

Civil Society Organization Sustainability Index – Sub-Saharan Africa

Overview The Civil Society Organization Sustainability Index (CSOSI) regional report for sub-Saharan 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 31 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 Index 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 CSO sector sustainability.



Results Overall, the year posed diverse and sometimes contradictory challenges for civil society. In some countries, economic decline began to turn around, armed conflicts abated, or political leaders in office for decades ceded power, although not always willingly. Elsewhere, economic and political trends increased suffering and political turmoil. CSOs usually responded to local developments as capable advocates and service providers, although in some countries they suffered severe setbacks as funding waned or government hostility intensified. Twenty countries, or about two-thirds of the countries surveyed, reported no change in their overall scores from the previous year. Of the countries reporting change, six countries (Botswana, Burundi, Kenya, Namibia, Senegal, and Uganda) reported decline, balanced by five countries (Angola, The Gambia, Guinea, Niger, and Sierra Leone) reporting improvement. The five countries reporting overall improvement in CSO sustainability attributed their improvement mainly to increased resources or more supportive governments. The number of countries reporting an overall decline in sustainability in 2017 was fewer than in 2016, when nine countries, or more than one quarter of all countries surveyed, reported deterioration. The reasons for overall decline varied greatly from country to country, but they generally reflected a confluence of diminished funding with efforts by governments to constrict the space for CSOs. In particular, all six countries reporting overall decline also reported deterioration in their legal environments, and four of the six countries reported poorer financial viability.

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>.

