

2018 Civil Society Organization Sustainability Index – Sub-Saharan Africa

Overview The 2018 Civil Society Organization Sustainability Index (CSOSI) for Sub-Saharan Africa reports on the state of CSO sectors in 31 countries in the region. The CSOSI 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 CSOSI 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 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.

Results The region’s CSOs continue to be highly diverse but are united in a strong drive to cooperate with governments, international agencies, beneficiaries, and other stakeholders to further their countries’ democratization and socio-economic development. Countries such as Burundi and Sudan suffered a closing of civic space in 2018, as governments silenced or intimidated critics through the use of violence, arrests, repressive new laws, and bureaucratic red tape. In other countries, including Angola, Ethiopia, and The Gambia, civic space opened up as new leaders indicated a willingness to cooperate with CSOs and create a more enabling environment for their work. CSOs in countries affected by instability and conflict were urgently pressed to provide humanitarian services to affected populations. While these CSOs had to deal with tensions between donors and governments, unsupportive local authorities, hard-to-reach communities, and the threat of armed groups, many were still able to provide and extend access to basic services, such as education, health care, food, and water, to assist in reducing conflict, and to confront corrupt governments and businesses. In all, ten countries’ overall CSO sustainability score improved in 2018, led by Ethiopia, where a loosening of the political situation contributed to improvements in the legal environment, advocacy, and public image scores, and Botswana, where a supportive government and a stable economy led to higher scores in most dimensions. Only Burundi, which saw violent protests and government crackdowns, and Sudan, which suffered from extreme economic stress, noted overall declines in CSO sustainability 2018.

The 2018 CSOSI regional 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>.

