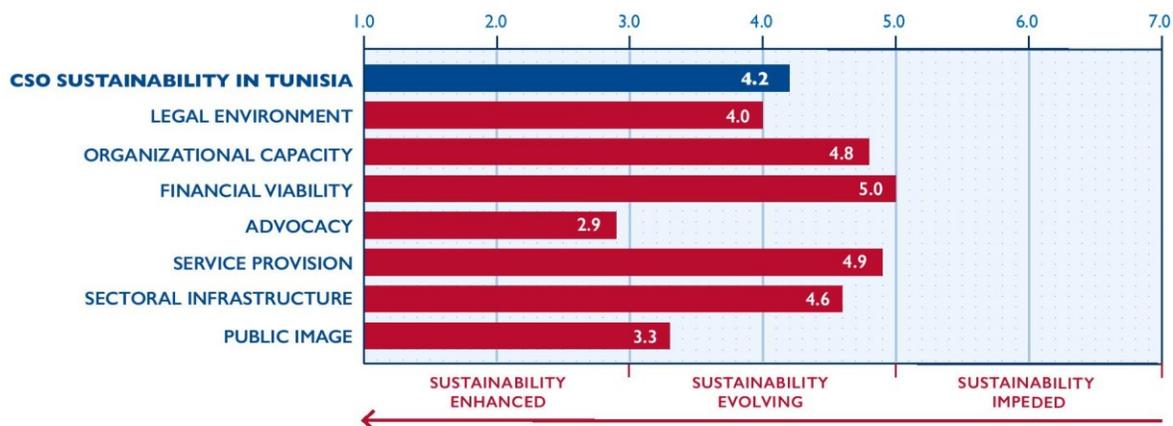
Because of the lockdown and the related ban on gatherings, CSOs became more adept at publicizing their activities on social media networks—primarily Facebook and Instagram—during the year. This led to an increase in their visibility, especially among people aged eighteen to twenty-four. Since this age group is quite active on social media, they were able to learn about CSOs' activities and contributions to society via these platforms in 2020.

CSOs' transparency continues to be limited. The majority of CSOs do not hold general assemblies and are not accountable either to themselves or the public. This problem is exacerbated by a lack of training, capacity, and awareness about the importance of effectively promoting their activities to the media and the public, although the situation is gradually improving.

# TUNISIA

**Capital:** Tunis  
**Population:** 11,811,335  
**GDP per capita (PPP):** \$10,756  
**Human Development Index:** High (0.740)  
**Freedom in the World:** Free (71/100)

## OVERALL CSO SUSTAINABILITY: 4.2



Political instability and the COVID-19 pandemic both impacted the sustainability of CSOs in Tunisia in 2020.

The government of Tunisia changed hands three times over the course of the year. In January 2020, the proposed cabinet of Prime Minister-Designate Habib Jemli was rejected through a no-confidence vote in parliament. Parliament instead approved Elyes Fakhfakh as prime minister in February. However, Fakhfakh resigned in July after information was leaked about his stakes in firms that had won public contracts, an apparent conflict of interest. The Interior Minister Hichem Mechichi succeeded him as prime minister in September and remained in the post at year's end.

The global COVID-19 pandemic affected all levels of government, society, and the economy in Tunisia. The virus was first detected in the country in late February 2020, just days after the formation of the new government. On March 2, the government passed a comprehensive set of measures aimed at slowing the progression of the COVID-19 virus. The government suspended all travel, mandated that non-essential workers work from home, closed mosques, imposed mandatory quarantines and nightly curfews, shut down schools and businesses, and banned public gatherings. Military and police forces were tasked with ensuring that these instructions were followed. On April 3, the Ministry of Interior deployed surveillance robots in Tunis to ensure that individuals respected the government's lockdown orders. When approached by the robots on the street, people were expected to scan their ID on the robot's camera and await further instructions. Over 1,000 people were arrested in the first few weeks of the lockdown for violating the lockdown rules. Despite these constraints, CSOs managed to respond to citizens' basic needs through close collaboration with their institutional partners.

On April 4, citing Article 70 of Tunisia's Constitution, the parliament adopted a law giving the prime minister the autonomy to issue decrees for two months without referring them to the legislature for approval. During this two-month period, the office of the prime minister issued over thirty-five decrees.

On May 19, 2020, Tunisia released a phone application that allowed the government to track and inform users who may have had contact with other individuals infected with COVID-19 about their risks of exposure. The app uploaded location data and personal information, including phone numbers, to a centralized database that was accessible to the National Observatory of Emerging Diseases. This was considered a violation of the right to privacy by several CSOs and members of the public.

The government's attempts to limit or lift COVID-19 restrictions throughout the year were met with increased spikes in outbreaks of the virus, causing the government to reimpose partial lockdowns and mandatory curfews. In May, for example, the government began to relax economic restrictions and in June it reopened Tunisia's borders,

leading to a large second wave of infections, which stretched the country's public health-care system beyond capacity and led to a new round of restrictions. Following a loosening of restrictions in November, Tunisian authorities again reimposed a government-imposed curfew in December 2020. Throughout the year, the country was also under a security-related state of emergency, which has been in place since a 2015 ISIS attack against the presidential guard.

The measures adopted to reduce the spread of the virus also suppressed the economy, with gross domestic product (GDP) contracting by 21 percent in the second quarter compared to the same period in 2019. International travel restrictions reduced tourism levels by 65 percent and significantly limited exports of electrical machinery and textiles, Tunisia's main manufacturing exports. According to the Brookings Institute, the government attempted to mitigate some of these economic losses by allocating a one-time cash transfer to informal sector workers, delivering some support to vulnerable groups, and distributing grants to workers at risk from losing their jobs. However, these efforts did little to address the downward economic spiral or to appease the public, who felt the measures were insufficient.

Social and economic rights deteriorated as a result of restrictions on movement and freedom of expression. The government canceled all cultural and sports events, literary competitions, festivals, seminars, and exhibitions, dramatically affecting civil society, which organizes many of these activities. In the fall of 2020, discontent over the increasingly repressive political climate led to a significant increase in the number of protests. The Tunisian Forum of Social and Economic Rights documented 3,045 protest movements between October and December 2020. CSOs attempted to address this crackdown through increased advocacy efforts, including informal social movements and protests. In response, the authorities investigated and arrested a number of CSO activists, some of whom were sentenced to prison on criminal charges.

Despite this difficult context, the overall sustainability of the CSO sector did not change in 2020, with positive trends in some areas offsetting negative trends in others. Service provision improved slightly, largely as a result of CSOs' efforts to improve access to health care for much of the country's more vulnerable populations. Public image also improved as CSOs were able to work closely with journalists and the media to improve coverage of their activities, particularly their response efforts during the pandemic. Financial viability, on the other hand, declined slightly as many donors changed their funding priorities to address the pandemic or reduced their funding. Sectoral infrastructure also deteriorated slightly as the availability of training and forms of technical assistance decreased. Other dimensions of sustainability remained largely unchanged. CSOs continued to operate in a difficult legal environment. While the reduction in financial resources and the pandemic-related restrictions forced some CSOs to halt activities, other CSOs weathered the storm and were able to adapt their services to combat COVID-19 by increasing their use of technology. CSOs successfully engaged in a number of advocacy efforts, despite the fact that they had less access to decision makers who could carry out legislative reform efforts.

According to the Center for Information, Training, Studies, and Documentation on Associations (IFEDA), a total of 23,213 CSOs were registered in Tunisia as of the end of 2020. Just over 1,000 of these were newly registered during the year. Civil society played a key role in 2020 in fighting the spread of COVID-19. The CSOs that were most active were those working on health care, as well as gender rights, combating domestic violence, and engaging in broader human rights. The number of active cultural CSOs decreased as a result of the pandemic.

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## LEGAL ENVIRONMENT: 4.0

The legal environment governing the CSO sector remained largely unchanged in 2020. No significant changes were made during the year to the specific laws governing CSOs. The main legal instrument governing CSOs is Decree 2011-88. The most common type of CSOs are associations.

CSOs are required to obtain legal status to operate. Decree 2011-88 establishes a declaration (notification) regime instead of an authorization (registration) regime, meaning that a CSO should, in principle, be able to gain legal status simply by declaring its existence. In practice, however, a CSO needs a receipt acknowledging its formation to open a bank account and operate fully. Law No. 52 of 2018 requires CSOs to register with the National Registry of Associations as a confirmation of their status. It also states that failure to register may result in a year of imprisonment and a fine of \$4,000. An association must publish its registration in the Official Journal of Tunisian Republic, but the journal often refuses to publish the official acknowledgement without a registration receipt.

## LEGAL ENVIRONMENT IN TUNISIA



CSOs faced increasing problems with the registration process in 2020. The General Direction of Associations used to open its doors two days a week to advise CSOs encountering challenges in establishing and registering their organizations. However, due to the pandemic, this service was not offered for most of 2020, delaying the registration process for some CSOs.

Organizations such as Cideal faced challenges when attempting to establish their representation as international non-governmental organizations (INGOs) in Tunisia, despite the fact that both domestic and foreign NGOs are supposed to be given equal treatment under the law. These organizations faced problems listing themselves in the National Registry of Enterprises and opening bank accounts. In another instance, Beity CSO

wanted to legally provide space to another organization, which was in the process of being established. However, the General Direction of Associations refused to allow it to do so.

In the past, some CSOs have faced resistance from the administration when trying to shift or adjust their objectives. In 2020, however, the government was more flexible in allowing CSOs to adapt their mandated missions in order to conduct activities to address the pandemic.

The Tunisian Assembly of the Representatives of the People (ARP) adopted two new laws in 2020 relevant to civil society. Law No. 2020-30, adopted on June 30, 2020, outlines the concept of a “social and solidarity economy,” including its forms of organization, structures, and the mechanisms for implementation, monitoring, evaluation, and development. According to Article 2 of the law, social and solidarity economic enterprises include cooperatives, development groups in the agriculture and maritime fisheries sectors, mutual associations, micro-finance associations, and CSOs and other associations governed by Decree 2011-88. Law No. 2020-37 on “crowdfunding,” adopted on August 6, 2020, creates a new source of funding for CSOs. According to Article 64 of the law, associations that serve as intermediaries between their members and the relevant public authorities are allowed to engage in crowdfunding. These two laws had not come into force by the end of the year as governmental decrees and procedures were not yet issued, although some CSOs were able to receive special permits to engage in crowdfunding activities.

As noted earlier, Tunisia has been under a state of emergency since terrorist attacks in 2015. CSOs and social movements have been subject to state harassment since that time. This harassment was amplified by the pandemic and the government measures to control the spread of the virus, including limits on protests and public gatherings.

The first incidents of state harassment towards CSOs took place during the months of March and April 2020 and were indirect consequences of the lockdown and curfew measures imposed by the authorities. During this time, people exercising their right to freedom of expression, including by documenting or questioning measures taken by the authorities, or even doing charity work, faced the threat of being arrested. For example, the president of the CSO I-Watch was arrested for not respecting the curfew while distributing aid to vulnerable groups. Such arbitrary arrests directly undermined CSOs’ attempts to provide humanitarian assistance during the crisis.

The second wave of repression started in early November 2020, with the rise of social movements and protests in response to the ongoing deterioration of the social and economic conditions in the country. In an attempt to suppress these movements, authorities investigated and arrested a number of bloggers, activists, and representatives of social movements. Many of them were charged and some were sentenced to prison on criminal charges (including defamation). These cases are alarming as people were being tried for their right to freedom of expression, both online and off. The authorities also investigated police brutality during the protests.

CSOs are supposed to receive tax exemptions and deductions on income from grants, both of which are regulated by Decree 2011-88. However, these exemptions are difficult to obtain even with support letters from donors addressed to the tax inspector’s office.

Decree 2011-88 specifies four types of financial resources accessible to associations: membership fees; public funding; donations and legacies of national or foreign origin; and income from associations’ property, activities, and

projects. An association must publish information regarding the source, value, and purpose of any donations or grants received from foreign sources in print media and on its website, if it has one, within a month of the decision to request or accept funding. In addition, it must inform the secretary general of the government by registered letter in the same timeframe.

CSOs face challenges finding lawyers who are trained and sufficiently familiar with CSO-related laws. There are also few resources on the legal framework impacting CSOs' work, including fiscal and social obligations, labor code regulations, and fighting against terrorism and money laundering.

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## ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY: 4.8

Organizational capacity within the CSO sector remained largely unchanged in 2020, as it was affected by both positive and negative developments.

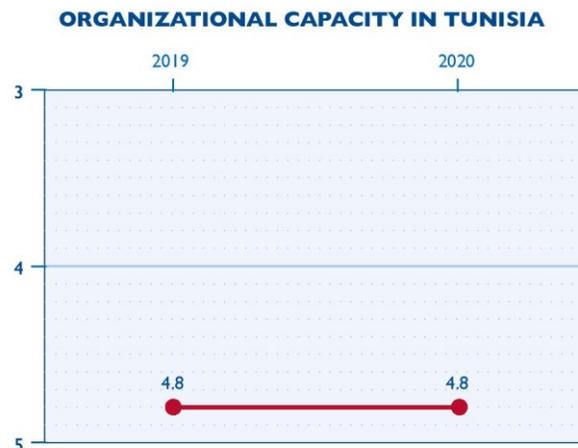
According to a study conducted in June 2020 by the Arab Institute of Business Managers (IACE) and Jamaity on the impact of COVID-19 on CSOs, 47.82 percent of CSOs completely stopped their activities beginning in March. For example, CSOs like the Tunisian Association of Environment and Nature in Gabes and the Association of Wind Energy in the capital were forced to halt their activities. However, many CSOs were able to effectively weather the crisis and develop innovative ways to assist their beneficiaries.

CSOs generally have clearly defined constituencies, allowing them to have a remarkably positive impact on their target groups. Throughout the year, CSOs collaborated with their peers and the government to counter the worsening health crisis. For example, the Red Crescent was able to mobilize more than 20,000 volunteers, who carried out 6,000 interventions to assist vulnerable groups by providing food and personal protective equipment (PPE) between March and April 2020.

During the crisis, CSOs actively involved their constituents in planning their activities. For instance, BEDER Organization for Citizenship and Equitable Development worked with Associa-Med, Tunis and Manar Universities, and the National Council of Doctors to create [Sauve.tn](https://www.sauve.tn), a free interactive digital platform that facilitates communication with health-care professionals and provides documented and reliable information about COVID-19 to the public. Both the medical and editorial staff volunteered significant time to the project.

The organizational capacity of individual CSOs is related to their size, location, and the availability of capacity-building interventions. Over 20 percent of all Tunisian CSOs are located in the capital of Tunis; these organizations tend to have greater organizational capacities. Smaller organizations typically only have general mission statements and are less likely to define clear objectives than their larger counterparts. Even though many donors try to provide these organizations with the tools needed to engage in effective strategic planning, many of their representatives do not have sufficient technical expertise, reporting skills, or legal knowledge to fully engage in the development and implementation of successful strategic plans. While most CSOs recognize the importance of having clear and established mandates, many are driven by their donors' agendas, particularly as funding becomes scarcer.

The health crisis demonstrated that some organizations are fairly adept at adapting their priorities to changing needs. For instance, recognizing that the pandemic would result in a surge in domestic violence, Beity CSO established a helpline in early April to ensure women's safety during the health crisis. In April and May 2020, Beity successfully helped 157 women in vulnerable situations through the provision of legal, psychological, social, and health services, in addition to shelter. I-Watch, which works on transparency and anti-corruption, was also able to adjust its activities by readapting its online platform Bill'kamcha, which allows citizens to report cases of corruption, to also allow people to report violations of the COVID-19 lockdown measures.



CSOs continue to struggle with management issues. Most boards try to actively engage in the governance of CSOs and operate in an open and transparent manner, including by allowing contributors and supporters to verify how funds are allocated and spent. However, management practices can vary significantly from one CSO to another, and CSOs generally do not have internal policies or procedures to guide their operations. Management structures, including CSOs' ability to maintain a division of responsibilities between staff members and their boards of directors, deteriorated in 2020 as coordination between CSOs and their board members decreased during the lockdown. According to a survey published by Jamaity and the Arab Institute of Business Owners on the impact of the pandemic on CSOs, almost three-fourths of the associations surveyed were not able to pay their employees during the first three months of the pandemic, from March to May. On average, those associations that declared their employees were only able to pay 12 percent of salaries during this same period.

As a preventive health measure, the majority of Tunisian CSOs temporarily closed their physical premises but were able to make use of digital tools to move their activities online and work remotely during the crisis. However, CSOs in the interior regions and in less populated or developed governorates in rural areas suffered as they had less access to technical expertise and equipment, such as the internet, remote-access software, and distance-learning tools. While the move to online work increased the potential for new cybersecurity threats, not all CSOs had access to the needed tools to prevent and counter occasional cyberattacks. A number of INGOs and embassies, such as GIZ and the Finnish and Swedish embassies, have been encouraging CSOs to upgrade their technology and software and have supported training on cybersecurity issues.

## FINANCIAL VIABILITY: 5.0



Financial viability deteriorated slightly in 2020 due to the economic impact of the pandemic and the decrease in funding from many donors. Most local CSOs, especially those in the interior regions of the country, faced significant financial hurdles due to the shifting priorities of donors and lack of funds available during the pandemic, which disrupted their activities and ability to function effectively. However, most CSOs managed to survive and contributed significantly to relief efforts during the crises.

Although there is no data on overall levels of foreign funding, foreign aid programs continue to be the most significant source of funding for CSOs in Tunisia. More than 200 INGOs operate in the country, over half of which are estimated to provide some sort of funding to local CSOs. Before the total shutdown of the country,

there were some specific funding calls for Tunisian CSOs that focused on post-election priorities. Beginning in March, however, most donors either suspended their funding or readjusted their funding mechanisms to respond to the specific needs of the health crisis. While some donors, such as the German Embassy, launched targeted calls focused on COVID-19, others such as the European Endowment for Democracy (EED), Lawyers Without Borders (Avocats Sans Frontières, ASF), and the British Council adapted their ongoing support to the needs of their local partners by giving them the opportunity to use previously awarded funds for activities addressing the crisis. However, most of the support that was made available to combat the pandemic was directed towards supporting government structures such as municipalities, as opposed to CSOs.

Most donors do not support operating costs and prefer to finance large organizations with better knowledge and experience in their respective fields. Some CSOs expand their scopes of work to increase their eligibility for various donor-funded programs, although this often has a negative impact on their credibility as donors tend to favor specialized and narrowly focused areas of engagement and worry about over-extending grantees.

As a result of the cessation of funding by some donors and the severe lack of alternative means of support, some CSOs, including Amal Association and Al-Khat Association, were forced to suspend their usual activities in 2020. Perhaps the most affected CSOs were those working in the field of culture, as all cultural activities were suspended for much of the year. Some organizations relied on financial assistance from the public so that they

could contribute to efforts to combat the pandemic in simple ways, usually through the provision of PPE and cleaning supplies.

The state offers little support to CSOs and, when it does, its decision-making processes are not transparent. Smaller CSOs with limited capacity and experience have a particularly difficult time accessing government funding. Local funding was especially rare in 2020. Although they relied on CSOs to provide much needed assistance and support to communities impacted by the pandemic, local governments did not seem to prioritize supporting civil society. Most government funding was allocated instead to businesses, financial institutions, and the tourism sector, according to a study by IACE.

During the year, most CSOs relied on support from their members to raise awareness about COVID-19 among their communities and offer assistance to those most in need. While it is still rare for Tunisian CSOs to use crowdfunding, as it is such a new tool, in 2020 some CSOs launched open calls for funding on their Facebook pages or in other media such as radio or television to attract individual donations. Created in 2018, [www.Cha9a9a.tn](http://www.Cha9a9a.tn) is one of the first crowdfunding platforms that allows associations and individuals to raise funds for their projects. One of the first successful campaigns on Cha9a9a was initiated by the Maram association, which successfully carried out a crowdfunding appeal that raised TND 20,000 (\$7,335) for Dar Maram, a center for the families of hospitalized children in the capital.

CSOs generated little income from the sale of products and services in 2020, although a few organizations had projects, services, or some form of social enterprise from which they were able to generate some level of income. For example, Amal Association provided catering services while Shanti, a local art gallery, sold some handmade products.

Financial management is still a weakness in the CSO sector, and only a few CSOs have effective financial management systems in place. CSOs have a strong desire to be transparent, but because of their limited capacities, they often struggle to meet both legal and donor requirements. CSOs—particularly those in the interior regions of the country and along the border areas—require additional technical support in this area.

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## ADVOCACY: 2.9

The ability of CSOs to advocate for legislative reform at both the national and local levels did not change notably in 2020. The unstable political context and the tense dynamics between the political parties within the ARP and the presidency of the republic created an environment that was less receptive to CSO advocacy efforts than in the past. Moreover, according to Al Bawsala, the ARP has neither voted on nor passed any legislation since the second parliamentary session in September 2020, except to consider specific stimulus and loan initiatives. After the removal of the government of Elyes Fakhfakh, it became even more difficult for CSOs to implement advocacy initiatives.

Despite this difficult context, a number of CSO advocacy efforts successfully pushed back against proposed legislation and improved some questionable policies and practices. Successful advocacy campaigns included efforts to decrease overcrowding in detention centers, ensure accountability for human rights abuses by members of the armed forces, expedite court hearings for victims of domestic violence, halt the passage of a draconian disinformation law, and ban the use of plastic bags in cement distribution. As in past years, most advocacy initiatives are led by well-established organizations, while smaller, grassroots CSOs have weaker advocacy skills.

Three legal measures regulate and allow for public participation in the legislative process. First, the Prime Minister's Circular No. 31, 2014 urges the adoption of a participatory process when the government prepares legislative texts. Second, the Bylaws (Rules of Procedure) of the ARP, 2015, require that plenary sessions be public and provide civil society the right to make comments on draft laws. Finally, the Code of Local Collectivities, 2018,



mandates public participation at the local level. These laws require parliament to make all draft laws available on the parliamentary website [legislation.tn](http://legislation.tn) and allow the public and CSOs to provide written feedback and participate in committee meetings. In practice, however, draft laws are rarely posted and CSOs are not regularly allowed to participate in meetings.

Several civil society representatives met with the president's assistant in charge of relations with CSOs on June 30, 2020, to discuss the draft of the Covenant between the ARP and Civil Society, which seeks to improve participation and encourage collaboration between parliament and CSOs. This meeting did not result in any concrete changes.

Some governmental bodies, such as the Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Defense, do not communicate with CSOs at all, instead preferring to collaborate directly with donors, embassies, and United Nations (UN) agencies. The Ministry of Justice has also limited its collaboration and communication with CSOs, for example, by allowing only one CSO—the Tunisian League of Human Rights—to access prisons and detention centers.

The Code of Local Collectivities, which governs the decentralization process of government in Tunisia, was passed by parliament in April 2018; however, its implementation is still quite spotty. Well-known CSOs with branches and/or projects in the municipalities, such as Al Bawsala and I- Watch, have a much better chance of being able to influence or cooperate with local authorities than smaller, grassroots organizations as they have larger networks and better strategies. With only a few exceptions, the pandemic worsened CSOs' cooperation with local authorities, with municipalities rejecting or postponing most areas of potential collaboration with CSOs outside of the health sector or in the area of crisis management.

Although CSOs did not succeed in promoting and proposing new laws in 2020, they were successful in getting a number of problematic laws and decisions struck down. For example, a CSO coalition that included Amnesty International, Article 19, Human Rights Watch, and other INGOs, successfully lobbied the ARP to withdraw the Law on Advantages Afforded to the Armed Forces, which would have provided immunity for armed forces and security agents who committed human rights offenses or otherwise abused their authority. The attempt by parliament to introduce a draft law on disinformation in April 2000 led to a massive outcry from CSOs, human rights activists, and the public. The proposed bill, which would have effectively criminalized the dissemination of so-called “false or doubtful speech” online with a two-year prison sentence and a steep fine, was deemed an unconstitutional violation of freedom of expression rights by over forty leading Tunisian human rights organizations, including the Association of Tunisian Judges, the Tunisian Association for Rights and Freedoms, and the National Syndicate of Tunisian Journalists.

According to the Tunisian Ministry for Women's Affairs, the number of reported cases of violence against women increased seven-fold since the start of the pandemic. This outbreak of attacks prompted human rights organizations, including members of the newly formed network of women's associations, including Beity, the Tunisian Association of Democratic Women (ATFD), the Tunisian Women's Association for Development Research (AFTURD), and the Damj association, to send an open letter to Tunisian authorities in early April 2020, demanding the courts to take measures to expedite these cases in court. By the end of that month, the High Judicial Council published two letters calling on family judges to give domestic violence cases the highest priority and ensure access to justice for all victims.

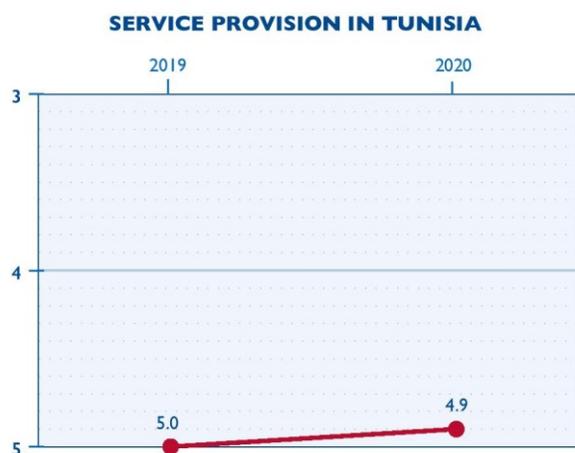
CSOs continued to advocate actively on environmental issues in 2020. A group of CSOs and lawyers succeeded in banning the use of plastic bags for the production and distribution of cement, which had become an environmental problem. Other advocacy campaigns on environmental issues were less effective. For example, an attempt to halt household waste from being shipped from Italy to Tunisia was ultimately unsuccessful, although it did raise public awareness about this growing concern. Collectif Des Eaux (Coalition of Water) is currently working on access to water issues and the Tunisian water code, given that demand for clean water in the country is expected to overtake supply by 2030. Advocacy campaigns also encouraged members of the ARP to visit local communities and discuss the issue in person, when possible.

New forms of online advocacy emerged during the year because of the restrictions on assemblies and gatherings as well as the increasing influence of social media on policy makers and public opinion. For example, Alert, a civic initiative that operates mainly through social media networks and is currently evolving into an independent CSO, has been advocating against the windfall economy (l'économie de rente) by hosting online debates and exposing mechanisms through which the ruling elite is able to reap undue economic benefits. These efforts were ongoing at the end of 2020.

The Alliance of Security and Liberty advocated in the early months of the pandemic to reduce overcrowding in the country's prisons, in collaboration with the General Committee on Prisons and Rehabilitation. The joint strategy focused on removing as many prisoners as possible from the country's prisons, penitentiaries, and detention centers to avoid contamination between them. As a result of their efforts, around 5,000 presidential pardons were issued. The General Directorate of Prisons noted that that was the first time in Tunisia that the government met international standards and the corresponding indicator of one prisoner per bed. This improvement was threatened when authorities began to arrest more people for curfew and quarantine violations, but the coalition successfully lobbied for the penalties for these violations to be changed from imprisonment to a fine, thereby avoiding another potential overcrowding of the prisons.

While CSOs did not advocate for any reforms to the legislation or regulations governing the sector in 2020, they did advocate against the increased threats and state harassment to which they were subject by raising public awareness of the problem through press conferences, press releases, and visits with government representatives and international partners.

## SERVICE PROVISION: 4.9



CSOs' service provision improved in 2020. CSOs responded effectively to the pandemic by increasing the scope and scale of their services. The health crisis unveiled social and economic disparities and exposed a significant need to increase access to health care, especially among vulnerable populations. CSOs provided a greater variety of services to the population both during and after the lockdown and constantly monitored and supported the government's efforts to prevent the spread of the virus. For example, CSOs like Beity provided food and sanitizing products to the population. Association Pensée Nationale Libre (APNL) in Mahdia published a manual with guidelines on how to avoid the spread of COVID-19 and created and distributed around 600 protective masks using 3D printers.

Psychologues du monde offered free psychological support to the public, while Institut Nebras provided similar services to a variety of groups (including victims of torture and their families) while also offering allowances for transportation, medical care for children suffering from sexual abuse, and support for women victims of violence. Lawyers Without Borders offered legal assistance to vulnerable groups throughout the country, such as the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI) community. Through its LINKAGES project, USAID also supported efforts to provide shelter and utilities for thirty-five people, including trans people and sex workers affected by the pandemic. Mawjoudin provided shelter and utilities for trans people and sex workers, as well as necessities like food for LGBTI refugees in partnership with store chains across the country.

AFTURD, in partnership with the Ministry of Women, Family, Children, and Seniors and with the support of the UN Population Fund (UNFPA), opened a new emergency shelter for women victims of violence in 2020. This initiative was coordinated with various stakeholders including the special unit for combating crimes of violence against women under the supervision of the Ministry of Interior.

In general, the services offered by CSOs are provided free-of-charge, however some CSOs implement income-generating activities. For example, Véloration offers biking lessons, Afek in Blidet provides handicraft training and sewing lessons, and the Association to Safeguard the Oasis of Chenini (ASOC de Chenini) offers training sessions in communication skills.

Some CSOs provide services to members and non-members alike. For example, Kon Sadiki CSO offers training on media capacity building and the Coalition of Humanitarian Associations organizes sewing and aluminum manufacturing lessons. CSOs like Gabes Action and We Youth also provide services, including analytical research materials and workshops, to other CSOs. Although CSOs should attempt to adjust their priorities to meet

community needs, not all organizations are able to collect data on their stakeholders' priorities because of financial constraints.

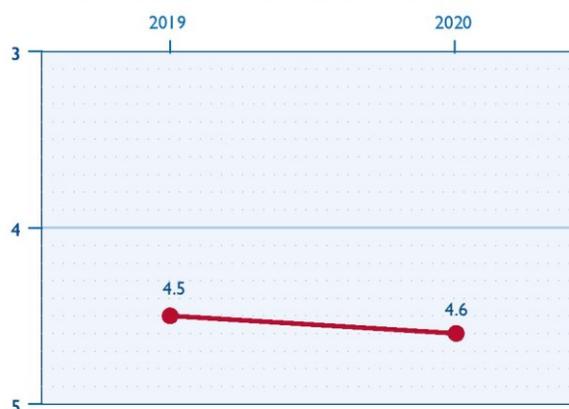
Some CSOs were able to collaborate with public authorities and border communities on projects relating to peace, crisis management, human rights, and gender equality. For example, IRADA in Ben Guerdane offered assistance to municipalities from the two opposite sides of the Tunisian-Libyan borders to resolve potential conflicts.

Through its public statements, the government acknowledged CSOs' efforts to provide basic social services to the public. For example, the Ministry of Women, Family, Children, and Seniors granted prizes to CSOs that contributed supplies and resources to the broader population during the COVID-19 pandemic.

## SECTORAL INFRASTRUCTURE: 4.6

The infrastructure supporting the CSO sector deteriorated slightly in 2020. Access to training and technical assistance was significantly reduced or shifted online. CSOs had virtually no opportunities to meet with each other or their constituents, which limited their ability to share information and experiences, especially during the second quarter of 2020 when the pandemic curfew restrictions were the strictest. However, cooperation within the CSO sector improved as CSOs formed informal and ad hoc coalitions and worked together to reduce the spread of the virus in the country. As noted above, CSOs in the interior regions and in less populated or less developed governorates in rural areas have less access to technical expertise and equipment, such as the internet, remote-access software, and distance-learning tools. This greatly limited their ability to maintain contact with each other and their constituents and take part in training in 2020. Access to local resource centers, which have the technology, training, and technical assistance they needed, remained limited.

SECTORAL INFRASTRUCTURE IN TUNISIA



Only intermediary support organizations (ISOs) like IFEDA, Jamaity, and Center for Democracy, Citizenship and Development (CD2), which are based in a few larger cities such as Tunis, Kef, Nabeul, Sidi Bouzid, and Sfax, continued to operate resource centers in 2020, although access to them became increasingly difficult during the pandemic, due to limitations of movement and assembly. Most ISOs, and the resource centers associated with them, usually cover their own operating costs (i.e., salaries, rent, and supplies) through earned income (such as fees for services) and other locally generated sources. During the pandemic, however, earned income was virtually non-existent, making them more dependent on donors to cover these costs. Furthermore, the focus areas of most technical assistance programs had been determined earlier by donors and it was difficult to modify them, making them less responsive to emerging needs.

Training is generally available to help CSOs define their missions, develop strategic plans, and incorporate strategic planning techniques into their decision-making processes. However, the availability of such training opportunities decreased in 2020. Some co-working spaces like Cogite, l'entrepot, and Station 47 offered services and capacity-building training to CSOs for a fee, but most CSOs were no longer in a position to afford these opportunities. Wiring Accountability for a Vibrant Economy and Society (WAVES) was launched in late 2020 to support capacity building for CSOs in management, grant writing, fundraising, and other issues of relevance. This program's activities, including a series of thematic workshops, were mostly held online in 2020, and access was predominately given to larger CSOs operating in the capital of Tunis. Skilled local trainers are available in the country. Training and tools are offered in Arabic (both Tunisian and Modern Standard Arabic) and French. However, the demand for training by CSOs far exceeds the supply. In addition, training and funds are often provided to experienced and well-established CSOs. Meanwhile, the emerging generation of CSOs has not benefited from such training, limiting their access to grants and needed knowledge and resources.

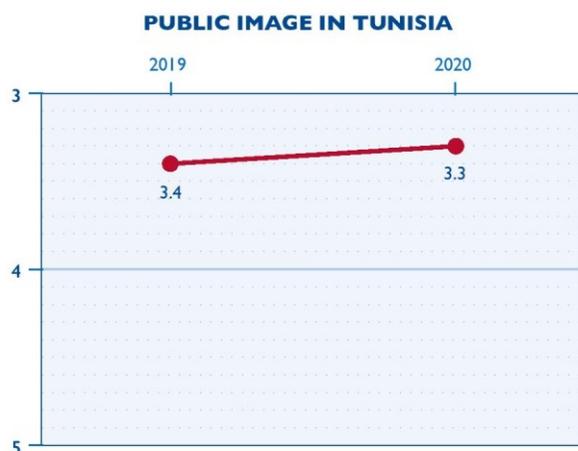
Access to grants from local communities, foundations, and ISOs decreased during 2020. The outbreak of COVID-19 caused many donors to suspend their activities and only a few tried to adapt to these challenges and respond to the new needs with new funding initiatives. However, with funding from international donors, some ISOs made sub-grants available to local CSOs to address locally identified needs. One such example was Doctors of the World, which managed the EU-funded project Sehaty that offered capacity building and financing to around twenty CSOs that provided health services in different regions.

Cooperation within the sector improved in 2020, as CSOs formed coalitions and worked jointly to counter the spread of COVID-19. A number of informal networks and coalitions were formed to coordinate humanitarian responses to the crisis. For example, the network of women's CSOs unites several associations like Beity, ATFD, AFTURD, and Damj association. This network advocated for women's right to justice during the lockdown. Although their accomplishments were impressive, these informal networks were not able to rectify their own legal status and their missions were still poorly defined. According to a survey conducted by Jamaity about coalitions in Tunisia, most of the networks identified do not benefit from technical support from donors or others. This has a negative impact on their operations and management of their internal affairs, including the functioning of their governance structures.

Some CSOs and projects facilitate the work of CSO coalitions. One example is Jamaity's project Reinforce, which seeks to improve the capacities and structuring of networks, platforms, and coalitions of CSOs focused on human rights and fundamental freedoms in order to increase their political impact. Through this project, approximately seven well-known coalitions, including the Madinaty network and the Tunisian Association of Associative Media (UTMA), have been trained to better reframe their strategic plans and make their interventions clearer and more targeted.

Collaboration between CSOs and other sectors improved in 2020, primarily in the framework of COVID-19 response projects. While overall cooperation with local governments was limited, JESR (Bridge), an online platform launched by CSOs and local and regional authorities to fight the COVID-19 pandemic and coordinate with volunteer initiatives, was a notable exception.

## PUBLIC IMAGE: 3.3



The public image of the CSO sector improved slightly in 2020 due to increased media coverage of CSO activities. CSOs developed stronger relationships with independent media outlets, providing them with more opportunities to increase their visibility. CSO representatives participated in more TV and radio programs during 2020 than in the past and independent media outlets regularly consulted and quoted CSOs on stories related to the active role they played in addressing the pandemic.

Mainstream media showed an increased interest in CSO activities during the COVID-19 crisis and several programs on local and private channels focused on CSOs' work. For example, Jamaity in partnership with Shems FM produced a show to promote civil society's work and highlight issues of public and social importance.

Nawaat, an associative journalistic platform, covers topics ranging from international justice to corruption and human interest stories.

In order to increase their visibility and improve their public image, many CSOs involve journalists in their organizations or maintain a list of media contacts. In addition, some have their own media outlets, allowing them to increase public awareness of their activities. For instance, Radio Nefzawaand and Djerid FM are two community radio stations that offer practical advice to members of their local communities.

It was clear to the public and the current government that civil society played an important role during the health crisis, and that their interventions and responsiveness in meeting the needs of the population during the pandemic

kept the situation in the country from becoming even more volatile. The positive public recognition of CSOs was most apparent when people interviewed on television during the pandemic praised CSOs' efforts to provide services, support, and resources to the public during this period. In this regard, CSOs compensated for the lack of trust people have in their government and politics. Some governmental entities also publicly praised the efforts of the CSO sector in 2020.

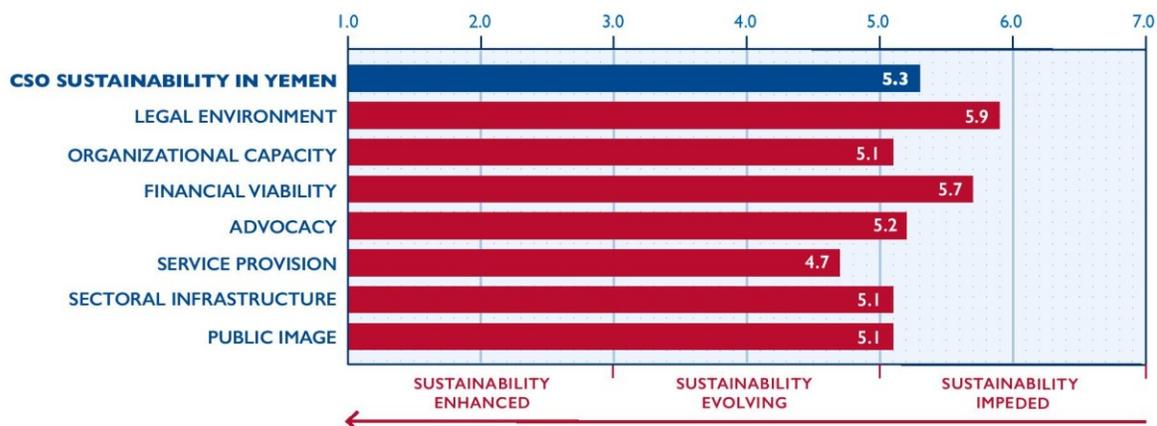
Part of the increased visibility of the efforts made by CSOs in 2020 was also due to their improved efforts in using Facebook and Instagram more proactively to promote their activities.

Many organizations publish reports on their activities online, but few prepare annual reports because they do not have the financial resources to pay staff to do this work. Some CSOs have internal policies that may include codes of conduct, but this depends on the size and structure of individual organizations, with larger organizations more likely to adopt such practices.

# YEMEN

Capital: Sana'a  
Population: 30,399,243  
GDP per capita (PPP): \$2,836  
Human Development Index: Low (0.470)  
Freedom in the World: Not Free (11/100)

## OVERALL CSO SUSTAINABILITY: 5.3



Over the past decade, Yemeni civil society has operated in a constrained environment, hemmed in by a variety of political and military forces that would often like to see it silenced. Civil society continued to confront political, economic, and security challenges in 2020. These challenges have adversely affected the already declining humanitarian conditions and freedom of speech in the country, as well as public institutions' ability to provide basic services to the country's beleaguered population.

The country has been engaged in internal armed conflicts since 2014. Armed clashes between the internationally recognized government of Yemen (IRGY), which is backed by a Saudi-led coalition, and the Ansar Allah rebel group continued across parts of Yemen in 2020. In 2019, fighting erupted between the IRGY and the Southern Transitional Council (STC), which at the end of 2020 claimed control over four governorates in south Yemen, including the temporary capital of Aden and nearby cities. This skirmish culminated in the IRGY being forced to flee to exile in Riyadh, where it remained for most of 2020, finally returning to Aden at the end of December.

The country continued to be divided by these internal conflicts in 2020. As of the end of 2020, Ansar Allah occupied Yemen's most populous northern region and some parts of central Yemen, including the cities of Sana'a, Amran, Ibb, and parts of the Hudaydah governorate and Taiz. The STC maintained control over the cities of Aden, Lahij, and parts of Abyan, and Ad-Dali, and the IRGY maintained jurisdiction over Marib, Shabwa, Al-Mahara, Hadramout, and parts of Taiz. These political divisions posed additional challenges to CSO operations in 2020, particularly in terms of satisfying competing registration regimes.

Yemen's humanitarian crisis worsened in 2020. According to the Yemen Humanitarian Response Plan, 80 percent of the population needed some form of humanitarian assistance in June 2020. However, humanitarian funds in 2020 only covered around 50 percent of the needs, compared to 85 percent of the needs that were covered in 2019. With 24 million of Yemen's 30 million people in need of some kind of humanitarian assistance, the United Nations (UN) continues to refer to Yemen as the "world's worst humanitarian crisis."

COVID-19 exacerbated the humanitarian crisis and the problems faced by the deteriorating health sector, which relies on donor assistance to survive. Between April and September alone, the UN confirmed 2,034 cases of COVID-19 and 588 deaths in the country, although the lack of testing made it hard to determine the actual number of cases. In order to control the pandemic, authorities banned air travel and most public events, including weddings, training, and workshops, while also closing schools and suspending work for 80 percent of the public sector. Officials worked with international organizations like the World Health Organization (WHO) to expand the number of COVID-19 isolation wards and provide some hospitals with needed equipment.

The situation remained dire at the end of the year. By the end of October 2020, only half of the country's approximately 5,000 health facilities and hospitals remained fully operational, as scores of health-care workers, underpaid or not paid at all and with little or no access to personal protective equipment (PPE), left their posts. As of late July, Ansar Allah had recorded only a few cases of COVID-19 and stopped all social distancing measures after claiming that the virus did not exist in the areas it controls. Eventually Ansar Allah was forced to acknowledge the health risks and started implementing some procedures to fight the spread of the virus like disinfecting public spaces, ordering shops to close during rush hours, and banning meetings in public places.

The measures adopted to mitigate the spread of the virus limited CSOs' abilities to provide humanitarian assistance. As a result, the reach of humanitarian aid dropped from 14 million people a month in 2019 to 9.2 million by October 2020. In addition, according to Human Rights Watch, Ansar Allah blocked large containers of much needed medical equipment belonging to the WHO, as well as large shipments of PPE, from leaving the port of Hudaydah for over four months. Distribution of humanitarian supplies was further hampered as relief organizations faced difficulties getting travel permission from the needed authorities.

In Aden, the absence of an internationally recognized government in 2020 caused the provision of public services, such as health and electricity, to plummet, allowing COVID-19 to spread. In areas controlled by Ansar Allah, a fuel shortage that erupted in mid-2020 impeded the humanitarian response. With no fuel available on the official market, the price of fuel skyrocketed, increasing by 120 percent on the black market. This was further exacerbated by a nearly 25 percent depreciation of the Yemeni Riyal against the dollar at the end of the year.

Early in the year, the large-scale hostilities that erupted in the Sana'a suburbs of Nihem, as well as in the cities of Marib and al-Jawf, forced more than 90,000 persons out of their homes. During the summer, torrential rainfall and floods across Yemen damaged many residential areas and camps of internally displaced persons (IDPs), leading to a new wave of displacement. These developments placed additional burdens on domestic and international CSOs.

Domestic and international CSOs continued to experience harassment and abuse from governmental institutions and armed groups in 2020. In areas controlled by Ansar Allah, new policies further restricted CSOs' movement. Most of these mandates, allegedly imposed to contain COVID-19, came from the Supreme Council for the Management and Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (SCMCHA), which was established as a presidential body in November 2019. SCMCHA gained more power over the past year, enabling it to enforce its policies over the sector more effectively. Across Yemen, CSOs encountered considerable barriers from armed groups, other people in power, and religious factions. CSO staff faced considerable abuse while traveling through cities on business trips. Additionally, poor coordination between central and local authorities meant that CSOs had to obtain multiple permits from different administrative levels in order to implement their projects.

In the face of this combination of difficult factors—ongoing armed conflict, political divisions, the pandemic, cuts in donor aid, and the worsening humanitarian crisis—the CSO sector's sustainability deteriorated slightly in 2020. The legal environment, organizational capacity, financial viability, and advocacy dimensions all deteriorated, while most other dimensions of sustainability remained unchanged. Only service provision improved slightly due to an expansion of some services.

There are no up-to-date official statistics on the number of CSOs in Yemen. However, in late 2018, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor (MOSAL) estimated that there were 13,200 registered CSOs across the country, including both active and inactive CSOs. While CSOs are located across the country, the majority are based in the major cities.

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## LEGAL ENVIRONMENT: 5.9

The legal environment for CSOs in Yemen continued to deteriorate in 2020 as they faced increased restrictions and harassment from governmental authorities and armed groups, especially in areas under Ansar Allah control.

Law I of 2001 on Associations and Foundations and Executive Regulations 129 of 2004 are the primary legal instruments governing CSOs in Yemen. Their implementation is overseen by MOSAL, which supervises the work of local organizations. Ministerial Resolution 211 of 2011 regulates cooperation between the government and all international organizations and agencies operating in Yemen, including the UN. The resolution is enforced by the Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation (MOPIC). Both MOSAL and MOPIC have branch offices in all governorates to facilitate their operations



CSOs operate under different and often inconsistent authorities, which posed significant impediments to their work in 2020. Typically, all newly established domestic CSOs should receive a license from MOSAL in order to begin their activities; this license must be renewed annually. CSOs, also, must receive a work permit for each project. UN bodies and international NGOs (INGOs) are expected to follow similar procedures with MOPIC. To complicate matters further, in areas controlled by Ansar Allah, the responsibilities of SCMCHA, which supervises and guides all domestic and international CSOs, overlap with those of MOPIC and MOSAL. In 2020, all domestic CSOs in these areas were instructed to submit their data and reports to SCMCHA, even if they were already registered with MOSAL; if they did not comply, their project permits were not issued. In

addition, some UN agencies, such as UNICEF, requested that their local partners register with SCMCHA in addition to MOSAL. In Sana'a, Ansar Allah issued a presidential decree in 2019 stripping MOPIC of its international roles and responsibilities, leaving SCMCHA responsible for dealings with local and international organizations.

SCMCHA opened branch offices in governorates and assigned coordinators in many of the governorates' districts in 2020. This placed further restraints on CSOs' activities, as they had to obtain separate permits from all these levels, in addition to coordinating their activities with the Ansar Allah-controlled MOPIC and MOSAL. In addition to these complex restrictions, some individuals in these agencies engaged in extortion—demanding money, positions running projects in CSOs, or employment for their acquaintances—in exchange for granting permits.

In Aden, the responsibilities of the IRGY MOSAL head office and branch office continued to overlap in 2020, resulting in CSOs facing further extortion as they tried to obtain multiple permits from the same agency. In Hadramout, the Research Unit in the Governor's Office monitors organizations' activities related to studies and training. CSOs were required to obtain activity permits from this unit, which frequently sent people to participate in their activities. In areas controlled by the IRGY, some CSOs had to set up new organizations to implement their projects. In other cases, CSOs were forced to implement projects through other organizations when they were denied permits under the pretext that their head offices were located in areas controlled by Ansar Allah. In Marib, the MOSAL office increasingly intervened in CSOs' activities by requesting project documentation and design changes.

Ansar Allah authorities refused to issue licenses to several INGOs at the beginning of 2020, pressuring them to allocate 2 percent of their overall assistance to SCMCHA for "operating expenses." However, Ansar Allah rescinded this demand after UN bodies and INGOs threatened to suspend their activities. In areas controlled by Ansar Allah, many CSOs were also subject to extortion when they tried to renew licenses or obtain activity permits. Some CSOs succumbed to this extortion, either paying bribes, allowing their grants to be administered by the blackmailing authorities, or employing relatives of these authorities with high wages. The CSOs that refused these extortion attempts were forced to move their activities or even head offices to IRGY-controlled areas. In 2020, Ansar Allah authorities issued more than eighty-five formal decisions regulating relief activities, some of which violated humanitarian principles and actions set forth in the Yemen Humanitarian Response Plan. The International Organization for Migration (IOM) closed its office in Hudaydah due to official restrictions.

Many CSOs waited for activity permits from MOSAL in Aden for the entire year, with only those that paid money actually obtaining permits. One CSO in Abyan agreed to implement 40 percent of its activities in an area to which an official person belonged in order to get approval for the project. Staff members of Abs Development were arrested in Hajjah on multiple occasions, and the security seized their phones and shut down their office. The authorities in Sana'a changed the name of Islah Charity to Charitable Society for Social Welfare and took over the implementation of its projects, while retaining its original logo as a misinformation tactic to ensure the continuation of donor assistance. Some religious groups in Hadramout lashed out against gender-related women's rights projects and incited people against them.

Ansar Allah authorities continued to enforce the tax law requiring CSOs to pay payroll taxes. CSOs in IRGY-controlled areas, on the other hand, do not pay any taxes. Additionally, Ansar Allah authorities imposed an

additional 3 percent fee over the percentage provided by law to insure CSOs' staff salaries. The Law on Associations and Foundations grants CSOs customs exemptions, enables them to conduct commercial activities to support their operations, and allows them to collect donations after prior coordination with relevant authorities.

Yemeni laws allow CSOs to conduct fundraising campaigns to support their charitable activities after coordinating with relevant authorities. However, obtaining permits for these campaigns is not always easy in areas controlled by Ansar Allah.

Very few lawyers specialize in CSO-related law. Those that are available are located in the major cities of Sana'a, Aden, and Taiz.

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## ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY: 5.1

Organizational capacity in the sector declined slightly in 2020 due to the numerous challenges that CSOs faced during the year. CSOs were forced to halt activities from March to June as a result of the pandemic.

Although most were able to continue their work after this period, many organizations, including Tamdeen Youth Foundation (TYF) and Wama Foundation, had to shut down some of their branch offices.

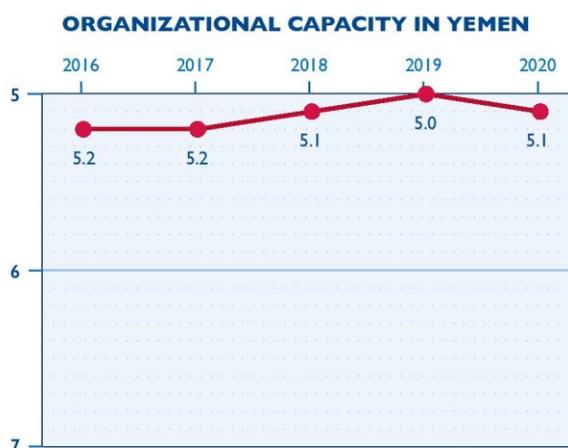
Due to the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, CSOs focused more of their efforts in 2020 on responding to the needs brought on by the virus than on improving their own organizational capacities. Some CSOs that specialize in providing humanitarian aid and relief, such as Nahda Makers and Abs Development, were more active during the pandemic as they were able to attract additional funds and establish new branch offices in other cities.

CSOs continued to engage in constituency-building and outreach efforts to their targeted beneficiaries. For example, Yemen Without Conflict Foundation (YWC) established student peace committees in five schools in Taiz. These committees resolved conflicts and promoted tolerance and coexistence within schools after receiving training on conflict resolution. YWC also established conflict resolution committees in some neighborhoods of Taiz. Resonate! Yemen formed and trained youth community teams to play an active role in public life in several governorates, including Hadramout, Taiz, Aden, and Marib. These teams worked in cooperation with local authorities to prepare development plans for their cities.

In 2020, some CSOs developed strategic plans to guide their activities, while other CSOs, such as Youth Without Borders, Yemen Peace School, Abs Development, and ROWAD Foundation, adopted alternative plans to cope with COVID-19. Some CSOs, such as Abs Development, were able to use the relatively quiet period during COVID-19, when activities were limited, to improve their internal management and operation systems. The Hodeidah Girls Foundation obtained its ISO 9001 certification during the year.

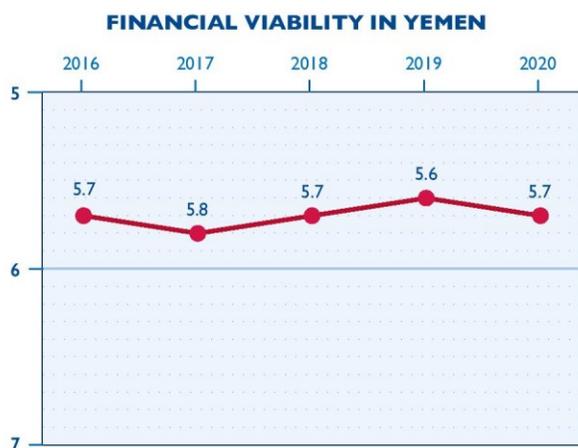
CSOs in Yemen generally have two governing bodies. In foundations, the board of trustees (which typically includes an organization's founders) is the main governing body, while an executive body under the board of trustees runs the organization's activities. In community-based organizations, the general assembly is the main governing body, followed by the executive committee. In general, boards of trustees formally exist in most CSOs, yet most remain ineffective at enhancing organizational governance and managing funds.

During 2020, most domestic CSOs were unable to retain their staff or secure sufficient wages due to funding cutbacks. Volunteers were still able to take part in CSO activities in 2020. For example, CSOs often engaged volunteers in short-term projects, such as assisting with online trainings and event planning. However, most CSOs do not have clear policies about how and when to engage volunteers. Some CSOs maintain databases of volunteer contacts who they reach out to when needed. In some cases, volunteers are compensated for their transportation and other expenses.



COVID-19 forced many CSOs to purchase computers and software to allow their staff to work from home and carry out their activities remotely. Before the pandemic, such investments were not considered a priority. At the same time, internet connectivity remained a problem in the country. In early January, one of the country's main underwater fiber optic cables was severely damaged, cutting off internet access for nearly 80 percent of the country's population for about a month. Frequent power outages and shutdowns, high connectivity costs, and low bandwidth also hindered access throughout the year. Many CSOs, however, especially those working in the humanitarian relief sector, were able to pay for improved access and services.

## FINANCIAL VIABILITY: 5.7



The CSO sector's financial viability declined slightly in 2020 as funding cutbacks, combined with the redirection of much of the available funding to COVID-19 response, meant that CSOs specializing in social development had less access to funding.

Although CSOs attempt to diversify their funding resources, most CSOs continued to be heavily dependent on foreign funding in 2020. The level of foreign funding declined in 2020. According to Human Rights Watch, multilateral governmental support to UN agencies that provide the bulk of humanitarian aid to the country experienced significant budget cuts, in some cases, by over half from the previous year. According to a study published by Oxfam in October 2020, only \$1.43 billion of the requested \$3.38 billion needed to fully

implement the 2020 Yemen Humanitarian Response Plan was received, thus making 2020 the "worst funded" year in over a decade. The report also notes similar trends in other forms of donor assistance.

In 2020, some UN agencies, including UNICEF, adopted new partnership policies, under which they would procure assistance, and then domestic CSOs would deliver it to the end beneficiaries. In other cases, domestic CSOs would both procure and distribute assistance, and then get reimbursed. These new types of partnerships offered a means of support to CSOs operating in areas under the control of the IRGY.

Ansar Allah continued to interfere with the provision of assistance in areas it controlled. The United States worked with the international community to reduce this obstruction and to encourage other donors and UN agencies to reduce their funding for activities in these areas. This decreased funding for CSOs, at least for a time, in these areas. Many CSOs from the north have been moving to the south where it is easier to operate and where more funding is available.

As a result of the shrinking economic base due to COVID-19, funding from the private sector for CSOs decreased considerably in 2020. However, some of Yemen's larger corporations, such as the Hayel Saeed Anam Group, provided donations to the UN for COVID-19 response needs in the country.

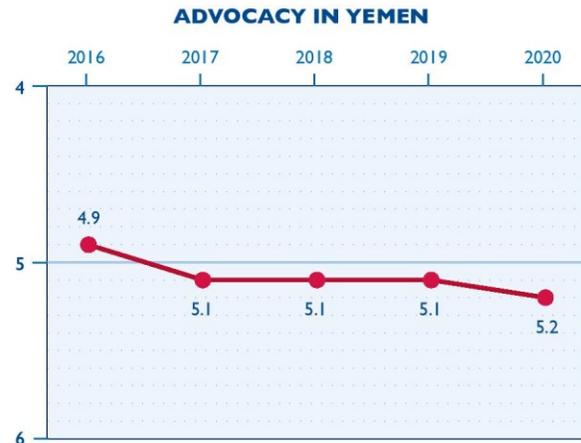
As in previous years, in 2020, some CSOs tried to establish income-generating activities in areas such as legal aid and economic assistance. For example, the Tamden Youth Foundation established an information technology (IT) company and a detergent manufacturing company in 2020 to ensure sustainable income. In general, however, CSOs' ability to establish revenue-generating projects as a means of providing sustainable income was more limited in 2020 due to the economic turmoil and security concerns in the country.

Some domestic CSOs improve their financial management abilities each year. In 2020, those that could afford to—primarily CSOs engaged in humanitarian response—invested in improving administrative systems and software to manage grants and ensure high levels of transparency, accountability, and effectiveness during implementation.

## ADVOCACY: 5.2

CSOs' advocacy efforts declined slightly in 2020 as a result of increased restrictions and logistical difficulties in implementing their activities.

Although Yemeni laws stress the importance of engaging the community in public policy making and allow for access to information related to government performance, the actual mechanisms for engaging CSOs in public policy making are still unclear and, thus, ineffective. Public institutions operating in areas controlled by the IRGY were largely paralyzed during 2020 due to the government's forced exile in Riyadh. Official communication channels between public institutions and CSOs across Yemen were generally ineffective and coordination efforts depended largely on personal relationships between decision makers and CSO leaders.



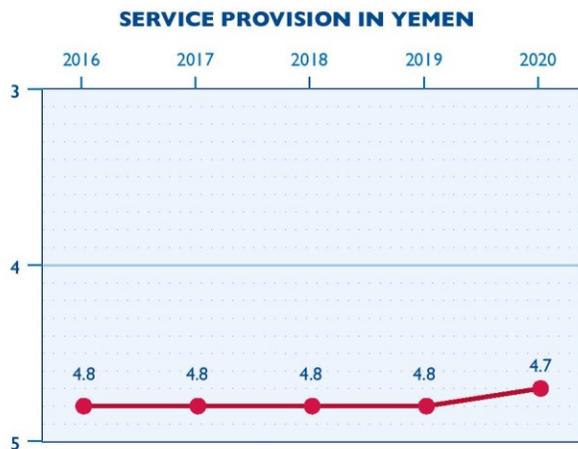
CSOs' ability to advocate for issues in the public interest fell sharply in 2020. In addition to restrictions imposed by Ansar Allah on freedom of expression, STC forces tightened their grip over public life. As CSOs could not place any pressure on authorities directly, they organized social media campaigns to condemn the deteriorating situation and lack of public services, such as electricity and health care. Some CSOs in Aden, such as the Yemen Center for Human Rights Studies, Akoun Foundation for Human Rights, and Woajood Foundation for Food Security, advocated for the UN Secretary General to issue a statement calling for an end to all wars and conflicts around the world and for the need to stand together in the battle against COVID-19. A few CSOs issued a statement addressing the situation in Aden and the importance of allowing CSOs to play a watchdog role to ensure that government institutions fulfill their responsibilities effectively.

Several CSOs, such as Youth Without Borders, Nahda Makers, and the Medical Field Foundation, conducted a large-scale advocacy campaign on social media to raise the authorities' and citizens' awareness about the risks of COVID-19 and ways to prevent its spread. These CSOs produced and widely disseminated posters and videos over social media and TV channels. These activities had wide outreach, making them highly effective.

Some CSOs and community initiatives, such as the Civil Alliance for Peace and National Reconciliation, Sheba Youth Foundation, and Yemen Partners, contacted the warring parties to unblock the Ad Dali-Hawban road, one of the main roads connecting major cities in the country. However, these CSOs did little to mobilize the public and local communities to exert pressure on the warring parties to respond to these requests. In Hadramout, where the issue was less politically sensitive than in other areas, CSOs successfully advocated for the re-opening of the Ad-Dhabba road to allow entry to the city. They also successfully pressured the military not to occupy some public institutions. Given the political tensions in the divided city of Taiz, CSOs felt it would be unsafe for them to advocate for the removal of the military from some schools and public institutions, despite the negative impact of their occupation.

CSOs were not able to advocate for legislative reform effectively in 2020 since the parliament largely stopped performing its duties. Therefore, CSOs also found it difficult to pressure the authorities to improve the legal environment governing the sector, especially in areas controlled by Ansar Allah, where the freedom of speech was significantly restricted.

## SERVICE PROVISION: 4.7



CSO service provision improved slightly in 2020. The range of services provided by CSOs expanded slightly in 2020, as many introduced new services, such as institutional support for governmental institutions, community media, and the preparation of development plans for local communities. In addition, CSOs offered services in response to COVID-19. However, decreased funding resulted in reductions in some services, while restrictions on movement impeded CSOs' ability to provide services for a few months of the year.

In 2020, CSOs provided more entrepreneurship opportunities for youth by expanding their services to new cities. The Sheba Youth Foundation set up the first-ever business incubator in Taiz called Build it Up, which empowered and funded some community projects. The

ROWAD-run Block One incubator provided technical support for a wide range of startups in Sana'a, Taiz, and Hadramout. This technical support included building entrepreneurs' capacities to develop business models as well as marketing and sales plans. Education for Employment (EFE) Foundation provided technical and financial support services for a large number of startups in Aden and Sana'a, and outfitted a new incubator in Sana'a, Kayan Light, which provides entrepreneurship-related services for startups. ROWAD, in cooperation with the Ministry of Industry, developed a procedural guide for startups on registration and taxes, as well as a website for start-up-related services. Yemeni Women's Union developed an e-platform to promote the products of women-run projects to boost economic empowerment.

Some CSOs began to provide institutional support services in 2020. Yemen Partners and Youth Without Borders started to provide technical support for Judicial Authority offices in Taiz. Berghof Foundation and the German: Society for International Cooperation (GIZ) provided institutional building for some governmental offices in Hadramout. Resonate! Yemen built the capacity of local authorities in Hadramout, Aden, and Taiz, helping them to prepare strategic plans. In Aden, Afaq Shababia Foundation held a social accountability workshop for the local MOSAL office and developed a public service guide for CSOs that promotes accountability and transparency in the sector.

Some CSOs also undertook activities to enhance government transparency and reduce corruption in the implementation of donor-supported projects and the delivery of public services. For example, the Gusoor Foundation implemented an initiative to monitor the transparency and efficiency of relief projects in Taiz. Al-Wasat Foundation for Development evaluated the efficiency of local public services in Seyion, providing updates about their monitoring over the radio. Mysarah Development and Protection also developed a series of activities to monitor and improve the performance of police stations in Sana'a.

To respond to citizens' needs, CSOs participated actively in the response to COVID-19. Many organizations conducted intensive campaigns on social media, TV, and radio to increase public awareness of preventive measures. They also distributed PPE and medication around the country and supported community initiatives that manufactured ventilators and stretchers.

In the field of economic empowerment, Ash-Shihr Fisheries Association and Mukalla Fisheries Association supported fishermen to continue their income-generating activities. In several districts in Hajjah, Abs Development provided water purification technology to render the groundwater potable.

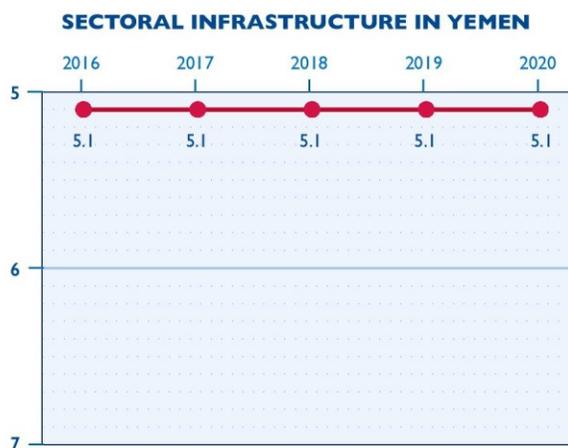
CSOs' ability to build constituencies and sustainable relations with beneficiaries remained unchanged in 2020. Most CSOs continued to provide their services to the public at large without discrimination. Exceptions to this trend include community-based organizations (CBOs) that are established by specific communal groups to serve their own specific interests. Most services provided by CSOs rely on foreign funding. As a result of local currency depreciation, inflation, and weakened purchasing power, the commercial projects run by CSOs faced continuity challenges in 2020.

The government's attitude towards CSO activities remained unchanged in 2020. CSOs are more appreciated by governmental institutions in IRGY-controlled areas, while CSOs' relations with governmental institutions in areas controlled by Ansar Allah are more complicated. The MOSAL branch office in Marib recognized the relief and development efforts of thirty-one domestic and international organizations in 2020. Despite the increased restrictions on CSOs in Ansar Allah controlled areas, at the end of 2020, the MOSAL office in Sana'a honored several CSOs as a sign of appreciation for their relief and development work. In mid-2020, the Taiz Police Department honored several CSOs for supporting its efforts.

## SECTORAL INFRASTRUCTURE: 5.1

The infrastructure supporting the CSO sector was unchanged in 2020 and remained quite fragile.

Overall, there is a severe scarcity of specialized centers that provide technical, administrative, and legal support services to CSOs, especially those in smaller cities and rural areas. For a few months in early 2020, many of the networks that normally provide technical and administrative training and services to CSOs were busy implementing relief-related activities. Other networks, such as Yemen Microfinance Network, continued to provide support services to their members throughout the year. Consulting firms that offer research and monitoring and assessment tools to CSOs with the support of UN agencies or other INGOs were unable to operate effectively in areas controlled by Ansar Allah, forcing them to move to areas under IRGY control.



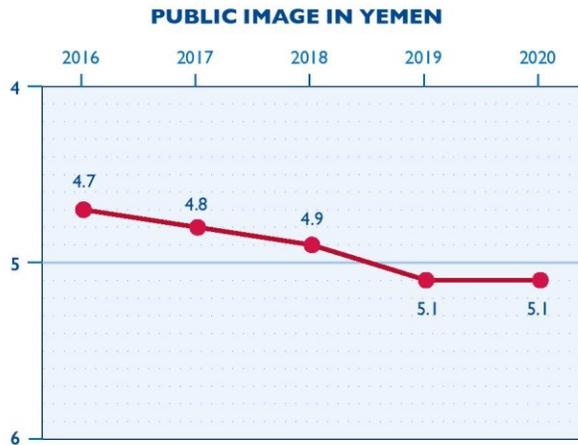
Some CSOs provide technical and administrative training to other CSOs in areas such as strategic planning, project management, financial and grant management, and monitoring and evaluation. With funding from Saferworld, the Yemen Center for Human Rights Studies in Aden offered training to its staff as well as some partner CSOs on communication, advocacy, and monitoring and evaluation. Youth Without Borders published a training manual on youth and peace.

The pandemic forced most training to be held online through Zoom and other platforms in 2020. CSOs and activists have better access to the internet than the population at large, generally enabling them to take advantage of these opportunities. Sana'a Center offered Zoom-based organizational and technical support to several CSOs. Sheba Youth Foundation convened Zoom-based training on public policy for researchers and activists. The Sudanese Humanitarian Aid and Development Organization held a series of Zoom-based trainings on CSO sustainability for twenty Yemeni CSOs. Field Medical Corporation held several technical and administrative training sessions for its staff to improve their efficiency and productivity. Partners Yemen held integrative strategic planning and grant management training for its local CSO partners in several governorates such as Marib, Al-Mahrah, Hadramout, Shabwah, and Aden.

CSOs struggled to build coalitions in 2020, particularly in areas under the control of Ansar Allah. However, some new coalitions emerged during the year to support advocacy on social issues. A group of CSOs in Sana'a formed a union to improve the efficiency of humanitarian and development interventions. However, the organizers have not yet been able to register the union officially. In Hadramout, the Alliance of Women for Peace, an initiative aiming to increase the role of women in promoting peace, was formed. Funded by Save the Children, an online peace-building platform was established by a group of youth CSOs in several governorates. Also, Youth Pact for Peace and Security was established in Aden with the support of UN Women.

Cooperation between CSOs and the private sector did not change notably in 2020, except for the support provided by the private sector to UN agencies for COVID-19 response. CSOs attempted to work more with public health institutions to respond to the pandemic.

## PUBLIC IMAGE: 5.1



activities.

In areas controlled by Ansar Allah, media coverage of CSOs' activities continued to be rare, as most CSOs tended to avoid the media, which is controlled or censored by Ansar Allah. Meanwhile, some of these media outlets and public officials continued to distort CSOs' public image. In a press conference, a spokesperson for the Ansar Allah armed forces accused USAID of supplying weapons "to the mercenaries." Television channels broadcast videos of weapons with the USAID logo as evidence of this claim. Ibb News website published an article describing CSOs as deviating from their humanitarian work and engaging in intelligence gathering and unethical actions. On Almasirah TV, the Secretary General of SCMCHA described the UN donor conference as a scandal and suggested that the WHO had been keeping medicine in storage until it expires and misappropriating relief funds. In another interview on the Yemen Today channel, he indicated that donors are complicit with the countries of aggression and added that they helped eight Israelis enter Yemen in 2018 via UN flights to carry out intelligence work. In 2020, an Ansar Allah research center published a book entitled "Dealing with CSOs in the Quranic Project," which contains inflammatory speech against CSOs.

This negative rhetoric likely incited violence against CSOs in 2020. In Aden, for example, unidentified persons threw a bomb at Oxfam's head office on New Year's Eve, and two Emirates Red Crescent coordinators were kidnapped and killed. In addition, a mobile clinic run by the UAE Red Crescent was fired upon in Mukha. Although the public does not condone such outbreaks of violence against CSOs, many still believe that CSOs serve foreign agendas and do not work in the interest of the Yemeni public. CSOs did little to improve their image among the public in 2020.

CSOs have no sector-wide code of ethics, nor is there an institutionalized code of ethics at the organizational level. However, many CSOs have clear values that shape organizational ethics. Although the law requires CSOs to provide financial and technical information about their activities to the authorities, many CSOs do not share their budgets and financial statements with either the authorities or the public to avoid being harassed by corrupt government officials.

CSOs' public image did not change in 2020. In areas controlled by Ansar Allah, smear campaigns continued to target domestic and international CSOs, accusing them of corruption and feeding intelligence to foreign governments. CSOs made few efforts to improve their public image.

Some audio-visual and print media continued to provide positive coverage of the work of domestic and international CSOs operating in areas controlled by the IRGY. Yemen Shabab channel covered a public debate on engaging youth in peace building that was facilitated by Youth Without Borders in Taiz. In Hadramout, Lana radio devoted spots to CSOs' activities, while some other radio stations covered CSOs' efforts in support of women's rights. Aden TV regularly covered CSOs'

# ANNEX A: CSO SUSTAINABILITY INDEX METHODOLOGY

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## INSTRUCTIONS FOR CSOSI IMPLEMENTING PARTNERS

### 2020 CSO SUSTAINABILITY INDEX

#### I. INTRODUCTION

USAID's Civil Society Organization Sustainability Index (the Index or CSOSI) reports annually on the strength and overall viability of CSO sectors in Africa, Middle East and North Africa (MENA), Central and Eastern Europe and Eurasia, and Mexico. The CSO Sustainability Index is a tool developed by USAID to assess the strength and overall viability of CSO sectors in countries around the world. By analyzing seven dimensions that are critical to sectoral sustainability, the Index highlights both strengths and constraints in CSO development. The Index allows for comparisons both across countries and over time. Initially developed in 1997 for Central and Eastern Europe and Eurasia, the CSOSI is a valued tool and methodology used by non-governmental organizations (NGOs), governments, donors, academics and others to better understand the sustainability of the civil society sector. USAID is continually striving to ensure the cross-national comparability of the Index scores, and to improve the reliability and validity of measurements, adequate standardization of units and definitions, local ownership of the Index, transparency of the process of Index compilation, and representative composition of panels delivering the scores.

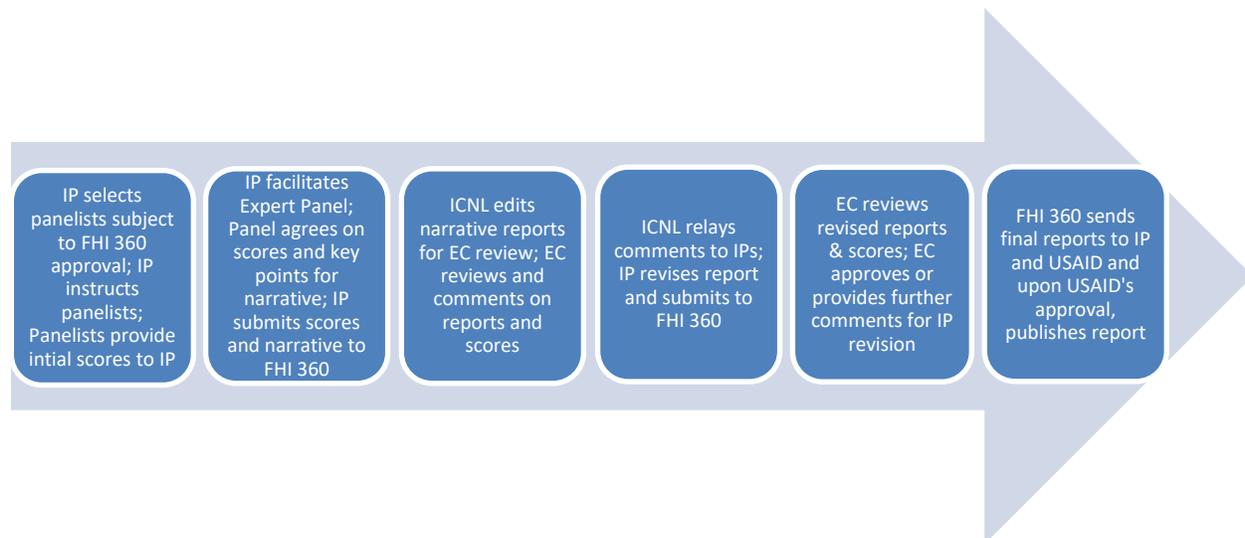
Beginning with the 2017 Index and for the following four years, FHI 360 and the International Center for Not-for-Profit Law (ICNL) are managing the coordination and editing of the CSOSI. A senior staff member from both FHI 360 and ICNL will serve on the Editorial Committee as will one or more senior USAID/Washington officials. FHI 360 will provide small grants to local CSOs to implement the CSOSI methodology in country, while ICNL will be primarily responsible for editing the reports. Local Implementing Partners (IPs) play an essential role in developing the CSO SI and need a combination of research, convening, and advocacy skills for carrying out a high quality CSOSI.

#### **Local Implementing Partners should please remember:**

- Panels must include a diverse range of civil society representatives.
- Panelists should formulate initial scores for dimensions and justifications individually and in advance of the Panel Meeting.
- Discuss each indicator and dimension at the Panel Meeting and provide justification for the proposed score for each dimension.
- Compare the score for each dimension with last year's score to ensure that the direction of change reflects developments during the year being assessed.
- Note changes to any indicators and dimensions in the country report to justify proposed score changes.
- The Editorial Committee will request additional information if the scores are not supported by the report. If adequate information is not provided, the EC has the right to adjust the scores accordingly.

## II. METHODOLOGY FOR THE IMPLEMENTER

The following steps should be followed by the IP to assemble the Expert Panel that will meet in person to discuss the status of civil society over the reporting year, determine scores, and prepare a country report for the 2020 Civil Society Organization (CSO) Sustainability Index.



**I. Select Panel Experts.** Carefully select a group of at least 8-10 civil society representatives to serve as panel experts. Panel members must include representatives of a diverse range of CSOs and other stakeholders, such as:

- CSO support centers, resource centers or intermediary support organizations (ISOs);
- CSOs, community-based organizations (CBOs), and faith-based organizations (FBOs) involved in a range of service delivery and/or advocacy activities;
- CSOs involved in local and national level government oversight/ watchdog/ advocacy activities;
- Academia with expertise related to civil society and CSO sustainability;
- CSO partners from government, business or media;
- Think tanks working in the area of civil society development;
- Member associations such as cooperatives, lawyers' associations and natural resources users' groups;
- Representatives of diverse geographic areas and population groups, e.g., minorities;
- International donors who support civil society and CSOs; and
- Other local partners.

It is important that the Panel members be able to assess a wide spectrum of CSO activities in various sectors ranging from democracy, human rights and governance reforms to the delivery of basic services to constituencies. CSOs represented on the panel must include both those whose work is heavily focused on advocacy and social service delivery. To the extent possible, panels should include representatives of both rural and urban parts of the country, as well as women's groups, minority populations, and other marginalized groups, as well as sub-sectors such as women's rights, community-based development, civic education, microfinance, environment, human rights, and youth. The Panel should to the extent possible include an equal representation of men and women. If two or more representatives of the same CSO participate in the Panel, they can only cast one vote. It is recommended that at least 70 percent of the Expert Panel be nationals of the country that is being rated.

In countries experiencing civil war, individuals should be brought from areas controlled by each of the regimes if possible. If not, individuals from the other regime's territory should at least be contacted, to incorporate their local perspective.

In some instances, it may be appropriate to select a larger group in order to better reflect the diversity and breadth of the civil society sector in the country. For countries where regional differences are significant,

implementers should incorporate, to the greatest extent possible, differing regional perspectives. If financial constraints do not allow for in-person regional representation, alternative, low cost options, including emailing scores/ comments, teleconferencing/Skype, may be used.

**If there is a USAID Mission in the country, a USAID representative must be invited to attend the panel.** USAID representatives that attend are welcome to provide some words of introduction to open the event, as it is funded by USAID, and they are welcome to observe and participate in the discussion. However, they will not have the ability to cast their vote in terms of scores.

**Please submit to FHI 360 for approval the list of the Panel members who you plan to invite at least two weeks before the meeting is scheduled to occur using the form provided in Annex A.** It is the responsibility of the IP to ensure that the panel composition, and the resulting score and narrative, are sufficiently representative of a cross-section of civil society and include the perspectives of various types of stakeholders from different sectors and different areas of the country.

**2. Prepare the Panel meeting.** Ensure that panel members understand the objectives of the Panel, including developing a consensus-based rating for each of the seven dimensions of civil society sustainability covered by the Index and articulating a justification or explanation for each rating consistent with the methodology described below. We encourage you to hold a brief orientation session for the panelists prior to the panel discussion. This is particularly important for new panelists but is also useful to update all panelists on methodology and process changes. Some partners choose to hold a formal training session with panel members, reviewing the methodology document and instructions. Other partners provide a more general discussion about the objectives of the exercise and process to the panelists.

**Definition of CSO:**

Civil society organizations are defined “broadly as any organizations, whether formal or informal, that are not part of the apparatus of government, that do not distribute profits to their directors or operators, that are self-governing, and in which participation is a matter of free choice. Both member-serving and public-serving organizations are included. Embraced within this definition, therefore, are private, not-for-profit health providers, schools, advocacy groups, social service agencies, anti-poverty groups, development agencies, professional associations, community-based organizations, unions, religious bodies, recreation organizations, cultural institutions, and many more.”

- *Toward an Enabling Legal Environment for Civil Society, Statement of the 16th Annual Johns Hopkins International Fellows in Philanthropy Conference, Nairobi, Kenya. The International Journal of Not-for-Profit Law, Volume 8, Issue 1, November 2005.*

The overall goal of the Index is to track and compare progress in the sector over time, increasing the ability of local entities to undertake self-assessment and analysis. To ensure a common understanding of what is being assessed, the convener shall provide a definition of civil society to the panel members. The CSOSI uses the enclosed definition to ensure the report addresses a broad swath of civil society.

In order to allow adequate time to prepare for the panel, distribute the instructions, rating description documents and a copy of the previous year’s country chapter to the members of the Expert Panel a minimum of three days before convening the Panel so that they may develop their initial scores for each dimension before meeting with the other panel members. It is critical to emphasize the importance of developing their scores and justifications before attending the panel. It is also important to remind panel members that the scores should reflect developments during the 2020 calendar year (January 1, 2020, through December 31, 2020).

We also recommend you encourage panelists to think of concrete examples that illustrate trends, since this information will be crucial to justifying their proposed scores. In countries with closing civic space, the IP should take initiative to ensure that expert panel members do not self-censor themselves, including by taking whatever measures possible to build trust. The confidentiality of all members must be ensured and participants must be protected against retaliation; to this end, the IP can choose to enforce Chatham House Rules.

Lastly, it is highly recommended to compile and send to panelists data and information sources to guide them as they score. Recommendations of information sources are listed below under #4.

We are very interested in using the preparation of this year’s Index to track lessons learned for use in improving the monitoring process in upcoming years. We would appreciate implementers recording and submitting any observations they might have that will increase the usefulness of this important tool. In addition, we will solicit feedback through regional debriefs, and will continue to maintain an online forum where IPs can share best practices, ask questions, and submit their comments or suggestions. These methods will be supplemented by brief satisfaction surveys that will be used to help evaluate the success of methodological and process innovations.

### 3. Convene a meeting of the CSO Expert Panel.

**3.a.** We do not require panelists to score individual indicators but only overall dimensions. For each dimension, allow each panel member to share his or her initial score and justification with the rest of the group. (Note: If two or more representatives of the same CSO participate in the Panel, only one vote can be cast on their behalf.) Although scoring will not take place at the indicator level, please be sure that panel members discuss each indicator within each dimension of the CSOSI and provide evidence-based, country-relevant examples of recent or historical conditions, policies, and events within each of the dimension narratives. Please take notes on the discussion of each indicator and dimension, detailing the justification for all dimension scores, in the template provided. These notes must be submitted to FHI 360 with the first draft of the narratives (they do not have to be translated to English if not originally written in English).

At the end of the discussion of each dimension, allow panel members to adjust their scores, if desired. Then, for each dimension, eliminate the highest score and the lowest score (if there are two or more of the highest or lowest scores, only eliminate one of them) and average the remaining scores together to come up with a single score for each dimension. Calculate the average or arithmetic mean<sup>1</sup> of these scores for a preliminary score for the dimension. Please keep all scores on record, making sure that personal attribution cannot be made to individual panel members. Use a table similar to the one provided below to track panel members’ scores without personal attribution.

Panel Member	Legal Environment	Organizational Capacity	Financial Viability	Advocacy	Service Provision	Sectoral Infrastructure	Public Image
1							
2							
3							

**3.b. Once a score is determined for a dimension, please have panel members compare** the proposed score with last year’s score to ensure that the direction and magnitude of the change reflects developments during the year. For example, if an improved score is proposed, this should be based on concrete positive developments during the year that are noted in the report. On the other hand, if the situation worsened during the year, this should be reflected in a worse score (i.e., a higher number on the 1-7 scale).

Please note that for countries where a democratic revolution took place in the previous year, the panelists should be conscious to avoid scoring based on a post-revolution euphoria. The score-change framework should be closely followed to avoid panelists scoring based on anticipated changes, rather than the actual level of change thus far.

A change of 0.1 should generally be used to reflect modest changes in a dimension. Larger differences may be warranted if there are more significant changes in the sector. The evidence to support the scoring change must always be discussed by the panel and documented in the dimension narrative. See **CSOSI Codebook – Instructions for Expert Panel Members** for more details about this scoring scale.

In addition, for each dimension score, review the relevant description of that dimension in “CSOSI Codebook – Tiers and Scores: A Closer Look.” Discuss with the group whether the score for a country matches that rating description. For example, a score of 2.3 in organizational capacity would mean that the civil society sector is in the “Sustainability Enhanced” phase. Please read the “Sustainability Enhanced” section for Organizational Capacity in “Ratings: A Closer Look” to ensure that this accurately describes the civil society environment.

<sup>1</sup> Arithmetic mean is the sum of all scores divided by the total number of scores.

If the panel does not feel that the proposed score is accurate after these two reviews, please note this when submitting proposed scores in your narrative report, and the Editorial Committee will discuss whether one or more scores needs to be reset with a new baseline. Ultimately, each score should reflect consensus among group members.

**3.c. Discuss each of the seven dimensions of the Index and score them in a similar manner.** Once all seven dimensions have been scored, average the final dimension scores together to get the overall CSO sustainability score. Please submit the table with the scores from the individual panelists together with the narrative report. Panelists should be designated numerically.

**3.d. Please remind the group at this stage that reports will be reviewed by an Editorial Committee (EC) in Washington, D.C.** The Editorial Committee will ensure that all scores are adequately supported and may ask for additional evidence to support a score. If adequate information is not provided, the EC may adjust the scores.

**4. Prepare a draft country report.** The report should focus on developments over the calendar year 2020 (January 1, 2020, through December 31, 2020).

The draft report should begin with an overview statement and a brief discussion of the current state of sustainability of the civil society sector with regard to each dimension. In the overview statement, please include an estimated number of registered and active CSOs, as well as a description of the primary fields and geographic areas in which CSOs operate. Also include a brief overview of any key political, economic, or social developments in the country that impacted the CSO sector during the year. If this information is not provided, the editor will request it in subsequent rounds, which will require additional work from you.

The report should then include sections on each dimension. Each of these sections should begin with a summary of the reasons for any score changes during the year. For example, if a better score is proposed, the basis for this improvement should be clearly stated up front. These sections should include a discussion of both accomplishments and strengths in that dimension, as well as obstacles to sustainability and weaknesses that impact the operations of a broad range of CSOs. Each indicator within each dimension should be addressed in the report.

The report should be written based on the Panel members' discussion and input, as well as a review of other sources of information about the CSO sector including but not limited to analytical studies of the sector, statistical data, public opinion polls and other relevant third-party data. Some international sources of information and data that should be considered include the following:

- CIVICUS State of Civil Society Report - <https://www.civicus.org/index.php/state-of-civil-society-report-2019>
- CIVICUS Monitor -- <https://monitor.civicus.org/>
- World Giving Index - <https://www.cafonline.org/about-us/publications>
- Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) - <https://www.v-dem.net/en/analysis/CountryGraph/>
- Media Sustainability Index - <https://www.irex.org/projects/media-sustainability-index-msi>
- Nations in Transit - <https://freedomhouse.org/report-types/nations-transit#.VdugbqSFOhI>
- Freedom in the World - <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/freedom-world-2019>
- Freedom of the Press - <https://freedomhouse.org/report-types/freedom-press>
- ITUC Global Rights Index: <https://www.ituc-csi.org/rights-index-2019>
- ITUC Survey of Violations of Trade Union Rights: <https://survey.ituc-csi.org/?lang=en>
- U.S. Department of State Human Rights Report: <https://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/>
- ICNL Civic Freedom Monitor: <http://www.icnl.org/research/monitor/>
- Carnegie Endowment for International Peace: <https://carnegieendowment.org/regions>
- Afro-Barometer: <http://www.afrobarometer.org/>

Please limit the draft reports to a maximum of **ten pages in English**. Please keep in mind that we rely on implementers to ensure that reports are an appropriate length and are well written.

While the individual country reports for the 2020 CSO Sustainability Index must be brief, implementers may write longer reports for their own use to more fully describe the substance of the panel meetings. Longer reports may include additional country context information or examples and could be used for a variety of purposes, including advocacy initiatives, research, informing project designs, etc.

Please include a list of the experts who served on the panel using the form provided. This will be for our reference only and will not be made public. Also, **please remember to provide the individual panelists' ratings for each dimension** (with the names replaced by numbers).

**Submit the draft country reports** with rankings via email to FHI 360 by the date indicated in your grant's Project Description.

**5. Initial edits of the country report.** Within a few weeks of receiving your draft report, FHI 360 and its partner, ICNL, will send you a revised version of your report that has been edited for grammar, style and content. As necessary, the editors will request additional information to ensure that the report is complete and/or to clarify statements in the report. Please request any clarification needed from the editor as soon as possible, then submit your revised report by the deadline indicated.

**6. Editorial Committee review.** In Washington, an Editorial Committee (EC) will review the scores and revised draft country reports. The EC consists of representatives from USAID, FHI 360, ICNL, and at least one regional expert well versed in the issues and dynamics affecting civil society in the region. A USAID representative chairs the EC. If the EC determines that the panel's scores are not adequately supported by the country report, particularly in comparison to the previous year's scores and the scores and reports of other countries in the region, **the EC may request that the scores be adjusted, thereby ensuring comparability over time and among countries, or request that additional information be provided to support the panel's scores.** Further description of the EC is included in the following section, "The Role of the Editorial Committee."

**7. Additional report revision.** After the EC meets, the editor will send a revised report that indicates the EC's recommended scores, and where further supporting evidence or clarification is required. Within the draft, boxes will be added where you will note whether you accept the revised scores or where you can provide further evidence to support the original proposed score.

The report should be revised and returned to the editor within the allotted timeframe. The project editor will continue to be in contact with you to discuss any outstanding questions and clarifications regarding the scoring and the report's content. Your organization will be responsible for responding to all outstanding comments from the EC, as communicated by the project editor, until the report is approved and accepted by USAID.

**8. Dissemination and promotion of the final reports.** After the reports are approved by USAID and final formatting is conducted, the country reports will be grouped into regional reports. Each Implementing Partner will be responsible for promoting both the final, published country report and the regional report. Your organization will conduct activities to promote the Index's use and its visibility. This may include organizing a local public event, panel discussion, or workshop and by making the report available electronically by web posting or creating a social network page for the country report and through the other methods described in your Use and Visibility Plan. Documentation that you have conducted these activities as described in that Plan must be submitted to FHI 360 before it will authorize the final payment.

### III. THE ROLE OF THE EDITORIAL COMMITTEE

As an important step in the CSO Sustainability Index process, all country reports are reviewed and discussed by an Editorial Committee composed of regional and sector experts in Washington, DC, and an expert based in the region. This committee is chaired by a USAID Democracy Specialist and includes rotating members from USAID (past members have included experts from regional bureaus, the USAID Bureau for Democracy, Conflict and Humanitarian Assistance's Center of Excellence on Democracy, Human Rights and Governance (DCHA/DRG), the USAID Bureau for Economic Growth, Education and the Environment's Local Solutions Office, and USAID Democracy, Human Rights and Governance foreign service officers). The committee also includes civil society experts from FHI 360 and ICNL.

The Editorial Committee has three main roles. It reviews all reports and scores to ensure that narratives are adequate and compelling from the standpoint of supporting the proposed score and to determine if the proposed change in score is supported by the narrative. A compelling narrative demonstrates that a score results from evidence of systematic and widespread cases and is not based on one or two individual cases. For example, a country environment characterized by a growing number of CSOs with strong financial management systems that raise funds locally from diverse sources is a compelling justification for an elevated financial viability score. A country in which one or two large CSOs now have the ability to raise funds from diverse sources is not. The Editorial Committee also checks that scores for each dimension meet the criteria described in "Ratings: A Closer Look," to ensure that scores and narratives accurately reflect the actual stage of CSO sector development. Finally, the Editorial Committee considers a country's score in relation to the proposed scores in other countries, providing a regional perspective that ensures comparability of scores across all countries.

CSOs are encouraged to remind their panels from the outset that the Editorial Committee may ask for further clarification of scores and may modify scores, where appropriate. **While implementing partners will have the chance to dispute these modifications by providing more evidence for the scores the panel proposed, the USAID Chair of the EC will ultimately have the final say on all scores.** However, by asking panels to compare their scores with last year's scores and "Ratings: A Closer Look" (which is essentially what the Editorial Committee does), it is hoped that there will be few differences between proposed scores and final scores. Ensuring that the narrative section for each dimension includes adequate explanations for all scores will also limit the need for the Editorial Committee to ask for further clarification.

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## INSTRUCTIONS FOR CSOSI EXPERT PANEL MEMBERS

### Introduction

USAID's Civil Society Organization Sustainability Index (the Index or CSOSI) is a tool developed by USAID to assess overall viability of civil society organizations (CSOs) in a particular country. By analyzing seven dimensions that are critical to sectoral sustainability on an annual basis, the Index highlights both strengths and constraints in CSO development.

The Index allows for comparisons both across countries and over time. Initially developed in 1997 for Central and Eastern Europe and Eurasia, the CSOSI is a valued tool and methodology used by CSOs, governments, donors, academics and others to better understand the opportunities, challenges and sustainability of the civil society sector in a particular country or region. In 2020 the CSOSI was implemented in 73 countries.

For the period of 2017-2022, FHI 360 and the International Center for Not-for-Profit Law (ICNL) are managing the coordination and editing of the CSOSI. To develop the Index each year, FHI 360 provides small grants and technical support to local CSOs who serve as Implementing Partners (IPs) responsible for leading the in-country process to prepare the annual country report, using the CSOSI methodology. ICNL oversees the editing of the country reports once they are drafted by IPs. A senior staff member from both FHI 360 and ICNL serves on an Editorial Committee that reviews all reports, as do one or more senior USAID/Washington officials.

The Expert Panel (EP) members for whom this Codebook is designed participate in in-country panel discussions on the seven dimensions of sustainability covered by the Index. The IP convenes these panel discussions annually to assess the situation of civil society in their countries and determine scores based on an objective analysis of the factual evidence.

The CSOSI management team is continually striving to ensure the cross-country and cross-year comparability of the Index's scores, as well as to improve the reliability and validity of measurements, standardization of definitions, local ownership of the Index, and transparency of the Index's methodology and processes.

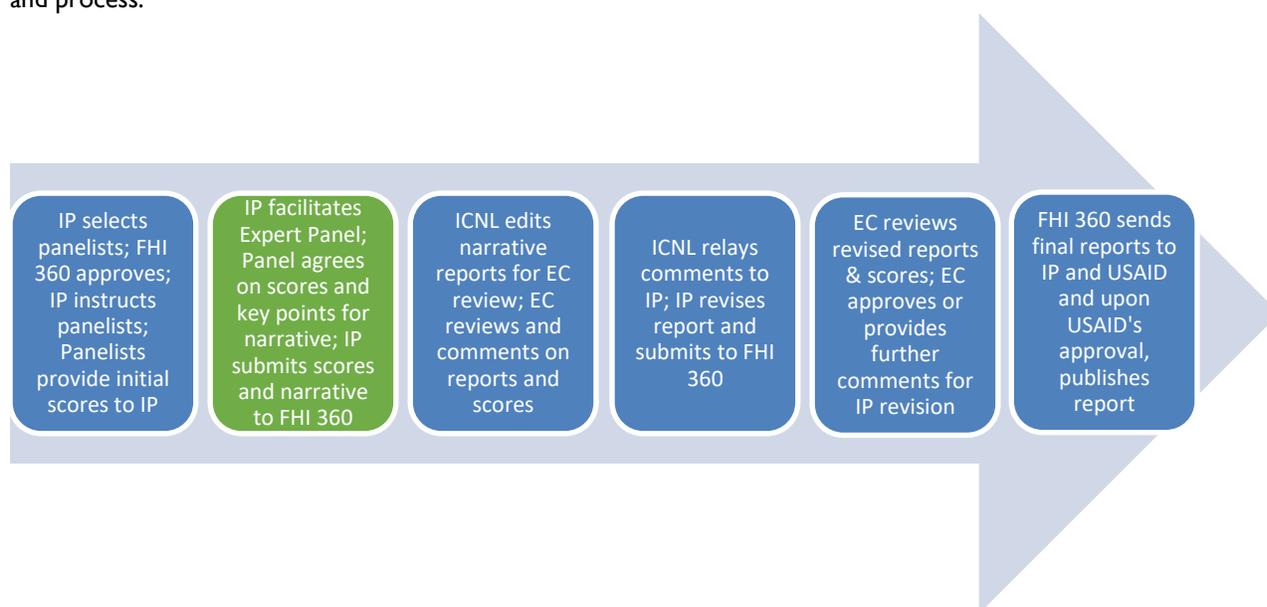
Therefore, FHI 360 has created this Codebook to inform and guide expert panel members through the scoring process. The Codebook provides definitions of the key concepts used to assess the overall strength and sustainability of the civil society sector in a given country, explains the scoring process, and standardizes the scale to be used when proposing score changes.

This document is the first part of the Codebook, providing an overview of the concepts and processes that guide the expert panel members' role in the CSOSI's methodology. The second part of the Codebook provides descriptions, or vignettes, of each score for each dimension, to standardize expert panel members' understanding of the scoring scale and to assist them in ensuring that scores are accurate.

## CSOSI Methodology

The CSOSI measures the sustainability of each country’s CSO sector based on the CSOSI’s seven dimensions: legal environment, organizational capacity, financial viability, advocacy, service provision, sectoral infrastructure, and public image. Its seven-point scoring scale used not only by CSOSI, but also variety of well-known reviews such as Freedom House in its publications “Nations in Transit” and “Freedom in the World.”

The IP in each country leads the process of organizing and convening a diverse and representative panel of CSO experts. EPs discuss the level of change during the year being assessed in each of the seven dimensions and determine proposed scores for each dimension. The IP then drafts narratives that document the rationale for each score. The scores are organized into three basic “tiers” representing the level of viability of the civil society sector: *Sustainability Impeded*, *Sustainability Evolving*, and *Sustainability Enhanced*. All scores and narratives are then reviewed by a Washington, D.C.-based Editorial Committee (EC) for consistency, completeness and methodological adherence, assisted by regional civil society experts. The graph below summarizes the approach and process.



### Definition of Concepts

The overall goal of the Index is to track progress or regression in the CSO sector over time, increasing the ability of local entities to undertake self-assessment and analysis. To ensure a common understanding of what is being assessed, panel members need a shared understanding of the key concepts underlying their assessment.

### Civil Society Organization

Civil society organizations are defined:

*“...As any organizations, whether formal or informal, that are not part of the apparatus of government, that do not distribute profits to their directors or operators, that are self-governing, and in which participation is a matter of free choice. Both member-serving and public-serving organizations are included. Embraced within this definition, therefore, are private, not-for-profit health providers, schools, advocacy groups, social service agencies, anti-poverty groups, development agencies, professional associations, community-based organizations, unions, religious bodies, recreation organizations, cultural institutions, and many more.”<sup>1</sup>*

<sup>1</sup> *Toward an Enabling Legal Environment for Civil Society, Statement of the 16th Annual Johns Hopkins International Fellows in Philanthropy Conference, Nairobi, Kenya. The International Journal of Not-for-Profit Law, Volume 8, Issue 1, November 2005.*

This definition of CSO includes informal, unregistered groups and movements, but to be included in the CSOSI, the movement must possess the structure and continuity to be distinguished from a single gathering of individuals and from personal or family relationships. In many countries political parties and private companies establish and support CSOs, but these entities are usually either public, for-profit, or not self-governing.

#### Civil Society Sector

The CSOSI defines the CSO sector to include all of the following: non-governmental organizations (focused on advocacy, oversight, or service provision), social movements, community-based organizations and faith-based organizations, trade and labor unions, women’s groups, youth groups, resource centers and intermediary support organizations, research institutes and think tanks, professional associations, cooperatives, and natural resource users’ groups, recreational organizations, cultural institutions, social enterprises, and informal movements, networks, and campaigns.

Throughout the report, please address differences between these different types of CSOs and note where trends and developments have affected specific types of CSOs.

### Seven Dimensions of Sustainability

The CSOSI measures sustainability across seven dimensions by analyzing a series of indicators related to each dimension. (see **Scoring: Dimensions and Indicators, provided as Annex A, for the full list of questions to guide your analysis of each indicator**):

**1- LEGAL ENVIRONMENT:** The legal and regulatory environment governing the CSO sector and its implementation.

<i>Registration – Legal procedures to formalize the existence of a CSO</i>
<i>Operation – The enforcement of the laws and its effects on CSOs</i>
<i>State Harassment – Abuses committed against CSOs and their members by state institutions and groups acting on behalf of the state</i>
<i>Taxation – Tax policies that affect CSOs</i>
<i>Access to Resources – Legal opportunities for CSOs to mobilize financial resources</i>
<i>Local Legal Capacity – Availability and quality of legal expertise for CSOs</i>

**2- ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY:** The internal capacity of the CSO sector to pursue its goals

<i>Constituency Building – Relationships with individuals or groups affected by or interested in issues on which CSOs work</i>
<i>Strategic Planning – Organizational goals and priorities for a set timeframe</i>
<i>Internal Management – Structures and processes to guide the work of CSOs</i>
<i>CSO Staffing – Quality and management of human resources</i>
<i>Technical Advancement – Access to and use of technology</i>

**3- FINANCIAL VIABILITY:** The CSO sector’s access to various sources of financial support

<i>Diversification – Access to multiple sources of funding</i>
<i>Local Support - Domestic sources of funding and resources</i>
<i>Foreign Support – Foreign sources of funding and resources</i>
<i>Fundraising – CSOs’ capacity to raise funds</i>
<i>Earned Income – Revenue generated from the sale of products and services</i>
<i>Financial Management Systems – Processes, procedures and tools to manage financial resources and operations.</i>

**4- ADVOCACY:** The CSO sector’s ability to influence public opinion and public policy

<i>Cooperation with Local and Central Government – Access to government decision-making processes</i>
<i>Policy Advocacy Initiatives – Initiatives to shape the public agenda, public opinion, or legislation</i>
<i>Lobbying Efforts – Engagement with lawmakers to directly influence the legislative process</i>
<i>Advocacy for CSO Law Reform – Initiatives to promote a more favorable legal and regulatory framework for the CSO sector</i>

**5- SERVICE PROVISION:** The CSO sector's ability to provide goods and services

<i>Range of Goods and Services – Variety of goods and services offered</i>
<i>Responsiveness to the Community – Extent to which goods and services address local needs</i>
<i>Clientele and beneficiaries – People, organizations and communities who utilize or benefit from CSOs' services and goods</i>
<i>Cost Recovery – Capacity to generate revenue through service provision</i>
<i>Government Recognition and Support – Government appreciation for CSO service provision</i>

**6- SECTORAL INFRASTRUCTURE:** Support services available to the CSO sector

<i>Intermediary Support Organizations (ISOs) and CSO Resource Centers – Organizations and programs that provide CSOs with training and other support services</i>
<i>Local Grant Making Organizations – Local institutions, organizations or programs providing financial resources to CSOs</i>
<i>CSO Networks and Coalitions – Cooperation within the CSO sector</i>
<i>Training – Training opportunities available to CSOs</i>
<i>Intersectoral Partnerships – Collaboration between CSOs and other sectors</i>

**7- PUBLIC IMAGE:** Society's perception of the CSO sector

<i>Media Coverage – Presence of CSOs and their activities in the media (print, television, radio and online)</i>
<i>Public Perception of CSOs – Reputation among the larger population</i>
<i>Government/Business Perception of CSOs – Reputation with the government and business sector</i>
<i>Public Relations – Efforts to promote organizational image and activities</i>
<i>Self-Regulation – Actions taken to increase accountability and transparency</i>

**How to Score**

The CSO Sustainability Index uses a seven-point scale from 1 to 7. **Lower numbers indicate more robust levels of CSO sustainability.** These characteristics and levels are drawn from empirical observations of the sector's development in the country, rather than a causal theory of development. Given the complex nature of civil society sectors, many contradictory developments may be taking place simultaneously. The levels of sustainability are organized into three broad clusters:

- Sustainability Enhanced (1 to 3)* - the highest level of sustainability, corresponds to a score between 1.0 and 3.0;
- Sustainability Evolving<sup>2</sup> (3.1 to 5)* - corresponds to a score between 3.1 and 5.0;
- Sustainability Impeded (5.1 to 7)* – the lowest level of sustainability, corresponds to a score between 5.1 and 7.0.

Sustainability Enhanced	Sustainability Evolving	Sustainability Impeded
1.0 – 3.0	3.1 –5.0	5.1 –7.0

**Scoring Process<sup>3</sup>**

The primary role of the EP is to provide an assessment of the CSO environment based on the seven dimensions mentioned above. During the panel discussion, panel members are tasked with analyzing each dimension and any recent developments, identifying and discussing initial scores for each dimension, including their evidence for these

<sup>2</sup> The 'Sustainability Evolving' categorization does not assume a direct or forward trajectory. Dimension and Overall Sustainability scores that fall within this category may represent both improvements and regressions.

<sup>3</sup>NOTE: For countries in which the CSOSI is being implemented for the first time, the below scoring process does not apply. Instead, please refer to the document Scoring Process for Setting Country Baselines. For countries discussing baseline score recalibration, please use the Recalibration Guidance Sheet.

scores, and determining their final proposed scores for each dimension. The overall score for the country will be an average of these seven scores.

Each expert panel member is asked to follow the steps below:

**Step 1:** Please start by reviewing last year's report and other sources of information about sectoral developments from the last year of which you are aware related to each dimension and its indicators. Then, based on the evidence, rate each dimension on the scale from 1 to 7, with a score of 1 indicating a very advanced civil society sector with a high level of sustainability, and a score of 7 indicating a fragile, unsustainable sector with a low level of development. Fractional scores to one decimal place are encouraged. See "Scoring based on Level of Change" on page 6 below for guidance on how to determine proposed scores.

When rating each dimension, please remember to consider each indicator carefully and make note of any specific, country-relevant examples of recent or historical conditions, policies, or events that you used as a basis for determining this score.

**Step 2:** Review your proposed score for each dimension to ensure that it makes sense in comparison to last year's score and narrative. Please carefully consider the importance of any developments and weigh more heavily those changes that have had an impact at the sector level, especially in cases when there have been both positive and negative changes. In determining the level of change, including the incremental change over the past year, look at the evidence of change, the various factors over the year being assessed that led to those changes (events, policies, laws, etc.), the durability of the change and the extent to which the change impacts the sector as a whole.

**Step 3:** Once you have scores for each dimension, average these seven scores together to arrive at an overall CSO sustainability score and provide all these scores to the IP before you attend the expert panel discussion.

**Step 4:** Attend the EP discussion. Listen to other experts describe the justification for their scores. After discussing each indicator in a dimension, you will have the opportunity to revise your proposed score. Should the panel achieve consensus regarding the scores, the consensus scores will be the panel's final proposed scores. If consensus is not reached among the panelists, the IP will average the panelists' scores, removing one instance of the highest and lowest scores each, to arrive at the final scores that will be proposed to the EC.

It is very important that the discussion includes specific examples and information that can be used to justify the Expert Panelist's scores. Therefore, please come prepared to share specific evidence to support trends you have noted during the year. **If adequate supporting information is not provided, the EC has the right to adjust the scores accordingly, to ensure objectivity and methodological consistency in scoring.**

**Important Note:** In countries with disputed territories or areas (e.g., self-declared states, breakaway states, partially recognized states, declared people’s republics, proto-states, or territories annexed by another country’s government), panelists should score based only on the area under the national government’s control. However, these territories’ contexts should be discussed, to be referenced briefly in the introduction of the country report.

In countries experiencing civil war (political and armed movements that administer parts of the country, regions governed by alternative ruling bodies), panelists should balance the situation in each of the territories when determining all scores, and discuss trends and developments under each regime.

In countries where a great deal of regional autonomy is recognized (e.g. Iraqi Kurdistan), expert panelists should take those areas into account when scoring and compiling examples, and IPs should ensure the situation in these areas are well-integrated into the scoring decisions and narrative report.

For countries with closing civic space, sufficient data and informational sources should be discussed to both acknowledge the changes in civic space and consider its impacts on dimensions. The panelists should respond to published sources and present their evidence to ensure balance between positive and negative developments affecting civil society in their country. To avoid self-censorship and ensure the confidentiality of and non-retaliation against any expert panel member, the IP could choose to enforce the *Chatham House Rule*. When a meeting, or part thereof, is held under the *Chatham House Rule*, participants are free to use the information received, but neither the identity nor the affiliation of the speaker(s), nor that of any other participant, may be revealed.

In countries where a democratic revolution took place in the previous year, the panelists should still closely follow the score-change framework when determining the new dimension-level scores to justify the changes, avoiding exaggerated score increases that may be due to a post-revolution feeling of euphoria. The proposed scores should always measure the actual changes thus far and not anticipated impacts in the near future.

### Scoring Based on Level of Change

The level of change in a dimension from one year to the next is determined by assessing the impact of multiple factors including new policies and laws, changes in implementation of existing policies and laws, various organization-level achievements and setbacks, changes in funding levels and patterns, as well as contextual political, economic, and social developments. While individual examples may seem impactful on their own, ultimately a sector’s long-term sustainability only changes gradually over time as the implications of these positive or negative developments begin to be felt and their long-term effects take hold. Therefore, dimension-level score changes each year should not in normal circumstances exceed a 0.5-point change from the previous year<sup>4</sup>.

When determining what weight to give different trends and developments in how they affect the scores, consider the relative scope of the changes and the duration of their impacts. Those trends and developments that will have larger and longer-term impacts on the sector as a whole should be weighted more heavily compared to those that affect only limited parts of the sector and are more likely to change from year to year. For example, a demonstrated increased capability to mobilize domestic resources (e.g., through corporate philanthropy or crowdfunding) broadly witnessed throughout the sector, or a new mechanism for long-term funding of CSOs (e.g., through a basket fund or a tax designation mechanism) would signal a longer-term change in a sector’s financial viability than a one-year increase in donor funding to CSOs such as during a year of national elections or following an emergency.

In determining how the level of change in the dimension of sustainability should translate into a change in score, the following scale can be used to assist expert panel members’ decision making:

*What was the overall impact of the change(s) on the dimension?*

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<sup>4</sup> **Note:** This scale has been adjusted for the 2018 CSOSI to more accurately reflect the scale at which trends and developments should impact a score given the definitions of the scoring scale above.

<b>Deterioration</b>	<p><b>Cataclysmic deterioration:</b> Trends and developments have had a completely transformative negative effect on at least one or two indicators in the dimension and significantly affected other dimensions as well.</p> <p>Example: Legal Environment – A law has banned all international CSOs and their affiliates from the country, as part of the government’s systematic crackdown on civil society organizations.</p>	0.5 or greater
	<p><b>Extreme deterioration:</b> Trends and developments have had very important negative effects on at least one or two indicators in the dimension.</p> <p>Example: Organizational Capacity – Economic depression and instability have led donor basket funds to close abruptly, leaving many major CSOs without funding for their activities. Outreach efforts to constituencies have been halted due to funding shortages and many major CSOs have lost their well-qualified staff members.</p>	0.4
	<p><b>Significant deterioration:</b> Trends and developments have had important negative effects on at least one or two indicators in the dimension.</p> <p>Example: Public Image – The government conducts a relentless media campaign to discredit the image of CSOs by calling them agents of foreign actors seeking to destabilize the country. At the same, the government intimidates media outlets and threatens them with retaliation should they partner with or cover CSO activities without prior approval by the government.</p>	0.3
	<p><b>Moderate deterioration:</b> Trends and developments have had a somewhat negative impact in at least one or two indicators in the dimension.</p> <p>Example: Legal Environment – In an effort to increase public revenue, the government has decided to increase fees by 100% for some types of government services, including CSO registration renewal fees, which were already very high according to many CSOs. As a result, some CSOs, particularly community-based organizations (CBOs), had to delay or suspend their activities.</p>	0.2
	<p><b>Slight deterioration:</b> Trends or developments have had a slightly negative impact on a at least one or two indicators in the dimension.</p> <p>Example: Legal Environment – The government has decided that CSOs should submit their financial statement and annual activity report to the registration agency every year. This may have a long-term positive effect but in the short-term it has increased bureaucratic hurdles and the possibility of harassment by overzealous government officials.</p>	0.1
<b>No Change</b>	The country has not encountered any significant trends or developments in the dimension or developments have been both positive and negative in equal measure.	0
	<p><b>Slight improvement:</b> Trends or developments have had a slightly positive impact on at least one or two indicators in the dimension.</p> <p>Example: Legal Environment – To facilitate CSO registration, particularly for those in rural areas, the government has decided its registration agency will allow the agency to take applications locally and process registration directly at the district level. Now, CSOs in rural areas are not required to travel to the capital to apply. However, this measure is accompanied with a small increase in the registration fee.</p>	0.1

<b>Improvement</b>	<p><b>Moderate improvement:</b> Trends and developments have had a somewhat positive impact in at least one or two indicators in the dimension.</p> <p>Example: Service Provision – To improve the effectiveness of public service delivery, the central government has decided that at least 10% of local government contracts for basic service delivery will be set aside for CSOs. The law is lacking in specificity, particularly around the application process, but it reinforces CSOs’ image as credible partners.</p>	0.2
	<p><b>Significant improvement:</b> Trends and developments have had important positive effects on at least one or two indicators in the dimension.</p> <p>Example: Public Image – There has been a net increase of CSO partnerships with businesses. CSOs have also agreed to and published a general code of conduct for the sector, reinforcing a positive trend of greater transparency and accountability.</p>	0.3
	<p><b>Extreme improvement:</b> Trends and developments have had very important positive effects on several indicators in the dimension.</p> <p>Example: Organizational Capacity – The government and international donors have launched a five-year multi-million-dollar basket funds to support CSO-led activities and to strengthen CSO capacity, with a special focus on skills training for CSO staff members, particularly those from CBOs.</p>	0.4
	<p><b>Transformative improvement:</b> Trends and developments have had a completely transformative positive effect on at least one or two indicators in the dimension and will potentially affect other dimensions as well.</p> <p>Example: Legal Environment – A nonviolent revolution that toppled an authoritarian regime and installed a more democratic regime has produced sudden political and legal changes that will protect basic freedoms and human rights.</p>	0.5 or greater

# Instructions for Baseline Recalibration

## Background

To enhance its methodology, the Civil Society Organization Sustainability Index (CSOSI) incorporated several activities into its annual process. These activities respond directly to the methodological issues identified through consultations conducted with stakeholders in 2018 and 2019.

One of these activities to strengthen the CSOSI methodology is to reset dimension-level scores which are not accurate, either because their baseline scores were inaccurate or because they have not moved significantly enough over time to reflect structural changes in the sector's sustainability. The goal of resetting these scores is to improve the cross-country comparability of scores and to increase the analytical usefulness of the CSOSI to its target audiences.

There are two scenarios in which a score can be recalibrated:

- Scenario 1
  - FHI 360 informs the Implementing Partner (IP) about the dimension score(s) that the Editorial Committee (EC) has flagged for needing recalibration
- Scenario 2:
  - A majority of expert panelists flag the score for recalibration at the panel discussion.

## Scenario 1: EC recommended recalibration

### Instructions

1. **Inform participating expert panel members about the scores flagged for recalibration –** When the IP sends the expert panelists the annual CSOSI package of relevant materials, it also communicates to them the purpose of baseline score recalibration and the dimension scores that have been selected by the EC, in consultation with regional experts, for recalibration.
2. **To determine the new score(s), use *Sustainability Categories and Scores – A Closer Look* and a comparison to other scores in the region –** Instead of using the scoring guidance whereby proposed scores are determined by analyzing the level of change from the previous year, the scores identified for recalibration are determined by analyzing where they should fall on the one-to-seven scoring scale, as well as a comparison with the other countries' CSOSI scores for that dimension in the same region. The expert panelists should review the vignettes and illustrative examples in *Sustainability Categories and Scores – A Closer Look* to familiarize themselves with how various levels of CSO sustainability should correspond to the CSOSI's scoring spectrum. Scores should be proposed to the tenth decimal point based on how well they match the descriptions of the various full-point scores listed in this codebook. To help narrow proposed scores to the tenth decimal point, experts can review other countries' scores listed for that dimension in the most recent CSOSI regional report.
3. **Discuss evidence for recalibrated scores, as well as trends and developments in the past year that led to improvements and deterioration in the dimension –** The narrative report should be drafted the same as in the other dimensions, reviewing the current situation and discussing what has changed over the previous year. A note will be included into the final report that clarifies that the new score for that dimension is based on a recalibration and should not be compared with the previous year's score to make assertions about improvement or deterioration.
4. **Prepare and submit a recalibration justification note to FHI 360 –** To justify a proposed baseline recalibration, or to disagree with the EC's recommendation to recalibrate a score, the IP should prepare a justification note to be sent to FHI 360. The note should summarize the panel members' decision to accept or reject a requested recalibration. It should also outline the evidence and examples provided by

the panelists related to each and every dimension being recalibrated, justifying the new score specifically in relation to the vignettes in *Sustainability Categories and Scores – A Closer Look*.

5. **The Editorial Committee will decide to accept or reject the proposed score** – As with scoring decisions based on the level of change, the EC will make a final decision on the proposed baseline recalibration. If EC rejects the proposed new score, it will propose an alternative score for the dimension.

## Scenario 2: Expert Panel (EP) recommended recalibration

### Instructions

1. **Inform participating expert panel members about the changes in methodology regarding recalibration** – When the IP sends the expert panelists the annual CSOSI package of relevant materials, it also communicates to them the purpose and the process of optional baseline score recalibration. If expert panel members believe that one or more dimension-level scores are significantly out of place, they should attend the panel discussion about a proposed score recalibration, bringing supporting evidence for the score(s) to be recalibrated.
2. **To determine the new score(s), use *Sustainability Categories and Scores – A Closer Look* and a comparison to other scores in the region** – Instead of using the scoring guidance whereby proposed scores are determined by analyzing the level of change from the previous year, the scores identified for recalibration are determined by analyzing where they should fall on the one-to-seven scoring scale, as well as a comparison with the other countries' CSOSI scores for that dimension in the same region. Expert panelists that want to propose a recalibration should review the vignettes and illustrative examples in *Sustainability Categories and Scores – A Closer Look* for the relevant dimension(s), to familiarize themselves with how various levels of CSO sustainability should correspond to the CSOSI's scoring spectrum. Scores should be proposed to the tenth decimal point based on how well they match the descriptions of the various full-point scores listed in this codebook. To help narrow proposed scores to the tenth decimal point, experts can review other countries' scores listed for that dimension in the most recent CSOSI regional report.
3. **Discuss evidence for recalibrated scores, as well as trends and developments in the past year that led to improvements and deterioration in the dimension** – If a majority of expert panelists want to recalibrate a score, the dimension(s) should be discussed in the context of what the recalibrated score should be. The narrative report should be drafted the same as in the other dimensions, reviewing the current situation and discussing what has changed over the previous year. A note will be included into the final report that clarifies that the new score for that dimension is based on a recalibration and should not be compared with the previous year's score to make assertions about improvement or deterioration.
4. **Prepare and submit a recalibration justification note to FHI 360** – To justify a proposed baseline recalibration, the IP should prepare a justification note to be sent to FHI 360. The note should summarize the panel members' decision. It should also outline the evidence and examples provided by the panelists related to each and every dimension being recalibrated, justifying the new score specifically in relation to the vignettes in *Sustainability Categories and Scores – A Closer Look*.
5. **The Editorial Committee will decide to accept or reject the proposed recalibration** – As with scoring decisions based on the level of change, the EC will make a final decision on the proposed baseline recalibration. If EC rejects the proposed new score, it will propose a score for the dimension(s).

### Tips

If FHI 360 informs the IP that certain dimension scores have been identified for recalibration by the EC, the IP should communicate with the expert panelists which dimensions have been selected for baseline recalibration at least one week in advance of the panel discussion. This advance notification will give the panelists an opportunity to prepare evidence about the status quo in the country under this dimension to inform their selection of a new baseline score.

If the local EP decides to recalibrate the score unprompted by the EC, the IP should ensure that the panelists present evidence during the panel discussion to justify the change and to include in the recalibration justification note.

In either case, the IP should be prepared to respond to the EC's questions about the justifications for recalibrated scores.

# Instructions for Electronic Questionnaire

## Background

To enhance its methodology, the Civil Society Organization Sustainability Index (CSOSI) has incorporated several activities into its annual process. These activities respond directly to the methodological issues identified through the feedback and consultation process conducted with project stakeholders in 2018 and 2019.

One of these activities to enhance the methodology's implementation is to disseminate an electronic questionnaire or e-questionnaire to a larger group of individuals. The questionnaire allows a larger, more diverse group of individuals to contribute their perspectives and insights on the CSOSI dimensions, strengthening the representativeness and inclusiveness of the process and data, enhancing Expert Panel (EP) deliberations, and providing Implementing Partners (IPs) more evidence to improve report quality. Dissemination of the questionnaire also helps to improve visibility of the IP and Index, and foster engagement with stakeholders who are the most likely to subsequently use the Index when completed.

## Instructions

- **Identify approximately 50 participants to whom to send the questionnaire** – The IP selects individuals who will expand the scope and diversity of inputs into the process. The selected individuals should include representatives of or specialists in specific sub-sectors of civil society organizations (CSOs), such as labor unions, capacity building organizations, organizations representing marginalized and vulnerable groups, informal movements, community-based organizations, faith-based organizations, intermediary support organizations, resource centers, and research institutes. Emphasis should be placed on selecting individuals who are in other localities of the country and those located in rural areas. The objective is for the IP to select a group of people who would add new perspectives on various aspects of the sector on which the in-person panelists might not have deep expertise, as well as individuals who have broad knowledge but would be unable or available to attend the in-person panel discussion. FHI 360 and the local USAID Mission may request additions to the list of questionnaire recipients from their own network of contacts.
- **Design your e-questionnaire** – Look at the mandatory and optional questions shared by FHI 360 to design an e-questionnaire that best responds to the needs of the civil society sector in your country. You can translate the e-questionnaire into the principal local language(s) of the country. The country-specific questionnaire should be brief and should take no more than 10-15 minutes to complete.
- **Disseminate the electronic questionnaire to your selected additional participants** – The IPs can disseminate electronic questionnaire on the online platforms of their choice or consult with FHI 360 on setting up the e-questionnaire on SurveyMonkey, to be distributed to the IP's selected additional participants. The IP can use snowball sampling to disseminate the questionnaire to both increase the number of responses as well as to diversify them. To reach larger audiences, the IP can work with local CSO umbrella organizations to tap into their mailing lists, social media pages and other sector-specific online platforms to share the questionnaire link. The IP should ask the additional participants to complete the questionnaire within a period of two weeks or less.
- **Compile analysis of the questionnaire's results**– After the e-questionnaire deadline that the IP identified has expired, the IP compiles the quantitative and qualitative data received. In cases when FHI 360 supported the IPs to set up the e-questionnaire on SurveyMonkey's CSOSI account, FHI 360 collects the electronic questionnaire results and submits to the IP.
- **Incorporate the findings into the panel discussion** – Statistics and examples that are raised through the questionnaire responses should be presented to the in-person panel to serve as an additional data source for the scoring process and the discussion around the relevant indicators. When responses are not conclusive or do not align with the experts' opinions, the IP should still present them at the panel discussion for the panelists' consideration.
- **Write the conclusions reached into the narrative report** – While panels should analyze the questionnaire results and use them to inform their discussions, the e-questionnaire responses do not directly translate into scoring decisions. The data received from the electronic questionnaire should be incorporated into the narrative report in the same way that the expert panelists' insights are incorporated

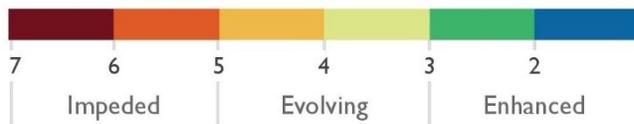
-- justifying scores, sharing without attribution to a particular individual or reference to the questionnaire. Instead, the inputs should simply be mentioned where relevant as evidence of what has changed positively or negatively in ways that affected the sustainability of the CSO sector in the relevant year. Anecdotal evidence, specific examples, and references to events through open-ended questions may provide IPs necessary data to strengthen their narrative reports.

### Tips

- When selecting additional participants, please keep the following points in mind:
  - Sending the e-questionnaire to people with whom you already have a working relationship may increase the response rate, so consider sharing it with organizations and individuals in other areas of the country with whom you have worked;
  - Sharing the e-questionnaire with donor agencies operating in your country and allowing them to propose individuals to receive the e-questionnaire can be a useful way of reaching new experts and perspectives outside of your own organization's network;
  - Sharing the e-questionnaire with civil society networks and allowing them to forward it to their member organizations' leaders, or other experts with whom they work, is a useful way of maximizing circulation outside of your network;
  - When sending out the e-questionnaire, it may be useful to commit to send participants a copy of last year's final country and regional reports, so they feel a sense of participation in the larger process of developing the CSOSI;
  - When preparing your distribution list, consider whether the situation in the country is such that individuals may try to manipulate the e-questionnaire results. If that is a possibility, consider steps to target distribution, establish specific time frames or other measures to address the concern.
- When disseminating an e-questionnaire, inform your audience about the survey deadline, and send a reminder few days before the last day.
- As a best practice, the IP can compile a written overview of the conclusions and evidence of the additional participants and send it to the EP members before the panel discussion, so they can review it. If a written overview is sent out before the panel discussion, the IP can ask the expert panelists at the discussion which findings stood out most to them, to spur discussion.
- When e-questionnaire findings are not conclusive, the IP should ask the expert panelists to analyze the results to better understand the data.
- Pay special attention to geography – if your country has breakaway regions, is experiencing civil war or has regions' that may be unrepresented or marginalized, make extra efforts to reach people in all the relevant areas.
- Convincing the participants that their inputs are confidential is key to obtaining a high participation rate and meaningful findings. Especially in countries where self-censorship might be an issue, be very clear that only your organization and FHI 360 will see their inputs, and no comments made will be personally attributed under any circumstances.
- The IPs can use any online platform of their choice to disseminate the electronic questionnaire. In the past, FHI 360 used SurveyMonkey while some other IPs reported using Google Forms. The IPs should take relevant measures to ensure data privacy.

# ANNEX B: STATISTICAL DATA

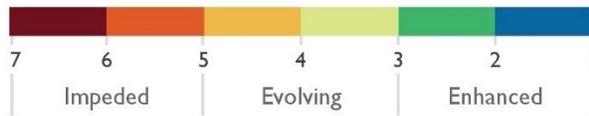
## 2020 MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA SCORES



Country	CSO Sustainability	Legal Environment	Organizational Capacity	Financial Viability	Advocacy	Service Provision	Sectoral Infrastructure	Public Image
Egypt	5.4	6.6	5.4	6.0	5.5	4.6	4.1	5.8
Iraq	4.6	4.8	4.7	5.6	3.4	4.3	5.0	4.7
Jordan	5.2	5.7	5.6	5.7	5.0	4.9	5.0	4.6
Lebanon	3.9	4.4	4.1	5.1	3.2	3.3	3.9	3.6
Libya	5.5	5.6	5.6	6.0	5.0	5.2	5.8	5.6
Morocco	4.7	4.9	5.1	5.6	3.8	4.5	4.8	4.2
Tunisia	4.2	4.0	4.8	5.0	2.9	4.9	4.6	3.3
Yemen	5.3	5.9	5.1	5.7	5.2	4.7	5.1	5.1

To further explore CSOSI's historical data and past reports, please visit - [www.csosi.org](http://www.csosi.org).

## COUNTRIES RANKED BY SCORE



### Legal Environment

**SUSTAINABILITY ENHANCED**

SUSTAINABILITY EVOLVING	
Tunisia	4.0
Lebanon	4.4
Iraq	4.8
Morocco	4.9

SUSTAINABILITY IMPEDED	
Libya	5.6
Jordan	5.7
Yemen	5.9
Egypt	6.6

### Organizational Capacity

**SUSTAINABILITY ENHANCED**

SUSTAINABILITY EVOLVING	
Lebanon	4.1
Iraq	4.7
Tunisia	4.8

SUSTAINABILITY IMPEDED	
Morocco	5.1
Yemen	5.1
Egypt	5.4
Jordan	5.6
Libya	5.6

### Financial Viability

**SUSTAINABILITY ENHANCED**

SUSTAINABILITY EVOLVING	
Tunisia	5.0

SUSTAINABILITY IMPEDED	
Lebanon	5.1
Iraq	5.6
Morocco	5.6
Jordan	5.7
Yemen	5.7
Egypt	6.0
Libya	6.0

### Advocacy

**SUSTAINABILITY ENHANCED**

Tunisia	2.9
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SUSTAINABILITY EVOLVING	
Lebanon	3.2
Iraq	3.4
Morocco	3.8
Jordan	5.0
Libya	5.0

SUSTAINABILITY IMPEDED	
Yemen	5.2
Egypt	5.5

### Service Provision

**SUSTAINABILITY ENHANCED**

SUSTAINABILITY EVOLVING	
Lebanon	3.3
Iraq	4.3
Morocco	4.5
Egypt	4.6
Yemen	4.7
Jordan	4.9
Tunisia	4.9

SUSTAINABILITY IMPEDED	
Libya	5.2

### Sectoral Infrastructure

**SUSTAINABILITY ENHANCED**

SUSTAINABILITY EVOLVING	
Lebanon	3.9
Egypt	4.1
Tunisia	4.6
Morocco	4.8
Iraq	5.0
Jordan	5.0

SUSTAINABILITY IMPEDED	
Yemen	5.1
Libya	5.8

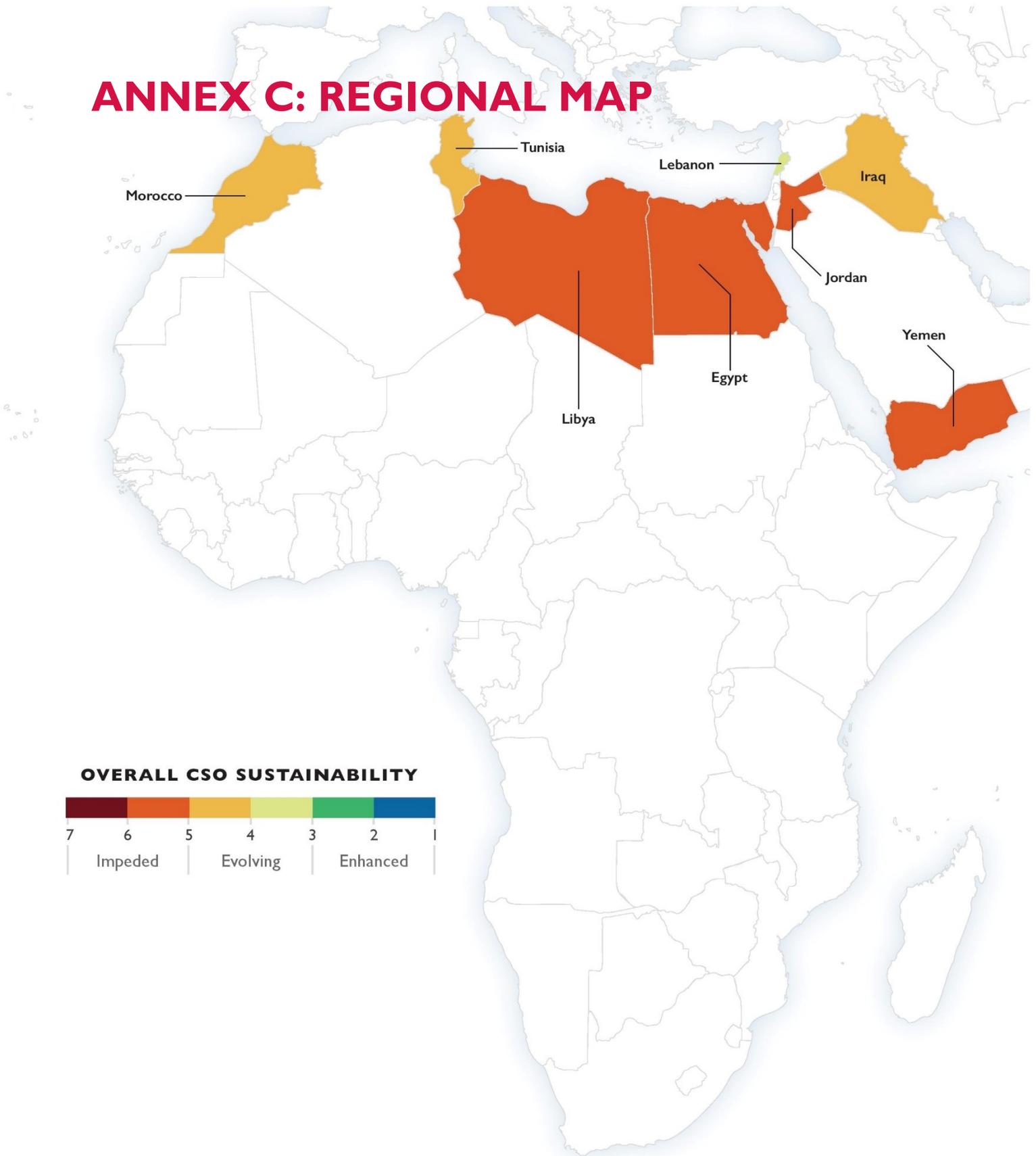
### Public Image

**SUSTAINABILITY ENHANCED**

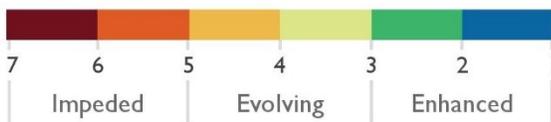
SUSTAINABILITY EVOLVING	
Tunisia	3.3
Lebanon	3.6
Morocco	4.2
Jordan	4.6
Iraq	4.7

SUSTAINABILITY IMPEDED	
Yemen	5.1
Libya	5.6
Egypt	5.8

# ANNEX C: REGIONAL MAP



## OVERALL CSO SUSTAINABILITY



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