

2020 Civil Society Organization Sustainability Index – Sub-Saharan Africa

Overview The 2020 Civil Society Organization Sustainability Index (CSOSI) for sub-Saharan Africa reports on the state of CSO sectors in 32 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.

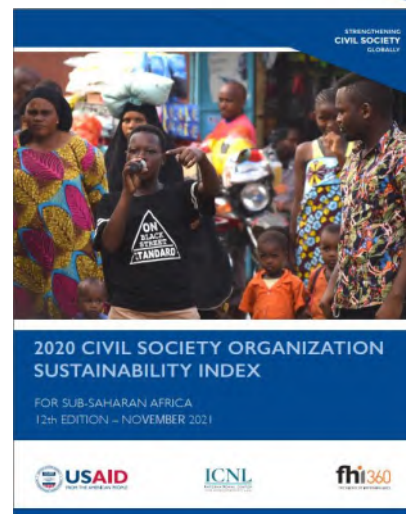
The CSOSI provides a comprehensive assessment of the capacity of civil society to serve as both a short-term partner in implementing development solutions and a long-term actor in ensuring that development outcomes are sustained. The CSOSI empowers local civil society actors to collectively assess not 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 73 countries across the globe were surveyed in various regional editions of the CSOSI in 2020.

Results Civil society in sub-Saharan Africa suffered severe setbacks in 2020. In addition to political, economic, security, and climate-related factors, the COVID-19 pandemic introduced new and unusual complications that had profound effects on CSO sectors throughout the region. As the 2020 CSOSI for sub-Saharan Africa shows, the pandemic served as a litmus test for civil society, confirming its ability to withstand extreme stress in some areas while exposing acute vulnerabilities in others. Most troubling was the weakening of CSOs’ organizational capacity and financial viability and the increasingly constrained legal environments in many countries. At the same time, CSOs’ advocacy efforts, service provision, public image, and the sectoral infrastructure often proved resistant to the debilitating effects of the pandemic and, in some countries, even improved as organizations tackled the challenges of the pandemic with energy and confidence.

Eight countries reported deteriorations in their overall CSO sustainability scores in 2020, usually because of regressions in their financial viability and legal environments, while only five recorded overall improvements, most often driven by strong performances in advocacy.

Resources The 2020 CSOSI regional reports can be found at FHI 360’s [resource page](https://www.fhi360.org/csosi). Explore historical CSOSI data at <https://www.csosi.org>.



2020 OVERALL CSO SUSTAINABILITY

