

# Civil Society Organization Sustainability Index – Middle East and North Africa

**Overview** The Civil Society Organization Sustainability Index (CSOSI) regional report for Middle East and North Africa, 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 an implementing partner in each participating country, assesses the status of CSO sectors in seven countries in the region. 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 development outcomes are sustained. The CSOSI empowers local civil society to collectively assess not only the environment in which they are operating, 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.

This year's Middle East and North Africa Index reports on the strength and overall viability of the CSO sectors in Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, the West Bank and Gaza, 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 CSOs, governments, donors, academics, and others who want to better understand and monitor key aspects of sustainability in the CSO sector.

**Results** CSO sustainability in the Middle East and North Africa remained challenged in 2017. All country scores for individual dimensions of sustainability as well as overall sustainability continued to fall in either the Sustainability Evolving or Sustainability Impeded categories. In nearly all countries, financial viability was the weakest dimension of CSO sustainability. Further, in all countries but Morocco, CSOs experienced a deterioration in financial viability, whether due to shifting donor priorities, new legal obstacles, or the emergence of larger economic challenges. Funding insecurity and shortages affected CSOs' ability to plan for the future and to sustain their activities and staff. The legal environment for CSOs—already impeded in most of the region—continued to grow more challenging in all countries but Jordan and Morocco in 2017. Governments imposed new laws, regulations, and practices that curtailed CSOs' formation and functioning. Organizations also faced a spate of new measures restricting freedom of expression. But despite funding challenges, legal constraints, and administrative barriers, CSOs remained outspoken advocates for change. Even in the context of a legal crackdown or civil war, organizations continued to carry out campaigns to address issues of public concern.

2017 CSOSI Reports can be found at <https://www.fhi360.org/resource/civil-society-organization-sustainability-index>.

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

