

# 2019 Civil Society Organization Sustainability Index – Sub-Saharan Africa

**Overview** The 2019 Civil Society Organization Sustainability Index (CSOSI) for Sub-Saharan Africa reports on the state of CSO sectors in 32 countries in the region, including, for the first time, Cameroon. 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 74 countries across the globe were surveyed in various regional editions of the CSOSI in 2019.

**Results** CSO sustainability in sub-Saharan Africa remained constrained in 2019, with no country having an overall CSO sustainability score that falls within the highest range of sustainability, Sustainability Enhanced (1 to 3). However, the average score for overall CSO sustainability improved slightly in 2019, driven largely by more competent advocacy, enhanced organizational capacity, and a stronger public image. Financial viability remained the weakest dimension of CSO sustainability in the region. Deteriorations were reported in ten countries and were usually attributed to a shift in donors’ interests or a narrowing of their focus to specific issues (such as security, elections, or gender-based violence), thereby reducing funding for other programmatic areas. CSO advocacy was again the strongest dimension of sustainability and showed significant advances in 2019. Twenty-one countries reported improvements in this dimension. Sudanese CSOs recorded a dramatic improvement and moved from the Impeded to Evolving range thanks to their leadership during the revolution. Improvements elsewhere were also shaped by specific local circumstances, such as the search for solutions to political and security crises in Mali and South Sudan and new openings for cooperation with governments in Angola, The Gambia, and South Africa. CSOs’ public image recorded improvement as well, with seventeen countries reporting improvements, often because of expanded media coverage of CSOs’ analyses or leadership in moments of crisis, with Sudan and Cote d’Ivoire progressing from the Impeded to the Evolving range. This development suggests growing appreciation of CSOs’ contributions, especially regarding advocacy.

**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>

