CIVICUS

Using The Civil Society Index:

Assessing the Health of Civil Society

A Handbook for using the CIVICUS Index on Civil Society as a Self-Assessment Tool

by Richard Holloway

based upon the ideas of
the CIVICUS Index on Civil Society
Project Team, Helmut Anheier, and
the Index Project Advisory Group

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CIVICUS is dedicated to pursuing a world in which the free and
unfettered actions of citizens are an integral part of the political,
economic and cultural life of all societies. We support and advocate
private action for the public good expressed by a rich and diverse
array of organizations, operating sometimes apart and sometimes in
dialogue with government and business. A healthy society is one in
which there is an equitable relationship among citizens, associations,
foundations, businesses and various levels of government.

CIVICUS's special purpose, therefore, is to help nurture throughout
the world the foundation, protection and continued growth of action
and expression of all peoples. This is most critical in areas where
participatory democracy, freedom of association and monies in
support of the public good are threatened and in peril.

Acknowledgements

There have been many contributors to the idea of the Index on Civil Society.

Originally it derives from the "New Civic Atlas" which CIVICUS published in 1997 (and to which I, among many others, was a contributor). This produced 60 civil-society profiles from 60 countries around the world for the 2nd CIVICUS World Assembly held in Budapest, Hungary. When it came time to upgrade and extend this Atlas, CIVICUS members asked for a more analytical and less descriptive document. With help from the United National Development Program (UNDP) and the Netherlands Organization for International Development Co-operation (Novib), Kumi Naidoo, the new Secretary General began the process of creating an Index on Civil Society.

Leslie Fox wrote the original project description, and meetings among CIVICUS members throughout 1999 sharpened the thinking. In order to move the idea forward, CIVICUS contracted Dr. Helmut Anheier, director of the Centre for Civil Society at the London School of Economics, to develop a methodology for assessing the health of civil society.

A preliminary design was presented to CIVICUS members at the 3rd CIVICUS World Assembly in 1999 in Manila. A special session was held to discuss it, upon which CIVICUS was given the mandate to work on the design leading up to the 4th CIVICUS World Assembly in Vancouver, Canada. In December 2000, Dr. Anheier produced the definitive academic text on the resulting methodology called "The CIVICUS Civil Society Diamond."

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In January 2000, CIVICUS contracted Volkhart "Finn" Heinrich to become the coordinator of the CIVICUS Index on Civil Society Project. The Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), the Commonwealth Foundation, the Packard Foundation and the Netherlands Agency for International Development Cooperation (Novib) helped fund a pilot implementation process whereby National Lead Organizations (NLOs) would join CIVICUS in testing the design of the Index in different countries around the world. Finn, with the assistance of the international project advisory group, produced a Researchers' Toolkit in early 2001. This toolkit will be refined on the basis of the NLOs' experiences during the pilot implementation phase.

CIVICUS realized there would be a need for handbooks focusing on different levels of use, for different groups and with different levels of complexity. CIVICUS contracted me to produce a 'popular version' of Dr. Anheier's report, following the completion of a popular-handbook version I wrote of a previous CIVICUS publication, "Sustaining Civil Society: Strategies for Resource Mobilisation."[1] The book that you now have in your hand is this popular version, borne from the thinking and experience of a large number of members and friends of CIVICUS.

Richard Holloway, May 2001, Jakarta

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[1] The report is currently turned into a book: Helmut Anheier with Lisa Carlson: Civil Society: Measurement and Policy Dialogue, Earthscan, forthcoming.

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How to Use this Book

Part 1:
Civil Society and Civil society Organizations

Because of problems defining the term 'civil society,' it is important for people who try to assess its health to be clear on what it is they are assessing. Part 1 helps wade through the difficulties to settle on a working definition for analysis and study.[2]

Part 2:
Where We Are Starting From – The Inhabitants of the Civil society Sector

Those who use the term 'civil society' come, most frequently, from that subset of civil society organizations known as 'NGOs' (non-governmental organizations), i.e. formally constituted, development-oriented, non-government and non-profit organizations that, in the South, are usually supported by funding from the North. There is, as a result, a tendency for the term 'civil society' to be used synonymously with NGOs. From our perspective, this would be misleading. Since CIVICUS is strongly of the opinion that civil society organizations (CSOs) encompass a great deal more than just NGOs, and that the Index on Civil Society (ICS) needs to assess the effect of all civil-society organizations, we need to be clear about just what kinds of organizations are subsumed within this term. Part 2, therefore, maps the inhabitants of the civil-society sector and analysis the kinds of groups they form.

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[2] Please note that the views expressed by the author of this handbook are not necessarily those of CIVICUS.

Part 3:
The Index on Civil Society

The ICS is an attempt to get a big-picture overview of the health and strength of the civil society sector as it contributes to the development of a nation. Part 3 describes the ICS's objectives, indicators (core and optional) and its participatory approach. Further, it shows the reader how to go through the exercise of using the Index on Civil Society – how to identify indicators, how to score, display and present the results and, finally, how to analyse and learn from the exercise. This, we hope, will lead to actions that build and strengthen civil society.

Part 4:
The Short Version

Once the reader has read the book and needs a short reference instrument to remind them of key points, they can use this shortened version with a selection of do's and don'ts.

Part 1:
Civil Society and Civil society Organizations

If you are reading this book, you are likely interested in the concept and practice of civil society. In this book, author and reader work together to devise a means by which we can assess the health of civil society in our country (or part of our country).

As part of the civil society sector, we are interested in finding out how we, as a whole, are doing, what kind of impact we are making and what part we are playing in the development of our country or region.[3] Based on our assessments, effective plans for strengthening civil society in the future can be laid out. To use a medical analogy, we are seeking to take the pulse of civil society so we can gauge its overall health and design an effective therapy and long-term treatment to further strengthen its condition.

Fifteen years ago we would not have thought along these lines, as the concept of 'civil society' and 'civil society organizations' (CSOs) had not entered universal parlance. Since then, however, the term has gained huge currency, and many of us involved with it are interested in developing an instrument which allows us to assess its current strengths and weaknesses. What are the burning issues with which it is currently grappling? How can it be made more productive?[4]

Those who are reading this book are likely to be strongly convinced of the value of citizen participation and citizen action,

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[3] The author's experience has mainly been in the South and most examples used are from there. He has tried to compensate for this potential bias.

[4] For all that the term 'civil society' is now part of the development lexicon in metropolitan languages, it is hard to find an easy translation in many indigenous languages.

and feel that civil society has become a legitimate partner alongside the state and the market in an expanding structure of democratic governance. CIVICUS thinks so, too. Given the growing role and responsibility of civil society, it has become more and more important for us to have a tool to measure and document its health as a legitimate public participant for social change, growth and cohesion. There are such tools being used by state and market stakeholders to document their involvement in the development of a country (please see Appendix 1). Those of us involved in civil society think it high time we had a similar kind of tool that is relevant to our lives and work.

Not all of us reading this book, however, are approaching this from the same perspective. Nor do we attach the same meanings to the vocabulary we use. Different readers may understand 'civil society' differently, and we need to start by clarifying what it is we are going to measure and document.

1 How the Term 'Civil Society' Has Come Down to Us[5]

While there is a long and complex history of the use of the term, the current use of 'civil society' came into prominence following the Earth Summit of 1993. The declaration of that Summit, titled "Agenda 21," used the term for the first time in an official international document connected to development. The term also gained prominence with the collapse of the Soviet Union as organizations like Solidarinosc of Poland and

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[5] Readers may find the 'Civil Society Toolbox' useful here. It is at Pact's web site: www.pactworld.org

Eco-Forum of Bulgaria proclaimed the citizens' desire to associate as a 'civil society' outside the control of the state. Since that time it has almost become a mantra in the development business, as both governments and international donors proclaim how important civil society is (and how important it is that it be consulted). In the context of countries in the North, the term has recently become a catchword for those seeking an alternative between the absolute reign of the state and the competing agendas of the market.[6]

In many cases, however, there is no clear agreement as to what civil society actually means, and no commonly accepted definition. For many it is (incorrectly) used to mean NGOs, the formal, non-government, non-profit organizations created to help third parties. In the South, NGOs are linked to development activities and are often very dependent on foreign funding for their sustainability. In the North, they may have a range of activities associated with voluntary efforts, but are increasingly being paid by governments to take on social-sector activities.

2. Unpacking Civil Society – Problems of Definition

If we are going to attempt to assess the health of civil society in our own country, and compare such assessments across countries and within regions of countries, it is important we have a common understanding of what it is we are assessing.

For a discussion of the new relevance of civil society in governance and development issues, see, for example, Matthews, Jessica (1997): "Power Shift" in: Foreign Affairs 76, 50-66, Burbidge, John (ed.) (1997): "Beyond Prince and Merchant. Citizen Participation and the Rise of Civil Society." New York: Pact, CIVICUS (1999): Civil Society at the Millennium, West Hartford: Kumarian.

Most contemporary social scientists, politicians and development specialists in both the North and South agree on what are a country's main socio/political/and economic sectors. They suggest that a country can be usefully analysed as the product of the public sector (government or the state), the private sector (business or the market) and civil society (the non-government and non-profit citizens sector). It is often portrayed in diagram as in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1:
A frequently seen but limiting view of civil society as one of the sectors of the state.
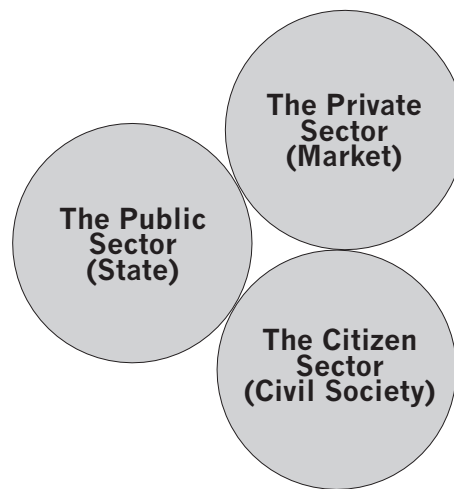
Of the three sectors, the role, purpose and structure of the public sector is usually well understood. It is the sector that governs and rules. Most would agree it contains the government executive, legislature, civil service, military and judiciary. It controls the legitimate use of coercion.

Similarly, the private sector is clear enough, being the sector that seeks to create wealth for individuals and organizations through the production of goods and services. Most would agree it contains businesses and other types of for-profit enterprises.

It is the third and perhaps more murky of these sectors, often called 'civil society,' which causes problems of definition and understanding. It is composed of organizations citizens have created with neither the purpose of ruling over other people nor of making a profit for individuals. It should, logically, be called the 'citizens sector' (the term 'civil' is based upon a citizen, or 'civis' in Latin). However, so frequently and so simplistically has the term civil society been used to describe only organizations that are not part of government and not for profit, that we are now stuck with a somewhat contaminated general understanding of the term.

What differentiates civil society from the private and public sectors is that the organizations that comprise it are established solely on the grounds of advancing the interests of those who support it. Many of these have been established deliberately to allow citizens a voice of their own, separate from government and business. These 'citizens organizations' include labour unions, professional associations, traditional societies, faith-based groups, NGOs, neighbourhood associations and foundations, among others. These are all organizations where certain citizens share values and have a shared commitment to action with other citizens on the basis of those values. Nothing is said about the nature of these values – simply that the values are those that groups of citizens share.

However, the word 'civil' in civil society, and the reformist element in many civil society organizations, has introduced a normative element into the discussion. To some people 'civil society' reflects people and organizations that are inclined to the public good, which are civilized. The term is thought to represent private choice for public benefit. For such people, religious extremists, for example, who practice the violent punishment of those whose beliefs are not their own, are generally thought to be on the fringes and not a part of civil society.

This normative judgement is surprising when we compare it to our view of government and business. Few people would include a value judgement when using the term 'public sector' (government) or 'private sector' (business). Most would use those terms descriptively, accepting that there may well be good governments (generally supportive of the public good) and bad governments, good businesses (paying their taxes, giving fair wages, not destroying the environment) and bad businesses. 'Government' and 'business' are terms that describe specific sectors of society without ascribing judgement, pro or con, about the quality of the sector. It is therefore proposed here not to restrict the realm of civil society to just 'civilized' organizations, but to look at the whole array of citizen behaviour, no matter what their goals and means of achieving them are.

3.   The Definition Used by CIVICUS

CIVICUS, however, needs a working definition than can serve as a platform for the development of the Index on Civil Society. It concentrates less on the idea of sectors and how they divide society and more on the idea of an arena or sphere in which citizens associate. As this arena may arguably have fuzzy boundaries, our intention in our analysis and understanding is to make sure to also recognize and make room for that which may be outside the box. CIVICUS thus defines 'civil society' as:

> *"The sphere of institutions, organizations and individuals located between the family, the state and the market, in which people associate voluntarily to advance common interests."*

A slightly different perspective has been to identify civil society as the place where all three sectors inter-connect and where they try to build 'civility'. This is different from thinking simply that whatever non-government and non-profit citizens do represents civil society. From this perspective, the three sectors are not isolated from each

The Private Sector

The Public Sector

Civil Society

The Citizen Sector
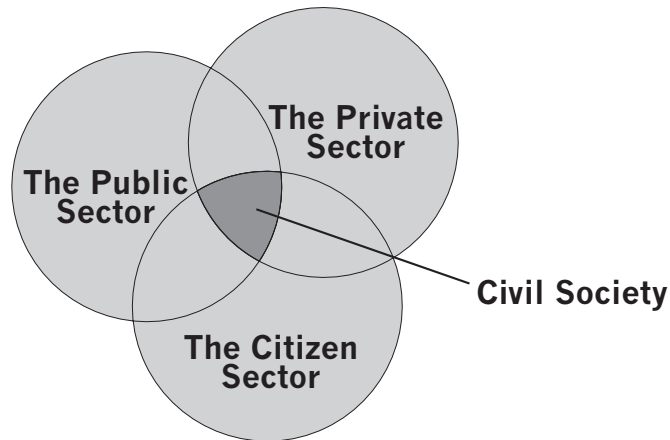
other, as is shown in Figure 1, but overlap to some extent, as they work together to promote democratic ideals and governance.

This overlapping area represents the place where the strengths of the state (legislature, executive and judiciary), business and citizens join together to create a normative area of democracy, social responsibility and protection of the public good. Compare Figure 2 above.

Myanmar, for instance, has a very small and insignificant civil society, since it has a very small citizens sector and there is, for the most part, infrequent interaction between the three sectors. The Philippines and India, by contrast, have a very large and significant civil society because the institutions of state, business and citizenry overlap a great deal. In India the government has a funding body specifically for Indian NGOs (called CAPART) and invites NGOs to be a part of government advisory bodies. There are also many Indian corporate philanthropic foundations. In the Philippines, every ministry has an NGO liaison office, and there is a national business foundation for development.

The civil society to which we aspire provides the:

- Space for the mobilization, articulation and pursuit of interests by individuals and groups
- Institutional means for mediating between conflicting interests and social values
- Opportunity for the expression and practice of social, religious and cultural beliefs and activities
- Possibility for limiting the inherent tendency of governments to expand their control
- Opportunity to nurture the values of citizenship required for democracy in a modern nation state

The Comparative Non-Profit Sector Project at Johns Hopkins University, which has been examining "the non-profit sector" (their terminology) around the world, has put it this way: [7]

> *"A true 'civil society' is not one where one or the other of these sectors is in the ascendance, but rather one in which there are three more of less distinct sectors – government, business and the non-profit – that nevertheless find ways to work together in responding to public needs. So conceived, the term 'civil society' would not apply to a particular sector, but to a relationship among the sectors, one in which a high level of cooperation and mutual support prevailed.(…) What this suggests is that developing mutually supportive relationships between the non-profit sector and the state, and with the business community as well, may be one of the highest priorities for the promotion of democracy as well as economic growth throughout the world."*

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[7] Salamon Lester and Anheier Helmut (1994) "The Emerging Sector – An Overview". Institute for Policy Studies, Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, Maryland.

A civil society seen from this perspective will have support drawn from the state, the market and the citizens, and will contain institutions that are reflected as in Figure 3 below. Such institutions, if working effectively, help to build a civil society.

Figure 3:
Institutions of a civil society with contributions from all three sectors.
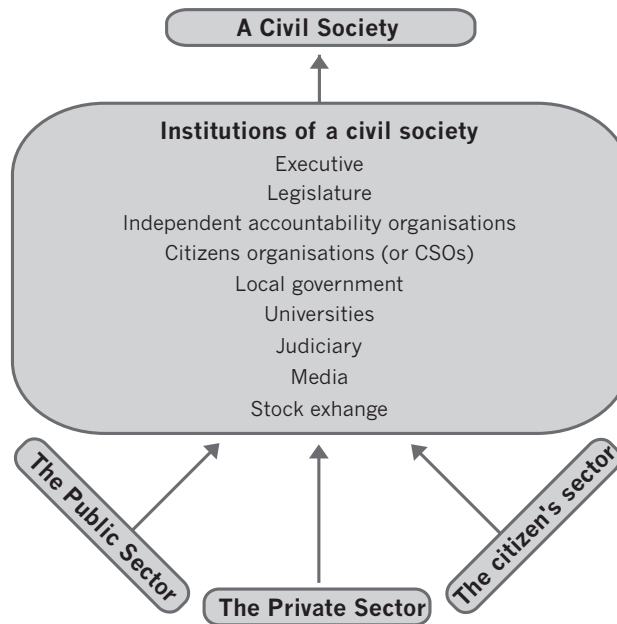
All these institutions require the active involvement of citizens to make them work well. So, too, do they need the acceptance by citizens of rules and regulations aimed at the public good. If the rules and regulations do not aim at the public good, or if they are being broken, the citizen can withdraw his/her involvement. As can be seen, there are many institutions that, working optimally, play their part in making a civil society. Citizens organizations are among these institutions.

However, in the Index on Civil Society Project, and in this handbook, we are not looking at the work other institutions play in making up a civil society – we are only looking at the work of citizens or civil-society organizations. We intend to measure and document the health of civil-society organizations as they try to build a civil society. Other perspectives, whether they be from the market or government, are crucial, and we acknowledge the enabling role institutions from both sectors play in good governance. (We will therefore also measure these factors in the Space dimension of the Index.) CIVICUS, however, is looking at this from the sole perspective of citizens organizations.

Part 2:
Where We Are Starting From – The Inhabitants of the Civil society Sector

"The sphere of institutions, organizations and individuals located between the family, the state and the market, in which people associate voluntarily to advance common interests" is the definition with which we're working. The "common interests" referred to may be of many different kinds. They may or may not be acceptable to, or well received by, all who work with civil- society organizations. But freedom of speech and freedom of association are important elements in a democratic country and they allow citizens to associate together for a variety of interests that are not necessarily equally attractive to everyone. The important point for a civil society is that the enabling environment exists in which different views are allowed and encouraged, where organizations or associations of different kinds are allowed to exist.

1.   Institutions of an Enabling Environment

Institutions that create an enabling environment for a civil society to flourish and prosper are those within a country that offer a space for citizens' voices to be heard. In the liberal democratic model that has become accepted, largely, as the norm in the last ten years (even if it is not always fulfilled in practice) these institutions include:

- The executive
- The judiciary
- The legislature
- The media

- Local government councils
- Independent accountability organizations:
  - Election commission
  - Human rights commission
  - Anti-corruption commission
  - Auditor General's office
  - Attorney General's office
  - Ombudsman
- Citizen's organizations
- The stock exchange
- Universities

Such institutions have the following implied functions (even if not always realized): [8]

- To provide space for the mobilization, articulation and pursuit of interests by individuals and groups
- To provide the institutional means for mediating between conflicting interests and social values
- To give expression and direction to social, religious and cultural needs
- To limit the inherent tendency of governments to expand their control
- To limit the potential of businesses expanding their control
- To nurture the values of citizenship required for democracy in a modern nation-state

The extent to which these institutions operate, and the extent to which they fully carry out their functions, define the enabling environment for a healthy civil society.

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[8] Adapted from "Striking a Balance: A Guide to Enhancing the Effectiveness of Non-governmental Organizations in International Development" by Alan Fowler. Earthscan. London 1997.

2.   Civil society Organizations

Citizens join or support a great variety of organizations – everything from a local farmers' group or wives' club to a national organization like the Red Cross/Red Crescent Society. Many local and traditional organizations are well known only by the people of a particular area or language group, and are unknown outside that locality, such as the age sets of the Masai people in Kenya, the arisan of Java or the stokvel of South Africa.

In order for us to appreciate the richness of associational life we need some tools by which we can 'unpack' such richness. We can usefully identify two broad categories of citizens organizations: mutual-benefit organizations and public-benefit organizations (followed by a warning note of a third category of 'pretenders'). Each of these categories then has a variety of sub-categories. Figure 4 (below) illustrates the different categories of citizen organizations found in civil society.

Figure 4:
'Unpacking' Citizen's Organizations

Citizens' Organisations

Mutual Benefit Organisations

Organisations formed by citizens in which they are members and from which they derive benefits.

Public Benefit Organisations

Organisations formed by one group of citizens to benefit other groups of citizens, often with support from third parties

Pretenders

Organisations formed by individuals which pretend to be one of the other two, but actually formed for personal advantage

It should be noted however that formal associations for collective citizen action do not exhaustively define civil society organizations. They also include ephemeral forms such as demonstrations or boycotts where citizens come together for a particular purpose and disband after the purpose is achieved. We must not forget these important forms of loose collective behaviour of citizens when using the Index on Civil Society as our tool for assessing the health of civil society.

3.   Two kinds of Civil society Organizations and the Pretenders

Let us look at the two (plus one) major categories of citizens organizations:

1. Mutual-Benefit Organizations

These are individuals who join together to form an organization in which they are members, in which they have a governance function to elect office bearers and from which, as members, they derive benefits. Such organizations may be very small – community organizations in a particular geographical area – or large and national in scope. Typical examples are cooperatives, trade unions, professional associations and village self-help groups. They may also contain an ephemeral contingent as mentioned earlier, for such things as boycotts or strikes.

2. Public-Benefit Organizations

These are groups whose aim is to benefit citizens who have been identified as needing help. The people who govern or are members of the organization are not the targets of the organization, and those governing the organization are set up at the initiative of committed individuals (often a board).

These organizations can also range from very small to very large. Their mandate comes from the common perceptions and values of self-selected citizens. And while invariably public-spirited in nature, board members are more often than not accountable to their organization's governance structure and to the law under which they are incorporated, not to those who benefit from their services. Those whose interests are served, therefore, do not, as with mutual-benefit organizations, set the mandate of the organization.

Typical examples of public-benefit organizations are foundations, NGOs and charitable organizations.

3. Pretenders

Because so much attention (and so much money) has been paid to citizens organizations, a spurious group of people has appeared who pretend to be citizens organizations, but actually belong to the state or the business sectors. These are organizations which neither represent membership organizations nor organizations of committed individuals who wish to benefit others, but comprise individuals who are trying to earn money or power for themselves, their political party or their business.

We will take these three broad categories in turn, and look at the sub-categories within them. Such an analysis, we think, will reveal the accuracy of Alan Fowler's statement: "Too seldom is the point made that civil society is a messy arena of competing claims and interests between groups that do not necessarily like each other, as well as a place for mediation and collaboration."[9] A truly civil society will allow for such mediation and collaboration, but the groups may come from very different viewpoints.

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[9] Alan Fowler: "Striking a Balance" Earthscan, London 1997. (PAGE 15)

1. Mutual–Benefit Organizations

The following is an overview of the kinds of organizations typically found within this category. We shall examine them one by one. There may well be other local variations.

Figure 5:
Mutual Benefit Organizations

- Faith based organisations
- Indigenous CBOs
  Introduced CBOs
- Ethnic/traditional organisations
- Political parties (?)
- Employment related organisations (Trade Unions, Professional Associations, Trade Associations)
- Cooperatives (?)
  People's/Mass organisations
- Student Organisations
- Recreational/cultural organisations

1.1. Faith-Based Groups

Here we refer to associations which benefit the members of a particular faith-based grouping, either a common religion (like Islam) or, more commonly, a particular sect or congregation within a specific religion.

Where faith-based groups offer benefits to the general public (like schools or hospitals, for instance), they are listed elsewhere.

This is a group defined by its faith, identified more precisely by a particular sub-group within that faith and which offers benefits to the members of that group. Such a group may be of great service to its members, helping them both spiritually and socially.

However, one of the worrying elements of contemporary civil society is that such groups have also shown themselves as potential lightening rods for extremism, intolerance and violence toward others. Charismatic people who have great potential for encouraging mutual tolerance between different faiths may lead such organizations. It is also possible that such organizations can be led autocratically, particularly if the leader claims divine guidance for his/her claims. Examples of mutual-benefit, faith-based groups exist all over the world. What often happens is that in places where different faiths used to co-exist, such groups have polarized along religious or sect lines, turning to feuding and violence.

In places where traditional life is a strong basis for religion, those traditions can define the mutual-benefit organization. Traditional organizations have a huge potential for community participation and governance according to accepted traditions. However, we should also be aware that they are prone to being male-dominated, feudalistic autocracies.

1.2.   *Indigenous Community-Based Organizations*

These are indigenous organizations that reflect the interests and the culture of those who belong to a specific geographical community or who are the original inhabitants of a particular area. They may exist only at the time of a particular activity, like joint work parties that are organized at village level to cultivate land for a common purpose, or to deal with a common problem, like a broken bridge or land claim issues. They may also be permanent, with a very strong political or cultural identity.

In theory, traditional or customary organizations are immensely valuable for development and democratic governance, since they are (usually) long-standing within a community, command people's involvement and managed through local resources. They may,

however, also involve unhelpful activities that are, for instance, harmful to women or minority groups. They may be additionally harmful because they perpetuate an autocracy that suppresses freedom of expression.

1.3. *Introduced Community Organizations*

An introduced community organization means those forms of community organization that have been introduced from outside the area of operation, set up by outsiders and endorsed or participated in (to varying degrees) by locals. It refers to community organizations that have been induced or introduced by the state, donors, NGOs or other participants in the past – often defined by a specific government program or project. The intention of most introduced community organizations is that they will become accepted, absorbed and 'mainstreamed' into people's lives so that they become thought of as 'indigenous' rather than imposed by outsiders. This, however, rarely happens.

One reoccurring difficulty in both the North and South is that the benefits (and thus the beneficiaries) of 'introduced initiatives' depend on some outside resources (either government or non-government), with the organizational structure often only lasting as long as the resources keep flowing. Indeed, where outside resources are a part of the induced CBO, its introduction may also create internal strife in the community as people fight over access to the outside funds.

1.4. *Ethnic Organizations*

Ethnic organizations provide a sense of identity for many minority people, particularly against the dominating influence of the majority. People coming from the same language group and often the same geographical background define these organizations. Language and

geography still remain mobilizing forces even when the links people have to their ethnic origins are tenuous.

Ethnic groupings in major cities have had the useful function of helping their ethnic brothers and sisters acclimatize to city life. These mutual-support and identity-preservation organizations help ethnic groups who are far away from home. Unfortunately, another frequent aspect of ethnic associations is ethnic-based criminal gangs that often control gambling, prostitution, protection and drugs in many big cities.

In some countries, ethnic affiliations that were suppressed by a previous ruling autocracy for ideological and security reasons mushroom with liberalization of the regime and often become a driving force for ethnic cleansing initiatives.

1.5. *Political Parties*

Some would say political parties fit in the government sector rather than the citizen sector since they are, in effect, 'would-be governments.' For this reason, 'political parties' are listed with a question mark in Figure 5.

Before they succeed (or fail) in being elected to government, however, political parties have the potential to be powerful associational magnets for citizens with common interests or sets of values. In many western European countries during the 1920s, for example, 'parties-on-the-ground' were important catalysts for the growth of civil society, though they also prepared the way for totalitarian governments, as in Germany and Italy.

1.6. *Employment-Related Associations*

This sub-category represents organizations that are representative of

people by virtue of their employment. This includes:

- Trade unions that represent workers
- Modern sector employers' associations
- Professional associations of dentists, engineers, physicians, teachers, etc.
- Less formal associations of the self-employed, such as fishermen, weavers, potters, etc.

1.7. Cooperatives

Just as political parties may be better represented under the government sector, so cooperatives may be better represented under the business sector (and also have a question mark after them in Figure 5), as they are associations of people who join together to engage in different kinds of business activities collectively. They have huge development potential, but in many countries they have been taken over by government departments.

1.8. People's Organizations/Social Movements

This covers a wide range of membership associations, which in turn represent a much larger group than a 'geographically-bounded' community. Some examples are:

- Federations of large numbers of CBOs (community-based organizations) that have joined together at a sub-regional, regional or national level.
- Broad categories of people – like women, youth or the disabled.
- An issue-based membership organization targeting (as examples) opposition to child labour, corruption or promoting the causes of women. Such organizational bodies are also set up, for example, to get support for people whose livelihoods big dams or

environmentally destructive factories destroy. Essentially temporal in nature, these organizations may cease to exist when the issue is resolved.

- A mass-based membership organization with a foundation in religion or politics. Its links to the grassroots offers particular advantages when it gets involved in political advocacy work, but can be a source of fundamentalist ideas, too.

Large membership-based organizations have huge development and democratic potential when their membership is from the group that is suffering and needs help, either in the form of mobilizing resources or in their insistence on policy changes and implementation. One of the problems of these organizations is that they are very attractive to political parties for short-term gains, and are thus susceptible to political co-option.

1.9. *Student Organizations*

In most countries there are plenty of students and ex-students who form associations out of a variety of interests (to keep in touch with their alma mater and with their former peers, to shape the public life at their school/university or to advocate for broader social, cultural and political causes).

In many countries, student organizations have played and continue to play a significant role in demonstrating against perceived and unresolved social injustice. Student organizations are also very attractive to politicians (as well as extremists of all persuasions) who want to use students as 'shock troops' on behalf of one cause or another.

1.10. Recreational/Cultural Organizations

Such groups (sports clubs, bird-watching societies, choirs) have development potential in building social capital. They also have strong possibilities in the field of social mobilization (men and women in sport who speak out against drug abuse, for instance), but are for the most part not involved in development activities.

2. Public-Benefit Organizations

Next is an overview of the kinds of organizations typically found within the category of public-benefit organizations. We shall examine them one by one. There may well be other local variations.

Figure 6:
Public Benefit Organizations

- ·   Private philanthropic bodies
- ·   Public philanthropic bodies
- ·   Faith based organisations
- ·   Location based organisations
- ·   Civic organisations
- ·   NGOs (of many types – see later)

Here we are dealing with organizations of people who wish to help other people. In some cases they use their own resources to help; in other cases they seek financing from a third group and act as intermediaries to make sure donated money is used effectively and responsibly.

2.1. Private Philanthropic Organizations

These are organizations set up by wealthier members of a community that earmark money and resources for particular groups of people, with the organization's mandate often dictated by its benefactor(s). Often such organizations have a strong charitable perspective, i.e. they accept the status quo, do not try to change it and see their role simply as helping the less fortunate. This contrasts with a developmental perspective in which the status quo is questioned and in which people need to help themselves. There also may be a public-relations component for the benefactor and his/her family.

2.2. *Public Philanthropic Organizations*

These organizations, which usually take the form of a foundation, have been set up for the general public good by an individual, group of individuals, business or government. Sometimes they act as a direct implementing or granting foundation to benefit those who come within the terms of the foundation's charter. They may also be organizations like Rotary Clubs, Lions Clubs or service clubs of the business community that want to assist in development for an identified group. Other examples are the Ford Foundation or many community foundations. The existence of such organizations in the South is particularly important because they put the decision-making about what should be supported into the hands of people in the country concerned instead of external donors.[10]

2.3. *Faith–Based Organizations*

These are organizations that are based on religious principles or specific religious organizations, but which do not limit their generosity and assistance to those who are from that particular religious organization (as compared to membership-based religious organizations mentioned previously). A person of any faith is allowed to receive the benefits of the organization. Many religious organizations have formed schools, universities, hospitals and clinics that are open to all. Part of the sub-text is sometimes the desired conversion of those benefiting from the services to the religion (or particular beliefs) of the service provider, but this is seldom a condition of attendance.

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[10] See "The Unit of Development is the Organization, Not the Project" by Richard Holloway. Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies, 1997 (PAGE 23)

2.4. Location-Specific Philanthropic Organizations

People who come from a particular area but are no longer living there form such organizations. They may be living in the capital city or even living overseas.

Such organizations are increasing with migration to the cities and the break between people and their roots. They have often set up local interest groups or councils that carry out the aims of the 'voluntarily displaced' people. People often come together for of marriages or funerals to meet with others who have come from the same place.

2.5. Civic Organizations for Political Advocacy

Here we are referring to organizations that restrict their role to advocating for a change in laws, policies, regulations or behaviour, existing primarily at the international level (such as Amnesty International, Greenpeace, Focus on the Global South, etc.). However, as many autocracies move toward more liberal systems, these organizations are establishing themselves in individual countries. Still, their involvement is less in playing an implementing role in projects or grassroots welfare and development activities than in general advocacy in support of over-arching social and political reforms.

The increasing number of advocacy organizations that have begun to flourish throughout the world reflects two things: firstly, the energy of citizens promoting and embracing democracy and democratic reforms and, second, the large amount of funds that have been provided to organizations (particularly in the South) willing to get involved in such work. The latter proliferation of funding comes from many international donors' desires to help countries of the South better understand and adopt democratic

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ideals and practices, with citizens organizations being the key to spreading the word.[11]

One of the main unanswered questions with regard to civic organizations (as with development and welfare NGOs) is whom they represent and what are their actual constituencies. A number of civic organizations represent little else but the small number of people who make up their staff. While they are legitimately entitled to express their point of view, their claims to represent a larger constituency need to sometimes be checked. When such organizations claim to be acting for the good of the nation, for example, it is important to ascertain just how deep are their organizational roots, say, in the nation's villages or urban slums.

2.6. *Development and Welfare NGOs*

These are organizations started by citizens with the intention to improve the situation of those who are disadvantaged or to improve a

Figure 7:
Development and Welfare NGOs

- · Implementing
- · Advocacy
- · Networking
- · Research and Think Tanks
- · Capacity Building/Support NGOs
- · Representative NGOs

situation that affects the whole country. They are usually legally

[11]. See, for example, Volkhart Finn Heinrich, "The Role of NGOs in Strengthening the Foundations of South African Democracy," in: Voluntas: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations, 12,pp. 1-15, 2001; Clarke, Gerard (1998): "Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and Politics in the Developing World" in: Political Studies 46, 36-52.

registered under the laws of a country, have a formal governance structure and are equipped with paid staff (although this is not as likely with smaller NGOs). In the South, the fields in which they work are usually health, education, agriculture, self-employment, family planning and family welfare, community development, environment and gender issues. Concerns to which these organizations attend in the North are perhaps not as wide reaching, although many of the needs are the same.

NGOs are often intermediary organizations that collect resources from one group of people in order to provide services to another group who are targeted because of their poverty, powerlessness or need for services. They may have a membership structure for governance purposes, but they are not a mutual-benefit organization.

The best of local and international NGOs see how important it is that the problems of the poor and disadvantaged with whom they are working are understood by society at large, either regionally or nationally. Public education and social mobilization to sustain citizens' interest in the alleviation or eradication of the root causes of a region's or country's problems are of paramount concern to these NGOs. The best also systematically build CBOs and people's organizations (POs) that will continue autonomously without the support of the local or international NGO. Many Northern NGOs working in international development, however, cultivate a patron/client relationship with the organizations they support. In many cases the clients are only interested in the patrons as long as a stream of development benefits continues to flow from the North.

In the best cases, NGOs (both national and foreign) carry out exercises that identify needs and involve participation in the design and implementation of programs to respond to these needs. When they operate in such a fashion it is clear they have a constituency

that is supporting their work (and a mandate from the people they want to help). Unfortunately, there is little to force an NGO to work in this fashion, and an increasing number of NGOs decide which programs they want to undertake without the input of their constituency.

Many assume NGOs are closer to the people's real needs because they are NGOs and not government. This may well be true in many cases, but it should nonetheless be verified as such on a case-by-case basis. Some NGOs have been set up as a means of self-employment, and do not work in consort with those they target.[12] It is also thought some NGOs are established solely as a means of accessing government funds. This point is discussed in the following section.

Development and Welfare NGOs can work in a variety of roles, none of which are exclusive of the others:

- **Implementation**: here an NGO's main work is carrying out grassroots activities to improve the lives of the target group. They are usually organized on a 'project basis,' which means a time-specific period with a pre-agreed budget. This is usually to fit in with the administrative convenience of a donor (North or South) that only makes grants on a project basis. As many NGOs know, real life does not follow a project format, and projects force NGOs into an unrealistic method of working with their target people.

- **Advocacy**: we have dealt with organizations that push for political and social reform in the previous section. This section notes organizations that pursue advocacy strategies to support the particular fields in which they work – farmers' rights, child

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[12] See "NGOs – Losing the Moral High Ground – Corruption and Misrepresentation" by Richard Holloway, 8th International Anti-Corruption Conference (IACC), Lima, Peru.1997. (PAGE 27)

rights, rights of the disabled, etc. Here the NGO's work does not only involve carrying out grassroots activity, but also trying to change public policy. They are best placed to do this because of their experience in the field. They know what works and what does not, and, perhaps most importantly, what the absence of (or the wrong application of) a government policy means in practice.

- **Networking**: here the main activity of the NGO is coordinating other NGOs that work in a particular geographical area or field of work. Networking is particularly relevant to advocacy work, from ad hoc participation to formal alliances.

- **Research and Think Tanks**: here the main activity is researching and analysing particular issues. Rarely does an NGO have a research and analysis department, but they often make alliances, for example, with university departments who carry out such work. More common is for a number of university researchers to form an off-campus organization that operates as a think tank and is registered as an NGO. Such organizations offer their services to NGOs, to business and to local or national government.

- **Capacity-Building NGOs**: a number of NGOs have realized that smaller NGOs have a great need to build their institutional, organizational and technical capacities. To this end, they have set themselves up as specialist, support-organization NGOs to help less developed non-governmental organizations.

- **Representative NGOs**: here the purpose is to be a liaison of sorts between NGOs and government. A truly representative organization will have some democratic membership structure that allows for (a) membership and (b) elections to select those who will represent the NGO (sub)-sector.

3.   Pretender (or Private-Benefit) Organizations[13]

This section refers to a variety of organizations that misrepresent themselves by pretending to be independent, public-benefit citizens organizations, when really they are something altogether different. The reason why we feel it is important to shed light on this group is that the public in many countries is fast becoming cynical about the civil society sector and its claims. The proliferation of 'pretender organizations' is the reason why. These organizations may, indeed, have begun life as genuine public-benefit organizations, but they have evolved into employment and income-creating vehicles for their founders.

- **GONGOs**: these claim to be NGOs but are, in fact, government- organised NGOs (GONGOs).

- **BONGOs**: this refers to business-owned NGOs, and, as with GONGOs, there are real dangers 'pretenders' can muddy the waters for those businesses which have a genuine public-spirited desire to contribute to development and democratic governance.

- **DONGOs**: here we mean donor-owned NGOs, whereby donors set up 'shell NGOs' in order to carry out their own programs without the complexity of having to identify and negotiate with indigenous NGOs. It is relatively simple for a donor to find a malleable and compliant NGO-for-hire that will do whatever the donor contracts the NGO to do. The reason for having public-benefit citizens organizations is that citizens will, on their own, decide what they think needs doing to improve a particular situation. When a foreign donor, in effect, buys an NGO to do the donor's bidding, the integrity of citizens organizations, unfortunately, comes into question.

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[13] Called "NGO Pretenders" in Alan Fowler's book "Striking a Balance" Earthscan.1997. Much of this section is indebted to his work. (PAGE 29)

Putting It All Together

As can be seen by the diverse list of functions and activities, civil society organizations are very inclusive, encompassing everything from a chess club to a political advocacy organization, a wheelchair users group to a fundamentalist organization in support of ethnic cleansing.

CIVICUS, as mentioned before, uses the definition, *"The sphere of institutions, organizations and individuals located between the family, the state and the market, in which people associate voluntarily to advance common interests."* These common interests may be valuable in building a harmonious and egalitarian society, or they may be much more selfish and exclusive. When we look at the health of civil society and the effect of civil- society organizations on a nation's health, we have to be very objective in looking at what civil society organizations actually do, and what effects they have.

There is one last category of which we need to be aware. It does not come within our categories of civil society organizations since it is operating for profit, but it often carries out similar activities to civil society organizations. This is the development contractor – a for-profit business that often takes on development or social and humanitarian work. The government, a donor or a foundation may pay it and it may operate on terms that are not maximizing of profit. At the end of the day, however, the contractor has to be bound by the profit principle or he/she will go out of business.

Part 3:
The Index on Civil Society

3.1.   Objectives, Concepts and Tools

As we have said previously, an enormous "associational revolution"[14] has taken place and enormous investments have been made by many parties in fostering civil society. It is important for us to take stock of what has been achieved, how we could best go about consolidating our achievements and see where there's room for improvement. From the previous chapter we have a checklist of what makes up civil society organizations. Now our next steps are to:

1. Work out how we can maximize participation and collaboration in the preparation of an instrument that will be accepted by a range of stakeholders

2. Look at the possible ways in which we can assess civil society organizations and agree on some common indicators of progress to chart our goals

3. Think of the different ways the instrument can be used to gather a range of information

4. Clarify how the data gathered can be best aggregated and displayed for ease of interpretation

5. Consider how the data can be a springboard for action, and not simply a static snapshot.

    The Index on Civil Society is not a conventional research

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[14] Salamon, Lester M. (1994): "The Rise of the Nonprofit Sector", in: Foreign Affairs 73, 4, 108-22.

exercise. It seeks to be an action-research initiative that involves sympathetic stakeholders in:

- Grappling with the question of what a healthy civil society sector looks like

- Identifying the appropriate indicators that will allow us to comprehensively assess the actions and values of civil society organizations

- Analysing the gap between the existing health of the sector and whatever improvements are assessed as needing to be achieved, and

- Clarifying an advocacy agenda that would get consensus on what needs to be improved.

When CIVICUS decided to prioritise the Index on Civil Society as an important project that it wanted to work on, it clarified the following objectives:

3.1.1. Objectives of the Index on Civil Society

- To increase the knowledge and understanding of civil society through reflecting upon and assessing the health of the sector
  As we have said before, we need an instrument to help understand the state of this sector in which so many of us work, but which does not yet have an agreed upon comparative perspective or tool for assessing its health and impact.

- To promote dialogue, alliances and networks among stakeholders in a civil society as a means of empowerment
  Civil society stakeholders inhabit all three sectors of a society (government, business and citizens). There needs to be collaboration and agreement between these stakeholders on the

value and worth of a civil society, and cooperation in assessing its impact.

- To strengthen civil society by providing stakeholders with a tool for developing a common vision and agenda to foster positive changes in behaviour
Assessing health is only the first step – we are interested not just in knowing what our current state of health is, but what further activities could lead to better health and greater impact.

The complexity of civil society organizations does not provide us with an easy, one-dimensional measure, as economists have with, say, Gross National Product or Income Per Capita. It would be difficult to aggregate the health of civil society in a country by using just one reference point, as is done by Transparency International, for example, with its Corruption Perception Index. The UNDP's Human Development Index comes closer as it identifies three indicators (life expectancy, per capita income and educational attainment), but it still subsumes these indicators into a one-dimensional index.

Through the Index on Civil Society, CIVICUS aims for something that is flexible and adaptable to different conditions, but is still intellectually rigorous and comparable between regions or nations. To assess civil society's health, one needs to take into account several dimensions (how it looks, what it does and what factors act upon it). Only this multi-dimensional approach is able to detect the various kinds of interplay between the dimensions as well as the specific strengths and weaknesses of civil society.

The next sections describe dimensions and indicators, and then

we will take you through the exercise of utilizing the Index on Civil Society, step by step.

3.1.2. Features of the Index on Civil Society

CIVICUS Index on Civil Society (ICS) has the following features (which we will look at closely one by one): [15]

1. **The Participatory Approach**
   A range of representative stakeholders is coordinated by a convening organization (usually a CIVICUS national partner) that selects a facilitator, sets up the logistics, orients the stakeholders to the exercise and conducts the exercise in a participatory manner. The stakeholders involved thus own each Index.

2. **Levels/Units of Application**
   The Index can be applied to a variety of different contexts, from civil society at the local, regional, national or international levels to individual sectors within civil society.

3. **Four Dimensions**
   These are Structure, Space, Values and Impact

4. **Core and Country-Specific Indicators**
   The ICS needs sufficient indicators to underpin each of the dimensions mentioned above and to 'ground truth' them. Some are likely to be common to the Index wherever it is used, but some are specific to local contexts.

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[15] Readers may be familiar with tools for Organisational Development that assess organisations position along a number of dimensions. These are useful for reflection, and as a stimulus for considering needed capacity building interventions. Such tools have been designed and applied by Pact, MSI, IDR and others. The ICS is an analogous instrument, but dealing with civil society in general at different levels as the unit of examination, not an organisation.

5. ***Scoring***
   Once the indicators are agreed upon, local research will produce scores for each indicator. The scores can be gathered in a number of ways: through a workshop of informed stakeholders, through collection of secondary data or through primary research. This handbook focuses on the methodology of self-assessment (i.e. holding a workshop of informed stakeholders who will have sufficient knowledge and experience to offer a score).

6. ***Displaying Scores as Positions Along the Four Dimensions***
   Once the data is collected and aggregated, it is displayed as a position along one of the four dimensions, which are linked visually to form a diamond pattern. This display shows the position civil society has reached in each dimension along the spectrum towards perfect health.

7. ***Displayed Data is Analysed, Interpreted and Used as a Stimulus to Action***
   Once the data is displayed, the stakeholders need to interpret it and agree what actions the data suggests in order to move toward a healthy civil society.

Let us look at these features in greater detail:

### 3.1.3. Four Dimensions (Structure, Space, Values, Impact)

Structure:
This dimension tries to capture information on the basic set up of citizens organizations: their size, components, infrastructure and economy. It seeks answers to the questions:
"How large and active is the civil society sector in terms of collective

citizen action? What are its component parts? How do they interact with each other in terms of networking, collaboration and conflicts? What resources does it command?"

At the two ends of the spectrum:

• A healthy civil society sector would be seen as having many strong, and varied civil society organizations commanding considerable resources.

Spectrum

Few, weak CSOs: Few resources in CSO sector ●- -● Many, strong, varied CSOs Considerable resources
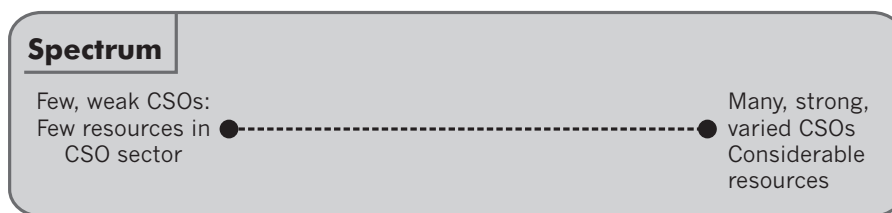
• An unhealthy civil society sector would be seen as having but a few weak and undifferentiated civil society organizations, each with limited resources.

Space:

This dimension tries to capture information on the environment in which the civil society sector operates. I t seeks to answer the questions:

"What is the legal, political and socio-cultural space in which the civil- society sector operates? What laws, policies and social norms enable or inhibit its development?"

At the two ends of the spectrum:
• A healthy civil society sector would be seen as having a supportive legal, political, fiscal and socio-cultural environment.
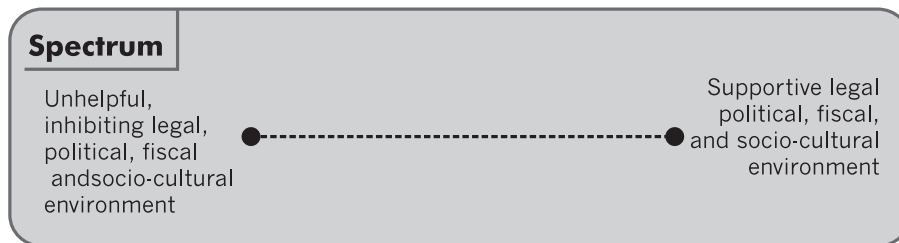
- An unhealthy civil society sector would be seen as having a legal, political, fiscal and socio-cultural environment which inhibits and curtails the effective operation of a healthy civil society sector.

Values:

This dimension tries to collect information on the value system of the civil- society sector, consensus or disagreement about these values and the range of such disagreement. It seeks to answer the questions:

> *"What values underlie the civil society sector? What values, norms and attitudes does it represent and propagate? How inclusive and exclusive are they? What areas of consensus and dissent emerge?"*

At the two ends of the spectrum:

- A healthy civil society sector would be seen as having values that support democracy, liberal values and good governance. The values would have majority support with little dissent.

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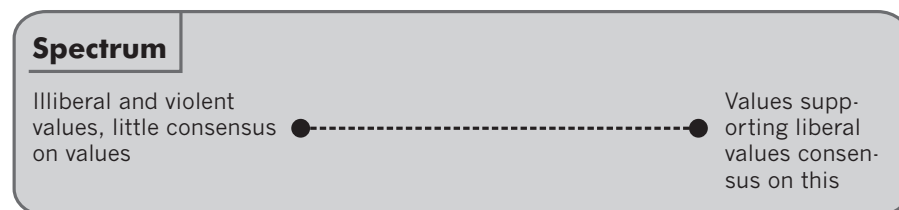
- An unhealthy civil society sector would be seen as having members who espoused illiberal and often violent values that were founded in extreme, intolerant and uncooperative positions.

Impact:

This dimension tries to gauge the contribution the civil society sector has had in aspects of development, rights and economic independence. It tries to answer the question:

"What is the contribution of the civil society sector to specific social, economic and political problems?"

At the two ends of the spectrum:

- A healthy civil society sector would be seen as having contributed greatly to solving social, economic and political problems, i.e. being an important force for development

- An unhealthy civil society sector would be seen either as having negligible or even negative impact on social, economic or political problems.

Spectrum		
Very little impact or unhelpful impact on social, economic or political problems	•------------------------•	Considerable impact on social, economic, or political problems
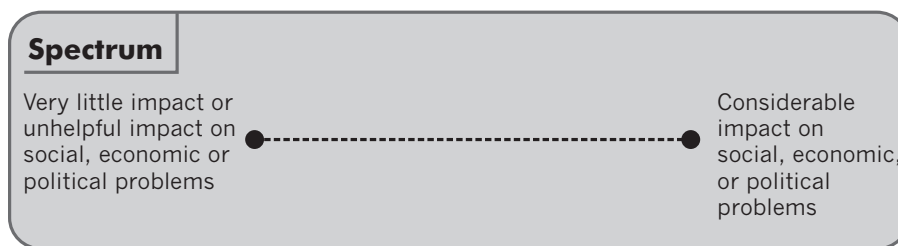
These four dimensions provide the framework within which the CSI operates, and they are fundamental to using the Index. All applications of the Civil Society Index must use all four dimensions to ensure comparability.

The value of these dimensions is greatly dependent on the indicators that are devised to capture progress along these dimensions. These indicators are the subjects of the following section.

3.1.4. Core and Country-Specific Indicators

Perception and Quantitative Indicators

Indicators for our purposes are of two kinds, depending on whether we are looking for a Perception Index of Civil Society or a Quantitative Index of Civil Society.

A Quantitative Index Indicator is data about different aspects of civil society that is expressed numerically and is based upon previously existing sources of research data or (where data is not easily available) upon specially commissioned research studies. The development of quantitative indicators is part of the work of the Civil Society Diamond Project carried out by CIVICUS in collaboration with National Lead Organizations, currently in its pilot phase. This has already generated a great deal of data, some of which has been synthesized in a researchers' toolkit.[16]

A Perception Index Indicator is a statement about the civil society sector that reflects an ideal or 'healthy' state. It is connected to one of the four dimensions, which allows stakeholders to reflect on its accuracy in describing the civil society sector in the country (or region) under discussion, and then to score it on a spectrum from 1-7, with 1 being "Don't agree at all" and 7 being "Fully agree." Such Perception Index Indicators are based upon the perceptions of a selected group of informed stakeholders about the civil society sector.

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[16] For more information on the researchers' toolkit, please contact Finn Heinrich at index@civicus.org

The exercise described in this handbook is one that is perception-based, but the two approaches should not be kept mutually exclusive. There is a lot to gain when stakeholders in a perception-based Index are able to check their perceptions against existing data. This could be statistics about CSOs, copies of laws that define CSO areas of work or research that describes present patterns of behaviour. The organization responsible for the participatory meeting at which the exercise for the Index on Civil Society is carried out should try and collect whatever data it can and make this available to others before the meeting.

This popular handbook looks at a Civil Society Index based upon perceptions, utilizing indicators suitable for a process of perception analysis.

These will be of two kinds of indicators: core and country-specific.

1. Core Indicators are relevant to each of the four dimensions of the civil society sector throughout the world. They are required in any Index on Civil Society.

2. Country-specific indicators are indicators each stakeholder group would like to include. These indicate important elements in the civil society sector in a particular country or region, but which would not necessarily be of the highest priority for the civil society sector in other countries or regions.

3.2. Index on Civil Society Exercise

3.2.1. Preparing for the Exercise

The Convening Organization

A CSO that would like to apply the Index on Civil Society in its country needs to convene a group of stakeholders in the civil society sector who will agree to work together to do the following tasks:

1. Select the appropriate indicators

2. Go through the exercise of scoring the indicators

3. Look at the display of the Civil Society Diamond that is produced from the scored indicators and discuss the significance of its elements

4. Agree on a vision of an improved civil society and create an action plan that will deal with some of its identified shortcomings

This could be achieved in a one- or two-day workshop guided by an experienced facilitator (see possible outline on following page). A self-selected organization will be needed initially to handle the logistics of invitations, selecting a place for the workshop and identifying a facilitator. Hopefully, after participating once, those involved will be enthusiastic to set up a working group to handle further exercises.

The convening organization will need to be an organization that has convening power, i.e. of a stature whereby people will be interested to come in response to an invitation from them. The organization will also have competence in organizing a workshop, have the resources needed for the exercise and be able to find a

Structure of Exercise

The following could be a good agenda for a two-day workshop:

::: Day 1 :::::::::::::	
Session 1	Explaining the Purpose of the Workshop, the Civil Society Sector, Civil Society Organisations, the Civil Society Index and the 4 Dimensions
Session 2	Identifying Indicators (core and country specific)
Session 3	Continued. Once Indicators are agreed they need to be written down with a score sheet.
Session 4	Scoring the Indicators
	(overnight the facilitator aggregates and averages the scores and draws the Diamond)
::: Day 2 :::::::::::::	
Session 1	Reviewing, analysing and interpreting the Diamond
Session 2	Agreeing a Vision, making an Action Plan and assigning responsibilities for it

good facilitator. It will also need to provide a secretary of some sort who will type up the indicators as soon as they have been agreed upon, replicate them and provide a copy to each participant (within the meeting) so that they can score.

The initial organization that has taken the responsibility of managing the Index for Civil Society exercise (and whatever organization becomes involved thereafter) also has a responsibility of making the results of the Index known to important members of the civil society sector not in attendance.

We would be grateful if the responsible organization would forward the relevant information to CIVICUS to allow us to build a body of knowledge on the perceived state of civil society around the world, so we can refine the existing methodology for carrying out the self-assessment exercise.

The Facilitator

Initially it is unlikely you will have in your country a person with experience in conducting the exercise for the Index on Civil Society (although their numbers are increasing with the implementation of the Index on Civil Society Project managed by Finn Heinrich). This would be the first choice for a facilitator, but someone with experience in conducting perceptions surveys would be fine, e.g. Pact's Organizational Capacity Assessment (OCA) (see Footnote 14). Short of that, anyone with experience in training workshops and adult-learning methods who is armed with this book will be able to conduct this exercise with a certain amount of preparation.

The facilitator must keep his eye on the ball, by which I mean the facilitator must focus on the final goal of the exercise – to develop an action plan to improve the health of civil society organizations in the country or region concerned. Producing a diamond is important, but it is a step to the process of reflection, analysis, discussion and generation of an action plan. The facilitator should also be prepared with a calculator for the aggregation of data in a timely fashion, so as to be able to report back to the participants quickly while their interest is still high.

Stakeholders

The group of stakeholders invited to participate in the exercise needs to represent those who are involved and knowledgeable about the civil society sector. Basically this means people who work within the civil society sector, as well as those who deal with the sector, but are themselves outside of it. They must have a commitment to deal honestly and professionally with an examination of the sector in which they work and not regard the exercise as a way to bolster their standing and credibility. It should be made clear to them that their invitation is based upon their knowledge and assumed interest in promoting the sector as a whole, not any one part of it.

The optimal composition of the group might of course vary due to country-specific features of civil society, but a useful group should represent:

1. Traditional associations

2. Unions

3. Professional associations

4. Religious organizations

5. Mass organizations

6. Foundations

7. NGOs (community development, social welfare, advocacy, representative and support NGOs)

8. Government (representing whatever part of government liases with CSOs)

9. The media (people knowledgeable about CSOs)

10. Business (from businesses which have some links to CSOs)

11. Academia/researchers

Some of the organizations suggested above (unions, professional associations or traditional associations) may not think of themselves as members of the civil society sector. There will probably need to be some discussion as to what civil society is, what civil society organizations are and who is involved in building a civil society. Hopefully this book will provide much of the material that is needed for this task, and the facilitator will be able to use it to clarify these issues.

If you are seriously interested in carrying out this Index exercise for the whole of the civil society sector, then it is important that the group is not dominated by one particular kind of civil society organization or sub-sector. Since CIVICUS members are likely to be development NGOs, it is important that a conscious effort is made to be inclusive.

Logistics and Structure of the Exercise

The convening organization must make sure that the environment for the exercise is conducive to learning. There should be two flip-chart stands, lots of flip-chart paper, an overhead projector and screen. There should also be large empty areas of wall on which used flip-chart paper can be pinned or stuck with masking tape.

In order to get good group dynamics there should be between 20 and 30 participants, with 5 round tables seating 4 to 7 participants each. Such an arrangement (see next page) allows maximum participation at small-group and whole-group levels, encouraging open-mindedness while allowing the facilitator to circulate among the participants. As with all workshops, it is important to make sure that participants have good writing surfaces, good ventilation and an absence of outside noise.[17]

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[17] A fine source of information on all aspects of training and facilitation are the "Management Pocketbooks" of Stylus Publishing, particularly "The Trainers Pocketbook" and "The Facilitators Pocketbook" both by John Townsend.

Figure 8:
Optimal Arrangement for Exercise
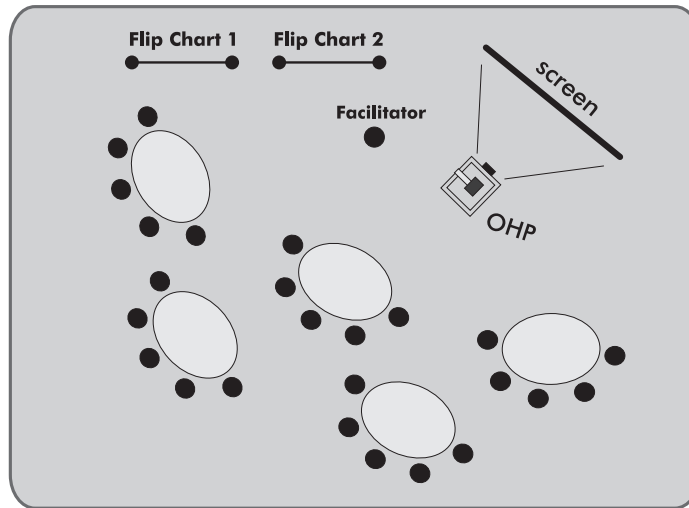
3.2.2. Introduction to the Exercise and its Purpose

The facilitator should start by clarifying the purpose of the exercise, making sure that all are aware of the goals and objectives and are comfortable with them. They are, as mentioned before:

1. To increase the knowledge and understanding of civil society through reflecting on and assessing the health of the sector

2. To promote dialogue, alliances and networks among stakeholders in a civil society as a means of empowering them

3. To strengthen civil society by providing stakeholders with a tool for developing a common vision and agenda to foster positive behavioural change.

The facilitator should also point out that while other sectors of society (business and government) have indices for their work, civil

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society organizations do not. The facilitator should try and get the assemblage to understand the unique and important nature of the task at hand.

The facilitator should clarify the usual house rules which all participants can agree on (smoking? hand-phones? starting, finishing and break times?) and introduce the plan of the exercise (see above).

It is important early on to get clarity on the unit of analysis you will be looking at. Up to this point in this handbook, we have talked about the Index on Civil Society being applied to the civil society sector in a particular country as a whole. It may be, however, that the participants feel this is an unrealistic exercise and it would be much more useful to apply it to:

a. a sub-national unit, e.g. a particular province, state or district

b. a particular sector, e.g. NGOs, CSOs in the environment field or trade unions

It may be a great deal easier to get indicators that are easily agreed upon by all stakeholders when the unit of observation is more homogenous (and, conversely, less easy to do this when we are analysing and observing a very heterogeneous collection of civil society organizations). This must be agreed upon before starting the exercise. For instance, it may make sense to have a 'tiered structure,' whereby provinces do the exercise for themselves and then aggregate their results at a national level.

3.2.3. *Identifying Indicators*

The facilitator needs to clarify to the participants what indicators are (statements about different aspects of civil society organizations which participants feel illustrate both the desired future state of a healthy civil society sector and which allow for some variation that reflects the present situation). Useful indicators are those which show what people consider to be a central aspect of civil society.

Before we can get to the indicators, however, we need to agree on an intermediary category between the four dimensions and the indicators. We can call these sub-dimensions (i.e. more detailed categories within specific dimensions). Three to 5 per dimension are necessary. Once the facilitator has clarified the dimensions, he/she should ask for suggestions of the issues important to civil society within that dimension. These should be written on flip charts as sub-dimensions.

For the STRUCTURE dimension, for instance, the sub-dimensions could be membership, citizen participation, composition and resources. For the Space dimension, sub-dimensions could be laws and regulations, links to government and business and socio-cultural norms.

Here are some sample sub-dimensions that are likely to be common issues for civil society organizations the world over. There may well be others, and the facilitator should encourage their suggestion. These are, for lack of a better word, the 'default' settings for civil society issues based on the experience of CIVICUS to date.

Dimension 1: Structure

Sub-dimension

- Membership – the number and kind of CSOs and their membership
- Citizen participation – volunteering in CSOs, voting, demonstrations, petitions
- Distribution – regional/urban-rural distribution of CSOs, sectoral distribution of CSOs
- Composition – existence and strength of umbrella bodies and short-term alliances among CSOs, number and strength of civil society support organisations, divisions within the sector (political, ideological, ethnic, religious etc)
- Resources – kinds of funding sources (private, public, foreign, membership)

Dimension 2: Space

Sub-dimension

- Laws and regulations – enforcement of civil rights and rule of law, specific CSO regulations
- Links to government and business– existence of CSO liaison officers, general attitude of government/business towards cooperation with civil society
- Socio-cultural norms – respect for volunteering and public spiritedness

Dimension 3: Values

Sub-dimension

- Tolerance, human rights, gender equity, sustainable development – the role of the civil society sector in promoting these
- Transparency and accountability – the position of CSOs
- Internal processes – involvement of stakeholders, internal democracy

Dimension 4: Impact

Sub-dimension

- Public policy – the role of civil society in agenda-setting, policy making, policy implementation and monitoring government
- Responsiveness of CSOs – towards their constituents and the marginalized in society as well as the public in general
- Effectiveness of CSOs – in advancing the common good (e.g. poverty reduction, social inclusion, sustainable development)

The facilitator needs to engender discussion about the most important issues within each dimension and write up a list of dimensions and sub-dimensions.

Following this part of the exercise, the facilitator then needs to ask the participants to come up with indicators for each of these sub-dimensions. These might take the form of statements that reflect a desired goal and a range of likely strategies to achieve that goal. Responses, then, can take the form of "Don't agree at all" to "Fully agree."

A good facilitator will encourage creative thinking from the participants, but will also have ideas to suggest if the participants need some stimulation.

An important note for the facilitator is to try and stop people jumping to the next stage of 'scoring'. What is important at this point is the relevance of the indicator to the issue and the dimension. Scoring comes later, and will confuse things if it is addressed too early.

In addition to the sub-dimension issues, here are some examples of perception indicators that reflect the issues and which make a statement about what is the agreed 'healthy' situation for the civil society sector in country or region X. All can be scored along a spectrum of "Don't agree at all" to "Fully agree."

What follows, therefore, are examples of statements that can be used as perception indicators for each of these issues and in each of the four dimensions. These are suggestions for indicators, and it may well be that your stakeholder group may come up with a better way of conceptualising an indicator (or indeed find that your particular society finds a certain core indicator irrelevant). For reasons of comparability across regions and across countries, however, we encourage you to use the core indicators because they

deal with a certain number of core issues that become common in all operations of the Index on Civil Society.

For an indicator you do not want a closed YES/NO response. Rather, what you want is a statement that is dynamic and malleable depending on the place, time, knowledge and experience of the person involved. One way to test a proposed indicator as being useful is to see whether it helps by taking it to an extreme.

Examples of Core Perception Indicators

1. Structure

1.1. Membership

1.1.1.   Member benefiting CSOs in (country x) have large numbers of active members

1.1.2.   Third party benefiting CSOs in (country x) have large numbers of active supporters

1.2. Citizen Participation

1.2.1.   CSOs in (country x) have large numbers of people who are prepared to help the CSO without any material re-ward (i.e. volunteers)

1.2.2.   It is common for citizens to work together to solve shared problems and pursue their interests.

1.3. Distribution

1.3.1.   CSOs exist throughout (country x)

1.3.2.   CSOs are evenly distributed throughout (country x)

1.3.3.   CSOs exist in all different sectors

1.4. Composition

1.4.1.   There is at least one effective networking/umbrella body for CSOs in (country x)

1.4.2.   Each CSO sub-sector has a networking or umbrella body

1.4.3.   CSOs generally co-operate with each other on issues of common concern

1.4.4.   There are enough support organisations for CSOs

1.5. Resources

1.5.1.   CSOs receive sufficient funding from government

1.5.2.   CSOs receive sufficient funding from private individuals

1.5.3. CSOs receive sufficient funding from business

 1.5.4. CSOs create significant funding from enterprises

 1.5.5. CSOs receive sufficient funding from foreign sources

 1.5.6. Civil society organizations can mobilise sufficient local resources to carry out their activities.

2. Space

2.1. Laws and regulations

 2.1.1. Freedom of association is effectively protected by the state

 2.1.2. Government regulations for registering CSOs are simple and accessible

 2.1.3. Regulations to exempt CSOs from paying tax exist and are accessible

 2.1.4. Tax exemptions for individuals and organisations supporting CSOs are accessible

2.2. Links to government

 2.2.1. The government recognizes the structures that CSOs use to govern themselves

 2.2.2. Specific government units successfully support the work of CSOs

 2.2.3. The State does not hinder the establishment and activities of civil society organizations in your country.

2.3. Socio-cultural norms

 2.3.1. People respect a citizen who joins a CSO

 2.3.2. People generally respect public spiritedness

 2.3.3. Businesses support their employees if they are CSO activists

 2.3.4. Government supports their employees if they are CSO activists

3. Values

3.1. Tolerance, human rights, gender equity, sustainable development, social justice

 3.1.1. Citizens active in CSOs learn tolerance of others despite their differences

 3.1.2. All major cultural and social groups of your society are peacefully promoting their interests in civil society without promoting intolerance towards other groups.

 3.1.3. CSOs generally respect fundamental human rights

 3.1.4. CSOs generally promote the sustainable use of natural resources

 3.1.5. CSOs generally promote gender equity through their own organisations

 3.1.6. Civil Society is the place where the marginalized and socially excluded in your society voice their interests.

3.2. Transparency and accountability

    3.2.1.   CSOs are generally accountable and transparent in their operations

    3.2.2.   CSOs generally make their accounts publicly available

    3.2.3.   There is no corruption in CSOs

3.3. Internal processes

    3.3.1.   CSOs generally elect their leaders through democratic elections

    3.3.2.   CSOs generally involve their members or stakeholders in planning, implementing, and evaluating their activities

    3.3.3.   Active participation in civil society is the way citizens acquire democratic values and skills in your country.

3.   Impact

4.1. Public policy

    4.1.1.   CSOs are successful in representing the interests of their constituents in public policies

    4.1.2.   CSO representatives are regularly invited to participate in the discussion of legislation

    4.1.3.   CSOs successfully influence government policy in respect of their constituents

    4.1.4.   CSOs successfully cooperate with government in implementing policies

    4.1.5.   CSOs are successful in monitoring government commitments and policies

4.2. Responsiveness of CSOs

    4.2.1.   CSOs are successful in mobilizing marginalized groups to take part in public life

    4.2.2.   CSO goods and services reflect the needs and priorities of their constituents and stakeholders

    4.2.3.   CSOs specifically target the marginalized in their work

4.3. Effectiveness of CSOs

    4.3.1.   CSO clients or beneficiaries generally improve their lives

    4.3.2.   CSOs generally succeed in benefitting the public good

    4.3.3.   CSOs goods and services generally produce sustainable improvements in the lives of those they work with.

    4.3.4.   Civil Society plays an effective role in solving your country's most important social problem.

For instance, if your indicator is "CSOs successfully collaborate with government in implementing policies," ask yourself if there is a situation in your country or region in which no CSO would possibly consider implementing a government policy. Or is there a situation in which all CSOs, as a matter of course, implement government policies? If the truth is somewhere between these two extremes, you likely have a useful indicator.

It is likely, for example, that not all CSOs in your country contribute to tolerance. Think for your indicators of those civil society organizations that have, in your opinion, contributed to violence, and consider how important a part of the sector they are rather than immediately thinking of the peace-loving NGOs. Don't forget that civil society organizations have, by varying degrees, contributed to the massacres in Rwanda and Kosovo.

Country-Specific Indicators

In some countries you will feel that certain issues (and certain indicators linked to these issues) are of paramount importance, but they may not be those that have already been shown in the list of core indicators above. It is difficult to say in advance what these might be since each country will be very different from another. An example from a Civil Society Index exercise in Indonesia illustrates possibilities, which might give you some idea of the different variations possible. In the list below are examples from the Indonesian group, together with explanations as to why Indonesians considered these important issues and indicators (in italics). These are over and above the core indicators. A rule of thumb is to suggest not more than five indicators per sub-dimension.

It is very important to note that an indicator express an ideal of what is desired from a healthy civil society. An example would be: "CSOs do not promote racism." If an indicator is provided which is

the opposite of the ideal ("CSOs are pressured to support political groups"), then tabulating the scores will be confused, since a high score represents agreement with the truth of the indicator.

Indonesian Country Specific Indicators

1. Structure

Individual CSOs usually last for a long time

The group in Indonesia thought that longevity of a civil society organisation was an important indicator of the structure of the civil society sector with long-lasting organisations being preferred over short duration organisations.

CSOs do not use violent means to express their opinions

In Indonesia there was concern in the civil society sector about religious intolerance and violence, and thus they thought that they needed an indicator which addressed this issue.

2. Space

CSOs have access to the legislature to put their points of view

With the new democracy in Indonesia, people felt that it was important that the access of CSOs to these democratic institutions was clarified.

The state officially recognizes people who have shown public service through CSOs.

Connected to an indicator about the public's approval of public spirited people, the group wanted to have an indicator that reflected the government's similar approval, as being an important issue in a country where the government was very important.

3. Values

CSOs do not promote racism

Because of the incidences of anti-Chinese racism that were a feature of the transition from the old regime to the present, the group wanted to examine this contribution of CSOs to values of tolerance.

4. Impact

CSOs provide services that the state and business would not be able to provide

Indonesian CSOs were interested in clarifying their impact vis-a-vis the state and business and finding out whether they indeed have a "comparative advantage" over the other two groups of actors.

CSOs are able to attract the attention of the media to their causes.

A free media is an important new feature of life in Indonesia, and the group wanted to see whether the media was interested in the work of CSOs.

3.2.4. Scoring

Once indicators have been agreed upon, they are typed up, replicated and a sheet is provided to each participant upon which has the indicators and scoring opportunities written beside each one (see below as an example for Structure)

The stakeholders are then asked to express the degree of their agreement with the statement shown by the indicator by giving a score from 1 to 7, with the lowest being an expression that you do not agree at all with the statement. The intermediary scores between 1 and 7 will then represent less extreme position between the two extremes. The participants circle or underline the mark that expresses their point of view, giving the paper to the facilitator when finished.

Since the indicators have been agreed upon at a previous point in this exercise, do not allow the stakeholders to start questioning the indicators at this point. You should have allowed enough time for people to come to consensus about the indicators. If the indicators are again discussed, the forward flow of the exercise will be destroyed. Another logistical point is to make sure that everyone scores all the indicators. People should not leave an indicator out because it is difficult to come to a decision about a score. If they do, it is likely to complicate aggregating and averaging the scores.

1. Structure	Don't Agree at all					Fully Agree	

1.2. Membership

1.2.1. Member benefitting CSOs in (country x) have large numbers of active members 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

1.2.2. Third party benefitting CSOs in (country x) have large numbers of active supporters 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

1.2. Citizen Participation

1.2.1. CSOs in (country x) have large numbers of people who are prepared to help the CSO without any material reward (i.e. volunteers) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

1.2.2. CSOs in (country x) undertake a lot of advocacy work to change policy, laws, practices, and behaviour 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

1.2.3. It is common for citizens to work together to solve shared problems and pursue their interests. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

1.3. Distribution

1.3.1. CSOs exist throughout (country x) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

1.3.2. CSOs are evenly distributed throughout (country x) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

1.3.3. CSOs exist in all different sectors 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

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1.4. Composition

1.4.1. There is at least one effective networking or umbrella body for CSOs in (country x) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

1.4.2. Each CSO sub-sector has a networking or umbrella body 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

1.4.3. CSOs generally co-operate with each other on issues of common concern 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

1.4.4. There are many support organisations for CSOs 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

1.4.5. CSOs generally have similar political, social, and developmental perspective 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

1.5. Resources

1.5.1. CSOs receive government funding 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

1.5.2. CSOs receive funding from private individuals 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

1.5.3. CSOs receive funding from business 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

1.5.4. CSOs create funding from enterprises 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

1.5.5. CSOs receive funding from foreign sources 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

1.5.6. CSOs can mobilise sufficient local resources to carry out their activities 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Stakeholders, as has been mentioned, are chosen for their knowledge and experience of the civil society sector, and it should thus be relatively easy for them to give their opinion.

The problem people might face when deciding upon a score is thinking specifically about one organization or association in particular and not looking at the civil society sector as a whole.

We think that there are enough similarities within the civil society sector that a person can take a view even if they are making a composite of their views.

If stakeholders find it impossible to aggregate and average a score, then you may need to re-phrase your unit of analysis and say that you are only targeting 'religious organizations' or 'advocacy NGOs.' But urge stakeholders to think broadly, and certainly to refrain from thinking of just the organizations they know best.

The easiest way to make a score is for all stakeholders to circle or underline their choice on their own without discussion (there should have been plenty of discussion in creating the indicators!). Once a particular dimension is finished, ask that the results be given to the facilitator.

The facilitator then averages the scores that he has received by:

(a) adding the individual scores for each indicator and then dividing the sum by the number of participants.
(b) adding them up and dividing by the number of indicators within each sub-dimension to give a sub-dimension score.
(c) adding up the scores of the sub-dimensions and dividing by the number of sub-dimensions to give a dimension score.

A score for the Structure sub-dimensions given above might be:

Membership	4.4
Citizen Participation	5.2
Distribution	4.8
Composition	4.8
Resources	4.4
TOTAL	**23.6**

This would give us a score for the 'value' dimension of 23.6 divided by 5 (as there are five sub-dimensions) = 4.9 (round up to the nearest decimal point).

This can be displayed visually by a bar graph, as seen below. Such sub-dimension bar graphs are an important part of the final diamond scoring and should be preserved.

| Sub-Dimension	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Membership							
Citizen Participation							
Distribution							
Composition							
Resources							
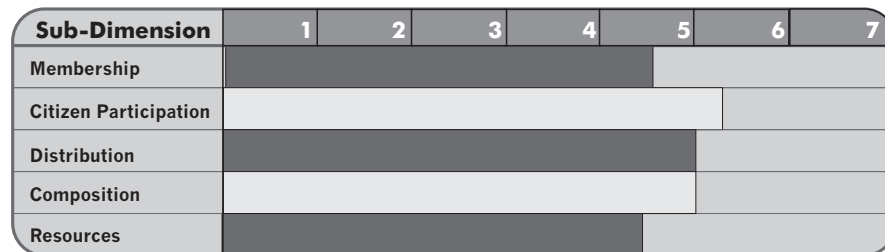
Let it be clear that the computed scores are not sound statistically. The scores from 1 to 7 are not internally consistent, such that a score of 6 is, in a mathematical sense, equivalent to twice as much as two scores of three. This exercise is an exercise in perceptions, not an exercise in statistical precision. CIVICUS has found, just as others have found with similar exercises in perceptions of organizational competence, that this technique is able to present rough approximations of people's thinking and perceptions in a way that is helpful, stimulating and productive.

3.2.5. *Presenting The Results*

The diamond is the visual display the Index on Civil Society uses.[18] It is composed of 4 dimensions formed from 2 axis that cross at a middle point, thus making four quadrants. The point at which the two axis cross has a value of 0. The farthest points of each quadrant have a value of 7. (Please see Figure 9 below):

Figure 9:
The Axis and the Dimensions
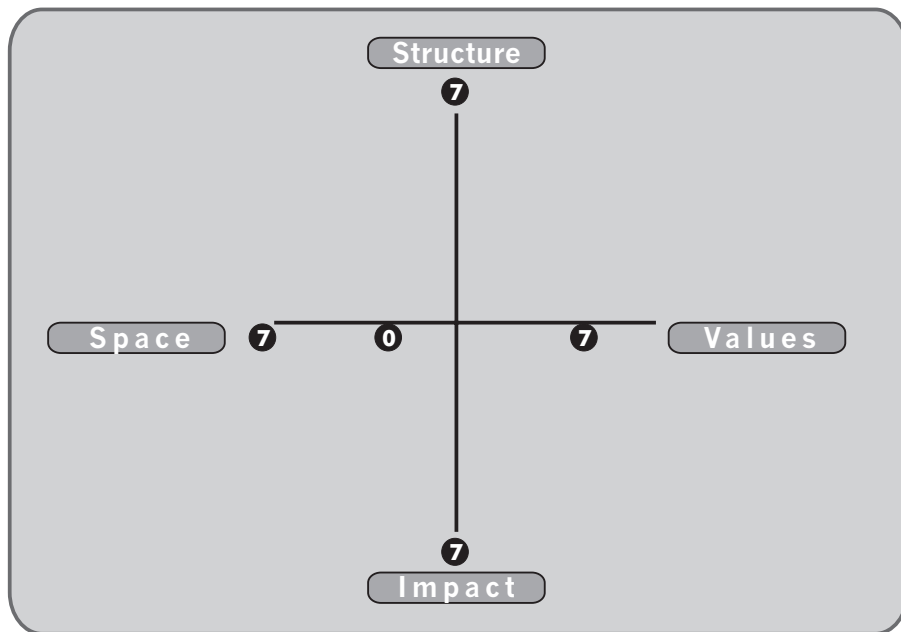
An ideal situation, where the civil society sector has been scored as having full marks on all dimensions and sub-dimensions would produce a perfect diamond with each axis linked at the 7 mark, as we can see by looking at Figure 10.

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[18] The Diamond Approach, analytic framework and methodology were developed for CIVICUS by Helmut Anheier of the Centre for Civil Society, London School of Economics.
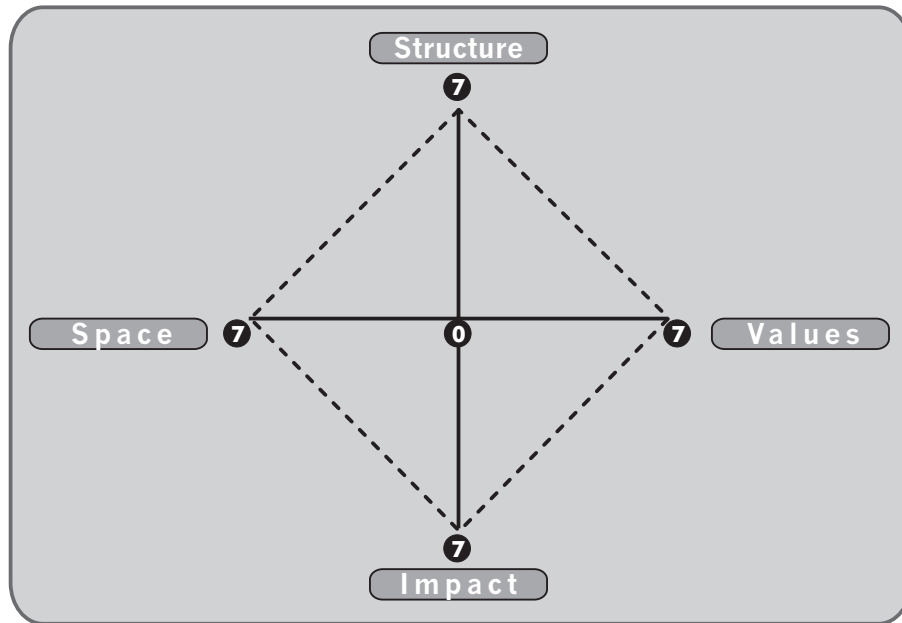
Our scoring, however, has shown that each dimension has a score of less than 7. The score is therefore plotted to its particular point on the axis, with lines plotted to join these points. If we have a Structure dimension with a score of 4.0, a Space dimension with a score of 3.5, a Values dimension with a score of 4.8 and an Impact dimension with a score of 2.2, then the diamond will look misshapen and unique. From the scores shown on the previous page we get a picture like Figure 11 on the next page.

This provides a distorted diamond, which represents the score averaged for each dimension. In the example above we can see that the farthest from the ideal of a healthy civil society sector is in the dimension of IMPACT, while the closest to an ideal of a healthy civil society sector is in the VALUES dimension.

Structure

7

(4.0)

(3.5)   (4.8)

Space 7   0   7 **Values**

(2.2)

7

Impact
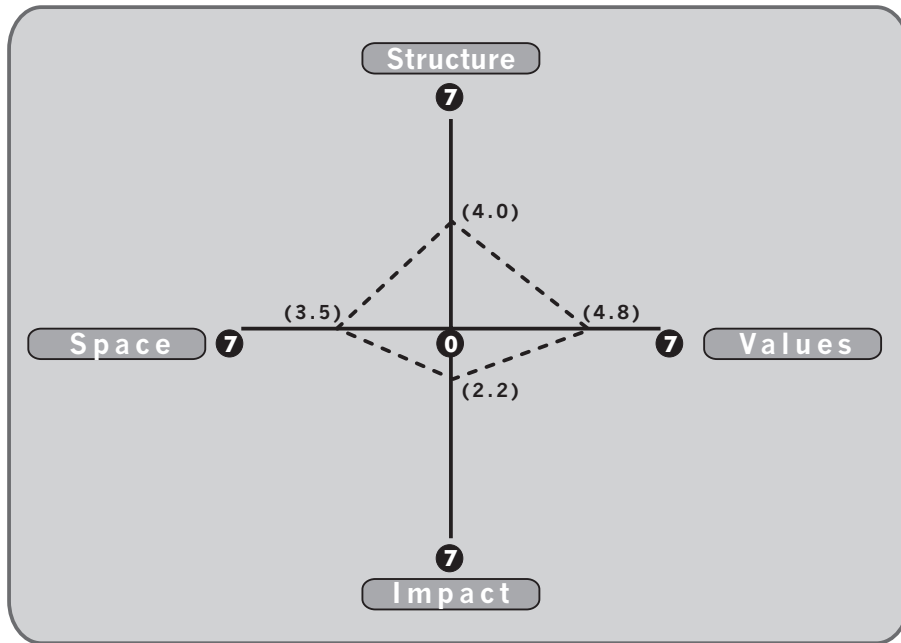
We can then go back and look at the scores for the sub-dimensions and assess which of those scores was the lowest, and which of those sub-dimensions was responsible for bringing the average score down.

3.2.6. *Analysing and Discussing*

Once the distorted diamond is displayed, all stakeholders are asked to look at it and think about what it shows.

The first response is likely to be that it shows the perceived performance of the civil society sector in your country at different degrees of health along each of the four dimensions. It is likely to show that the sector's performance along one dimension is worse

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than along others, with this suggesting, perhaps, there is a problem with the sector's competence or capacity along that dimension.

The second response is to probe a bit deeper by going back to the sub-dimension scores and finding which of them was the key factor in bringing the average score down.

The third response is to analyse why people scored the civil society sector low in that particular sub-dimension. Is it something clearly understandable with no dissenting voices? Or are there people among the stakeholders who are surprised by the score, and claim that they scored the sector high in that particular sub-dimension? If this is the case, is there a misunderstanding of the issues? A misunderstanding of the sector? An application of the issue and the indicators to one part (but not all) of the sector?

The facilitator must first help the group to probe where the key to the low score is, and to satisfy the group that it is a legitimate and intended low score – not the product of misunderstanding or misinterpretation. If it is established that indeed it was intentionally marked as a low score, then the facilitator should ask the participants to delve a little deeper. What are the features of civil society in your country or region that produce this intended low score, and what can be done about this?

The facilitator should also make sure that the group does not focus only on the negative scores, but takes some time to review the positive scores to see where civil society is perceived to be strong. Here, again, participants should probe whether there is agreement on the positive scoring of the dimensions, sub-dimensions and certain indicators.

An interesting comment has come from Nilda Bullain of the Civil Society Development Foundation of Hungary. She facilitated a Civil Society Index exercise in Bosnia, Croatia, Macedonia,

Romania, Yugoslavia and Hungary, and gives the following comment:

"The exercise proved to be helpful in clarifying some of the definitions we used and in describing the current situation of NGOs and their environment in a country. These all served as reference points for further discussions about strategic planning and resource mobilization. For example, when comparing Romania and Hungary, we saw that with the Hungarian diamond – where the government is a serious player in both policy implementation and in financing the sector – the left or Space and Structure side of the diamond was bigger as legislation and inter-sectoral relations have become more developed. In Romania, however, where NGOs are much more reliant on foreign funding, the right – or Values and Impact' – side of the diamond was larger."

3.2.7. *Generating an Action Plan*

Once the group has agreed that the civil society sector in their country, region or district is, indeed, under-performing along a particular issue or indicator, the next step is to think what might be done about it (and just who would be interested in doing it). It is unlikely that there is a representative organization in your country that claims to speak on behalf of the varied number of groups, organizations and associations we have indicated as belonging to the civil society sector. You will need to find out who is interested in improving the performance and capacity of the sector, particularly if the findings are not relevant to the specific kind of organization you represent.

The facilitator should steer the discussion at this point toward the effects an under-performing civil society has upon all organizations that are members of the sector. This will show that all can be harmed if there is widespread perception among the public that civil society organizations are not effective along these 4

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dimensions. There is general disillusion among members of the public about the civil society sector in many countries. Sometimes this is led by the government and business sector, sometimes not. If the participants think about the image the civil society sector is presenting, they must also think what they can do about it.

This will lead to the next part of the exercise, which is agreeing on a vision of where you can – realistically – hope the civil society sector might, as reflected by the diamond, evolve in the next two years. Is it possible for one sector or another to have a higher score in two years time? What does this mean practically? We recommend splitting the stakeholder group into four (one for each dimension) and ask them to set themselves a target score for their respective dimension.

In some cases the target score might not even be set as an improvement, but as a holding-the-line stabilization of the present situation. For instance, if civil society organizations are showing themselves to be increasingly violent across religious lines, the vision might be to hold the present level of tolerance in the realization that increasing tolerance (and a score that reflects that) is unrealistic.

The key will be identifying the weaknesses in the civil society sector that have been revealed by the sub-dimension bar charts, and by the scores on each of the dimensions. A concrete action agenda can then be developed which translates the vision into action. Sometimes this concrete action agenda can be handled by one small part of the civil society sector; sometimes this will require coordinated and collaborative action by many different parts.

It is likely that enlightened self-interest (whereby members of the civil- society sector can see that improving the whole is likely to help all the parts) will suggest some measures that can be put in place. These measures must have a clear description, a clear target,

a clear responsibility and a clear timeline for accomplishment.

A further valuable spin-off that may take place is that an organization may come forward prepared to take on sector-wide capacity building once the urgency is clarified.

Lastly, the results of the Index exercise may come as a shock to some who felt that the civil society sector was very healthy – and they may not want to have the results publicized or communicated, feeling that they will be harmed by the findings. My own reaction to this is that there is a widespread feeling among the public in the South that civil society has presented itself as being 'holier than thou' by assuming a large degree of moral leadership in the development arena. Many are cynical about this, and would be re-assured by seeing the sector take a considered and thoughtful look at itself if the results prompted action rather than narcissistic navel-gazing. The Index exercise, therefore, can help to ensure a greater accountability and transparency of civil society.

However, we would also suggest to not only focus on the weaknesses identified, but to take some time to reflect on the strengths of your findings. What strengths were identified? In what areas (dimensions and sub-dimensions) can they be found?

Balancing the discussion of weaknesses with an interpretation of civil society's strengths is important to provide stakeholders with a balanced picture of the health of civil society.

3.2.8. *Evaluation and Closure*

Since the exercise has probably been a first for many of the participants, it is worthwhile to go back over it, asking for people's feedback concerning the value of the exercise and whether it provoked new and fresh thinking for them.

It is almost certain that participants have never before been asked to think of and assess the civil society sector as a whole. As we have noted previously, it is likely that people thought of NGOs as representing the civil society sector – and thought them to be the finest ones at that!

Some participants will probably say the field was so heterogeneous that they could not easily provide a score for a field that contains so many unlikely bedfellows, and will subsequently ask for an exercise with a more disaggregated sub-section of civil society.

Go back to the original thinking about having a document that could stand beside the overviews of the business and government sectors – are people satisfied that what you have produced could play that role? It may well be that some people will feel that their perceptions were too vague and not rigorous enough from a seriously analytical perspective. They may feel that the civil society sector needs to try and cultivate a lot more hard data before it can compare itself to something as statistically strict as GDP or Per Capita Income. This, in itself, may give some suggestions for the future (for surveys or for some aggregation of data that has not been done before which will flesh out different aspects of the civil society sector).

Do not forget that there are others probably thinking along the same lines. CIVICUS members all over the world are trying out the Index on Civil Society and coming up with interesting ideas. In some of the places where the National Lead Organizations are operating they may have some very valuable ideas of ways in which information on the civil society sector can be compared.

Finally, it will be very interesting to take the country (or region) results up to a larger level of generality. If Indonesia's diamond is skewed in a certain way, for instance, is this reflected in the same

sort of skewing in the diamonds from nearby Thailand or Vietnam? What about from the diamonds of countries that are continents away? Can we see similarities in countries that are ethnically similar? Can we see similarities in countries with similar colonial backgrounds? Where we find 'positive deviants' (countries that have much higher scores than we expected), to what can we attribute this? What can we learn from them? However, while there is a certain space for cross-country comparisons, one has to keep in mind that people assess the health of civil society based on their own country-specific standards. Thus, comparing the individual scores across countries is not appropriate. What can be compared are the patterns of the Index and which indicators or sub-dimensions were ranked positively or negatively.

There is a mass of useful information to be teased out of the Index for Civil Society, as it becomes a regular and increasingly professional way of looking at the sector. It will require, initially, enthusiasts, but soon, we hope, it will prove itself a tool useful not just to those who work in the civil society sector, but for all those who aspire to a civil society.

Part 4:
The Short Version

A.   Preparing you to think about the whole of the civil society sector

·   Clarify that civil society is an arena in which there are three players – government, business and citizens

·   Clarify that citizens group together in two basic kinds of organizations to bring about a civil society – organizations for self-help and organizations for helping others

·   Clarify who the actors are in your country in these two basic kinds of organizations

·   Clarify that the civil society sector means citizens organizations – and that there are a huge variety of values within this sector.

DO :

Be as inclusive as possible – consider all the different kinds of citizens organizations that may exist in your country

Clarify with your peer group whether political parties, trade unions and cooperatives should be considered part of the civil society sector

Ascertain whether there are existing directories of organizations, or research on the civil society sector

DON'T :

Exclude other kinds of organizations just because they have very different values from you

Allow your thinking to be dominated by NGOs – involve someone from another important block (like Unions) from the start

Ignore traditional citizens' groups simply because they are not documented in the modern sector

Ignore representatives from government or the business sector because they have not shown their support for civil society thus far

B.   Preparing for a Civil Society Index Exercise

·   Find a reference group of people who are knowledgeable observers of civil society. Describe the exercise as one of assessing factors important to civil society to identify its strengths and weaknesses. Clarify for them, as you have clarified for yourself, what is meant by civil society.

·   Develop with them indicators to describe a healthy civil society with reference to your country as a start. Use the 4 dimensions and the sub-dimensions suggested. Emphasise that their indicators are required and provide an example list

·   Check that all indicators are positive statements

·   Try and produce 20 indicators per dimension with 4-5 per sub-dimension

·   Reflect whether there are objective reference materials that could be found and used to back up or challenge people's perceptions

·   Ask the reference group for examples of civil society that illustrate the extremes of the indicators chosen in order to get people's thinking clarified.

·   Decide on a scoring system and very clear scoring instructions.

DO :

Try and get participants who are from a

variety of different parts of the civil society sector. Failing that, do get people who are knowledgeable about different sub-sectors

Look for objective reference material that can back up your perception indicators

Make sure that high marks for any particular indicator produces the intended contribution to a healthy civil society

DON'T :

Force core indicators on the participants, but urge them to think of the value of comparable indicators across countries

Forget to use the tool of extreme examples – to make people appreciate the variety of organisations within civil society

Forget to explain the scoring system carefully.

C.   Managing the Assessment Exercise

·   Emphasize the need for and the role of the facilitator

·   Go through the indicators with the group for comprehension. Ask for extreme illustrations to exercise their minds

·   Go through the indicators one by one, asking people to score. Be sure to ensure privacy and allow people to comment on the fitness of any indicator

·   Ask people to suggest existing objective verifiers of any of the indicators as you go through them or possible objective verifiers which could be set up subsequently

DO :

Make Sure that the facilitator knows what is expected of the participants, and has practiced beforehand – and has also read this book

Keep collecting sources of objective information to back up your perception based information

DON'T :

Stop people questioning the indicators – better that everyone is in agreement about them

Allow anyone to leave out a score for a question – all indicators should be scored

D.   Looking at the Results

·   (a) collect the papers and aggregate the marks outside the group

·   (b) aggregate the marks within the group

·   Present the Diamond Outline

·   Position the scores on the axis

·   Draw the connected lines

·   Compare the shape of the scored diamond with the 'healthy' diamond: look at the divergence in each dimension: consider the most important within the score for each dimension: consider the effect of averaging scores: consider the disproportionate influence of specific groupings within civil society on the score

·   Interpret the diamond shape: examine the new diamond for surprises, for extremes, as a reflection of the present or maybe as a recent trend.

·   Think through whether the scored diamond suggests any concerns that civil society should address. What are they? How would you like the diamond to look? What needs to be done? Who might be interested in doing it?

·   Agenda-setting and goal-setting: Who will do this?

- Check changes over time

DO :

Clarify how the scores are being aggregated – so no-one is suspicious

Take time to consider the implications of the scored Diamond.

DON'T :

Allow the group to disband before an action plan with responsibilities allocated is made

Lose the questions, working, diamonds, and notes – you will need them for comparison next time you do the exercise.

E.   Various Uses of the Diamond

- Reflect that this exercise to date has been for a national assessment of civil society

- This can also be done at the local, district, state/province and regional levels. What indicators would need to change and how would you get new indicators?

- This can also be done with a much more restricted constituency (e.g. CSOs in the environmental field, labour unions, religious groups, etc.). What indicators would need to change and how would new indicators be identified?

Think sector wide, not just about your own subgrouping, within the civil society sector.

Appendix 1

Comparative Instruments for the Other Sectors

The long-term aim of a CIVICUS Index on Civil Society is to create a regular, respected and intellectually rigorous tool that will be able to provide information about the contribution of the third sector of society on a regular basis. This will help with reflection, impact assessment and future planning for the sector. There is, at present, no global body which takes the pulse of citizens' contribution to civil society – in the way that the World Trade Organization, for instance, takes the pulse of the market's contribution to the public good or the World Bank takes the pulse of government's contributions to development.

There have been, and are, some organizations that collect data on social indicators that are relevant to our work, like the UNDP's Human Development Report. Other organizations have attempted to develop statistics on the third sector, and they can be very useful to us. Examples might be the Johns Hopkins Comparative Non-profit Sector Project, the World Value Survey, The Union of International Associations and EUROVOL.

Such organizations have worked out indicators, methods of assembling data and regular ways of aggregating the data to present it to those who think about these sectors. There is no such tool for the citizens sector to date, no systematic way in which those interested in citizen's contributions to the public good can reflect on what has been done and what needs to be done, nor a common agreement on the dimensions of civil society.

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