

SCS DRG: Civil Society Organization Sustainability Index

Overview

The Civil Society Organization Sustainability Index (CSOSI) (2017 – 2022, \$9.5 million) is a USAID/DRG-funded initiative to assess the capacity of civil society to serve as both a short-term partner in implementing development solutions and a long-term actor in ensuring that development outcomes are sustained. This resource allows local civil society to assess the environment in which they are operating and their capacity to advocate, operate sustainably and communicate with citizens.

CSOSI Context

Initially developed in 1997 for Central and Eastern Europe and Eurasia, the CSOSI is a valued tool and methodology used by nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), governments, donors, academics and others to better understand the sustainability of the civil society sector. The CSOSI addresses both advances and setbacks in seven key components:

- legal environment
- organizational capacity
- financial viability
- advocacy
- service provision
- sectoral infrastructure
- public image

Major Program Components

CSOSI Methodology:

The CSO Sustainability Index reports are developed by local implementing partners in 72 countries. The CSOSI partner in each country follows the Index's methodology to convene an expert panel discussion about the status of civil society over the reporting year, determine scores and prepare an eight- to ten-page draft narrative report summarizing trends and developments for the CSO Sustainability Index.

Expert panel members, representing diverse geographical, sectoral and minority status and areas, develop a consensus-based rating for each of the

seven dimensions of civil society sustainability covered by the Index and articulate a justification and evidence for this rating. Expert panels discuss the level of change during the year being assessed in each of the seven dimensions and determine proposed scores for each dimension.

Its seven-point scoring scale mirrors those used by Freedom House in its publications “Nations in Transit” and “Freedom in the World.” The scores are organized into three basic “tiers” representing the level of viability of the civil society sector: Sustainability Impeded; Sustainability Evolving; and Sustainability Enhanced.

CSOSI Country and Regional Reports:

CSOSI country reports are aggregated into four regional reports that provide summaries of significant regional trends, as well as graphics depicting and comparing scores for each of the seven dimensions of sustainability.

Achievements

- Published [CSOSI regional reports](#) for 2017 and 2018 for Asia, Central and Eastern Europe and Eurasia, Middle East and North Africa, and Sub-Saharan Africa
- Created [CSOSI Explorer dashboard](#) which displays CSOSI's current and historical data in map form and allows for analysis of historical CSOSI trends
- Released four 2017 regional reports at the April 2019 SCS Global Learning Event focused on the Journey to Self-Reliance
- Released four 2018 regional reports at December 2019 SCS Global Learning Event focused on Civil Society amid Authoritarianism and Crisis

Updated January 2020