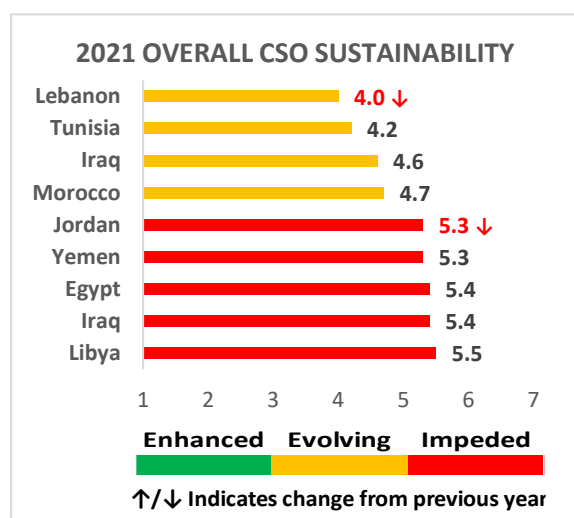


# 2021 Civil Society Organization Sustainability Index – Middle East and North Africa

**Overview** The 2021 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, Tunisia, 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 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 2021.



**Results** Most countries reimposed and eased COVID-19 precautions in accordance with the changing risks over the course of the year, significantly impacting CSO operations. Though governments largely moved away from the strict emergency decrees that had been levied in 2020, the ad hoc reimposition of restrictions on movement under the banner of pandemic precautions continued to raise concerns and impede civil society. CSOs across the region continued to adapt as best they could to these difficult and divisive environments, often continuing to learn from the flexibility and innovations that had been forced upon them with the first lockdowns in 2020.

The trend of closing civic space continued in 2021, with the legal environment governing CSOs deteriorating in four out of the eight countries covered in this edition of the Index: Iraq, Lebanon, Libya, and Yemen. Across the region, the hostility evident in the closing

of civic spaces was similarly reflected in the public image of CSOs, which recorded slight deteriorations in that dimension in four out of eight countries: Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, and Yemen. Nevertheless, as they faced increasing restrictions on civic space and, in some cases, rising levels of disinformation and smear campaigns from government authorities, CSOs in the region managed to maintain and even improve their organizational capacity and service provision to meet the growing needs of their communities. Given the incredibly difficult and complex environments in which many of these organizations operate, these improvements speak to the monumental efforts of CSOs in the region in the face of increasingly challenging circumstances.

**Resources** The 2021 CSOSI regional reports can be found on FHI 360’s [resource page](https://www.csosi.org). Explore historical CSOSI data at <https://www.csosi.org>.