

# Civil Society Organization Sustainability Index – Mexico

**Overview** The 2018 Civil Society Organization Sustainability Index (CSOSI) for Mexico reports on the state of the Mexican CSO sector. The report addresses seven key components or “dimensions” of the sustainability of the civil society sector: 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 CSOs, governments, donors, academics, and others who want to better understand and monitor key aspects of sustainability in the Mexican CSO sector.

The CSOSI provides a comprehensive assessment of the capacity of civil society to serve as both a short-term partner in implementing development solutions and a long-term actor in ensuring that development outcomes are sustained. The CSOSI empowers local civil society actors to collectively assess not only the environments in which they operate, but also their own capacities to advocate, operate sustainably, and communicate with citizens. Allowing local civil society to self-identify their development challenges is the first step in promoting resiliency and long-term self-reliance.

The CSOSI is produced by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) in partnership with FHI 360, the International Center for Not-for-Profit Law (ICNL), and a local implementing partner in each participating country. A total of 72 countries across the globe were surveyed in various editions of the CSOSI in 2018. This is the first year the CSOSI reports on developments in Mexico, the first country in the Latin American region to be covered by the CSOSI.

**Results** In 2018, Mexican CSOs were affected by and responded to the larger trends affecting Mexico as a whole. For example, as the number of migrants crossing through Mexico on their way to the American border surged, CSOs mobilized to provide critical assistance, including shelters, clinics, food, and health care, and advocated to protect the migrants’ human rights. However, Mexico’s record-high murder rate made some areas too dangerous for CSOs to send field staff, and the 544 instances of aggression against the press, including the murder of eight journalists, led to self-censorship among CSOs working on sensitive issues. Overall, the sustainability of the Mexican CSO sector is evolving. One of the most worrisome dimensions is the sector’s public image, which is generally negative. Organizational capacity within the sector varies significantly, although most organizations are small, informal, and underfunded. Financial viability is a major concern and the sector exhibits a general lack of financial diversification. Advocacy is in its early stages of development, perhaps mirroring the development of Mexico’s young democracy. The sector demonstrates significant experience with the provision of services addressing basic needs and may be moving towards more strategic and sophisticated program models with the help of a burgeoning sectoral infrastructure. The strength of the Mexican CSO sector is perhaps the legal environment which, despite much room for improvement, provides sufficient levels of clarity and enables the sector to grow and evolve, though there is some skepticism in the sector regarding the outlook for CSO-government relations under the incoming administration.

The 2018 CSOSI reports can be found at <https://www.fhi360.org/resource/civil-society-organization-sustainability-index-reports>.

Explore historical CSOSI data at <https://www.csosi.org>.

