

2019 Civil Society Organization Sustainability Index – Middle East and North Africa

Overview The 2019 Civil Society Organization Sustainability Index (CSOSI) for the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) reports on the strength and overall viability of the CSO sectors in Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Yemen, and, for the first time, Tunisia. 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 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 74 countries across the globe were surveyed in various regional editions of the CSOSI in 2019.

Results Several themes emerge from the 2019 country reports. First, the legal environments governing CSOs continued to deteriorate, with more than half of the countries included in this edition of the Index reporting increasing problems with registration and government harassment, in addition to violations of the freedom of assembly. On the positive side, organizational capacity improved in four countries (Egypt, Iraq, Libya, and Yemen), driven by advances in constituency building. The infrastructure supporting the sector also improved in four countries (Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, and Morocco), with CSOs having more access to various support services and increasingly developing coalitions and intersectoral partnerships. Tunisia was included in the CSO Sustainability Index for the first time in 2019. According to its inaugural report, CSOs in Tunisia have the second highest level of sustainability in the MENA region after Lebanon. Reflecting CSOs’ robust role in policy making since the 2011 revolution, advocacy is the strongest dimension of CSO sustainability in Tunisia. However, the report also notes that the vast majority of CSOs in Tunisia have major organizational capacity issues and CSOs continue to be largely dependent on foreign funding. Ultimately, the scores in this edition are a pre-pandemic snapshot, as in 2020 the COVID-19 pandemic would go on to negatively affect CSOs in the region across the dimensions of sustainability.

Resources The 2019 CSOSI regional reports can be found at FHI 360’s [resource page](https://www.csosi.org). Explore historical CSOSI data at <https://www.csosi.org>

