PARTICIPATORY CIVIL SOCIETY ASSESSMENTS – EXPERIENCES FROM THE FIELD

Cyprus

The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

Mozambique

Uruguay

Viet Nam

United Nations Development Programme

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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The growing role of civil society as development partners and advocates for inclusive policies and democratic governance has lately been accompanied by demands, both from civil society and the international development community, for a more thorough understanding of the nature, workings and extent of civil society in different countries. This has in turn resulted in the growth of civil society-led assessments, initiated, implemented and sustained by civil society. The expansion of such assessments is an important trend for UNDP, given the fundamental role of civil society and civic engagement in spreading and sustaining democratic governance, which is a core focus of the work of the organization.

UNDP has a long-standing partnership with CIVICUS on the Civil Society Index (CSI), through which participatory civil society assessments have been carried out in many countries across the world. The CSI results in detailed reports on the status of national civil society, highlighting its structure, main actors and relationships, the external environment, its values and its impact. UNDP with the engagement of United Nations Country Teams has since 2004 supported the implementation of the CSI in 27 countries.

According to several UNDP Country Offices, the nature of the exercise in itself helped to increase UNDP's dialogue with a wider constituency, incorporating previously unheard voices. The CSI has generated valuable new information on the civil society sector and opportunities to open up space for civic participation in public policy.

The landscape of civil society assessments has evolved greatly in recent years, with the emergence of a number of new methodologies. Periodic reviews of these experiences in assessing civil society are necessary to take stock of what has worked and identify lessons for future exercises. To this end, UNDP has produced a set of three inter-related publications. The first is a

Users' Guide to Civil Society Assessments (2010). It is the first full review of the current landscape of civil society assessments at global and local levels, providing wide-ranging stakeholders with practical knowledge of, as well as systematic guidance in developing new methods. The guide describes the scope of available methods and ways in which future assessments can further enrich our ability to understand the nature and impact of civil society.

The second publication, *The Future of Participatory Civil Society Assessments: A Conceptual Analysis* (2011), presents four forward-looking pieces by leading academics and practitioners in this field.

This paper, the third in the series, documents and analyses the experiences of five Country Offices and civil society partners in Cyprus, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Mozambique, Viet Nam, and Uruguay, in implementing the CIVICUS CSI since 2005-2006. As the project was implemented in a wide scope of countries, the selected sample is similarly diverse. It includes countries in which the role of, and legal framework for civil society is expanding (Uruguay, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia), but also where the official stance is of diffidence at best (Viet Nam), where the identity and role of civil society are still in the making (Mozambique), and where civil society plays an important part in the reconciliation process (Cyprus). The report captures the impact of the CSI at the micro, meso and macro levels and presents the experiences of different stakeholders, in particular UNDP Country Offices and civil society in general. These experiences are aimed at stimulating the adaptation of the tool to fit local, national and sectoral needs. It is hoped that they will encourage more Country Offices and national CSOs to support participatory civil society assessments as a means to strengthen UNDP's engagement with civil society.

A list of the questions and criteria used to guide the case studies can be found in Annex 1.

The CIVICUS Civil Society Index

The CSI is a participatory needs assessment and action planning tool for civil society around the world, aimed at creating a knowledge base and momentum for civil society strengthening initiatives. The initiative uses a mix of research (quantitative and qualitative) and consultative methods to enhance the knowledge base and practice. Some of these research methods include: primary and secondary research data review, regional stakeholder consultations, population surveys, media review, and desk studies. The CSI actively involves and disseminates its nationally owned findings to a broad range of stakeholders including governments, development partners, academia, media and the public at large.

With seed funding from UNDP in 1999, CIVICUS designed the CSI as a tool that is implemented by and for civil society organizations at the country level. The project was successfully piloted in 2001 with support from a number of donor agencies. It has since been implemented in 88 countries, with a current global phase covering 50 countries. The country reports and analyses of the findings are compiled in *CIVICUS Global Survey of the State of Civil Society Volume 1: Country Profiles* and *Volume 2: Comparative Perspective* (Kumarian Press 2007).

Summary of findings

Country-specific findings

The CIVICUS CSI has proven to be most useful in contexts where civil society is able to play a key role in development processes of the country:

The CSI process has been instrumental in **Cyprus** in mobilizing actors in the Greek as well as the Turkish Cypriot communities for activities focusing on bi-communal work and reconciliation. Fledgling networks between communities and different actors were strengthened by the CSI process. But outreach to rural communities, academics, public

officials and the private sector has been limited to one-off events. That said, the CSI ties in well with other development activities in both communities and has therefore contributed to a momentum in advocacy and peace-building efforts.

Synergies with other initiatives are also a key element of the perceived success of the CSI implementation in **Uruguay**. The role of civil society in the country has expanded thanks to the Government's collaborative approach. The inclusive process of the CSI has helped to foster collaboration and joint activities between the state, the UN, and civil society, and contributed to the country's ongoing process of decentralization in public administration. Civil society organizations have also picked up the challenge of increasing their internal transparency, one of the key weaknesses highlighted by the CSI report.

The CSI in the **former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia** led to the drafting of a strategy for collaboration between the Government and civil society, and played an important role in strengthening dialogue and collaboration. Here the report and methodology were specifically of use as they were integrated in the sociology curriculum of two universities, and instrumental in developing the capacity and visibility of key CSO networks.

The project plays a more limited role in countries where the space for civil society is restricted or only permits CSOs to deliver services:

While in **Mozambique** the CSI was deemed useful for civil society to gain understanding of its role and identity, it led to few follow-up initiatives and the recommendations have remained largely 'on paper'. That said, important legislation to expand the space for advocacy and lobbying activities is currently being considered by parliament (although this could not be attributed to the CSI implementation).

Viet Nam is currently experiencing increasing restrictions on civil society activities. The CSI might paradoxically have been a double-edged sword in this context as the ruling party (CPV) used the findings for (unpublished) research of its own.

Findings based on key criteria of the CSI implementation

Each case study analysed the findings against a set of criteria: effectiveness, inclusiveness, efficiency and sustainability. A brief glimpse of the criteria and findings for each of the case studies is presented below.

- **Effectiveness:** How meaningful has the implementation of the CSI been to strengthen civil society?

CYP	**High.** As the only comprehensive assessment of civil society in the Turkish Cypriot Community, the CSI has been termed a milestone, serving as background document and road map for the development of civil society. It has been used by international donors, academics, and CSOs to inform future activities.
MKD	**Medium.** The CSI is used by civil society organizations as a tool for strategy development, public policy formulation and to conduct further assessments on the context and state of civil society. Other stakeholders use the CSI to analyse and understand the needs of the state. The CSI's comprehensive analysis of civil society was used by the Government to design the Strategy for Cooperation of the Government with the Civil Sector (with an Action Plan 2007-2011), adopted in 2007.
MOZ	**Medium-High.** Bearing in mind the vast challenges faced by Mozambican civil society, and the limited resources available for its development, the CSI had great impact. It brought the debate and knowledge about civil society to a higher level and led to thinking about alternatives for civil society improvement.
URY	**High.** CSOs have been strengthened by the implementation of the 2009 CSI, especially as it was part of the DaO pilot experience. This attracted the interest and participation of CSOs outside the capital and helped to create a consultative committee, providing many CSO networks with an opportunity to participate and present their recommendations. This resulted in a strengthening plan that addressed the needs and concerns of CSOs throughout the country.
VNM	**Low.** There is little evidence that the findings and recommendations of the CSI were used to improve the legal framework affecting civil society as well as programming practical actions to strengthen it.

- **Inclusiveness:** Has the implementation of the CSI reached out to a variety of stakeholders and interest groups?

CYP	**Medium-low.** Even though the CSI included many CSO leaders in its implementation process and follow-up activities, its overall outreach is weak. Very few CSOs have made direct use of the report and known CSO actors keep attending CSI-related activities, indicating that the CSI's ability to reach out beyond existing networks has been weak. Also, the outreach to rural communities, academics, public officials and the private sector has been limited to one-off events, not leading to the development of long term relationships. That said, the CSI's outreach to and receptivity of foreign donors has been strong.
MKD	**High.** The inclusive participatory process in conducting the CSI spurred dialogue on the state of civil society, among individual actors and within civil society as a whole.
MOZ	**Low.** Despite great efforts to guarantee inclusiveness throughout the CSI implementation process, the informal nature of the sector, the country's territorial complexities, and the geographical spread of informal organizations led to many informal CSOs being excluded from the process.
URY	**High.** The 2009 CSI was very inclusive through the Management and Consultative Committees; over 100 Uruguayan organizations participated in an international forum. It was also successful in covering rural and semi-urban areas of the country. Only five per cent of workshop participants were from Montevideo.
VNM	**Medium-low.** The methodology used in the Viet Nam CSI was Shortened Assessment Tool (CSI-SAT). Unlike the full version, it relies on existing data and does not include consultative and action-planning stages. In this regard, the implementation of the CSI was not highly inclusive. However, the Stakeholder Assessment Group drew participation of representatives from various parts of civil society (mass organizations, Vietnamese NGOs, umbrella organizations, and international NGOs) and others (Government, research institutions).

- **Efficiency:** How would you assess the balance of the costs against the benefits of the CSI in your country?

CYP	**High**. Even though the CSI is a difficult project to replicate, the costs were relatively low. Therefore the benefits for civil society including the need to monitor progress and thus regularly re-implement the project, outweigh the cost of implementation.
MKD	**Medium-high**. Time and the participatory approach raised the costs and consumed human resources. Notwithstanding the cost, human resources allocated and time spent in preparing this participatory report, it was worthwhile for its comprehensive view on civil society and as an investment in long-term development strategy for civil society.
MOZ	**Medium-high.** In addition to the strong instrument which was created, recognized and given legitimacy by society as a whole, the CSI had many other impacts, such as inspiring a series of academic publications. For UNDP the index formed the basis of its capacity-development programme and was crucial to the revision of the legal framework for associations.
URY	**High.** The 2009 CSI was an efficient project as it generated many synergies that contributed to the DaO experience and to the achievement of a national priority.
VNM	**High.** The main benefits of the CSI project, namely knowledge and visibility of civil society, are hard to measure in a tangible way. However, given the relatively low cost of conducting the CSI in Viet Nam, the benefits seem to outweigh the cost.

- **Sustainability:** Can the CSI be institutionalised as a tool to strengthen civil society? To what extent can the recommendations be followed up?

CYP	**High**. Assuming that the CSI were to be implemented regularly and provide updated information on the state of civil society, the recommendations will continue to inform the actions of various interest groups from donors to CSOs and gradually to the public sector as well.
MKD	**Medium.** To ensure that the implementation is sustainable, the state of civil society needs to be assessed on a regular basis.
MOZ	**Low.** The high dependency on external resources, combined with the great degree of informality of Mozambican civil society, makes it unviable for initiatives such as the CSI to function alone as an internal driver to mobilize CSOs to continue this process. The absence of a broad agenda for implementation of the recommendations of the CSI revealed the dependent nature of civil society, and diminished the expected impact.
URY	**High.** The 2009 CSI and the joint project that implemented it developed several mechanisms for CSOs to collaborate and organize. In particular, the CSOs will continue in the Consultative Committee as they found it a useful forum to express needs and generate institutional strengthening plans and activities.
VNM	**Low.** The CSI has the potential to strengthen civil society in Viet Nam, provided that its recommendations are followed up, which has not yet been the case.

Trends across countries

The project was implemented in many countries and the results vary significantly. Despite their individual characteristics, the experiences in all five countries offer some common lessons and good practice. This section explores their shared outcomes resulting from the implementation of the CSI.

One of the most valuable contributions of the CSI has been the **generation of new information** on the state of civil society and the participatory and inclusive process. The case studies outlined positive trends towards a broader and more inclusive concept and definition of civil society and reported increased self-awareness within the sector as a result of the CSI process.

In addition, the CSI process led to **further research** on civil society in all countries observed. For example, in Viet Nam, the CSI findings drew the interest of state-owned research institutions, such as the Viet Nam Academy for Social Sciences and the Ho Chi Minh Academy of Political Sciences, which previously had not paid much attention to civil society, given its political sensitivity.

The integral link between the CSI process and the work and research undertaken by United Nations Volunteers in the area of **volunteering** was also noted in most countries. This connection proved both beneficial and cost effective. For example, in Uruguay, the Ministry of Social Development, UNDP and United Nations Volunteers agreed to carry out a national survey on volunteerism in conjunction with the CSI process. The survey added a number of volunteer-related questions to the original questionnaire and used the ongoing data collection process of the CSI. The efficient use of resources made it possible to develop a survey and a case study that ultimately enabled a better understanding of the growth and the value of volunteerism in Uruguay. This survey prompted the beginning of a National Dialogue on Volunteerism and Social Commitment in 2009.

The CSI has also proven to be a good entry point for joint UNDP and civil society policy engagement at the country level. Four out of five countries reported that they began to engage in the **civil society legal and regulatory framework** as a result of the process. This issue is a critical factor for civil society organizations, as it allows and governs their establishment, space and scope to function in public life. UNDP's engagement in this field is also of key importance as restrictive laws can limit the role and space for civil society and in turn affect development goals and democratic governance.

Even though the CSI has been most effective in developing the capacity of the actors positioned within the immediate radius of the project, these experiences suggest that a process such as the CSI can lend itself to broader **capacity-development** initiatives if undertaken in a purposeful and facilitated way. The case studies show evidence of the creation of joint civil society – UNDP programmes in all five countries studied as a direct output of the process. Cyprus used the results of the CSI to develop a comprehensive civil society programme, aimed at promoting civic engagement throughout the country. The Mozambican, Macedonian and Uruguayan case studies report capacity-development initiatives for civil society in the area of **social accountability** e.g., conducting training on participatory budgeting, public expenditure tracking and citizen report cards, in response to gaps identified in the CSI process. These initiatives foster inclusive participation and engagement of citizens in national and local decision-making processes aimed at holding the state accountable.

UNDP's role as a **convener and facilitator** has also proven to be critical for the success of the project, in particular in countries with restricted space for civil society and civic engagement. The Viet Nam case study showed that the biggest benefit of the CSI is that the existence of civil society is acknowledged in Government circles. The Government permitted a workshop to be organized to publish the CSI results, with wide audience and media. Civil society was the main topic of the discussion. The unique trust UNDP enjoys with the Government made it possible for civil society organizations to take on such a sensitive issue.

Ways forward

While much has been achieved already, it is important that future phases of the CSI learn from experiences so far, particularly how to better promote and foster action. While the generation and systematization of knowledge is seen as an unambiguous achievement of the CSI, this is important mainly as a springboard for action.

The next generation of participatory civil society assessments needs to build on the fact that genuine civil society infrastructure emerges indigenously. External drivers can influence and shape this process, but initiatives are unlikely to last without successful adaptation to local context and realities, and an ability to effectively foster action for development results. Although the CSI currently allows for some flexibility in adapting outputs and outcomes, it was seldom applied. The country cases demonstrate the ever increasing need for the localization, disaggregation and decentralization of these tools to make them progressively more meaningful and valid locally. In reality civil society comprises more than formal civil society organizations, many of which have greater importance for the health of society than formal ones. These are however not captured adequately in any of the processes or reports. A context-specific, domain approach e.g., in areas such as water, human rights, anti-corruption or HIV/AIDS, which encompasses all types of institutions and organizations that make sense in terms of the issue represents one of many solutions at hand.

The accompanying paper on the future of participatory assessments of civil society, which presents four pieces by leading academics and practitioners in this field, delves deeper into these issues, with reflections and recommendations on the future direction of civil society assessments.

The growing demand from governments and civil society to undertake nationally owned assessments has led UNDP to mobilize with partners. UNDP, UNV and CIVICUS have now begun collaboration, with the participation of other interested partners, to form a platform that will take this work forward as part of our effort to promote vibrant civic engagement for democratic governance and inclusive participation. It is hoped that these country experiences will contribute to the ongoing discourse among different stakeholders on the future direction of this important work.

I

STRENGTHENING CYPRIOT CIVIL SOCIETY

AS A VEHICLE FOR RECONCILIATION AND POLICY CHANGE

CSI diamond (Greek Cypriot community)
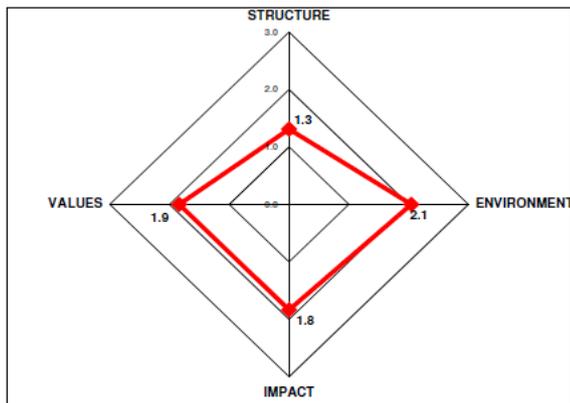
CSI diamond (Turkish Cypriot community)
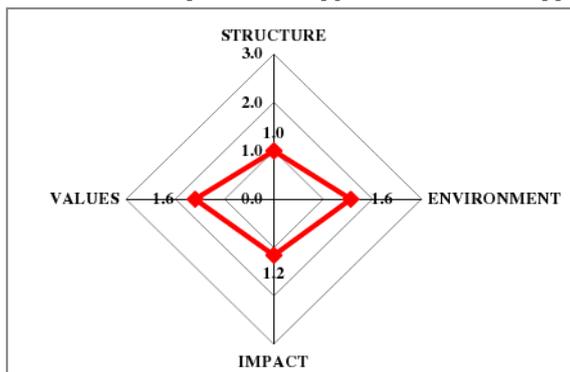
CSI key impacts in Cyprus (GCC & TCC)

- Created a stronger understanding of the role of civil society and the need to use the methodology further to include peace and reconciliation in the 2010 study

- Initiated civil society advocacy activities for change in the NGO legal framework in both communities

- Influenced UN and donor strategies (UNDP, EU and EEA Financial Mechanism) to meet priority needs of civil society

- Helped to strengthen civil society cooperation at thematic, community and island-wide levels by developing networks between Greek and Turkish Cypriot CSOs

- Strengthened implementing organizations as intermediary consultancy bodies providing technical assistance to civil society

- Strengthened bi-communal work and reconciliation aspects of the CSI

Executive summary

This study was carried out by UNDP in Cyprus in collaboration with the two implementing partners for the second CIVICUS Civil Society Index (CSI) assessment for Cyprus (2008-2010),the Management Centre from the Turkish Cypriot Community (TCC) and the NGO Support Centre from the Greek Cypriot Community (GCC). Its purpose is to assess the impact of the 2005 CSI on civil society in Cyprus, with an emphasis on peace and reconciliation, as well as on the overall context. The CSI project opened the way for a greater shared understanding of civil society in both communities as well as in the two separate civil society sectors in the TCC and GCC. This was made possible through the strategic support of UNDP. As such, the CSI has become a milestone in the development of civil society in Cyprus, and has inspired many with its process, findings and recommendations for the future.

UNDP (through the UNDP-ACT programme and its predecessor, the UNDP/UNOPS Bi-communal Development Programme) funded the implementation of the CSI. The implementing partners recognized the benefits of working with the UNDP team both as donor-beneficiary and

partner, providing research and information in support of the UNDP mission in Cyprus. Strategically, the CSI influenced the design of UNDP's 2008-2011 programming, with a focus on networking, media relations, policy engagement and peace-building integrated into almost all programmes during the funding phase. Technically, the data was used as a comparison with other more local research which focused on the levels of 'trust' and other issues relating to the ongoing peace process in Cypriot society.

The findings of the 2005 CSI demonstrated weaknesses mainly in the 'structure' and 'impact' of civil society, which were rooted in the lack of collaboration among CSOs as well as between them and local authorities and the private sector. The impact of 'public benefit' mission-driven CSOs was shown to be particularly limited, as compared to unions and professional and business associations, which enjoyed better access to international and national institutions and decision-makers.

> *The relationship with UNDP has moved from funder-beneficiary to partnership.*

The results of the 2005 CSI led to follow-up research in multi-sector cooperation, the conduct of CSOs, gender equality and networking. It was determined that the laws, rules and regulations for both communities needed to be reformed and updated, specifically to address networking and platform-building among CSOs for better advocacy and engagement in international development issues. With support from UNDP and the [European Center for Not-for-Profit Law](#), a draft report was developed, with recommendations for changes in the law for both communities.

The existing political situation in Cyprus necessitated a change in approach to the CSI and required the work of two teams to carry research separately in their own communities, while reporting the findings jointly. This proved to be a difficult and painful process, particularly in deciding what terminology was to be used and

how the report was to be presented. Further, participants refrained from commenting on the bi-communal work of civil society as this was a relatively new concept in Cyprus.

As a result, the implementing organizations carrying out the 2008-10 CSI took a different approach. They agreed at the outset on the need to conduct research in the two communities separately, given the political stalemate and the fact that the communities remained divided. However, it was also apparent that the sensitivities of the past stemming from the timing of the previous study (which was conducted just after the referenda held by the UN in 2004) were not as strong and that participants in the study would be more open to discussions about civil society in the 'other' community.

The outcomes of the 2005 CSI and its follow-up have helped to shape the current strategy of both UNDP and implementing organizations in strengthening civil society. There is a much stronger institutional relationship between the two implementing organizations based on mutual understanding and trust and also a greater capacity to help other CSOs and networks. The relationship with UNDP has moved from funder-beneficiary to partnership aimed at strengthening civil society to participate in policy-making and contribute to reconciliation and peacebuilding. Finally, civil society in both communities has become more engaged in global and European development priorities such as the Millennium Development Goals, aid effectiveness and democratic governance.

The context of Cyprus

Three major events marked the development of Cypriot society in the past 35 years. These were the April 2003 opening of checkpoints along the buffer zone, which gave Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots the opportunity to easily cross from one community to the other (this had not happened since the division in 1974, and movement for both communities was limited since the outburst of intercommunal conflict between the two communities in 1963); the April 2004 referendum (the Annan Plan) that resulted in

failure; and the May 2004 accession of the Republic of Cyprus to the European Union with subsequent suspension of the acquis communautaire along with the European Union's approval and immediate implementation of the €259 million aid regulation in the TCC (February 2006). For the average Greek Cypriot, becoming an EU citizen meant security, reunification of the island and peaceful coexistence of all Cypriots under the European acquis, and a positive future without conflicts. For Greek Cypriot society it meant new rights, greater social dialogue, justice, democracy, transparency and increased quality of life (Press and Information Office, 2008). However, the failure of the Annan Plan process transformed the enthusiasm of Turkish Cypriots for peace and anticipation of EU membership into deeply felt disappointment and a widespread disinterest in civil society in peace-building efforts. For the Greek Cypriot community, joining the EU in 2004 shifted attention from peace-building efforts to the EU process.

Throughout this period, UNDP remained a supporter of Cypriot CSOs, both as a funder (through USAID), and key partner of civil society. Under the 'UNDP-ACT (Action for Cooperation and Trust)' programme that started in October 2005, UNDP began its current project implementation phase UNDP-ACT II 2008-2011, continuing to develop the capacity of Cypriot CSOs across the island. UNDP-ACT also supports civil society in peace-building efforts through strategic support to six civil society networks and joint initiatives in both communities, support that is expected to continue until the end of 2011. UNDP, a funder and stakeholder in the 2005 CSI, supported the Cypriot Civil Society Strengthening Programme designed in light of the CSI findings and implemented jointly by the Management Centre (TCC), the NGO Support Centre (GCC) as well as INTRAC (UK) during 2006-2009. The programme aimed to strengthen the organizational capacities of civil society entities under the category of 'public benefit' organizations.

The work of UNDP (and other organizations) with civil society in both Cypriot communities rekindled activism among a diverse range of CSOs. Many have resumed their activities as well as their organizational development through projects, implemented either in the TCC or the GCC or across the border on issues such as human rights, peace and reconciliation.

Prior to the assessment of civil society in the TCC, there was a general understanding among decision-making bodies as well as key civil society actors that organizations such as trade unions, professional chambers and professional organizations were the 'voice' of civil society. A similar understanding existed in the GCC as well, with regard to professional, welfare, cultural and sports organizations. This view can be attributed to the more professional nature of these organizations which receive indirect sustainable funding from decision-making bodies. They are also more successful in influencing the national economic activities of the TCC and the GCC respectively, and have had a key role in mobilizing the public during the pre-referendum Annan Plan period of 2003-2004 and more recently against austerity measures being implemented by the authorities in the TCC.

With their inclusion in the TCC as entities eligible for finance and partnerships (first by UNDP and then the EU), and project-based activities and capacity-development trainings, CSOs began to feel more assured in their role as civil society actors. The shift in patterns among political parties as to who are 'in power' and who are 'the opposition' also led some CSOs (both GC and TC) to redefine their role in their respective communities. From being an extension or direct supporter of a political party in the TCC, or a supporter of both a political party and the Church in the GCC, a significant part of civil society in both communities have reported during recent interviews that they see themselves as part of the 'third sector', representing certain interests alongside the public and the private sectors. Furthermore, financial and technical support from the EU and UNDP helped to defuse previously widespread suspicious attitudes towards international donors, enabling outreach to a much larger and more diverse group of CSOs than ever before.

The stories and key CSI impacts

A stronger understanding of the role of civil society

As a result of the implementation of the CSI in 2005, key civil society representatives across the island, through discussions informed by the CSI methodology and its findings, came to redefine the meaning and role of civil society both as an overall concept and as it applied to the local context. As such, an understanding of the term 'civil society' as an autonomous actor was initially adopted by this core group and then spread through their networks. Furthermore, within this 'third sector', the CSI findings were shared with the same group of representatives, demonstrating that in both communities civil society could further be categorised in terms of their CSI indicators: trade unions, chambers of commerce and professional organizations on the one hand, and mission-driven associations working for broader community interests such as the environment, human rights and gender equality on the other hand.

This self-awareness gradually became more widespread through significant donor strategies designed in light of the CSI report findings and recommendations. Furthermore, the allocation of EU aid for the direct use of CSOs in the TCC in itself meant the immediate acceptance of all types of CSOs as entities. This new identification that resulted from a long-anticipated form of relationship activated a diverse range of CSOs not limited to trade unions and chambers, bringing the civil society reality to a wider number of people living across the TCC through the implementation of projects extending across much broader geographical and thematic areas. CSOs began to be trusted as organizations meeting a community need instead of being regarded with suspicion as having partisan agendas. Turkish Cypriot CSOs have also managed to break their perceived exclusion extending their activities beyond Cyprus as lead NGOs implementing capacity-development projects (such as the one in Azerbaijan funded by the EU and implemented by the Management Centre in partnership with the local NGO Centre for Social and Economic Development).

In the GCC, the status of CSOs as belonging to a new EU Member State helped to redefine the application of civil organizations in society through opportunities not previously open to them. CSOs were encouraged to participate with international NGOs as partners in EU-funded projects and in some cases as lead organizations. This made CSOs confident that they could bring about change in their own community and overseas. Furthermore, it increased their visibility with decision-makers in the GCC and placed greater emphasis on the need for authorities to interact strategically with CSOs.

> As a result of the implementation of the CSI in 2005, key civil society representatives across the island came to redefine the meaning and role of civil society.

Advocating for change in the NGO legal framework in both communities

As a direct result of the CIVICUS CSI and following publication of the report, Turkish Cypriot and Greek Cypriot CSOs during separate mono-communal processes identified limitations in the legal framework of CSOs in their respective communities, as well as discrepancies between international requirements and local frameworks. The process of advocating for change in the NGO legal frameworks began in 2007. The overall objective of the legal reform as a bi-communal approach to peace and reconciliation was to standardise the legal framework and create parity in the governing of NGOs in both the TCC and GCC, in line with agreed international practice. UNDP funding has supported the formation of local networks and networks between communities, and their involvement in policy-making has had considerable impact in enabling public benefit organizations to professionalize as a prerequisite to strengthening advocacy activities.

Soon after the publication of the CSI, the Management Centre, with support from UNDP-ACT I, began an in-depth investigation of key issues highlighted by the report. This included networking and public and civil society partnership, which was presented as a need at an international symposium in May 2007, along with the creation of action plans for each issue. The research showed that 75 per cent of CSOs in the TCC reported a low level of dialogue with decision-makers, and that more than 80 per cent of CSOs did not belong to an umbrella organization, with most of that group made up of public benefit organizations. A meeting with representatives of the authorities and civil society resulted in the establishment of a core committee composed of key representatives of the two groups. Its main task, with a first meeting held in October 2007, was to amend the existing associations law for the TCC, which took almost two years to complete.

The revisions received legal support from the European Center for Not-for-Profit Law (ECNL). The result was a new draft associations law for the TCC authored by representatives of the authorities and civil society, with democratic content in line with EU laws. This was presented to the relevant authorities to be taken to the next level of discussion and official recognition. Currently, it remains somewhat ambiguous as to what the final outcome will be. Nevertheless, the process was important in terms of civil society collaboration as a single network, as well as increased advocacy efforts to take part in policy making.

In 2007, the NGO Support Centre pursued the findings of the CSI, particularly those relating to decision-making with the authorities. More than half of the participants in regional stakeholder surveys regarded the level of dialogue between CSOs and decision-makers as limited and only a small percentage of people thought that CSOs were successful in holding the state to account (18 per cent). This pointed to low interconnectedness among CSOs as well as limited potential for influence at the policy level. The

NGO Support Centre, with support from UNDP, advocated with policy makers to amend the legal framework governing NGOs, through the Planning Bureau, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Finance. The Planning Bureau as the administrator of Cyprus's international development aid highlighted some gaps in the legislation and commissioned an assessment of the legal framework.[1] UNDP funded the study, which was assigned to ECNL.

The ECNL report[2] concluded that the current legislation should be reformed and modernized. Draft legislation on the registration and management of NGOs, the status of 'associations' and 'public benefit organizations' was prepared and is slowly progressing through a public consultation, to which the NGO Support Centre and other prominent NGOs in the GCC are responding. Current legislation does not allow local CSOs to manage any programme under Cyprus Aid (the international development aid programme of the Republic of Cyprus) which limits their capacity and experiences. The legal reform aims to resolve this issue, although the process is not yet concluded.

Influencing donor strategies to meet priority needs of civil society

At the beginning of UNDP's 2005-2008 programming period in Cyprus, the first CSI for Cyprus had just been published. UNDP's predecessor, the UNDP/UNOPS Bi-communal Development Programme, funded the 2005 CSI. As planning activities for a second phase of the CSI went forward in 2008, UNDP was more than a funder, becoming a partner in providing support and insights throughout the process. The CSI had a direct impact on the design of UNDP's 2008-2011 programming, with networking, media relations, policy engagement and peace-building integrated into almost all programmes during this phase.

Following the rejection of the Annan Plan and the inclusion of the GCC into the European Union, the EU developed a €259 million aid package for the development of the TCC that focused on infrastructure, trade, public administration, cultural heritage, rural development, health, education, and strengthening civil society. The aid package was aimed at reducing disparities in development between the two communities. During the design phase of the grant scheme in 2007, the CSI for the TCC was the only reliable source of published information on an overarching range of issues regarding civil society that was available to the European Union Task Force for the TCC. At the time, and to a large part even today, access to any public documents on even the most basic information regarding CSOs was difficult. When applying to the grant programme, 'Cypriot Civil Society in Action', many CSOs that took part in the CSI process referred to the CSI findings in justifying their proposed activities.

Participation in networking events created in the wake of the CSI was mainly limited to the 'usual CSO suspects'. The sustainability of these networks once the technical assistance ends in 2011 is questionable.

Besides the EU strategy to provide grants, the aid package also included a second strategy to establish a temporary technical assistance programme to meet the training and networking needs of civil society in the TCC. This was a recommendation of the 2005 CSI. During the interim period until a Civil Society Support Team was established, the Civil Society Strengthening Programme supported by UNDP provided CSOs with project-writing support free of charge.

Strengthened civil society networks between Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot CSOs

During the last three years CSOs have had more opportunities for bi-communal activities, through UNDP and other trust-building programmes, such as the EEA Financial Mechanism. The authorities in the GCC are open to activities that promote understanding and reunification and adopt policies and actions towards peace-building and reconciliation which in many cases may not be embraced by Greek Cypriots. Despite the positive environment very few new bi-communal activities have been launched, mainly because of the very low trust in Turkish Cypriots shown by Greek Cypriots not previously involved in reconciliation activities. During interviews for the CIVICUS CSI 2010, a survey revealed that 14 per cent of participating CSOs took part in a bi-communal activity before 2004 and 36 per cent after 2004, mainly in cultural, educational, sports and political activities. The same survey revealed that 68 per cent of CSOs undertake activities that promote understanding and reunification, and 65 per cent believe that bi-communal activities promote understanding and reunification and contribute to the reconciliation process.

Based on the results of the CSI and subsequent UNDP consultations with the Management Centre and the NGO Support Centre, it was proposed that a project called 'ENGAGE – Do your part for peace' be implemented jointly by these two organizations. The project (April 2009 - July 2011) intends to strengthen the role of civil society in the reconciliation process by increasing the number of policy positions led by CSOs and civil society networks; the number of partnerships, networks and informal connections supporting the reconciliation process; and the number of joint thematic initiatives created to demonstrate a common approach to island-wide issues. The project will also set out a best practice policy for CSO communications with the media, so that future programmes of work ensure continual learning about Cypriot civil society. To date a total of six networks and informal collaborations have been established, with support from a €100,000 small grant programme, among others.

Furthermore, as a component of the ENGAGE programme, the CSI for Cyprus has a greater focus on documenting peace-building efforts by including questions specific to Cyprus to the CSI surveys and methodology in general. Besides public events organized on issues related to peace-building, the ENGAGE programme has also encouraged many CSOs to take part in policy-level activities on this issue. The programme was launched with an event in July 2009, at which peace activists, both as individuals and CSO representatives, came together. They prepared a joint paper that was presented to representatives of the authorities from both communities.

The UN Good Offices[3] also engaged in the negotiations, expressing civil society's expectations of and support to the negotiations, as well as how CSOs can help the process. In September 2010, a year after the initial event, a similar collaborative effort produced yet another civil society expression of support to the negotiations from 54 organizations, delivered to the two leaders of the two communities. A similar press release was also presented by academics from both sides of the island under the 'Cyprus Academic Dialogue' in October 2010 with support from UNDP and the Australian High Commission in Cyprus.

Other networking opportunities created by the Civil Society Support Team (CSST) aimed at increasing dialogue and cooperation of CSOs with other local or international CSOs, another 'need' documented in the CSI. This included thematic networking events organized by the CSST where a new space for dialogue on issues such as health and gender emerged with the sharing of good practices with EU organizations. The outreach of these events, however, indicates that participation was mainly limited to the 'usual CSO suspects' (generally speaking, the pro-peace urban CSO activists). The sustainability of these networks once the technical assistance ends in 2011 is questionable.

Three networks, two community-based and one island-wide, have significantly benefited from ENGAGE and other previously funded UNDP activities. One community-based network is the Cyprus NGO Network in the TCC. Throughout the process of advocating for a more democratic associations law, the Cyprus NGO Network, though legally prohibited from registering as a formal network, has developed itself by signing a Memorandum of Understanding that regulates its operations, and by taking ownership of advocacy efforts initially led by the Management Centre. The second community-based network is the Development Network in the GCC, which consists of a small number of NGOs involved in international development education and cooperation in different parts of the world, including Palestine and Israel, Egypt, and parts of sub-Saharan Africa. The Development Network is mainly concerned with strengthening cooperation between CSOs and the authorities towards the relaxing of the legal framework (which currently prevents Cypriot NGOs from receiving Cyprus aid for development) and calling for civil society engagement in the preparations for Cyprus assuming the EU Presidency in 2012.

The questioning of decision-makers' ability and willingness to bring about social change has triggered the beginning of self-awareness among many CSOs (in both communities) of their role as social actors.

On a more island-wide level, disappointment has increasingly surfaced, putting into question decision-makers' ability and willingness to bring about social change on issues of common concern to civil society across the border. This has triggered the beginning of self-awareness among many CSOs (in both communities) of their role as social actors and led them to redefine their relations, distancing themselves from political party affiliations. It has also helped them to achieve greater autonomy in their activities while raising levels of trust in other CSOs across the island working towards similar bi-communal interests, with a rise in willingness to confront decision-makers in both communities.

One such initiative has been the Cyprus Islandwide Development NGO Platform (CYINDEP) formed as a meta-platform between the two development networks (the Cyprus NGO Network and the Development Network) with the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding in March 2009. CYINDEP's aim is "*to bring together NGOs [in both communities in Cyprus] working on international development, development education, and development cooperation to improve the effectiveness of their work and advocacy.*"[4] CYINDEP, which is a member of the European NGO umbrella platform CONCORD, will serve as a meta-platform for development NGOs in both parts of Cyprus and strive to strengthen communication, exchange of good practices and collaboration among all NGOs.

Strengthening consultancy services by implementing organizations for technical assistance to civil society

As the implementer of the CSI in the TCC, the Management Centre has gained valuable experience that has contributed to its vision of becoming an organization that provides all forms of technical assistance, especially to public benefit organizations in the TCC and beyond.

Similarly, the NGO Support Centre has developed expertise in a number of thematic areas, such as human rights, development education and diversity – as well as in cross-cutting themes like monitoring and evaluation and project management techniques. This has primarily been through the Centre's work on civil society strengthening programmes in Cyprus funded by UNDP and later by the European Commission for projects to help strengthen civil society overseas. One such programme is civil society strengthening through a human rights-based approach in Egypt. It is anticipated that the NGO Support Centre will utilize elements of the CIVICUS methodology to contribute to future programmes of civil society strengthening – therefore increasing its internal capacities further.

As the implementing partners for the 2005 CSI, the Management Centre and Intercollege, now the University of Nicosia, courageously joined forces and collaborated across sectors and communities, with positive results. The Management Centre built organizational trust through one of the most effective methods – working together for a common goal – which is a significant contribution to reconciliation efforts taking place at all levels in Cyprus. In the second phase of the CSI launched in 2008, the new partnership is much more effective thanks to the past organizational partnership that built trust and a common ground on sensitive terminology (a major hindrance to the project timeframe in the 2005 CSI implementation process). The new partnership is also much more confident about producing a significant bi-communal section of the report. Continued support to such organizational partnerships will help bridge the cooperation and trust gap between the two communities.

As a result of implementing the CSI, both the Management Centre and the NGO Support Centre became more informed about the state of civil society. This determined their future organizational strategy, working with public benefit organizations in developing their capacities, followed by more focus on reconciliation efforts. By learning about CSOs, these two organizations are building networks in Cyprus and are now the reference point for many CSOs on civil society issues. In response to the needs identified by the CSI, the Management Centre and NGO Support Centre have supported CSOs in project writing, facilitating their access to EU funding and organized various trainings (with support from UNDP) to build organizational capacities.

Bi-communal work and reconciliation

The 2005 CSI proved to be very difficult in two aspects. Firstly, the timing was just after the 2004 referenda on the UN Annan plan, and there was a high level of sensitivity towards the terminology used in the text. The reality of civil society was

that CSOs were in two different environments, faced with two authorities and two sets of rules and regulations. Secondly, the need to use sensitive terminology prompted the partners to publish two reports with disclaimers not to cause any political complexities. However, the two teams had to work together to adopt the CIVICUS methodology and also to present their reports in a workshop to capture commonalities and differences.

Self-anchoring and transversal assessment table

Criteria	Assessment
Effectiveness	**High**. As the only comprehensive assessment of civil society in the TCC, the CSI has been termed a milestone in this community, serving as a background document as well as a road map for the development of civil society. It has been used by international donors, academics and some CSOs to inform their future activities.
Inclusiveness	**Medium-low**. Even though the CSI has included many CSO leaders in its implementation process as well as follow-up activities, its overall outreach is weak. Very few CSOs have made direct use of the report and well-known CSO actors always attend CSI-related activities, reflecting the inability of the CSI to reach out beyond existing networks. Outreach to rural communities, academics, public officials and the private sector has been limited to one-off events, rather than building long-term relationships. That said, the CSI's outreach to and receptivity by foreign donors has been strong.
Efficiency	**High**. Even though the CSI is a difficult project to replicate, the costs were relatively low. Therefore the benefits for civil society including the need to monitor progress and thus regularly re-implement the project, outweigh costs of implementation.
Sustainability	**High**. Assuming that the CSI were to be implemented regularly and provide updated information on the state of civil society, the recommendations will continue to inform the actions of various stakeholders from donors to CSOs and gradually the public sector as well.
Networking	**Medium-high**. The CSI process has helped implementing partners to expand their networks. Furthermore, the networks have been further strengthened due to support from donors and partners, specifically UNDP, as recommended by the CSI report.
Advocacy	**Medium-high**. Advocacy initiatives have been more visible in both communities. However, as they are still limited to the scope of legal framework reform and mainly concentrated in the capital, there is still much progress to be made in improving current advocacy strategies.
Bi-communal contact and dialogue	**Medium-low.** The 2005 CSI has a unique recommendations section for the whole island which was derived from a bi-communal workshop as part of the study. Due to the difficult relationship between the two communities, bi-communal relations were focused on organizational trust-building and were not able to initiate widespread contacts. Nonetheless, this was a significant step towards increasing trust and bi-communal contact. However, it has difficult to motivate people to participate in bi-communal events and dialogue remains largely at the level of peace activists and academics. At the time of writing it is premature to assess the impact of new programmes such as ENGAGE (in synergy with the CSI).

The 2011 report started with this experience as a lesson learned and with an understanding of the need to carry out two studies since the political realities have not changed. But the report needs to be further combined by way of better cooperation and joint work to better study how the two sides can be more integrated at the civil society level. The 2005 experience made things like the use of specific terminology easier and less painful for partners and for UNDP. In 2005 it was not possible during the research to ask questions about bi-communal work in the Greek Cypriot community, whereas in 2009 there was a substantial focus on this issue and both partners and civil society were more receptive and forthcoming. The final product reflects this culture of cooperation and, although still containing two subsections, it is a more consolidated and integrated report that also reflects the bi-communal work of civil society.

Conclusions

In conclusion, the CSI has been an invaluable introductory tool needed to shape the vision of CSOs and strategies of donors. Although the CSI provides only an overall picture of the current state of civil society, leaving a lot of the reasons of its weaknesses unknown until more detailed research is conducted, the fact that it spurs further research and attracts interest to civil society activities makes it a valuable resource for civil society in Cyprus. Without comparisons, timely re-evaluations and revisions, the CSI can be read as proof of a weakening of civil society. As such, this paper has aimed to assess the impact of the CSI for Cyprus conducted in 2005, concluding with a reiteration of the lessons learned. The CSI was instrumental in creating a partnership between UNDP, CIVICUS and the implementing partners.

Key lessons learned have been the use of the CSI as a tool for the analysis (and thus strategic development) of civil society dialogue, activities and in particular defining its role in a given community, with an increase in policy-making and involvement in peace-building through the establishment of strong networks in Cyprus. This approach goes beyond action research and

creates an environment for all stakeholders and partners to engage with one another to discuss and resolve issues of significance. The role of UNDP, as both a donor and an active partner in the whole process, has also been a valuable experience in how two partners in a conflict-torn society can work together in innovative ways to address civil society issues.

Last but certainly not least, Cypriot civil society is gradually becoming more integrated and involved in the process of global development. There is more awareness about the Millennium Development Goals, aid effectiveness, and governance issues such as participation, accountability, transparency and policy engagement. CIVICUS, which conducts the CSI in more than 50 countries, brings during its annual World Assembly key civil society representatives to exchange and transfer knowledge.

One common understanding emerging from such exchange was: where the state is strong, democratic, and inclusive, civil society also seems to be more vibrant and strengthened. This says a great deal about the relationship to be built with the authorities to make civil society a more active partner in policy-making. Moreover, there is a need for greater localization and decentralization of development policies to address the needs of grassroot communities, which have legitimate collective rights as well as individual rights. The CSI process and the networking it has generated among civil society actors within and across countries has brought under scrutiny development models led by international NGOs in donor countries and based on financial aid from the rich to the poor. Cypriot civil society has gained awareness of these development debates as a result of dialogue and networking for the Civil Society Index.

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[1] See Planning Bureau (2008). *NGO Institutional Framework Reform*.

[2] ECNL (2008). *Assessment Report of the Legal and Regulatory Framework Affecting NGOs in Cyprus.*

[3] The UN Security Council has assigned the UN Secretary-General to provide his Good Offices to facilitate a solution to the Cyprus Problem.

[4] See Foundation Charter of CYINDEP.

II

URUGUAY:

THE MANY SYNERGIES OF IMPLEMENTING THE CSI IN A UN 'DELIVERING AS ONE' PILOT COUNTRY

CSI diamond
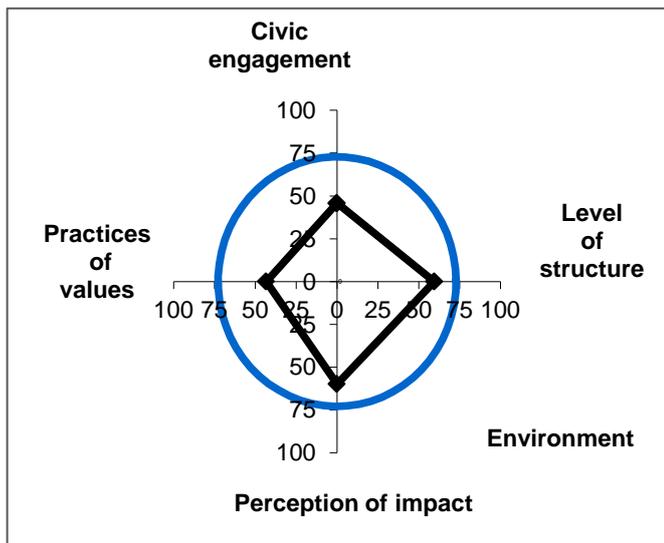
CSI key impacts in Uruguay

- Contributed to the country's ongoing process of decentralization in public administration and local governance by consulting civil society actors and developing their capacity.

- Developed synergies and initiatives between civil society networks, the Government and the United Nations.

- Highlighted key issues in which civil society capacities need to be strengthened.

- Increased accountability and transparency of civil society organizations.

Executive summary

This case study presents the achievements of and lessons learned from the implementation of the Civil Society Index (CSI) as part of the United Nations 'Delivering as One' (DaO) pilot experience in Uruguay. For DaO, civil society organizations (CSOs) were identified as key stakeholders and participants in development. The UN system in Uruguay has made several efforts to strengthen and include civil society actors in international cooperation.

Uruguay has implemented two CSI projects (in 2005 and in 2009). The 2009 CSI identifies the progress and setbacks in the work of CSOs during the last five years. Weaknesses persist, particularly relating to the low participation of individuals in CSOs, communication difficulties between CSOs, lack of transparency and accountability, and a weak capacity to influence public policies. However, the socio-political, socio-economic and cultural reforms of the last five years have improved the operational environment

for civil society. The results also show that the public's perception of the impact of the work of CSOs is higher in 2009 than it was in 2005, indicating that they are more highly valued in society.

The 2009 CSI was implemented as a joint project financed by the Uruguay One UN Coherence Fund. In this execution modality, the joint project set up a management committee where key implementers (CSOs and UN agencies) had a voice in how the activities were executed. The joint project also had a consultative committee composed of civil society representatives to provide feedback, advice and recommendations on the implementation of activities. The 2009 CSI took into account the lessons learned in 2005 which generated new communication strategies between the organizations around the country. It also improved channels used to disseminate findings and form alliances with other institutions, thus creating synergies with other initiatives.

Working within the timeline of the DaO process, the CSI project combined the diagnostic phase with training activities that brought together many CSOs from all over the country. This enabled the UN to maximize participation and develop a strengthening plan for CSOs. Another opportunity that presented itself was an International Forum to bring together more than 100 national and regional organizations to discuss and create ways of exchange, generating stronger alliances and prospects for cooperation.

Introduction

This case study presents the lessons learned and achievements attained by the implementation of the CIVICUS Civil Society Index (CSI) as part of the United Nations 'Delivering as One' (DaO)[1] pilot experience in Uruguay.[2] Since 2007, DaO has been the framework for rethinking and better coordinating cooperation with and for Uruguay, and for the country's own visibility and international stage. The DaO experience has influenced the debate over middle income countries (MICs) – also known as middle developed countries – and positioned international cooperation and UN reform on the national and international agenda.

One of the central themes in the DaO approach in Uruguay has been to guarantee the inclusiveness of all stakeholders, including CSOs, in cooperation for development. The UN system in Uruguay has made several efforts to strengthen and include CSOs in cooperation for development.

The Government has also increasingly recognized the need to involve and strengthen CSOs in public policy-making. From 2005 to 2009, the Government engaged with CSOs in decentralization processes as part of the democratic transformation of the State aimed at involving citizens in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of public policies. These efforts have continued with the new administration of President José Mujica who took office in March 2010.

One of the 15 joint projects implemented under the One UN Programme developed between the Government and the UN System in 2007 aims at strengthening and developing the institutional capacities of CSOs to improve their participation as key actors in various spaces.

To develop a strategy for CSOs that would foster the strength and inclusiveness of civil society, the UN System and the Government considered the results of the first CSI in Uruguay (2005), supported and funded by UNDP.[3] The following priorities were highlighted: promote greater participation of CSOs; seek mechanisms and tools that facilitate communication, exchange and cooperation among CSOs; strengthen smaller networks and organizations; implement self-evaluation and service certification practices; promote transparency and fiscal accountability; and strengthen the relationship with the State and the business sector to jointly seek solutions to the problems faced by the country.

As part of this joint project, a second implementation phase of the CSI was launched to take an updated 'snapshot' of CSOs in Uruguay, surveying progress and/or setbacks and identifying best practices to strengthen CSOs.

Uruguay has suffered deep and cyclical economic crises in the last decades that had devastating effects among the most vulnerable population.

The context of Uruguay

Uruguay is considered a relatively developed country in Latin America, ranking 52nd among 89 countries with 'high human development' in the 2010 *UNDP Human Development Report*. Its population is estimated at 3.5 million, mainly concentrated in urban areas (1.5 million live in Montevideo, the capital). Life expectancy is approximately 76 years, the literacy rate is 98 per cent among people over 15 years of age, the combined school enrolment rate is 89 per cent and per-capita GDP is $9,654 (PPP 2008).

The generally good economic and social indicators may lead some analysts to believe that Uruguay is not prone to economic turmoil and the social crises that they bring. It may also be thought that Uruguay, and similar countries, can achieve high levels of human development, guarantee the fulfilment of the human rights, and develop a vibrant civil society completely on their own. For that reason, Uruguay and MICs in general receive little official development assistance (Uruguay received 0.1 per cent of GNP in ODA in 2007).

In fact, Uruguay has suffered deep and cyclical economic crises in the last decades that had devastating effects among the most vulnerable populations (such as youth, women, and minorities). Over the last four decades, Uruguayan society has faced serious obstacles in achieving sustained and sustainable economic growth, reducing the incidence of poverty and inequality in income distribution, and strengthening the quality of its policies and institutions. The country's economic instability and vulnerability to external shocks is best represented by the 2002-2003 economic crisis that led to the highest levels of poverty known in recent decades. In fact, the country is still recovering from the subsequent ramifications of the deep recession.

Furthermore, the country's social, cultural and administrative operations are highly centralized in urban areas, particularly in Montevideo, making it difficult for citizens and CSOs outside of the capital to access services and participate in policy debates. The headquarter of many institutions, including the main campuses of all major universities, are located in Montevideo, as are the administrative headquarters of all ministries and sub-divisions.

Two civil society indexes: similarities and differences

Two CIVICUS CSI reports have been produced in Uruguay, the first in 2005 and the second in 2009. The main objective of the CSI is to create a knowledge base and momentum for civil society strengthening initiatives. Having a clear understanding of the weaknesses and strengths of CSOs enabled organizations to identify and prioritize their actions to become more effective in shaping public policies. The CSI implementation process brought together civil society actors and their partners in a process of evaluation, reflection and planning. It also measured and evaluated the quality and impact of CSO activities, the nature of their relationships with other actors, the commitment and participation of citizens in those activities, and the promotion of values within the organizations.

In Uruguay, civil society encompasses long-standing movements, such as trade unions and peasants, as well as professional, business and religious organizations. However, other actors have also 'joined' civil society, such as citizens organized to improve their quality of life and defend their rights, or to seek responses to a social emergency at times of profound crisis.

Although the results of the two reports are not wholly comparable due to changes in methodology, some progress and setbacks in the work of CSOs during the last five years can be identified. Weaknesses persist, particularly relating to the low participation of individuals in CSOs, communication difficulties between CSOs, lack of transparency and accountability, and a weak capacity to influence public policies. However, there have been several improvements in the operational environment, attributable to socio-political, socio-economic and cultural reforms. Similarly, the results show that the public perception of the impact of CSOs is higher in 2009 than in 2005, indicating that they are valued more highly in society and public opinion.

The results of the 2005 CSI determined that civil society groups *operate in an environment that does not fully encourage or enable the performance of their activities, with an average level of development in the promotion and practice of values, whose actions have a low impact and that have weak organizational structures.*[4] The major challenges identified were: promotion of greater participation; facilitation of communication; development of exchange and cooperation; greater public visibility of activities; promotion of transparency and public accountability; and strengthening the relationship among CSOs, the State and the private sector.

Four years later, the results of the 2009 CSI showed that Uruguayan civil society acts in a highly enabling environment, with a medium level of institutional development, performs actions with a high relative impact, and a high level of organization. However, participation remains low as does the practice and promotion of values.[5] The level of civic engagement and participation of people continues to be relatively low, and participation in social organizations is lower than in political organizations. However, social volunteering grew in recent years to 20 per cent of the population.

Although formally registered CSOs have grown in number, they lack trained staff in the areas of management, communications and fundraising. While organizations identified tolerance, respect, and non-discrimination as common values in their daily work, they highlighted the need to improve and deepen transparency and accountability.

Publicly, CSOs are perceived as active and successful in mobilizing the general society and contribute to the reduction of poverty and generation of employment. Some reported a high level of impact and involvement in working with the Government while others saw themselves playing a secondary role with little space to influence decision-making processes.

The latter perception contrasts with the findings on the operational environment for CSOs, which is seen as highly favourable, with very few restrictions from the Government. Since 2005, the Government has led a series of policy reforms that stimulate the creation of CSOs and their participation in public policy. It has fostered new spaces for dialogue and increased opportunities to access information, such as public announcements of when national commissions and councils meet. It has also increased information and access to services through local offices and via the internet and implemented decentralization efforts that include local-level governance and citizen participation. Local governments have instituted 'participatory budgets' that enable local communities to approve certain projects that benefit their neighbourhoods, and provide CSOs with access to grants.

The impact of the 2005 CSI

Three main impacts can be identified as a result of the 2005 CSI. First, CSOs addressed the need to improve their accountability and transparency, as noted in the 2005 CSI, through the development of codes of ethical conduct that promote the regulation of values, institutional behavioural practices, and transparency and accountability of their actions. The National Association of NGOs (ANONG in Spanish), an organizing body for many CSOs in Uruguay, was one of the pioneers in adopting and implementing a code for all its members in 2008.

Second, during the same period, CSOs advocated for the adoption of a law that guaranteed access to information to make public certain information available within State institutions and organizations. After some years of discussion, the Law on Access to Public Information (Law 18.381) was enacted in August 2010. It enables access to public information through simple procedures, makes public procedures transparent and promotes accountability.

Uruguayan civil society acts in a highly enabling environment. However, participation remains low, as does the practice and promotion of values.

Lastly, the impact of the 2005 CSI is also recognizable in changes in Government entities. The 2005 CSI emphasized the relationship between CSOs and the State. As such, as part of the governmental process to enhance citizen participation in all public spheres and decision-making processes that began in 2005, the Ministry of Social Development has since created spaces for the participation of citizens and CSOs. These Social Councils engage participants in the development and access to social policies in all governmental departments (local administrative regions). In the initial phase, the ministry found itself dealing with a very diverse number of CSOs whose participation in the Social Councils was hindered by their uneven capacities. Using the results of the 2005 CSI as inputs, the Government designed a national training module that showed CSOs how to best participate and be involved in

Social Councils. This was a milestone in the relationship between the Government and CSOs, especially for CSOs in the provinces. To date, most CSOs that received this training continue participating in the Social Councils.

> "It is in the interest of the State to recognize and guarantee citizens' rights. This implies creating instances of active participation by civil society organizations, not only in the execution of plans, programmes and projects, but through dialogue between the State and civil society. We understand that CSOs have an important role in demanding and guaranteeing the attainment of citizens' rights." (Mariella Mazzotti, former Director, National Directorate of Citizen Development, Ministry of Social Development)

The story

Delivering as One and strengthening the capacities of CSOs in Uruguay

Through the DaO experience in Uruguay, a joint project was undertaken to strengthen the institutional capacity of CSOs from May 2009 to October 2010. It was implemented by UNDP, UNESCO and UNFPA, in partnership with ANONG and other civil society networks and with financial support from the Uruguay One UN Coherence fund.

> "UNDP is in charge of implementing a specific component of the joint project: the Civil Society Index, which we supported in a previous effort; thus, we are interested in its continuity. This is a good chance to explore old issues such as the relationship between the State and civil society. Another relevant issue is the impact of CSOs' efforts; there is still much to debate on these issues." (UNDP officer)

One achievement of the joint project was the establishment of a consultative committee to provide a forum for civil society networks in the country to offer feedback, opinions, present requests, and coordinate actions implemented by the joint project, including the 2009 CSI. This forum helped in the implementation of the 2009 CSI as it provided broader coverage of and participation by from CSOs from all provinces. The consultative committee was composed of representatives of civil society networks from various sectors and with a national scope.[6] The committee advised the joint project's managing committee (the technical decision-making body with representatives of national counterparts and participating UN organizations)[7] and guaranteed further representation of CSOs in the joint project.

The key objectives of the joint project were to: 1) analyse the situation of CSOs (capabilities, strengths, weaknesses and deficits); 2) generate discussions and disseminate the results; 3) develop activities to strengthen CSOs, especially in the interior and to reinforce their institutional capabilities to achieve their objectives; and 4) develop capacities in CSOs to monitor and follow up public policies using the human rights-based approach. In particular, the project focused on organizations based in the provinces, as these CSOs have argued that due to low levels of decentralization, they have less access to information and resources and they are less consulted on issues that eventually affect their work.

To achieve these objectives, the work plan included the implementation of a second CSI in 2009 to assess civil society in terms of its level of organization, areas of involvement and actions being undertaken. To this end, surveys of CSOs and a public opinion poll were conducted. The effort also included the organization of an International Forum on the status and capacity-development activities of CSOs. Workshops were held in several regions to build a local common agenda prioritizing the main areas to be strengthened.

Synergies created through the 2009 CSI

Because the CSI was implemented as part of a joint project financed by the One UN Coherence Fund through the DaO pilot experience, there was a limited timeframe for its implementation. To expedite the process, the implementation of key activities had to overlap. Among these were the CSI diagnosis phase (identifying CSO strengths, weaknesses, and needs), the organization of training workshops in the interior and the implementation of an international forum to discuss organizational structures, strengthening, and public policy advocacy.

This overlap allowed ANONG (as the partner of the DaO project) and ICD (as the implementer of the CSI) and the Management Committee to combine the CSI diagnosis with training activities and bring CSOs from all over the country to four workshops held from September 2009 to March 2010. More than 300 participants8 met in the regional workshops to discuss the characteristics of local organizations, develop a diagnosis of their weaknesses and strengths collectively, and generate a common action plan to be implemented throughout the joint project's activities. The resulting plan aimed at improving policy capacities and the autonomy and impact of actions of CSOs. In addition, the workshops allowed for the collection of data for the CSI, reaching a wider range of organizations and individuals than was originally foreseen, including many grassroots organizations.[9]

One of the key achievements of the workshops was that they took place in small towns in the interior, with small and diverse organizations that were introduced to the CSI for the first time. Most of the workshop participants occupied key positions in the organizations represented and came from the country's interior; only five per cent of participant organizations were based in the capital. Most participants were women. For many organizations, these workshops were an opportunity to exchange experiences and information with other regional and/or local CSOs;

for others, they offered a space to create connections and/or strengthen existing ones.

This exercise also helped participants to visualize the CSI as a concrete, user-friendly tool that could generate a collective diagnosis while, at the same time, helping individual organizations conceptually organize their internal debates.

> "I have become more aware of the rights that civil society organizations have vis-à-vis the State. We are not alone in this effort, and thanks to this project, we had access to new tools that otherwise we could not afford. While most of us are people with great enthusiasm for what we do, very well-intentioned, and concerned about 'equity issues', we have quite limited resources and tools." (Testimony of a regional forum participant)

The International Forum in Montevideo (October 1-2, 2009), one of the components of the joint project, brought together more than 100 national and regional organizations from around the country to discuss and create exchange opportunities. The programme included a segment for the CSI to be presented by the Institute for Communication and Development (ICD, the implementing CSO in Uruguay) and other implementing CSOs in Argentina, Venezuela and Chile. In this space, participant organizations shared and compared the results of implementing the CSI in the region, deepening their understanding of the instrument and analysing possible causes of their weaknesses and strengthens. The discussion was compiled in a book which includes a section on CSI implementation in the region.[10]

> "The updated CSI allowed us to form a clear picture of where our members are working and what their demands and needs are. We also attained valuable input for maintaining a dialogue between the State and civil society. It allowed us to think about a new institutional structure for civil society, and it enhanced the discussion on the role of civil society in relation to other networks and with

the State." (Daniel Miranda, former Secretary, ANONG)

Finally, another innovative synergy brought about by the implementation of the CSI was the efficient use of resources through the creation of alliances. In 2009, the Ministry of Social Development, UNDP, and United Nations Volunteers agreed to carry out a national survey on volunteerism. The survey added a few volunteer-related questions to the original questionnaire used the ongoing data collection process of the CSI. The efficient use of resources made it possible to develop a survey and a case study that led to a better understanding of the growth and the value of volunteerism in Uruguay. Results showed that 20 per cent of the population performed some kind of voluntary work, and more than 43 per cent had volunteered at least once in their lifetime. This survey prompted the beginning of

Self-anchoring and transversal assessment table

Criteria	Assessment
Effectiveness	**High**. CSOs have been strengthened through the implementation of the 2009 CSI especially as it was part of the DaO pilot experience. This gathered interest and participation from many other CSOs from the interior and helped to create a Consultative Committee, providing many CSO networks with an opportunity to participate and present their recommendations. This resulted in a strengthening plan that addressed the needs and concerns of CSOs throughout the country.
Inclusiveness	**High**. The 2009 CSI was very inclusive thanks to the Management and Consultative Committees; over 100 Uruguayan organizations participated in an International Forum. Furthermore, covering the interior of the country was essential; this was successfully achieved as only five per cent of the participants in the workshops were from Montevideo.
Efficiency	**High**. The 2009 CSI was an efficient project as it generated many synergies that contributed to the DaO experience and to the achievement of a national priority.
Sustainability	**High**. The 2009 CSI and the joint project that implemented it left CSOs with several mechanisms to collaborate, organize and participate. Particularly, the CSOs will continue in the Consultative Committee as they found it a meaningful forum in which to participate and express their institutional needs by generating institutional strengthening plans and activities.
Territoriality	**High**. The steps taken to implement the CSI in Uruguay, through the DaO experience, have contributed greatly to engaging with a range of organizations, especially in rural areas. Four workshops were held in the interior, allowing many CSOs in rural areas to participate and become engaged.
Organizational	**High**. The 2009 CSI allowed CSOs to participate in capacity-development activities that would strengthen their organizational structures and abilities to advocate, monitor, and evaluate public policies supported by the State and the United Nations.
Transparency	**Medium-high**. The 2005 CSI demonstrated that CSOs in Uruguay needed to improve on their transparency and accountability. The 2009 CSI continues to highlight this need; however, more CSOs are aware of the issue and have taken steps to enhance their financial transparency and access to information through websites and public announcements.

a National Dialogue on Volunteerism and Social Commitment in 2009.

> "We have to analyse what civil society is, how it is organized, where it is organized, what types of networks there are, and the extent to which CSOs are integrated regionally. This Government has marked a different way of working with civil society. It has not always been easy, but we must deepen the search and create new ways to relate better." (Alejandra Erramuspe, Central Department for Planning and Budget)

In the words of the Ombudsman on the Rights of Citizens of Montevideo, "*The CSI has allowed us to identify civil society capacities and the political roles of organizations in the design and execution of public policies. It strengthens democracy and the establishment participatory processes; these kinds of initiatives help us become accountable, professionalize the work and better position Uruguayan civil society.*"[11]

Impact of the 2009 CSI

The 2009 CSI in Uruguay integrated the lessons learned in 2005 and, as a result, generated communication strategies among organizations around the country. It also improved channels to disseminate the findings and the means to create alliances with other institutions, and created synergies with other initiatives.

With support provided through the DaO pilot experience, the CSI built confidence and trust among CSOs by generating relationships between them and with the UN based on dialogue for collective actions. Additionally, the CSI showed that capacity development can become a learning process for CSOs to improve their ability to analyse, organize, build networks and do advocacy.[12]

Conclusions and recommendations

Given the high level of diversity attained at the CSI workshops, both in terms of thematic and geographic representation, CSOs recommended that the CSI be implemented at the departmental (local administrative) levels as this would set a baseline for the analysis of the situation of CSOs in different communities. This action would also assist in the creation of well-targeted strategies to strengthen the capacities of CSOs at the departmental level to have an impact on local development processes.

It was also recommended that the CSI should include the possibility of generating indexes by sectors, to achieve a more precise snapshot of each dimension. Sectoral indexes would take into account the fact that social organizations are not homogeneous and have different strengths and weaknesses depending upon the sector to which they belong.

Finally, the implementation of the CSI as part of the DaO experience in Uruguay facilitated the processes of generating agreements, becoming a bridge that connected state and social institutions. It also created spaces and capacities for dialogue towards a national consensus by involving opposition political parties, Parliament, civil society, academia and the UN in its capacity as a convenor and facilitator.

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[1] The DaO initiative aims at increasing the impact, effectiveness and efficiency of the United Nations through more coherent programmes, and reducing transaction costs for governments and the UN by capitalizing on the strengths and comparative advantages of the different Agencies, Funds and Programmes. National leadership and ownership are considered key elements in the process. It also entails a new view of international cooperation structured around four pillars: One Programme; One Leader; One Budgetary Framework, and One Office. Further information on the DaO experience in Uruguay is available at www.onu.org.uy.

[2] The eight countries selected by the General Assembly to pilot the DaO approach are: Albania, Cape Verde, Mozambique, Pakistan, Rwanda, Tanzania, Uruguay and Viet Nam.

[3] Both the CSI projects were implemented by the Institute for Communication and Development (ICD), a Uruguayan NGO founded in 1986 with the objectives of producing knowledge and strengthening civil society and citizen participation. See www.icd.org.uy

[4] For details of the CSI dimensions and methodology see
http://www.civicus.org/csi/csi-methodology

[5] Bettoni Analía/ Cruz Anabel (2010). *Índice CIVICUS de la Sociedad Civil; Una herramienta de investigación; una herramienta para la acción. Avances y necesidades en el fortalecimiento de la sociedad civil uruguaya.* ANONG-UNESCO.

[6] The members of the Consultative Committee were: ANONG, the National Association of Micro and Small Enterprises (*la Asociación Nacional de la Micro y Pequeña Empresa*), the Committee on the Rights of the Child (*el Comité de los Derechos del Niño*), Afro World (*Mundo Afro*), the National Commission on Women for Democracy, Equality, and Citizenship (*la Comisión Nacional de Seguimiento – Mujeres por democracia, equidad y ciudadanía*), the Interamerican Platform on Human Rights, Democracy and Development (*la Plataforma Interamericana de Derechos Humanos, Democracia y Desarrollo*), the Environmental Network of NGOs (*la Red de ONGs Ambientalistas*), and the Uruguayan Network against Domestic and Sexual Violence (*la Red Uruguaya contra la Violencia Doméstica y Sexual*).

[7] Management Committees for the joint projects funded through the Uruguay One UN Coherence Fund are composed of national partners in the implementation (ANONG in this case), the Office of Budget and Planning, participating UN organizations (UNDP, UNESCO and UNFPA in this case) and the Resident Coordinator's Office.

[8] Four workshops were held targeting organizations of all departments (local administrative regions) except the capital. They brought together 310 representatives of 173 CSOs based in 15 out of 19 departments of the country.

[9] Groups that attended included: environmental organizations; women's organizations; youth, religious and defence of rights organizations; local development organizations; community (neighbourhood commissions, committees of support), sports and recreational organizations; cultural and artistic organizations; organizations working on the preservation of cultural heritage of indigenous and traditional peoples; organizations focused on education, advocacy, the promotion of human rights and social research; organizations working with children; housing organizations and self-constructed cooperatives; media watch-dogs; non-profit business associations; business and professional organizations; and development solidarity networks and local civic associations.

[10] ANONG-UNESCO (2010). *Avances y necesidades en el fortalecimiento de la sociedad civil uruguaya.*

[11] Based on Fernando Rodríguez's testimony (Ombudsman Office, Montevideo). *Para ampliar su impacto y mejorar sus prácticas: propuestas de la sociedad civil.* Uruguay February 2010.

[12] Jones, Mercedes (2003). *Programa de Fortalecimiento de las Organizaciones de la Sociedad Civil* (OSC) *Informe de Relatoría.* Foro del *Sector Social-Buenos Aires*. Argentina.

III THE FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA:

HELPING CREATE NEW POLICIES AND PERCEPTIONS

CSI diamond
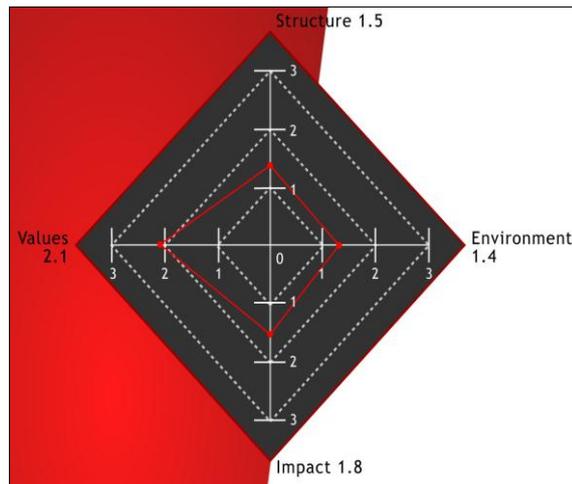
CSI key impacts in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

- Equips civil society organizations with a useful research methodology.

- Supports in-depth understanding of the state of civil society.

- Provides baseline data and allows evidence-based policy initiatives.

- Improves programme planning among CSOs.

- Creates opportunity for collaboration between sectors (particularly the state and civil society.

Executive summary

The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia has twice sought to gauge the strength of civil society. The first assessment took place from 2004 to 2005 while the second covers 2009 to 2011. These assessments were undertaken by CIVICUS in collaboration with the Macedonian Center for International Cooperation (MCIC).[1] This case study, conducted four years after the first CIVICUS Civil Society Index, attempts to assess the lessons learned and highlight successes of the impact of the CSI on Macedonian civil society.

The CSI was useful both as a self-assessment and as an evidence-based advocacy tool for civil society organizations (CSOs) as well as a repository of knowledge about civil society for other stakeholders.

Key achievements of the CSI in the country are:

- Broadening the concept of civil society has allowed trade unions and religious communities to be recognized as a part of civil society.

- The inclusive participatory process in conducting the CSI prompted dialogue on the state of civil society, among individual actors and within civil society as a whole.

- The CSI is used by CSOs as a tool for strategy development, public policy formulation and to conduct further assessments on the context and state of civil society. For instance, the Civic Platform of Macedonia (CPM), a national cross-sector network, used the CSI as a base for the development of its programme of work for 2006-2007. Also, the organization Polio Plus, a leading CSO for persons with disabilities, capitalized on the CSI to plan its advocacy activities and to promote its work. MCIC, one of the main actors supporting the development of civil society in the country, uses the CSI outputs and methodology to develop programmes for institutional and organizational strengthening of CSOs, as well as for evidence-based advocacy.

- Other stakeholders use the CSI to analyse and understand the needs of the state. The CSI's comprehensive analysis of civil society was used by the Government to design the 2007 Strategy for Cooperation of the Government with the Civil Sector (with an Action Plan 2007-2011).[2] In addition, some goals and measures in the strategy are in line with CSI recommendations. Further, the new Law on Associations and Foundations (2010) embraced many recommendations made in the CSI.

- Finally, the CSI report and related documents are being used by undergraduate and master's degree programmes in social and political studies. The CSI methodology also provides a useful learning tool for students in their research of methodologies and their applications.

The practice and promotion of positive values are the major strengths of Macedonian civil society driving its achievements and impacts.

Introduction

The CIVICUS Civil Society Index in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

This document presents the lessons learned and key achievements of the CIVICUS Civil Society Index (CSI) for the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, implemented between 2004-2005 (first phase) and 2009-2011 (second phase) by MCIC. The goals of the project (as formulated by CIVICUS) are to enhance the sustainability of civil society and to promote and strengthen its contribution to positive social change.

UNDP financially supported both phases of the CSI in the country. Representatives from UNDP participate actively in the advisory body of the CSI, the National Advisory Group.

In assessing the state of civil society, the CSI in its first phase examined four key dimensions: structure, external environment, values and impact on society at large. Each of these four dimensions was composed of sub-dimensions (25 in total), resulting in individual indicators (74). These were studied using in-depth primary and secondary research, including: a population and organizational survey, regional stakeholder consultations, a national conference, literature review, a media review and corporate social responsibility case studies. The National Index Team, comprising ten experts, collected and summarised the data and information, which was used by the National Advisory Group to score indicators on a scale of zero to three.[3]

According to the CSI, the practice and promotion of positive values were the major strengths of Macedonian civil society which drives its achievements and impacts. The environment was assessed as disabling to a certain extent, with a "*partially ineffective State*" and a "*deep lack of public trust and public spiritedness*" (in a socio-cultural context). The structure dimension was described as "*moderate in size and imbalanced in composition*" (with absence of some societal groups and an urban-rural gap, among other issues).[4]

The research findings were discussed and confirmed at a national conference attended by diverse civil society representatives as well as representatives of state, university, media and the private sector. They identified the strengths and weaknesses of the sector and provided recommendations to further strengthen Macedonian civil society.

The second phase of CSI implementation was completed in the first half of 2011.

The country context

The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia is considered a country with 'high human development' and is ranked 71st out of 169 in the Human Development Report.[5] Over the past 15 years the Human Development Index has increased from 0.634 to 0.701. The population of the country is 2,048,619 (57.8 per cent live in urban areas) and life expectancy is approximately 74.2 years. The literacy rate is 97 per cent in the age bracket over 15 years old. The gross domestic product per capita in 2010 was $4,634.[6]

Since its independence in 1991, the country has made progress in many areas: pluralistic democracy, market economy and the development of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights. Acknowledging such achievements, in 2005, the European Commission granted it status as a candidate for EU membership. However, more efforts are needed to address the remaining challenges to start membership negotiations, such as ensuring the independence and efficiency of the judiciary, non-discrimination and access to justice, efficient state administration, implementation of laws, independence of the media and reducing corruption.[7]

As the country progresses, so does its civil society.

One of the main concerns of citizens is the level of economic development. Despite a stable macroeconomic situation and steady growth, the country has high poverty and unemployment as well as unequal distribution of income and wealth.

Between two phases of CSI

As the country progresses, so does its civil society. To assess the state of civil society, the CSI examines it along four main dimensions: structure, environment, values and impact. According to the CSI, the **structure** of civil society is moderate and not balanced. The MCIC Survey on Social Responsibility of Citizens shows 4.5 CSOs per 1,000 citizens. However, in 2009, only a fourth of citizens were members of an organization, which is not different compared to previous years.[8] Only ten per cent of citizens volunteer for civil society organizations, mainly for altruistic reasons.[9]

On other sub-dimensions of structure, there are no major improvements since the previous CSI assessment. CSOs have relatively well developed mutual relations and a significant level of established networks and alliances. CSOs remain highly concentrated in the capital and other urban centres. Financial sustainability is increasingly becoming a concern as more donors either withdraw or significantly reduce their funds to the country.

The environment for civil society remains partly enabling. There is some improvement in the legal environment, but there have been no major changes in the socio-cultural or socioeconomic contexts. The strategy for cooperation adopted in 2007 helped contribute somewhat to the improvement of the legal framework and civic dialogue. Since 2006, several new regulations were adopted, including the Law on Associations and Foundations, the Law and Strategy on Volunteerism, the Law on Donations and Sponsorships of Public Activities, and the Strategy for Promotion of Volunteerism. CSO representatives participate in working groups to draft laws or strategies, but there is no centrally established system for participation in policy-making.[10]

During the first CSI phase (2004-2005), specific **values** were recognized as an asset of civil society. The strongest values were peace/non-violence and gender equality. The weakest values were accountability and transparency.

The key achievement in the **impact** dimension of civil society identified in the first CSI was the empowerment of citizens through education on human rights and other issues of concern to women and marginalised groups such as youth, retired persons and those with disabilities. Civil society played a moderate role in influencing public policies and meeting societal needs. However, civil society made little progress in influencing national budget processes or in holding the state and private corporations accountable. There has been some progress since the completion of the first CSI. CSOs have been more active in influencing public policies, and these activities could provide a basis for achieving impact on national budgeting processes.

This case study addresses the key achievements made in three CSI dimensions of civil society – structure, environment and impact – by presenting success stories. It shows how the CSI contributed to a common strategy for civil society development by building the research and monitoring capacities of CSOs to undertake policy

initiatives. These key impacts were identified by the participatory evaluation implemented after the first phase of the CSI. The case study also shows that the CSI provided a comprehensive and structured assessment of Macedonian civil society. The research methods and indicators were important methodological and analytical markers for future monitoring of the status of civil society. A desk review as well as interviews with different stakeholders were conducted to produce this case study.

> *The CSI has led to an improvement in the methodology, strategic orientation and approach of CSOs in influencing public policies.*

The story

The 2004-05 CSI recommended that civil society:

- Be further rooted in society and inclusive of all social groups.
- Develop structured dialogue with the state.
- Further strengthen its transparency, self-regulatory, and corporate social responsibility mechanisms.
- Contribute to restoring public trust in society at large and within itself.
- Strengthen its social capital and networking between stakeholder groups.
- Be the driving force for poverty eradication, which would mean a shift from providing social and humanitarian aid to advocacy for addressing the causes of poverty.
- Develop a clearer and more diversified strategy for mobilization of resources to increase support from citizens, the state and revenue-generating activities.

Some recommendations were addressed in the years following the implementation of the first phase of the CSI by different CSO programmes or governmental policies. This document presents some of these successes which show that the CSI has led to an improvement in the methodology, strategic orientation and approach of CSOs in influencing public policies.

Promoting the voice of civil society

The CSI report in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia is the first comprehensive assessment to analyse the state of civil society in four distinct dimensions (environment, structure, values and impact) with the active involvement of a large group of stakeholders. Previous studies focused on the role of civil society in one area[11] (e.g. corruption) or were conducted by a group of experts without extensive stakeholder participation in the implementation process.

The CSI analysis of the state of civil society identified strengths and weaknesses and presented conclusions and recommendations for further development.

One example of strong civil society work presented in the CSI report was that of the Inter-Party Parliamentary Lobby Group for the rights of persons with disabilities initiated by Polio Plus, one of the leading CSOs[12] advocating for the rights of persons with disabilities. Polio Plus used the CSI report to shape their position in society and to advance their advocacy by using data to plan activities and disseminate the CSI findings to their target groups and stakeholders. They published an essay based on CSI data entitled *NGO is not UFO: Civil Society Without Citizens* in the magazine 'Vulkan', describing and criticising the state of civil society.[13] By distributing the magazine to their members and to various stakeholders such as state institutions, other CSOs, and companies, Polio Plus also helped to disseminate the main conclusions from the CSI report to a wider audience.

Influencing policies and actions of decision-makers

The Center for Institutional Development (CIRa)[14] made use of the CSI to strengthen its strategic approach to civil society in terms of participation, inclusiveness and priority-setting. A blog publication entitled 'Macedonian Civil Society at the Crossroads,' published by the Executive Director of CIRa, used references from the CSI report. This blog raised high public interest and showed how CSI data and findings have a living value beyond the report.

The European Center for Not-for-Profit Law (ECNL) found the CSI report useful in understanding the civic environment in the country. ECNL has used part of the CSI findings in its input to the Macedonian Government's Strategy for Promoting and Developing the Volunteerism Framework.[15]

By providing a basis for a comprehensive strategy for civil society development, the CSI had considerable impact on the design or the re-drafting of policies and strategies of the Government. Soon after the report's publication, the Government agreed to work on improving its relations with CSOs and the environment for civil society. The CSI also provided crucial information needed for the strategy for cooperation adopted by the Government in 2007.

> "Highly appreciated by our members, the CSI data serves as a compass to define our position within the civil society sector. When you know where you are, you can easily define a roadmap to get to your desired destination." (Zvonko Shavreski, President of Polio Plus)

> "We were proud to recommend CSI data as a basis for drafting the strategy, while the Government was happy to have such a comprehensive report, prepared in a very participatory process, which saved time and resources for assessment." (Emina Nuredinoska, MCIC Team Leader)

Among the key achievements of this strategy is the approval of the new Law on Associations and Foundations in 2010. Following a long period of public discussion and institutional inertia, significant progress was made towards the improvement of the legal framework. However, in general, civil society is still rarely consulted in policy and decision-making processes. The involvement is either poor (no significant or systematic representation of civil society in governmental bodies) or inadequate (invited CSOs are not influential).

The CSI, as an action research project, brought together a wide group of different stakeholders to participate in the process of assessing the civil sector. Some participants acquired knowledge about analytical tools, research methods and relevant indicators, and used them in their organizations (see the section on Improving CSO Programme Planning below) for evidence-based advocacy.

> By providing a basis for a comprehensive strategy for civil society development, the CSI had considerable impact on the design or the re-drafting of policies and strategies of the Government.

Among these actors, Polio Plus used CSI tools and methods for its campaign to initiate the adoption of the Law on the Rights and Dignity of Persons with Disabilities a year after the CSI report was published. A questionnaire was developed using the CSI indicators' scoring matrix, revised to suit questions concerning the status of persons with disabilities. Interviews with public administration officials were conducted in different towns. Inspired by the regional consultations of the CSI process, Polio Plus organized regional debates with local governments, social care institutions and CSOs, to assess the status of people with disabilities. The findings of the evaluation report, with the CSI, strengthened the case of Polio Plus in presenting arguments to Parliament on the need to improve the legal framework for this marginalised group.

Generating and delivering new knowledge

The CSI report fills the gap of the lack of comprehensive research on the state of civil society in the country. It is a public document and as such has been used frequently by students as a base for further comparative analyses. At the Ss. Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje's Institute of Sociology, two subjects on civil society are being taught: 'Civil Society and Social Policy' and 'Development of the Civil Sector in Macedonia – History and Development', by Prof. Ilo

Trajkovski. Students use the CSI as a reference for their research. The curriculum draws on the CSI report *15 Years of Transition, from Stabilisation to Civil Society* to enrich students' knowledge about the influence of the civil society in the country. The curriculum includes small-scale research related to the CSI dimensions, while students are encouraged to contact CSOs mentioned in the report. There is a great deal of interest from students in the CSI as well as in the methodology used for the research. Students at the sociology and law faculty use this document as a resource, and to date two master theses have made extensive use of the report.

> *"I highly appreciate the CSI process in general as one of the few research projects in which the Macedonian working team demonstrated skills and capacity comparable to those of other countries."* (Ilo Trajkovski, Professor, Faculty of Philosophy, Ss. Cyril and Methodius University)

Improving CSO programme planning

The CSI findings contributed significantly to the strategic orientation of the Civic Platform of Macedonia[16] (CPM) and its Programme 2006-2007.[17] The activities of CPM addressed the weaknesses identified in all four CSI dimensions, through the following: coordination and cooperation, promotion of civil society, transparency and accountability, mobilization of resources, dialogue with business sector and legal framework.

Participating in the research, team members learned about the process and how to plan more relevant and feasible interventions for their own programmes. This was certainly the case in MCIC, which changed its programmes accordingly. The Centre for Civic Initiative organized training seminars for its staff to learn the CSI methodology and CSI Diamond design.

MCIC used the CSI to plan programmes and projects for development of civil society as well as for other sectors. Five MCIC programmes are based on the CSI: Strategy for Cooperation with the Government (2005-2007); Institutional

Development of Civil Society – IGO (2006-2008); Organizational Strengthening of the Civil Society Actors (2006-2008); Institutional Development of Civil Society – IRG (2009-2011) and Good Governance in Macedonia – DUM (2008-2011), with a total budget of over $3 million. The programmes addressed weaknesses and promoted the strengths identified by CSI. They focused on improving the following: the legal environment, public funding, information about civil society, cooperation and networking, transparency and participation in the preparation of the state budget and increased influence of CSOs in policy making. Alongside these programmes, several activities were undertaken including: supporting the preparation of the new Law on Associations and Foundations and by-laws, conducting training on participatory budgeting and developing a manual, preparing regular monitoring reports on the state and sources of funding, and drafting regular monitoring reports on implementation of the strategy for cooperation. In 2006, MCIC began conducting regular national representative sample surveys based on the CSI Population Survey, and publishes research reports.

> *"The CSI is a bible for us to refer to each time we are in a process of planning programmes or implementing projects. It was a mind-opener which allowed for a different view of civil society today. The CSI Diamond makes it easy to compare the sector to that of any country which has implemented the CSI."* (Sunchica Sazdovska, former Head, Civil Society Department, MCIC)

The CSI also contributed to regional comparison and planning of civil society development. It was used to present the state of civil society in two regional conferences on civil society strengthening organized by European Citizen Action Services and the Croatian National Foundation for Civil Society Development[18] in the Western Balkans region, attended by EU, state and civil society representatives. In 2008 a regional conference[19] based on the CSI findings was organized to compare and discuss possible joint activities for development of civil society in the region.

Self-anchoring and transversal assessment table

Criteria	Assessment
Effectiveness	**Medium.** The CSI is used by civil society organizations as a tool for strategy development, public policy formulation and to conduct further assessments on the context and state of civil society. Other stakeholders use the CSI to analyse and understand the needs of the state. The CSI's comprehensive analysis of civil society was used by the Government to design the 2007 Strategy for Cooperation of the Government with the Civil Sector (with an Action Plan 2007-2011).
Inclusiveness	**High.** The inclusive participatory process in conducting the CSI generated a dialogue on the state of civil society, among individual actors and within civil society as a whole.
Efficiency	**Medium-high.** Time and participatory approaches raised costs and consumed human resources. The evaluation of CSI benefits is not yet conducted, so there cannot be an assessment of efficiency based on facts. The implementing organization deems these costs worthwhile because the CSI gives a comprehensive view of civil society and is an investment in the long-term strategy for the development of civil society.
Sustainability	**Medium.** To ensure that the implementation is sustainable, the state of civil society needs to be assessed on a regular basis.
Territorial	**Medium-high.** Some CSI recommendations were addressed in the years following the implementation of the first phase of the project by different governmental policies: Strategy for Cooperation of the Government with the Civil Sector; Law on Associations and Foundations; Law on Donations and Sponsorships of Public Activities; Law on Volunteerism; Strategy for Promotion of Volunteerism are adopted.
Organizational	**Medium-high.** The CSI report responded to the need for comprehensive research on the state of civil society. The CSI process generated dialogue among key civic sector actors. There was agreement on the definition of civil society, as well as on a list of categories of civil society organizations. This definition recognizes trade unions, chambers of commerce, religious communities and political parties as part of civil society.
Transparency	**Medium.** Some key civil society actors used the CSI process and/or report to improve their advocacy strategies or programmes. The CSI report provided information on civil society strengths and weaknesses as well as recommendations for further development. The CSI process helped to provide knowledge about analytical tools, research methods and relevant indicators.

Increasing the understanding of civil society

The CSI report has not only provided a comprehensive assessment of the complex civil society sector in a structured manner but also generated dialogue among key actors to arrive at a stronger understanding and definition of civil society. The understanding is now much broader and more inclusive. The definition of civil society from the 2004 CSI recognized trade unions, chambers of commerce and churches and religious communities as part of civil society, along with associations and foundations. The new definition (2009) is even broader, and includes political parties. Further discussions on what civil society encompasses have shifted the terminology from 'NGO' towards 'CSO' and 'civil society actors'. A positive impact of this broader understanding is a greater recognition of associations as actors in the economic and social dialogue of the country.

"In a period when the general public has a low appreciation of civil society, broad public promotion through projects like CSI is necessary for understanding each other." (Slagjana Dimishkova, journalist)

Given that over 200 representatives of different CSOs and other stakeholders were involved in the CSI process, the research was an excellent opportunity for them to participate in an informed debate about civil society. This process of self-reflection is in itself an important contribution of the CSI assessment exercise. As summarised by a representative of the public sector, "*The CSI provides the administration with an opportunity to see the real state of CSOs and encourages us to undertake activities that assist further development of civil society.*"[20]

While it is hard to directly attribute all these changes to the CSI assessment, it is safe to say that its implementation played a role in a shift in the discourse on civil society (2006-2010) among many organizations, governmental institutions and donor organizations. This was due to the wide cross-sectoral involvement in the project and to the broad participation of entities in the national index team in the CSI process.

Conclusions and recommendations

The CSI had a considerable impact on civil society in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. It helped CSOs to develop their internal policies and had some influence on public policy debates about civil society and public partnership. Additionally it helped to broaden the concept and understanding of civil society in the country. Several organizations, leading in their fields of work, use the CSI report as a basis for programme planning and strategic development.

CSI findings are used to describe the state of civil society and to identify needs, conclusions and recommendations for its development. They provided an impetus for analysis of the positive impacts of civil society based upon well researched case studies. The CSI as a process also helped to improve the working methods of CSOs and showed that research activities are important for the conduct of evidence-based advocacy. Another important benefit from both phases of the CSI is the development of a more inclusive concept and definition of civil society which has supported

establishing and improving cooperation among civil society actors.

There is partial but meaningful evidence of the influence of the CSI on policy development. The CSI report was a basis for the preparation of the Strategy for Cooperation of the Government with the Civil Sector. It was used by members of the working group for preparation of the Strategy for Promotion of Volunteerism. Both strategies, and also several laws adopted after the CSI, address the recommendations from the first phase of implementation. Even though it is difficult to show direct impact of the CSI on some of these policies, those concerned recognize the benefits of having a comprehensive assessment of civil society at hand during the development phase.

> *Discussions on what civil society encompasses have shifted the terminology from 'NGO' towards 'CSO' and 'civil society actors'.*

The CSI improved upon the generally poor data available on civil society engagement and contributed to greater knowledge about civil society. The CSI report and its follow-up products are used by students and scholars to analyse the state of civil society and the socio-cultural and socio-political context in the country. Given that CSOs have low levels of citizen participation or membership, this type of analysis is key to increasing knowledge about civil society and its role in public policy debate and advancing of action-research in this area.

It is equally important to raise the visibility of CSI products and the CSI approach as an action-research project, both for the general public and specific target groups. The actors in the first and second CSI phases recommend broader distribution of reports, key findings, conclusions and recommendations. Presenting the CSI findings to state institutions, the business sector, embassies and other actors would further increase their overall impact. The second implementation phase therefore foresees publication of at least one policy brief targeting specific audiences (e.g., the state, the private sector, and specific actors within civil society).

[1] MCIC since 1994 implemented more than 20 programmes and 700 projects for institutional and organizational development of the civil society in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and region.

[2] The Strategy for Cooperation of the Government with the Civil Sector was prepared in the frames of the EU-funded project 'TA to the Civil Society Unit' implemented by COWI A/S, MCIC and INTRAC, 2005-2007.

[3] With zero being the lowest assessment possible and three the most positive based on a short description of the indicator and a qualitatively defined scale of scores from zero to three.

[4] See Macedonian Center for International Cooperation (2005). *15 Years of Transition – A Country Moving Towards Citizen Participation. CIVICUS Civil Society Index Report for the former Republic of Macedonia.* Skopje: CIVICUS.

[5] See UNDP (2010). *Human Development Reports.* New York: UNDP (accessed December 28, 2010)

[6] See IMF (2010). *World Economic Outlook Database.* October 2010 (accessed December 28, 2010)

[7] See European Commission (2009 and 2010). *Progress Report.* Brussels: European Commission.

[8] The Survey on Social Responsibility of Citizens is a regularly conducted assessment by MCIC. It was conducted in 2006, 2008 and 2010 on national representative sample. It represents a follow-up of the CSI population survey.

[9] See MCIC (2009). *Social Responsibility of Citizens.* Skopje: Macedonian Centre for International Cooperation.

[10] See MCIC (2008). *Trust in Civil Society.* Skopje: Macedonian Centre for International Cooperation.

[11] Igor Tasevski, Programme Manager, Centre for Civic Initiative

[12] According to the Annual Surveys on 'Trust of Civil Society' in 2010, Polio Plus – Movement Against Disability was recognized by a majority of surveyed citizens and was in third place on a list of 25 CSOs regarding ratio between positive and negative attitudes to certain CSOs.

[13] *Vulkan* is quarterly magazine for people with disabilities published by Polio Plus.

[14] Zoran Stojkovski, Executive Director of CIRa.

[15] Katerina Hadzi-Miceva Evans, Senior Legal Advisor, European Center for Not-for-Profit Law (ECNL).

[16] The Civic Platform of Macedonia is a national platform of 36 CSOs in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia from different sectors of work (www.gpm.net.mk) aiming at strengthening the role of the civil society sector, in a changed and challenging environment, increasing its influence and contributing to social changes, democracy and responsible governance.

[17] Daniela Stojanova, responsible officer for the Secretariat of Civic Platform of Macedonia in the period 2004-2005 and for implementation of the component of the CPM programme regarding cooperation and communication among CSOs.

[18] International conferences 'Civil society connecting EU and neighbouring countries'; Zadar, Croatia; 29-30 September 2008 and 'Strengthening the triangle CSOs-National Governments-European Commission'; Zadar, Croatia; 19 - 20 October 2009.

[19] Regional Conference 'Level of Development of Civil Society in the Region'; Belgrade, Serbia; 17 March 2008, organized by Research and Analytical Center 'Argument' and Center for Development of Non-for-Profit Sector.

[20] Statement by Ms. Floria Ljatifi, Advisor to the President of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, during the CSI National Conference, Skopje, 7 July 2005.

IV

MOZAMBIQUE:

KNOWLEDGE AND SELF-AWARENESS

FOR BETTER DEVELOPMENT OF CIVIL SOCIETY

CSI diamond
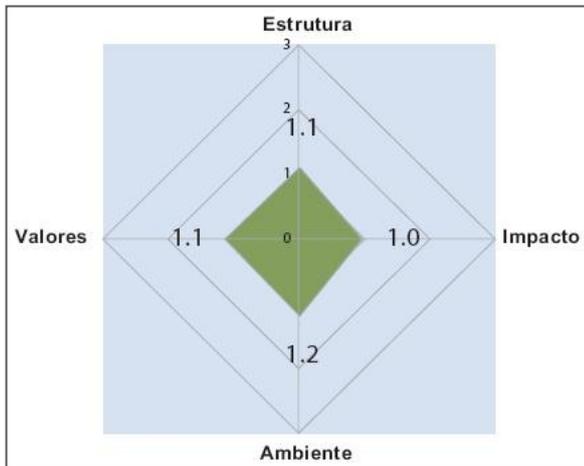
CSI key impacts in Mozambique

- The report has become a key reference for the analysis of civil society in Mozambique.

- Findings were instrumental in establishing a framework for the UNDP civil society capacity-development programme.

- The process led to an awakening of civil society's self-awareness in the country.

- The report provided a baseline for UNDP support on revising the legal framework for civil society in Mozambique.

Executive summary

Mozambican civil society is characterized by a large number of informal organizations. On the formal side, the National Institute of Statistics (INE) registered 4853 non-profit institutions in 2003, most of which were religious associations.

In a country where the state faces huge difficulties in meeting basic social and economic needs, most of the population relies on diverse forms of mutual support as a welfare mechanism. Informal self-help organizations, growing spontaneously on a needs basis, remaining mostly unknown and surviving without external resources, constitute the major part of Mozambican civil society organizations (CSOs).

The 2008 CIVICUS Civil Society Index (CSI) in Mozambique turned out to be an important tool for the analysis of civil society, benefiting donors, Government, academics, and of course civil society itself.[1] The implementation was also an important opportunity for critical self-reflection.

However, the CSI process did not go far in bringing about the anticipated impact – i.e.,

influence in governance programming and the opening of dialogue between policy-makers and civil society to a wider constituency beyond the 'usual suspects', and there was little follow-up after the release of the CSI report in April 2008.

In hindsight, UNDP and the lead organization Fundação para o Desenvolvimento Comunitário (FDC) recognize that they underestimated certain country-specific logistical and practical challenges in adapting the methodology and also that they lacked a strong agenda in mobilizing and implementing the project. These are the two main reasons for the impact falling short of expectations.

The difficulties in implementing the recommendations of the CSI, and the failure to promote its use as a reference for programming and governance, are intrinsically related to the challenges in the country. Future initiatives should take these challenges into account, and incorporate a longer period of training and capacity development in the process.

Introduction

The 2010 *UNDP Human Development Report* placed Mozambique in the bottom five of 169 countries of the Human Development Index (HDI). The challenges posed to a nation that suffered three decades of near uninterrupted war[2] until 1992 are also reflected in the challenges faced by the country's civil society. In terms of the measures used by the CSI, the structure and values dimensions are the weakest and civil society operates in a constrained environment.[3] Structurally, the main weaknesses are due to limited human and financial resources available to CSOs. In terms of values, the weaknesses are related to a lack of transparency, gender equity and diversity.

With a predominantly rural population, spread over 399,400 km^2, and with the state facing huge difficulties in meeting their basic social and economic needs, citizens rely on methods of mutual support for social protection. These mutual support groups are a major part of Mozambican civil society. They are created spontaneously and on a needs basis, remain mostly unknown, and survive without external resources.

Historically the space for CSOs has been very restricted, first by the colonial power, and later by the revolutionary government. It was only in 1990, with a new constitution, and with the approval of the Associations Law in 1991, that CSOs became legal entities. For a long period only certain religious institutions and organizations providing hunger relief were allowed to operate. Today, the legal framework for associations still constitutes a big barrier for the formalization of many CSOs. UNDP, in partnership with national CSOs, has taken on the reformulation of the legal framework as one of its priorities to support the strengthening of a free civil society.

While CSOs engage in a wide spectrum of activities, they struggle to overcome the status of being simple 'service providers'. They also face challenges in reducing their dependency on donors. While the period between 2007 and 2008 was perceived as a successful one for the consolidation of important platforms, groups and networks, the following years have registered an impasse. Reports suggest that some of the most important groups have lost momentum in strengthening their networks and activities, and some civil society platforms have been criticised for a lack of communication with their associates.

When assessing civil society in Mozambique, it is imperative to mention the events that occurred in early September 2010. The violent demonstrations to protest the rising cost of living, which resulted in ten deaths, were a sign of what citizens perceived as a failed model of economic growth without effective distribution, and may also help us to reflect on the situation of civil society in the country. During the riots, people expressed their outrage against rising costs of living, and resorted to violence to force the Government to withdraw the announced increases in fuel and food prices. A similar chain of events occurred in early 2008. The absence of interlocutors during these uprisings is a sign of the gap between formal institutions (including donors, the Government and its political opposition) and the 'un-organized' expressions of civil society. Furthermore it is a reminder of the long journey ahead for civil society before it can represent its claims in a manner that is simultaneously peaceful and resolute.

> *Informal self-help organizations, growing spontaneously on a needs basis, remaining mostly unknown and surviving without external resources, constitute the major part of Mozambican CSOs.*

This study presents the experience and lessons learned from the implementation of the CIVICUS CSI in Mozambique. It has been compiled with information from interviews with stakeholders in civil society, UNDP and others who were involved in the implementation process. It points to significant achievements, such as the consolidation of a reference document on civil society, and the awakening of self-awareness in civil society. Interviewees also highlighted some important challenges, notably the difficulty in

implementing the CSI methodology in the Mozambican context, as well as the lack of a concrete action plan to take forward the main recommendations of the CSI report.

The story

An important reference tool that enables synergies between actors

During the collection of best practices and experiences from the CSI implementation in Mozambique, a clear message from the actors involved was that the CSI's most important impact has been to enhance knowledge about the civil society sector in the country. The CSI became the main reference tool for analysis of civil society, benefiting donors, the Government, academics, and, of course civil society itself.

The absence of interlocutors during uprisings is an important sign of the gap between formal institutions and the 'un-organized' expressions of civil society.

The information gathered and presented in the CSI report has been widely used as the main source of information, studies and debate regarding civil society. For the first time, CSOs were asked to contribute to a project which was not simply enforced upon them from the capital city. The resistance that official surveys sometimes generate was overcome with the CSI methodology, which was truly participative.

The CSI was also the first in-depth assessment of civil society in Mozambique. The National Institute of Statistics (INE) had presented an official number of 4853 non-profit organizations in 2003. Before the CSI, this was the only comprehensive source of information that existed on civil society in Mozambique. The CSI was the first to look at civil society from the inside, providing a reliable insight different from the general perception. It remains the major source of information on civil society, and is therefore important for planning decisions, such as human resources, internal organization, international and national networks, financial sources, and technological resources.

The CSI is now used as the main reference tool to identify all civil society actions in Mozambique, as the study was able to gather many pieces of previously fragmented (both documented and undocumented) information on civil society.

Many academic papers were developed using the CSI as a basis. For example, professors from the Universidade Eduardo Mondlane have published several papers and articles using the CSI.[4] They agree that a lot of academic work could and should draw on the Index, but there is little interest in supporting this kind of research.

For UNDP, support to the CSI project was not only complementary to its other activities aimed at strengthening civil society, but the CSI also generated positive externalities (such as improved knowledge of civil society in the Government, and the production of technical and academic articles and reports) for the whole of Mozambican society. Since the publication of the CSI report in 2008, UNDP has supported several projects to develop the capacities of civil society. The creation of the Centro de Aprendizagem e Capacitação da Sociedade Civil (CESC), supported by the FDC, was also a direct result of the CSI. Other activities have focused on promoting CSO networks to monitor the process of governance from the district level. As a result, a district CSO platform (Plataforma de Governação de Ancuabe) was established in the far northern province of Cabo Delgado.

The CSI also influenced the UNDP annual work plan for 2009,[5] which was aimed at strengthening the capacity of the Government and civil society to plan, implement and monitor efforts to achieve socio-economic development and the MDGs in a transparent, responsible, equitable and participatory manner at national, provincial and local levels.

Based on the CSI results, UNDP partnered with many CSOs[6] such as FDC,[7] the implementing organization. The project was to

strengthen the capacity of CSOs in monitoring and assessing key policy documents, such as the Plano de Acção para a Redução da Pobreza Absoluta (PARPA), and the progress of MDGs. Supporting the Grupo Moçambicano da Dívida (GMD), UNDP is expected to follow one of the most important recommendations of the CSI, which is to improve the capacity of CSOs to conduct policy analysis based on research implemented at the community level. Additionally, United Nations Volunteers (UNV) has been engaged in a national mechanism to promote volunteer activity, highlighted as an important need by the CSI.

Although the CSI unsurprisingly revealed a negative picture, it helped Mozambican civil society achieve self-awareness.

The CSI was published in 2008, during the first year of 'Delivering as One' and after the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) Annual Workplan had been finalized and signed. The UN, specifically UNDP, began implementing some recommendations in 2009 and 2010, as UNDP did, with FDC. The UNDAF extension (2010-2011) also uses some of the information in the CSI.

Self-awareness through the CSI

Beyond the knowledge generated by the CSI, the awakening in civil society's self-awareness was also an important result of the CSI process. Although the main output of the CSI was not particularly surprising for members of civil society, revealing a very negative picture, it helped Mozambican civil society to achieve self-awareness in auto-analysis. This was not only crucial for the legitimacy of the assessment, but also created opportunities for debate at a higher level, where planning and decisions can take place based on a stronger framework.

It became clear that even though the solutions to many of the challenges civil society faces were beyond their reach, there was a lot of work that could and should be done. When the weaknesses

were diffuse, unclear, and exogenous, it was almost impossible to design a strategy for improvement. With the CSI, which analytically separates dimensions such as environment and structure from values and impact, it became clearer that CSOs themselves had a job to do, and that they could not wait for external solutions.

An important discovery of the CSI was the general acknowledgment that the concept of civil society in the Mozambican context should exclude participation in political parties. For many CSOs, this process of defining the meaning of 'civil society' led them to recognize that they were in fact a part of it, and CSOs in some provinces dominated by a one-party structure came to realize that they were something more than a mere extension of the party structure.

A significant number of CSOs agreed to participate in the CSI, even before they were officially invited. Many organizations expressed a desire to contribute to the study by volunteering in the team that implemented the CSI. This is an important indicator of the previous lack of attention to the activities of local civil society that was filled by the CSI implementation process.

Donors including UNDP also benefited from the CSI process in that it questioned the results of previous years of work with civil society in terms of their effectiveness.

Adapting the legal framework for civil society

The launch of the CSI in April 2008 enjoyed vast coverage in the media, highlighting the innovative methodology and intense participation of civil society in the process. The coverage was an important boost to the debate concerning the revision of the CSO legal framework, regulating the functioning of CSOs. With the CSI underlining the fundamental importance of the legal framework for civil society, UNDP supported the FDC in conducting a legal review of the framework, as part of the UNDP Annual Workplan of 2009.

In 2010 UNDP financially supported the approval and implementation of the legal framework for the operations of civil society.[8] The main expected result was the strengthening of CSO capacity to conduct research-based political analyses. To obtain these objectives, three activities were planned: (i) the implementation of a pilot programme in three districts, introducing tools for policy monitoring and assessment (citizen report cards; public expenditure tracking etc); (ii) follow-up training on citizen report cards and public expenditure tracking; (iii) assessment of the programme. UNDP is also a member of the Revision Committee, and has participated in meetings with the Parliamentary Commission for Social Affairs.

Although the revised Law of Associations had a positive reception in the Ministry of Justice[9] in August 2010 and in the Commission for Social Issues in Parliament[10] in October 2010, it has not yet been voted upon.

Among the main constraints that the current legislation imposes are: the need for each organization to obtain a government authorization (from the Ministry of Justice); the cumbersomeness and complexity of the formalization process; and the sums charged throughout the process.[11]

Improving methodology - the lack of a strong implementation agenda

While the CSI was important in generating knowledge and enhancing self-awareness of civil society, its implementation was weak in terms of civil society mobilization for change.

The majority of respondents, institutions and individuals, who were involved in the CSI process (including UNDP) acknowledged that the report's recommendations had little effect on their governance programming. They also felt that the process did not help to construct networks, linkages and partnerships in or outside civil society. The objective of opening dialogue to a wider constituency in civil society was also considered to have been poorly achieved.

A possible factor for the difficulties is the underestimation of national challenges in adapting the CSI methodology to the country context of Mozambique. The country's internal challenges in its multiple dimensions (logistics, human resources training, language) had to be addressed to the extent possible by the technical team.

The lack of qualified CSOs to carry out survey questionnaires also affected the results. In some provinces, for example, sessions of debate and consultation with civil society took the form of 'micro' training sessions. Without basic tools to absorb, digest, and process the debate, many opportunities eventually lost momentum and the participatory methodology ran short of expectations.

The specific challenges of Mozambique in its infrastructure and logistics had been somewhat underestimated upstream and downstream in the planning of the study. One of the interviewees pointed to the lack of reliable information on the condition of roads in the country. It is important to stress, however, that Mozambique's National Advisory Group supported an expansion of the sample beyond the one indicated by CIVICUS.

Despite the fact that discussions on the definition of the term 'civil society' proved extremely fruitful (for example in deciding to exclude political parties and include many informal organizations), the methodology used did not allow for many of these informal organizations to be mapped. From a UNDP perspective, the failure to undertake such a mapping means that UNDP can only continue to support formal institutions. To address this shortcoming in the future, the CSI team could remain for longer periods in the field.

A second major factor in the diminished impact of the CSI was the absence of a strong implementing agenda. Although the document is a reference study on Mozambican civil society, only a very small part of CSOs have managed to incorporate the CSI recommendations in their agendas. Some noted that to their knowledge there were no follow-up initiatives to the CSI research after the launch of the report.

Self-anchoring and transversal assessment table

Criteria	Assessment
Effectiveness	Bearing in mind the vast challenges faced by the Mozambican civil society, and the very sparse resources available for its development, the CSI had a great impact, in the sense that it brought the debate and knowledge about civil society to a higher level. This enabled the opening up of new alternatives for civil society improvement.
Inclusiveness	Despite the great efforts made to guarantee inclusiveness throughout the implementation process of the index, which involved hundreds of CSOs from all provinces, the informal nature of the sector, the country's territorial complexities, and the geographical spread of informal organizations led to many informal CSOs being excluded from the process.
Efficiency	The implementation of the index was quite efficient, especially when taking into account the challenges of conducting a study of this nature. In addition to the strong instrument which was created, recognized and given legitimacy by society as a whole, the index had many other impacts, such as inspiring a series of academic publications. For UNDP the index formed the basis of its capacity-development programme and was crucial to the revision of the legal framework for associations.
Sustainability	The high dependency on external resources, combined with the great degree of informality of Mozambican civil society, makes it unviable for initiatives such as the CSI to function alone as an internal driver to mobilize CSOs to continue this process. The absence of a broad agenda for implementation of the recommendations of the CSI revealed the dependent nature of civil society, and diminished the expected impact of the index.
Knowledge	The most important impact of the CSI has been to enhance the knowledge about civil society in the country. The information presented in the CSI report has been widely used as the main source of information, studies and debate regarding civil society in Mozambique, and the CSI became the main reference tool for analyses of civil society.
Self-awareness	The awakening of a self-awareness among civil society actors was an important result of the CSI process. The analytical distinction made between dimensions such as environment and structure and those of values and impact made it clearer to CSOs that they also had an internal job to do, and could not simply wait for external solutions.

The time and format chosen for the final discussion of the report were also highlighted as strategic mistakes. Although the final discussion of the report brought together representatives from all provinces, there was a shared feeling that the report was weakened due to the failure to 'bring back' the results of the CSI through promotion events and divulgation activities in the provinces. Moreover, many of the surveyed organizations, including UNDP, said the impact of the CSI on internal planning was weakened due to the timing of the launch of the report, which was after many multi-annual plans had already been made.

Finally, the final report of about 110 pages was regarded by respondents as being too complex and difficult to access for most CSOs. Faced with a high degree of informality and difficulties in retaining staff, most of them are unable to use the CSI in its current form as a tool for self-analysis and programming.

Conclusions and recommendations

Although it has been difficult to isolate the precise effects of the CSI at different levels, the collective benefit derived from UNDP's involvement in the implementation of the CSI became quite clear during the interviews. The main outcomes were the production of an important source of information regarding civil society, as well as the involvement of multiple stakeholders in the debate on civil society.

This achievement is particularly important in the Mozambican context, where the implementation of a process of this magnitude is in itself a major challenge. With greater self-awareness in civil society, it was possible to identify clear and varied alternatives, making all stakeholders aware that actions for improvement of civil society do not only depend on external factors. In this sense, UNDP was able to advance the goal of strengthening Mozambican civil society, generating a wealth of useful information, which can be used to inform their future actions.

The difficulties in implementing the recommendations of the CSI after its launch, and the failure to promote its use as a reference for programming and governance, are intrinsically related to the challenges in the country. Future initiatives should therefore take these challenges into account, incorporating a longer period of training and capacity development in the process.

The logistical challenges in Mozambique, coupled with the difficulties faced by the population, were identified as the main reasons for the lower-than-expected impact in mobilizing civil society during the process. Informal organizations require a much greater degree of involvement to deepen knowledge about them and enhance the capacity of all parts of civil society to participate throughout the process. For an eventual return to the field, reinforcements in the preparation and resources made available for the study, both for researchers and CSOs, are recommended.

A more rigorous and concrete plan is also needed for implementation of recommendations of a future CSI report. Part of the difficulty in understanding and using the index could possibly have been overcome with the use of more accessible material, oriented to address the specific needs of the organizations. Awarding research fellowships for young researchers to develop scientific papers based on data from the index would also help to enhance its use.

If the CSI experience of Mozambique is compared to other countries, progress may seem modest, with many expected targets not met. However, a more in-depth analysis reveals that given the Mozambican context and the challenges faced by civil society, the results achieved are important.

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[1] The Civil Society Index in Mozambique was launched in April 2008. It was implemented between March and December 2007 by the Community Development Foundation (Fundação para o Desenvolvimento da Comunidade, FDC), in collaboration with CIVICUS, and supported by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Aga Khan Foundation and the European Union.

[2] Hanlon, Joseph (2010). *Mozambique: The War Ended 17 Years Ago, but We Are Still Poor.* Conflict, Security & Development, 10: 1, p. 77 - 102

[3] For details on the CSI dimensions and methodology please refer to http://www.civicus.org/csi/csi-methodology

[4] Francisco, António (2010). *Sociedade Civil em Moçambique: Expectativas e Desafios.* Desafios para Moçambique 2010. p. 51-105. / Francisco, António (2008). *Key Triggers and Constraints for Civic Action in Mozambique: Bad Things Come in Three.* Regional Workshop on Civil Society Building. / Francisco, António; Mucavele, Albertina; Monjane, Paula; and Seuane, Sónia (2008). *Índice da Sociedade Civil em Moçambique 2007.* A sociedade civil moçambicana por dentro: avaliação, desafios, oportunidades e acção. Maputo: Fundação para o Desenvolvimento da Comunidade (FDC).

[5] UNDP Annual Work Plan 2009 – Capacity Building of Civil Society Organisations – Mozambique

[6] Brito, Carlos (2009). *Relatório de Consultoria – Diagnóstico Organizacional: Organizações da Sociedade Civil.* FDC – Fundação Para o Desenvolvimento da Comunidade.

[7] See FDC - Fundação Para o Desenvolvimento da Comunidade (December 2008). *Relatório Final de Capacitação das Organizações da Sociedade Civil.*

[8] UNDP Annual Work Plan 2009. *Capacity Building of Civil Society Organisations – Mozambique.* P. 11-12

[9] For further information, please consult: Síntese da audiência concedida pela ministra da justiça ao comité de revisão da lei das associações.

[10] For further information, please consult: Síntese da Audiência concedida pela comissão dos assuntos sociais da assembleia da república de moçambique ao comité de revisão da lei das associações.

[11] To see a more complete list, please consult: 'Proposta de Lei das Associações' and 'Dez principais notas da proposta de alteração da lei das associações' prepared by the Comité de Revisão da Lei das Associações.

VIET NAM:

TOWARDS A GREATER UNDERSTANDING AND VISIBILITY OF CIVIL SOCIETY: THE CONTRIBUTION OF CSI

CSI diamond
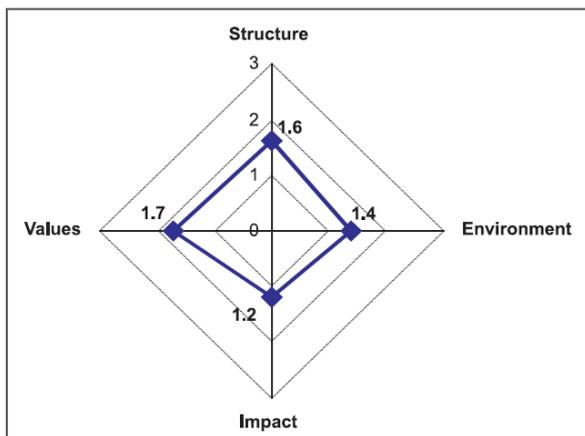
Key impacts of the CSI in Viet Nam:

- The CSI report generated knowledge that was used as the basis for in-depth research on civil society in Viet Nam

- The process and report contributed to greater visibility of civil society in the media and public discourse.

- It brought tangible benefits to the NCO (Viet Nam Institute of Development Studies) in increased capacity and enhanced organizational reputation.

- The main challenge is to translate the knowledge generated into concrete actions to strengthen civil society and its role in public life.

Executive summary

The CIVICUS Civil Society Index (CSI) in Viet Nam, supported by SNV and UNDP, was carried out in 2005-2006. It was the first comprehensive assessment of a civil society that started to emerge after the transition to the market economy, initiated in 1986. The CSI analysed four dimensions of civil society: its structure, socio-economic environment, values and impact. It generated new knowledge that drew much interest in development circles, although it is unclear to what extent it was used by the Government, donors and civil society organizations. The CSI also contributed to greater visibility of and openness towards civil society in the media and among the public. The capacity and reputation of the Viet Nam Institute of Development Studies, the national coordinating organization (NCO), was enhanced through the process of implementing the CSI project. The UNDP role was crucial to the conduct of the study: the trust it enjoys in Government circles helped a Vietnamese organization to take on this sensitive issue. It is recommended that UNDP continues its support for a more enabling legal environment, better coordination among donors working with civil society, and a full CSI in Viet Nam, with proper attention paid to the action planning stage after the assessment.

Introduction

In 2005-2006, UNDP and the Netherlands Development Organisation (SNV) supported the CSI in Viet Nam, using the Shortened Assessment Tool (SAT) of the CSI. The CSI-SAT relies on existing data and does not include consultative and action-planning stages.[1]

The findings indicate that the **structure** of civil society in Viet Nam is of limited strength, despite being quite broad-based.

The **environment** is slightly disabling, representing a mixture of conducive and less conducive factors. On the positive side are rapid poverty reduction, strong economic growth, increasing integration into the global economy, political stability, and a fairly high level of trust among people. The less conducive factors are limited political competition, high levels of corruption, limited basic civil rights and press freedoms, and restricted legal environment for civil society.

Civil society practises and promotes positive **values** to a moderate extent, with strong efforts to alleviate poverty in particular, while its transparency, democracy and environmental sustainability are quite low.

The **impact** of civil society on society at large is relatively limited. It is higher in meeting societal needs and citizen empowerment, especially for those more disadvantaged: the poor, ethnic minorities, poor women or people living with HIV/AIDS. There is little impact in influencing public policies on issues such as human rights, social policy and national budgeting or holding the state and private sectors accountable. Notably, the values dimension of civil society is the strongest and the impact dimension the weakest.[2]

The context of Viet Nam

Viet Nam has achieved remarkable development results in the past two decades. Annual GDP growth was 7.2 per cent during the decade of 1999-2008. Strong growth with poverty reduction has brought the country into the group of middle-income countries. The poverty rate, measured by international standards, decreased from 58 per cent in 1993 to 14 per cent in 2008 (GSO, 2009). It is an exceptional achievement, more than twice what was aimed for in the first Millennium Development Goal. In absolute terms, Viet Nam has lifted some 35 million people out of poverty from 1993 to 2008, nearly 6,400 people every day.[3] However, with 12.5 million people still living below the poverty line, this achievement remains precarious and not is yet sustainable.

> "*With so many of Viet Nam's people on the precipice of the poverty line, any major economic or natural disaster will only set Viet Nam back.*" (UNDP Viet Nam[4])

In terms of human development, Viet Nam belongs to the group with medium human development. With a 2010 Human Development Index of 0.572, it ranks 113 out of 169 countries. Life expectancy at birth is approximately 75 years in 2010. In 2008, the adult literacy rate was 92.5 per cent in the age bracket over 15 years old.[5]

Viet Nam's political system follows a mono-party model, where the Communist Party of Viet Nam (CPV) has absolute dominion in all branches of the government, i.e. legislative, executive and judiciary. About 90 per cent of the deputies in the National Assembly (Parliament) are members of the CPV. Senior Government leaders, including all ministers, as well as senior judges are also Party members. This explains why the term 'mono-organizational socialism' is sometimes used to describe Viet Nam's political system (Thayer, 2008[6]).

Civil society is a new phenomenon in Viet Nam. Before the transition to the market economy, the Government restricted all forms of organized activities other than those prescribed by the state.

Since the mid-1980s, the situation has changed. Now, Viet Nam has numerous, legally recognized professional associations, research and training centres, NGOs, and international NGOs (INGOs). There are also tens of thousands of informal, unregistered, and hence not officially recognized organizations. Many are loosely categorised as community based organizations (CBOs), although some varieties of CBOs have legal standing, at least in the eyes of local authorities.[7]

CSOs still operate in a disabling legal environment. According to one analysis:

> "*During Viet Nam's reform period that began in 1986, Party and government regulation of social organizations remained governed by regulatory documents enacted in 1957, during a period of strict control by the Party and state. Those 1957 regulations on associations severely limited rights to assemble and the ability of civic organizations to form, and the regulations adopted in the decades that followed continued that policy. (…) The key methods of control from the 1950s to the 1990s – and continuing to this day – have been long and difficult processes of approval to establish a social organization or association, and the continuing control and supervision of organizations that have been approved for establishment.*" (Sidel, 2010[8])

Impact of the CSI

The CSI was supported by UNDP and SNV. UNDP also provided technical support in shaping the research framework, coordinating activities and publicizing the results.

The first and most obvious benefit of the CSI was the knowledge it generated about civil society in Viet Nam. This is confirmed by a literature review and interviews with people knowledgeable about civil society.

Civil society is a new development concept in Viet Nam for the Government, the public and academia. It started to emerge[9] and move from the margins to the mainstream[10] of socio-economic development about two decades ago. Previous research on civil society either focused on a fragment of civil society, for example NGOs,[11] or a single aspect, such as the relationships of CSOs to the State.[12] The CSI was the first to comprehensively assess the state of civil society, including its environment, structure, values and impact. It attracted much interest in development circles, and is among the top ten most downloaded publications from the United Nations website in Viet Nam.[13]

Subsequent research on civil society often cited the findings of the CSI report. It figures prominently in the literature review section of *Forms of Engagement*, an important recent research on civil society.[14] The Training Needs Assessment of Civil Society Organizations in Viet Nam conducted in 2008 by the Asia Foundation referred to all major findings of the CSI to justify the need for civil society support and empowerment.[15] Another research paper on civil society also finds the main categories of CSOs as presented in the CSI report useful.[16]

The CSI results drew the interest of state-owned research institutions, like the Viet Nam Academy for Social Sciences and Ho Chi Minh Academy of Political Sciences. Traditionally, they were not paying much attention to civil society, because of its political sensitivity. After CPV leaders decided to commission research on civil society, these institutions came to the National Coordinating Organization to ask for materials. However, the relationship between the CSI and the interest of the CPV leaders to know civil society better remains unclear. The benefits of the CSI to the CPV research on civil society are unknown as the latter is not public, even among academic circles.

> *The CSI results drew the interest of state-owned research institutions.*

The story

Operating within an increasingly disabling environment

In analysing whether the knowledge generated by the CSI translated into informed action by different development actors (Government, donors, CSOs and UN agencies) it is useful to consider the best-case scenario. Ideally, the Government would use the results to improve the legal environment for civil society to function; CSOs would use the findings to strengthen their values and increase their impact; donors and UN agencies would use them to develop or adjust their strategies to work with or assist civil society in Viet Nam. None of these outcomes came to be.

The environment for civil society now seems to be even more restrictive than it was when the CSI was implemented. A prime ministerial decision (97/2009/QĐ-TTg dated 24 July 2009) is viewed by many civil society experts as an effort to curtail independent criticism of and feedback to Government policies and programmes. Another decree on associations (45/2010/NĐ-CP dated 21 April 2010), with its detailed, three-stage permission and approval procedures, maintains the same tight control over establishment and operation of associations as the decree it replaced (no. 88 from 2003).[17]

> The environment for civil society now seems to be even more restrictive than it was when the CSI was implemented.

There is no evidence of CSO networking or activities to promote sector-wide values – values that have been assessed low by the CSI, such as democracy, transparency, equity or environmental sustainability. Although the meetings of the Stakeholder Assessment Group created for the CSI-SAT implementation were dynamic, with conflicting opinions hotly debated, this dynamism did not translate into coalitions, collaborations or joint actions. Interviews with leaders of some NGOs indicated that CSI findings and recommendations have little bearing on strategies and daily operations of their organizations and on CSOs in general.

There is little evidence that the CSI has had significant influence on the civil society strategies of donors and UN agencies. A principal recommendation of the CSI was that donors and INGOs should establish a capacity-development fund to support CSOs in a number of fields. Five years have passed since this was proposed, and the fund has not been set up. Many new staff in charge of civil society programmes in donor organizations are not aware of the CSI report and did not consult it when developing their programmes. Some of those who know the report expressed frustration that its conclusions and recommendations are too general for any one organization to act on.

Some reasons for this result can be identified. First, Viet Nam implemented the CSI Shortened Assessment Tool (CSI-SAT), "*which (compared to the full CSI) is a shorter, less comprehensive and less resource-intensive process […] It relies on existing data only and does not include consultative and action-planning stages.*"[18] The assessment produced useful knowledge, but this did not lead to actions to strengthen civil society because of a lack of focus on action planning. The CIVICUS methodology is meant to facilitate action-based research, but in the case of Viet Nam it turned out to be solely research.

Secondly, civil society in Viet Nam is fragmented, with competing interests, and weak umbrella organizations and networks. Without dedicated leadership and external support, actions aimed at sector-wide improvement seem to be impossible.

Thirdly, the CSI adopted a very wide understanding of civil society that includes mass organizations under the umbrella of the Fatherland Front, professional associations, local NGOs, community-based organizations, etc. Having considered such a wide range of organizations with very different degrees of autonomy from the state, voluntariness of members and complexity of organizational structure, the CSI made recommendations that were felt by many as being too general to be acted upon.

Fourthly, no donor or UN agency plays a leadership role to convene or coordinate the many players working in the civil society field in Viet Nam. Finally, the attitude of the CPV and the state towards civil society, and consequently the legal framework, is not a linear process, with progress followed by set-back in a continuum. Looking back over a 20-year period, from the beginning of the renovation process, the long-term trend seems to be toward more openness for civil society.

However, short-term setbacks, like Decision 97 mentioned above, are possible. External political

events, especially in the wake of the 'colour revolutions' in Europe, might push the CPV and the state to tighten control of associations and other social organizations.[19]

Increased visibility and capacity

Besides creating new knowledge as described earlier, the CSI and its associated activities brought more media coverage of civil society. Newspapers with large readership, such as Tuoi Tre (The Youth), Vietnamnet, Phap Luat TP HCM (HCM City Laws) and VnExpress posted articles about the CSI and civil society. The term 'xã hội dân sự' – the Vietnamese translation for 'civil

society' – once rarely mentioned, gradually became accepted and even fashionable.

> "*The biggest benefit of the CSI is that the existence of civil society is acknowledged in the government circle. They gave permission to organize a workshop to publish the results, with wide audience and media. Civil society was the main topic of the discussion, not hidden under other topics or reports.*" (Dr. Nguyen Dinh Huan, Advisory Committee for Democracy and Laws, Viet Nam Fatherland Front)

Self-anchoring and transversal assessment table

Criteria	Assessment
Effectiveness	**Low**. There is little evidence that the findings and recommendations of the CSI were used to improve the legal framework for civil society or programming practical actions to strengthen it.
Inclusiveness	**Medium-low**. The methodology used in Viet Nam was the Shortened Assessment Tool (CSI-SAT). Unlike the full version, the CSI-SAT relies on existing data only and does not include consultative and action-planning stages. As such, the implementation of the CSI was not highly inclusive. However, the Stakeholder Assessment Group, the core of the CSI-SAT, drew participation of representatives from various parts of civil society (mass organizations, NGOs and umbrella organizations, and international NGOs) and from institutions outside civil society (Government and research institutions).
Efficiency	**High**. The main benefits of the CSI, namely knowledge and visibility of civil society, are hard to measure in a tangible way. However, given the relatively low cost of conducting the CSI in Viet Nam, the benefits seem to outweigh costs.
Sustainability	**Low**. The CSI has the potential to strengthen civil society in Viet Nam, provided that its recommendations are followed up. As this is not the case so far, the sustainability of the CSI project is judged to be low.
New knowledge about civil society	**High**. The CSI was the first to assess the state of civil society in a comprehensive way. It generated knowledge about civil society along four dimensions: structure, environment, values and impact. The findings have been frequently cited in subsequent publications on civil society. Overall, the CSI increased the knowledge pool about this emerging sector in Vietnamese society.
Visibility	**Medium-high**. The CSI and the workshop to publish its findings were reported in newspapers with large audience. Civil society began to be discussed more frequently in public discourse in the last few years. The CSI contributed to this greater openness.

The organization that benefited most from the CSI was the national coordinating organization, Vietnam Institute for Development Studies (VIDS). Its capacity became stronger in the process: "*Skills were built on most aspects including secondary data gathering, data analysis and interpretation, report writing, as well as convening and networking capacities.*"[20] Its organizational image and reputation also grew stronger, both in the eyes of foreign donors as well as Vietnamese authorities. After implementing the CSI, VIDS was asked by the Central Commission for Propaganda to write explanatory notes to brief the standing Politburo member about civil society. Subsequently, VIDS secured funding from the Finnish Embassy for two projects to develop the capacity of civil society to fight corruption. Even though the projects were relatively small (total budget of about $150,000) and time frame short (1.5 and 2.5 years respectively), they are the direct result of the work of VIDS with CSI and CIVICUS, according to the national project coordinator.

UNDP played an important role in the CSI process, given the delicate political situation in the country. Implementing an action research project on civil society was a risky undertaking for a Vietnamese organization. CIVICUS had tried to establish contact with various institutions for this purpose, but without success. In early 2005, UNDP, SNV (Netherlands Development Organization, a Dutch INGO) and the Viet Nam Union for Science and Technology Associations (VUSTA), an umbrella organization for several hundred scientific organizations and VNGOs, began a dialogue about implementing the project. The Viet Nam Institute of Development Studies, a research NGO under the VUSTA umbrella, was interested and willing to take on the task and the project was launched in April 2005.[21] This was not an easy decision for VIDS, given the political sensitivity of the issue. It had to weigh many factors. An important one was that UNDP enjoyed a high level of trust from the Government for its quality assistance.

Conclusions and recommendations

Civil society is an emerging phenomenon in Viet Nam and the CSI helps us to understand better its structure, environment, values and impact. The CSI revealed both strengths, such as broad structure or high value in poverty reduction, and weaknesses, such as shallow structure, low values in certain areas, and limited impact. The legal environment for civil society continues to be disabling. The CSI has contributed significantly to the knowledge about civil society in Viet Nam and increased its visibility in public discourse. However, the findings and recommendations have hardly been translated into practical actions and programmes benefiting civil society.

There are many needs to be addressed. The capacity of civil society needs to be strengthened, especially in weak areas. The legal framework needs to be more enabling. Stronger CSOs operating in a more favourable environment will have better impact, resulting in a higher profile of civil society. Taking this into consideration, this paper recommends that:

1. UNDP continues to support the Government of Viet Nam to create a more enabling legal framework for civil society. The high trust the UN enjoys in the Government circles places it in a unique position to pursue this work.

2. UNDP continues to support the creation of a Capacity Development Fund as recommended by the CSI. Such a fund will harmonise the requirements and policies of different donors working with and supporting civil society, making it easier for CSOs to access resources needed for their development. The fund has the potential to go beyond assisting individual CSOs to promote sector-wide values, for example transparency, accountability and democracy.

3. For a future CSI, greater attention should be paid to the action-planning phase to capitalize on the knowledge generated by the CSI-SAT assessment. A full CSI process would be a useful follow-up.

[1] For details on the CSI dimensions and methodology please refer to http://www.civicus.org/csi/csi-methodology

[2] Norlund, I., Dinh, D. N., Sinh, B. T., Dung, C., Quang, D. N., Diem, D. B., et al. (2006). *The Emerging Civil Society – An Initial Assessment of Civil Society in Viet Nam*. Hanoi.

[3] http://data.worldbank.org/country/Viet Nam (accessed on February 15, 2011)

[4] UNDP Viet Nam. (undated). *Viet Nam and the MDGs*. Retrieved July 05, 2010, from http://www.undp.org.vn/mdgs/viet-nam-and-the-mdgs/?&languageId=1

[5] UNDP. (2010). *Human Development Report 2010*. New York.

[6] Thayer, C. A. (2008). *One-Party Rule and the Challenge of Civil Society in Viet Nam*, p. 3

[7] Kerkvliet, B, A, N. Q., & Sinh, B. T. (2008). *Forms of Engagement Between State Agencies & Civil Society Organizations in Viet Nam.* Hanoi.

[8] Sidel, M. (2010, May). *Maintaining Firm Control: Recent Developments in Nonprofit Law and Regulation in Viet Nam.* The International Journal of Not-for-Profit Law, Volume 12, Number 3.

[9] Norlund, I. (2007). *Filling the Gap: The Emerging Civil Society in Viet Nam*. Hanoi.

[10] Sabharwal, G., & Huong, T. T. (2005). *Civil Society in Viet Nam: Moving from the Margins to the Mainstream.*

[11] Lux, S., & Straussman, J. (2004). *Searching for Balance: Vietnamese NGOs Operating in a State-Led Civil Society*. Public Administration and Development, 24, 2 , pp. 173-181.

[11] Wischermann, J., & Vinh, N. Q. (2003). *The Relationship between Civic Organizations and Governmental Organizations in Viet Nam – Selected Findings of an Empirical Survey.*

[13] UN Viet Nam website (accessed on Nov 30, 2010)

[14] Kerkvliet, B, A, N. Q., & Sinh, B. T. (2008). *Forms of Engagement Between State Agencies & Civil Society Organizations in Viet Nam.* Hanoi.

[15] The Asia Foundation. (2008). *Training Needs Assessment of Civil Society Organizations in Viet Nam: Organizational Development and Community Mobilization in the Policy and Law-making Process*, p. 14

[16] Thayer, C. A. (2008). *One-Party Rule and the Challenge of Civil Society in Viet Nam*, p. 7

[17] Sidel, M. (2010, May). *Maintaining Firm Control: Recent Developments in Nonprofit Law and Regulation in Viet Nam.* The International Journal of Not-for-Profit Law, Volume 12, Number 3.

[18] Norlund, I., Dinh, D. N., Sinh, B. T., Dung, C., Quang, D. N., Diem, D. B., et al. (2006). *The emerging civil society – an initial assessment of civil society in Viet Nam.* Hanoi.

[19] Sidel, M. (2010, May). *Maintaining Firm Control: Recent Developments in Nonprofit Law and Regulation in Viet Nam.* The International Journal of Not-for-Profit Law, Volume 12, Number 3.

[20] CIVICUS. *CIVICUS Civil Society Index Shortened Assessment Tool (CSI-SAT) - A Summary of the Viet Nam CSI-SAT Project Evaluation*, p. 3.

[21] Norlund, I., Dinh, D. N., Sinh, B. T., Dung, C., Quang, D. N., Diem, D. B., et al. (2006). *The emerging civil society – an initial assessment of civil society in Viet Nam*. Hanoi.

Guiding questions
- o   What were the main benefits of involving UNDP in the CSI project?
- o   How has the CSI benefited civil society and UNDP?
- o   Has the CSI been an entry point for governance programming?

Other specific criteria include:

Contribution to development efforts:
- o   UNDP partnered with civil society with the expectation that the CSI would not be a stand-alone document, but part of a larger process, which will generate promising, workable avenues for development of civil society and enlarge their space in the country. To what extent has this happened in your countries? How has the CSI been used?
- o   How did UNDP support for the CSI project complement its other civil society-strengthening activities?
- o   Has the CSI been used as a comparative tool to better understand civil society in the region?

Bridging different stakeholder groups and building dialogue:
- o   To what extent was civil society's voice promoted as a result of the process? Has the process opened up dialogue with a wider civil society constituency (i.e., faith-based groups, community organizations, social movements, trade unions)? How inclusive were the spaces for reflection and discussion created by the CSI process? Has it generated collective voice on any issue?

Overall impact and recommendations:
- o   What was the impact on civil society at various levels?
    - a.   To what extent did the CSI generate knowledge about the state of civil society?
    - b.   To what extent did the findings and recommendations influence the policies and actions of decision-makers and donors, including UNDP?
    - c.   To what extent did it bring about new networks, linkages and partnerships within or outside civil society? How can this be further strengthened?
    - d.   To what extent did the CSI process, and the involvement of UNDP, develop the capacity of the implementing organization?
    - e.   What kind of discussions and reflections did the workshops, focus groups and other spaces bring about?
- o   What was the nature of the interaction between the UNDP Country Office and the implementing organization? What were the strengths and weaknesses of the relationship? How can such challenges be overcome in the future, and what are lessons learned to forge a supportive working partnership between UNDP, CIVICUS and the implementing organization to carry out the CSI?
- o   How would UNDP like to engage and make use of the CSI in the future? How much change, impact or action did UNDP support for the CSI bring about? How did this correspond with the individual project's theory of change, and what is it realistic to expect in the future?
- o   Were there any surprises (positive or negative?)