Assessing and Strengthening Civil Society Worldwide

An updated programme description of the CIVICUS Civil Society Index: Phase 2008 to 2010.

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Preface

I am pleased to present our latest publication "Assessing and strengthening civil society worldwide", which describes an updated methodology of the new phase (2008-2010) of the Civil Society Index.

In this phase, the CSI programme works in 60 countries and national reports will soon be issued from at least 35 countries. The CSI remains a collaborative effort between the CIVICUS secretariat in Johannesburg and its national partners. As such, its results depend primarily on the work of a broad range of stakeholders at the national level, with CIVICUS maintaining a limited role in terms of the development of the tool, initial capacity building, international co-ordination, technical assistance and quality assurance.

The importance of the production of knowledge and evidence by civil society has been extensively underlined. The information civil society organisations (CSOs) produce and diffuse are traditionally their most valuable currency in order to influence political processes. For example, the CSI findings in the 2003-2007 implementation phase helped in understanding the social reality that exists within civil society in over 50 implementing countries. Moreover, the CSI has contributed extensively to the existing literature on civil society and has made crucial contributions to policy in many aspects of social and political life, including improving good governance, people-centred development and the fight against corruption.

The two main outputs of the CSI remain the Analytical Country Report and the Policy Action Brief. The Analytical Country Reports summarise the CSI implementation process and synthesise the findings in an analytical manner, and are directed at civil society stakeholders. The Policy Action Brief outlines the main CSI findings and highlights the action agenda and policy recommendations to rectify weaknesses and promote strengths. The Policy Action Brief is aimed at policy makers and a broader civil society audience.

The first phases of the CSI programme provided strong evidence for the validity of the research-action principle and for such a theory of change. In the Ukraine, for instance, the CSI not only increased the interactions, but also helped to strengthened relations amongst civil society, the government and the media. It also facilitated the development and adoption of the 'guidelines for cooperation between government and Civil Society Cooperation'.

The CSI is based on the fact that collective citizen action is a common feature of all societies around the world. It also considers that civil society is an adequate concept to describe this universal reality, irrespective of its philosophical roots. The CSI defines civil society as 'the arena in society between the state, market and family where citizens advance their common interests'. This conceptualisation successfully integrates two schools of civil society theory, namely the liberal conception of associational life and Gramsci's notion of civil society as the site of struggle for hegemony. Subsequently, civic engagement, or 'active citizenship', is a crucial defining factor of civil society. It is the hub of civil society and is therefore one of the core components of CSI's definition. In light of these goals and objectives, some changes have been made to the overall CSI methodology. The definition of civil society is still normative-free and functional, but is

now more explicit. The dimensions investigated have changed, increasing in number from 4 to 5. The **Structure** dimension from the previous methodology was divided into two separate dimensions - **Civic Engagement** and **Level of Organisation** and they join **Practice of Values** and **Perceived Impact**, as the four axes of the diamond. The fifth dimension, the **Environmental** context in which civil society must operate, is now represented by a circle surrounding the diamond. The main reason for the change of dimensions was that the environment was not a directly involved part of the dimensions of civil society, despite it having direct effect over civil society.

I would like to pay a tribute to past and present colleagues in the CSI programme who work tirelessly to implement what, in many aspects, represents our organisation so well. The CSI findings support and are enriched by many of our other programmes, such as the Civil Society Watch, Participatory Governance and Legitimacy, Transparency and Accountability programmes. Through the Civil Society Watch programme for instance, CIVICUS documents and takes action on threats to civil society all over the world. In many multi-stakeholder forums worldwide, we contribute to a collective reflection on the enabling environment for CSOs. All of CIVICUS' efforts are focussed on protecting the rights and fostering responsibilities of organised civil society. It is my hope that the current CSI phase findings will be discussed and used by civil society defenders all over the world.

Ingrid Srinath
Secretary General
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Acknowledgements

The CSI is indebted to a large number of individuals and organisations who have contributed to the programme's development over the last 10 years. In particular, CSI would like to thank former CIVICUS Secretary General Dr. Kumi Naidoo, who came up with the initial idea of a Civil Society Index (CSI) in 1999 and has constantly provided strategic guidance and advice to the CSI since that time. The programme also benefited from the work of Professor Helmut Anheier who developed the initial research framework, the Civil Society Diamond, which is still at the heart of today's CSI.[1]

The CSI team would also like to thank Volkhart Finn Heinrich and Carmen Malena for their immeasurable contribution in revising the methodology for the phase which took place between 2003 and 2007. Moreover, we are further indebted to Finn for his stewardship of the programme as its manager up to 2006. Finn and his team authored numerous programme documents and results, including the first edition of this programme description in 2004.

The 2008 revision team, comprising of Prof. Helmut Anheier, Regina List and Dr. Michael Hölscher (Centre for Social Investment, Heidelberg University); Janine Schall-Emden, Dr. Lorenzo Fioramonti, Jacob M. Mati, and Dr. Federico Silva (members of the CIVICUS CSI team); Fiona Holland and Dr. Sally Stares (London School of Economics); and Dr. Hagai Katz (Israeli Centre for Third Sector Research) must be thanked for their tireless dedication to improving the CSI methodology as is presented in this paper.

While only three names appear as authors of this paper, many others have contributed in different ways. We would specifically like to mention Rose Ngwenjah, a former CSI research intern, for her contributions. We also thank other members of the CSI team, Julia Sestier, Amy Bartlett, Mark Nowottny, and Megan MacGarry for their contributions, comments and reviews of drafts of this paper.

Lastly, but certainly not least, we would also like to thank the many national partners who have implemented the project throughout the years and who have provided useful input to the subsequent revision in the methodology. CSOs and individuals, more than anyone else, have breathed life into the Civil Society Index. It is their use of research and action, done in order to strengthen the position of civil society around the globe that remains an inspiration for all.

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[1] For a detailed account of Anheier's approach, see his publication 'Civil Society – Measurement, Evaluation, Policy', published by Earthscan, 2004.

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I. Introduction

In the first semester of 2008, the CSI programme undertook a revision of its framework and methodology. This followed the end of the first phase of implementation between 2003 and 2006, in which the CSI was implemented in 53 countries worldwide. This revision process was based on the findings of the end-of-programme evaluations as well as extensive feedback provided by the participatory evaluations of the National Coordinating Organisations (NCOs). The revision of the CSI methodological framework was developed in partnership with Heidelberg University, resulting in a revised toolkit for the 2008-20010 CSI implementation phase.

The redesign process started with a three day meeting from 25 to 28 February 2008. This was attended by four CIVICUS staff and six consultants, specialising in particular areas of interest to the revision process. The process was chaired by Dr Helmut Anheier, then Director of the Centre for Social Investment, at Heidelberg University. In the following months, the necessary steps for elaboration on the suggested changes were divided among all revision team members. The main amendments were then shared with the CIVICUS Board, the entire CSI team and the members of the Advisory Group. The revision process was concluded by the end of July 2008.

The major goals for the redesign were to streamline the CSI methodology and render it more user-friendly. Another was to decrease the resources needed for the programme and the time of implementation, while still preserving the richness of the original CSI approach. More specific objectives were to strengthen links between research and action, showing how evidence can have a political impact. The redesign aimed to enhance comparability of results and information, and to combine better quantitative and qualitative information. In this process of change, CIVICUS has been driven by a desire for the CSI to remain responsive and relevant to understanding the ever-changing dynamics in civil society, as well as to build civil society's capacity to play a stronger role in governance and development processes worldwide.

In view of these goals and objectives, significant changes have been made, and these are highlighted throughout this paper. The definition of civil society, although still normative-free and functional, is now more explicit. The number of dimensions measured and incorporated in the CSI Diamond has increased from four to five. These now include Civic Engagement, Level of Organisation, Practice of Values, Perceived Impact and Environment. The Civil Society Diamond, functioning as the final visual representation of the state of civil society, now has a circle that symbolise the Environment dimension. All of these dimensions have been carefully reshaped so that they are based on raw quantitative data, ranging from 0 to 100. In doing so, there has been a particularly significant move away from the scoring process used in the previous methodology, which was considered as too subjective, and towards greater objectivity.

Some of the tools used to gather primary data have also changed. The community sample survey was redeveloped into an opinion survey, done on a national scale. Stakeholder consultations were substituted by an organisational survey, tailored to capture specificities at the meso-level. A new survey was also introduced to capture the external perception of civil society's impact by relevant actors. This again reflects efforts to move away from the subjectivity of relying primarily on civil society's opinion of itself.

This quantitative data collection and analysis is also now complemented by the development of a number of case studies, to be chosen from a list of salient issues specific to each country's context. Case studies will triangulate findings in the final country report by pinpointing, specifying, and enriching the picture provided by the quantitative data from the surveys.

Finally, the methodology envisages two major outputs. Firstly, there will be a Country Report, which is to be shorter and have a more analytical form than in the previous phase. Secondly, there will be a Policy Action Brief in which key recommendations will be suggested to policy and decision makers on possible ways forward to build on strengths and counteract weaknesses identified by the Country Report.

This paper presents a snapshot of the current CSI phase of 2008 to 2010 and its revised conceptual and methodological design, as well as offering a comparison with previous incarnations of the project. The paper begins by giving the general background that first informed CSI's development. It then examines the rationale for continued implementation of the CSI ten years after it was first initiated. The paper then outlines in brief the current CSI methodology, before discussing the implementation process itself in the subsequent section.

II. General background informing CSI's development[2]

While civil society has, over the years, been celebrated by many scholars and policy-makers of different ideological persuasions, in recent years its role has increasingly elicited much scrutiny (Mati 2009; Heinrich, 2004 and 2007; Putnam 2000; Chandhoke 1995; Etzioni 1995; Gellner 1994; Cohen and Arato 1992). Despite this growing scrutiny and questioning, knowledge on civil society in many countries is still limited. Moreover, there are huge differences in the amount of available data on civil society between better-researched countries in the global North, and those in the South, where information is often scarce, or even non-existent. In many countries, research on civil society issues is truly an exploration into "no man's land". The dearth of knowledge about civil society emanates, in part, from the basic heterogeneity and dynamics of the actors occupying its terrain. Moreover, there have been limited opportunities for different civil society actors to come together with other stakeholders, in order to discuss and reflect on the current state of civil society, its challenges, and how to make the sector more effective in contributing to positive social change.

The CIVICUS Civil Society Index (CSI) seeks to address this need for increased knowledge about civil society by providing a participatory needs assessment and action planning tool for civil society around the world. The ultimate aim of the CSI is to create a knowledge base and increased momentum for civil society strengthening initiatives. The CSI is a unique research-action project led by, and for, civil society organisations and is implemented in partnership with CIVICUS. It also actively involves and disseminates its findings to a broad range of stakeholders including governments, donors, academics and the general public at large. At the heart of the project is the belief that civil society can and should exist, express itself and engage with other sectors. It will best do so when it creates proper space to reflect, discuss and reach an evidence-based understanding of civil society, such as its strengths, weaknesses, challenges and opportunities. By seeking to combine valid assessment, broad-based reflection and joint action, the CSI also attempts to make a contribution to the perennial debate on how research can inform policy and practice (Heinrich 2004 and 2007). The ongoing contribution of the CSI to the understanding of civil society and its strengthening has been well documented in over 70 publications, including country reports, working papers, conference papers and comparative volume books.[3]

[2] This section draws heavily from the earlier version of this paper authored by Volkhart Finn Heinrich, 2004. For more details on the content of the paper, please contact: http://civicus.org/new/media/CSI_Heinrich_paper.pdf

[3] For more details about these publications, please visit: http://www.civicus.org/csi/csi-publications and http://www.civicus.org/csi/phase-one/csi-country-reports

III. Why continue with implementation of the CSI?

At the time the CSI was conceived, it became clear from consultations with different stakeholders, that despite the plethora of studies on specific components and actors within civil society knowledge on civil society -especially in countries of the global South – was still limited (Heinrich 2004).[4] Heinrich (2004) argued that this principally emanated from the inherent difficulty in conceptualising and operationalising civil society for empirical research. Here, the elusiveness of the civil society concept resulted, as van Rooy (1998: 6) argued, in its misuse as an 'analytical hat-stand' for widely diverging ideologies and policy agendas. This, therefore, presented challenges in researching civil society, due to the greatly differing manifestations of civil society around the world. As such, despite the immense body of research that has been conducted on civil society, no widely used conceptual framework for analysing civil society has emerged (Heinrich 2004).

The CSI has contributed to clarifying the notion of civil society in the relatively few countries where it has been implemented. For example, the CSI findings from the 2003-2007 implementation phase helped in understanding the variegated reality of civil society in over 50 implementing countries (for examples see Malena 2008). In the process, CSI has produced a significant body of literature on civil society's crucial contributions to policy, and on aspects of social and political life, such as good governance, people-centred development and the fight against corruption (Blagescu and Court 2008). However, there is still significant uncertainty over what civil society looks like, in terms of its strengths, shape and development process, for a majority of countries around the globe.

The lack of overall understanding of civil society's empirical manifestations, particularly in the developing world, has hampered both the advancement of scientific knowledge on the subject, as well as an appreciation by practitioners and the development community of civil society's actual role in governance and development (Uphoff and Krishna 2001; Howell and Pearce 2002, as cited in Heinrich 2004). These knowledge limitations in turn hamper effective support for civil society in many countries (UNDP 2009; RECSA 2009; Lamptey 2007; SIDA 2003; Dutch Foreign Ministry 2003; NORAD 2002: 2, as cited in Heinrich 2004). Moreover, given the duality of the CSI objectives, pursuing both research and action aims, the CSI project must monitor the resulting efforts and initiatives seeking to strengthen civil society, as well as their long-term impact. This can only be achieved through repeated country implementation.

Moreover, as Heinrich (2004) intoned, advocates of civil society need to produce sound arguments, supported by empirical evidence, that counter recent advances in literature which question civil society's relevance. If this is not done, the concept is in danger of reverting to the same level of obscurity in which it has existed for the greater part of its

[4] This observation, at least from the CSI implementation perspective, remains somewhat true today. This is because a majority of the countries that implemented the CSI in the last phase (2003-2007) were mainly countries in the global North, who often found that they benefited from the advantage of already-existing knowledge on civil society. See http://www.civicus.org/csi/phase-one/csi-country-reports for more details on the participating countries.

historical trajectory. As such, the continued implementation also emanates, in part, from a desire by different civil society stakeholders to come together and reflect on the state of civil society. This is particularly relevant given the context of a growing body of work questioning the assumption of civil society's progressive role in development and democratisation processes (Liston 2003, 2009; Heinrich 2004).

The CSI research from the 2003-2007 phase revealed that these questions arise, in part, from the challenges surrounding civil society. The most important among these being civil society's own accountability and ambivalence to its own internal democracy (Heinrich, Mati and Brown 2008; Bonbright and Kiryttopolou 2009; Mati 2009 and 2010). As such, some commentators, for example Taylor and Naidoo (2004), have argued that 'we are now past the "magic" phase of global civil society, a new realism has set in, with events wiping away the naïveté of the 1990s to some extent' (cited in Mati 2008: 37). Edwards (2004) goes on to observe that the jury is still out as to whether civil society is the 'magic bullet' ensuring sustainable human progress, or simply yet another grand idea which fails miserably in practice. Despite such pessimism, civil society's role in development and governance is not in doubt. Munck demonstrates this optimism, arguing that 'we are now "taking global civil society seriously" in terms of moving beyond abstract typologies to construct its politics [and ...] we are probably in an era of paradigmatic transition in all realms' (2006: 331).

We argue in this report that due to these reasons, the need has therefore never been greater for efforts to help civil society identify and address its challenges, strengthen itself and effectively play a progressive role in social change. The CSI was designed to do just that and it continues to generate relevant and practical scientific knowledge for the strengthening of global civil society.

IV. Overview of the CSI: Phase 2008 - 2010

This section gives a snapshot of the current phase of the CSI programme and its methodology. It begins with an outline of the guiding principles that CIVICUS had drawn for the redesign team. It will then briefly give the history of the CSI, how CSI defines civil society and why. Additionally, it deals with the CSI processes and methodological tools for implementation, the CSI diamond and the final outputs and action plans for civil society strengthening. This will be followed by examining why and how the methodology has changed.

Redesign guiding principles

i) Action-orientation: In contrast to many academic-focussed research initiatives, the principal aim of the CSI is to generate information that is of practical use to civil society practitioners and other primary stakeholders. Therefore, the CSI conceptual framework had to identify aspects of civil society that can be changed, as well as generate information and knowledge relevant to action-oriented goals. In doing this, the CSI was guided by the need to generate an assessment of civil society that would meet the basic criteria of scientific rigour and cross-country comparability, as well as provide civil society stakeholders with practical knowledge and mechanisms for strengthening civil society.

The earlier edition of this paper by Heinrich in 2004, dealt at length with the empirical and theoretical contentions on the viability of having a programme such as the CSI.[5] Heinrich (2004) noted that some authors contend that the civil society concept cannot, and should not, be subjected to empirical measurement at all because civil society is primarily a theoretical, normative and abstract idea without any clear, distinct and measurable empirical manifestations in social life (Tester 1992: 124, as cited in Heinrich 2004: 2). In fact, during the pre-CSI design consultations, one participant termed it an "exercise in madness" (Malena 2008; Heinrich 2004). However, this was a lone voice and CIVICUS' resolve to design and implement the programme materialised. Experiences in implementing the CSI since 2001, have vindicated CIVICUS in a sense, because the programme has convincingly demonstrated the analytical and policy-related reasons for actual measurability of the concept.[6]

ii) CSI implementation must be participatory by design: The CSI implementation design needed to take note of the fact that the CSI does not stop at the generation of knowledge alone. Rather, it also actively seeks to link knowledge-generation on civil society, with reflection and action by civil society stakeholders. To ensure this link, the redesign team had to ensure that CSI continues to use a variety of participatory action-research methods and principles. The CSI has therefore continued to involve its beneficiaries, as well as various other actors, in this particular case, civil society stakeholders, in all stages of the process, from the design and implementation, through to the deliberation and dissemination stages. However, participation is neither seen as a

[5] For a detailed discussion on this, see Volkhart Finn Heinrich (2004) *Assessing and Strengthening Civil Society Worldwide; A project description of the CIVICUS Civil Society Index: A Participatory Needs Assessment & Action-Planning Tool for Civil Society*, Johannesburg, CIVICUS.

[6] For a detailed analysis of CSI's impacts and utility, please see *CIVICUS CSI 2003-2007 Impact Assessment Report: Phase 2003 to 2007* (forthcoming).

panacea (Cooke and Kothari 2001), nor is it used as a tool without due consideration throughout the programme cycle. On the contrary, each programme stage employs an appropriate type of participation by the relevant group of actors. These participatory processes ensure that desired courses of action and policy are chartered by the stakeholders through a combination of empirical data-gathering and normative assessment. Moreover, the engagement of researchers and practitioners throughout the programme stages, helps to break down barriers and allows for a mutually empowering relationship.

But how is this participatory cycle relevant to efforts to strengthen civil society in a country? One way in which it is relevant is that such a mechanism can foster the self-awareness of civil society actors as being part of something larger, namely, civil society itself. As a purely educational gain, it broadens the horizon of CSO representatives through a process of reflecting upon, and engaging with, civil society issues which may go beyond the more narrow foci of their respective organisations. A strong collective self-awareness among civil society actors can also function as an important catalyst for joint advocacy activities to defend civic space when under threat or to advance the common interests of civil society vis-à-vis external forces. These basic civil society issues, on which there is often more commonality than difference among such actors, are at the core of the CSI assessment. It should, of course, be kept in mind that in many instances, civil society actors and external stakeholders will not be able to find common ground due to irreconcilable differences in values, interests and strategies. Even then, however, the relevance of dialogue, constructive engagement and of 'agreeing to disagree' should not be underestimated (Edwards 2004: 100). This is especially important in many places where civil society experiences internal fragmentation, parochialism and divisions within the sector, as well as relations between civil society and government.

iii) CSI must remain change-oriented: The participatory nature that lies at the core of the CSI methodology is an important step in the attempt to link research with action, creating a diffused sense of awareness and ownerships. However, the theory of change that the CSI is based on goes one step further, coupling this participatory principle with the creation of evidence in the form of a comparable and contextually valid assessment of the state of civil society. It is this evidence, once shared and disseminated, that ultimately constitutes a resource for action. Thus, the CSI research component is not an end in itself, but rather an essential means for achieving more practical goals.

The importance of the production of knowledge and evidence, as a tool in the hands of civil society, has been extensively underlined amongst scholars and practitioners alike. Keck and Sikkink (1998) noted that the information CSOs produce and diffuse is traditionally their 'most valuable currency' to influence political processes. Risse (2000) defines this relevant information as 'authoritative knowledge' to explain the role that *expertise* plays in augmenting CSOs' leverage in politics. Also, at the empirical level, a number of different case studies concerning development have extensively highlighted this link between knowledge and action. The first phases of the CSI provided strong evidence for the validity of such a theory of change by collecting different signs of impact.[7]

[7] Examples here include: in Georgia, the USAID country office used the CSI to help inform their strategic planning process; the European Commission used the CSI to inform their framework for the European integration process; the Macedonian government used the CSI as a basis for its strategy for co-operation with the civil sector; in Ukraine, the CSI

At the heart of the CSI's knowledge-action link is the national workshop, which brings together a variety of civil society stakeholders. Many of the stakeholders have been actively involved in the CSI research process, such as the Advisory Committee members, participants in the focus groups, or as key informants for specific research questions. The intention of the national workshop is twofold. Firstly, it aims to engage stakeholders in a critical discussion of, and reflection on, the results of the CSI initiative, in order to arrive at a common understanding of its current state and major challenges. This is a prerequisite for the second goal, which is namely for participants to use the findings as a basis for the identification of specific strengths and weaknesses, as well as to identify potential areas of improvement for civil society. The national workshop usually culminates in the development of a specific action agenda, which is subsequently carried out by the stakeholders. In its methodology, the CSI created specific output to support this exercise in the form of the Policy Action Brief. As a synthesis of the scientific evidence and stakeholder planning, the purpose of the Policy Action Brief is both to outline the main CSI findings, as well as to highlight the action agenda and policy recommendations to rectify weaknesses and promote the strengths of civil society. Against this background, the CSI is increasingly emphasizing the importance of follow-up activities after the research aspects of the project are finalised. For example, these activities might include international conferences, or regional policy meetings, in order to build upon the momentum created by the national workshops. All of these events aim to enable multi-sectoral dialogue around the CSI regional findings, and also to foster the exchange of best practices, lessons learned and ways to address civil society issues. They also increase dissemination and the strategic use of CSI results, both at the national and regional levels, in order to support participatory governance, democratic initiatives and to consolidate approaches at the trans-national level. These renewed efforts to encourage subsequent activities reflect the CSI project's wider commitment to knowledge-reflection-action linkages. This is founded on the belief that development and civic engagement prospers best when knowledge, reflection and action come together. The CSI project also aims to generate important learning on what enables, and in turn, what prevents such linkages from working.

iv) CSI must continue putting local partners in the driver's seat*:* Finally, the CSI was to continue being a collaborative effort between a broad range of stakeholders, with most importance placed on the relationship between CIVICUS and its national partners. As shall be shown in this paper, the CSI design has sought to be as empowering as possible for the national partners, while maintaining a specific but limited role for CIVICUS, in terms of providing initial capacity building, international co-ordination, technical assistance and quality assurance. CIVICUS has a strong commitment to documenting, tracking and learning from these organisational and programme issues. Future programme papers will reflect in greater detail on the challenges of the CSI as an international capacity building programme for civil society support organisations.

Within the CSI implementation process, indigenous civil society actors take the driver's seat, as they develop their own civil society needs assessments and design their own action plans. This approach dovetails well with recent pledges from the donor community stating that donors' programmatic priorities should be based on the issues identified by

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increased the interactions and strengthened relations between civil society and the government and media and also facilitated the development and adoption of a Policy on 'Government and Civil Society Cooperation'.

local civil society itself, rather than being imposed externally (Dutch Foreign Ministry 2003; NORAD 2002: 4). In the current phase, it will therefore be interesting to monitor the extent to which donor agencies incorporate the outcomes of the CSI assessment and agenda-setting processes at a country level.

V. The CSI Methodology[8]

Since 1999, when then Secretary General of CIVICUS Dr Kumi Naidoo, envisioned a global comparative study of civil society to respond to the need for more information about the sector, the CSI has significantly contributed to a greater collective understanding of civil society. This has been made possible through the utilisation of a rigorous, but flexible, methodology that accommodates the diversity and fluidity of civil society. After extensive discussions and planning between Kumi and his then staff, with the CIVICUS Board and various academics and civil society stakeholders, a methodology was designed. Twelve countries initially took part in piloting it.[9] After the pilot phase, the methodology was developed further to address identified shortcomings and problem areas.

The resulting revised CSI methodology was then implemented in over 50 countries between 2003 and 2007. This yielded interesting results that have been published in 50 different country reports jointly by CIVICUS and the partner organisations. The results were also published in two comprehensive volumes by CIVICUS. The first being *CIVICUS Global Survey of the State of Civil Society: Volume 1 Country Profiles,* edited by V. Finn Heinrich (2007), and the second, *CIVICUS Global Survey of the State of Civil Society: Volume 2 Comparative Perspectives,* edited by V. Finn Heinrich and Lorenzo Fioramonti (2008). The 2003-2007 implementation phase yielded important lessons for the programme itself. The CSI has built on and learned lessons from past experiences, to sharpen the programme and develop it into a relevant and adaptable tool for civil society strengthening. This was done through a methodology revision and redesign carried out in 2008, that has culminated in the current 2008-2010 methodology. Since August 2008, the CIVICUS CSI team, together with our national partners in 56 countries, has been implementing the CSI, using the revised methodology as described in this paper.

Conceptual Issues: Defining Civil Society

As with any research project, one of the most important initial steps is to define the concepts and terminology that have been used. The definition of the concept 'civil society' has inherently been problematic. The first edition of this paper, by V. Finn Heinrich (2004), discussed in great detail the problems in conceptualising civil society. The problematic issues in defining civil society, highlighted in that publication, remain largely the same to this day. Heinrich (2004) argues that civil society has become a buzzword and has attracted enthusiasm from scholars and policy-makers of different ideological persuasions. These differences range from neo-liberal thinkers to radical democrats, communitarians and neo-marxists (Cohen and Arato 1992; Seligman 1992; Chandhoke 1995; Etzioni 1995; Gellner 1994; Putnam 2000 as cited in Heinrich 2004:1. Also see Mati, 2008 for similar arguments). As such, due to its different historical and ideological legacies and framings, the concept of civil society is uniquely imprecise and

[8] For a more in-depth review of the history of the CSI project, please refer to the earlier edition of this paper by Volkhart Finn Heinrich, 2004.

[9] These countries included: Belarus, Canada, Croatia, Estonia, Mexico, New Zealand, Pakistan, Romania, South Africa, Ukraine, and Uruguay.

fuzzy and is an extremely complex and contested concept (Mati 2008, 2009; Heinrich 2005; Keane 2004 as cited in Munck 2006). For some commentators, civil society is intertwined in a hegemonic historic bloc and serves as a stabilising, conservative force that ensures popular consent to the state (Gramsci 1971. See also Bond 2006; Katz 2006; Price 2003 for similar views). For others, it is a transformative anti-systemic force of counter-hegemony in the economic, political, social and cultural spheres (Mati 2008, 2009; Held and McGrew 2003; Polanyi 1957).

Recognising the heterogeneity of views in the conception of civil society, the CIVICUS CSI methodology utilises a bridging approach so as to be theoretically sound and empirically relevant and inclusive. This helps in not only 'captur[ing] the essence of most existing conceptualisations of civil society, but also passes the test of theoretical grounding and resonance in the broader field of empirical political sociology' (Heinrich 2005: 219). Arguably, this conceptualisation also:

> Successfully integrates […] two […] contending schools of civil society theory, namely de Tocqueville's liberal conception of associational life … and Gramsci's notion of civil society as the site of struggle for […] hegemony […] thereby strengthening its conceptual grounding in the field and rendering cross-fertilisation [of these different views in research] possible.[10]

In view of this, the progenitors of the CIVICUS CSI conceived civil society as 'the arena in society between the state, market and family where citizens advance their common interests' (Heinrich, 2005: 217). This was the definition used during the first phase of implementation. Reflecting on this definition and its operational application in the last CSI phase, Malena (2008: 185) notes:

> …the vast majority of CSI countries adopted CIVICUS's proposed working definition with no, or only very minor, modifications. Sometimes, however, this appears to rather have been a resignation than an active acceptance of the proposed definition - attributable to a desire to optimise comparability with other countries and the fact that consensus on specific modifications or alternatives could not be reached.

Besides this, another significant empirical revelation from the 2003-7 implementation was that the definition had an inherent assumption that civil society's existence is a given. In reality however this is not the case. One such compelling case was the finding in Scotland which 'opted to drop the word "arena" and emphasised "the act of associating" (Malena, 2008: 186. See also Shah, 2006: 6). This, according to Malena (2008: 186):

> ...suggests a certain evolution in the *concept* of civil society as the *reality* of civil society develops - starting with a focus on the creation of space for

[10] Heinrich (2005) notes that Tocqueville argues that 'civil society' is a forum in which habits of the 'heart and the mind' are nurtured and developed. Tocqueville sees civil society as the institutions, the relationships and the norms that shape the quality and quantity of a society's interactions as an informal web of solidarity (social capital) that binds the society together for collective action.

> civil society to exist, the emergence of citizen groups to inhabit that space and finally the ability of those individuals and groups to act.

In taking cognisance of these observations and reflections, the CSI methodology redesign team in 2008 modified the civil society definition. This was to correct this assumption and other issues identified by participants and researchers. The CSI programme (CIVICUS CSI, 2008) redefined the concept of civil society as:

> The arena, outside of the family, the state, and the market – which is created by individual and collective actions, organisations and institutions to advance shared interests.

Descriptions of key terms of this definition:

Arena: In conceptualising civil society as an arena, the CSI emphasises the importance of civil society's role in creating public spaces where diverse societal values and interests interact (Fowler 1996). CSI uses the term 'arena' to describe the particular realm or space in a society where people come together to debate, discuss, associate and seek to influence broader society. CIVICUS strongly believes that this arena is distinct from other arenas in society, such as the market, state or family. Based on the CSI's practical interest in strengthening civil society and its contribution to positive social change, it therefore conceptualises civil society as a *political* term, rather than in *economic* terms as a synonym for the 'non-profit sector'. This is because CSI is interested in collective public action, in the broader contexts of governance and development, and not primarily in the economic role of non-profit organisations in society.[11] This political perspective of civil society leads the CSI to focus on issues of power, both within the civil society arena, as well as between civil society actors and the institutions of the state and the private sector.

Family: As the CSI is concerned with public action of individuals, due to its private nature, the family is generally not regarded as part of civil society. However, the CSI acknowledges the public role of family associations or clan groups in certain societies and, based on their public activity, would include them as part of civil society.

State: The state is distinct from civil society, in that it alone possesses the monopoly over the legitimate use of force in society (Gerth and Mills 1946). In instances where the state is failing and/or disintegrating, civil society may *temporarily* take on a partially coercive role. This occurs within examples of some revolutions or state-failure situations. This does not detract from fundamental difference between civil society and the state. In certain contexts, where local governance institutions are largely citizen-controlled, and/or traditional organisations are assigned certain authorities at local level, these institutions are sometimes seen as part of civil society. It is the view of the CSI however, that the authoritative power of local government to make binding decisions for the locality makes local government a component of the state.

[11] It is interesting that the label 'non-profits' is often welcomed by such organisations because it can help their claims to power by asserting their moral authority. Therefore a political perspective might presumably also acknowledge that claims to transcend pure economic gain are a part of a wider power and legitimacy struggle, and not just an objective category.

Market: The market, or private sector, is another space in society where people associate to advance their interests. However, due to their profit motive, the interactions that take place in this sphere are excluded from the definition of civil society by the CSI. Market actors can however participate in civil society. As explained above, participation in civil society is determined on the basis of its 'function' and not its organisational 'form'. This means that market actors, when engaged in 'public', not-for-profit or philanthropic acts, are seen as acting within civil society. Therefore, market-related organisations such as chambers of commerce and professional associations, which advocate for their members shared interests, are a part of civil society.

Individual and collective action, organisations and institutions: Implicit in a political understanding of civil society is the notion of agency; that civil society actors have the ability to influence decisions that affect the lives of ordinary people. The CSI embraces a broad range of actions taken by both individuals and groups. Individual actions might include writing a letter to a newspaper, signing a petition, demonstrating, taking part in a boycott, participating in neighbourhood or community meetings, joining an online-discussion forum or media debate, volunteering at a local school or clinic or giving money to charity. Collective actions might include advocacy campaigns, providing assistance and information, organising citizens' juries, lobbying officials and parliamentarians, hosting public debates, or mounting protests. Many of these actions take place within the context of non-coercive organisations or institutions ranging from small informal groups to large professionally run associations. They also include, but are not limited to, local sports clubs, international human rights organisations, parents' associations, labour unions, mutual savings or self-help groups, grant-making foundations, social service and health care providers, local choirs and national orchestras, academic institutions, religious organisations and other such organisations.

Advance shared interests: The term 'interests' should be interpreted very broadly, encompassing the promotion of values, needs, identities, norms and other aspirations. They encompass the personal and public, and can be pursued by small informal groups, large membership organisations or formal associations. The emphasis rests however on the element of 'sharing' that interest within the public sphere. Personal shared interests might include hobbies such as dancing, attending a book club, wildlife-spotting, singing, and playing a musical instrument within a band. Personal interests would also embrace any sporting activity practised on an amateur basis, whether it is kite-surfing, football, hockey, swimming, martial arts, or mountain-biking to name a few. Broader societal shared interests might include an equally broad spectrum of concerns such as environmental issues, protection of human rights, democracy promotion, HIV/AIDS awareness, employee rights, anti-war or peace movements, volunteering etc. Shared interests are promoted when civil society actors, including individuals, organisations and institutions, come together, or 'associate', in public spaces. This ability of people to bond and relate to one another, whether under the umbrella of an organisation or in a spontaneous demonstration, is a key characteristic of civil society and one of its basic building blocks. 'Where, by contrast, such bonds of affinity and cooperation are lacking, we speak of mass society, in which people stand alone, atomised and unconnected to each other' (Hadenius and Uggla 1996: 1621. Also see Buechler 2000).

Rationale for the change of the definition of 'civil society'

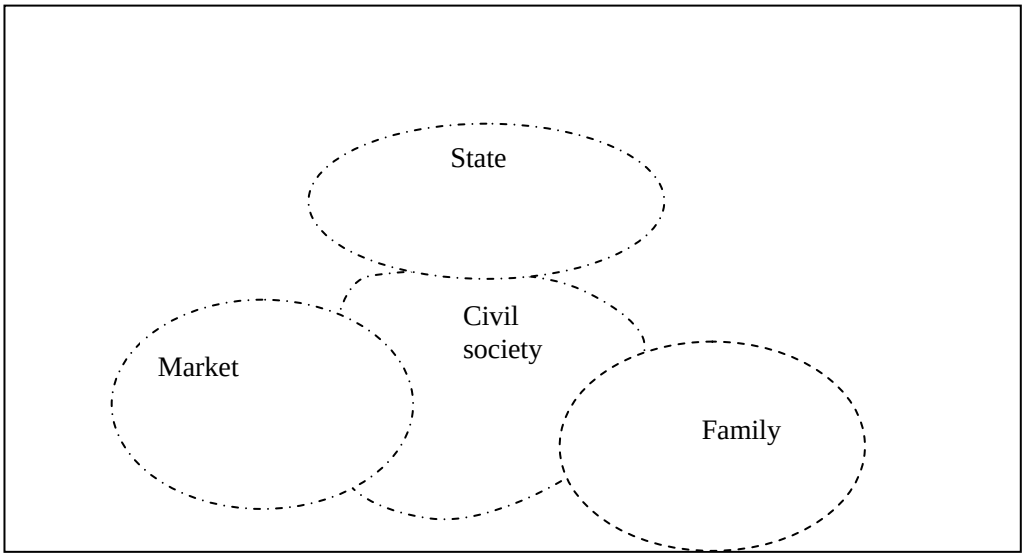
As mentioned earlier, the CSI felt the need to change its definition of civil society from that which was originally used in the first phase of implementation. The changes in the

definition, as well as the subsequent methodological adaptations, were guided by reflections from the implementation of the CSI from the 2003-2007 phase. Some of the conceptual reasons for the changes are outlined below.

Civil society is created

Firstly, the CSI realised that civil society does not exist on its own and that its existence should not be taken as a given. Moreover, it is generally acknowledged that civil society is a very fluid concept (For examples see Mati 2008 and 2009; Marlena 2008, Heinrich 2004 and 2007; and Munck 2006). Its reality is created spontaneously through organic civic action. As such, the CSI therefore continues to acknowledge that while there are theoretical and empirical boundaries between civil society, state, market and family, in reality these are 'fuzzy' and blurred boundaries. Firstly, as is illustrated in the figure below, the different spheres can overlap. Secondly, the CSI defines 'membership' in civil society according to function, in what activity or role an actor undertakes, rather than organisational form. This means that actors can move from one arena, sphere or space to another. Actors can in fact even inhabit more than one arena simultaneously, depending on the nature or function of their action, namely collective public action. This framework places less emphasis on organisational forms and allows for a broader focus on the functions and roles of informal associations, movements and instances of individual and collective citizen action. Such a definition may make the identification of who 'belongs' to civil society and who does not more difficult than one that defines civil society by its organisational form, in other words, by such terms as non-profit, or independent of state. However, only such an action-oriented definition can take account of the full range of civil society actors.

Figure 1. The civil society arena's blurred boundaries



Given this fluidity, it was necessary that the programme take into account the lessons empirically gathered from the various descriptions and developments of civil society. Key among these lessons was the reality that civil society, being created, can also be restricted by either its creators' actions or by external forces. For example the

environment can be restricted dramatically by forces, such as imposed governmental legislation of a harsh and restrictive nature.

Reflecting reality

The CSI deliberately builds on existing literature, concepts, scales, indicators and operational tools as much as possible, rather than reinventing the wheel. This eases the task of conceptualisation and data collection, as well as facilitating engagement within the fields of civil society research and related themes, such as democracy, governance and development research. As such, the CSI definition sought to be as inclusive as possible in generating knowledge about a range of different features and dimensions of civil society. Therefore, a multi-disciplinary approach that incorporated development-oriented literature, including approaches situating civil society in relation to democracy and governance, were adopted when choosing the necessary definitions, indicators, actors and processes (Heinrich 2004). This method was used in response to the lack of consensus around the concept of civil society and in an attempt to accommodate a variety of theoretical viewpoints and interests, while still remaining as reflective of reality as possible.[12]

The CSI also sought to establish a globally relevant and applicable framework, both in terms of the concept and the reality of civil society, in recognition of the variegated nature of civil society around the world. The CSI framework therefore seeks to accommodate cultural variations in understandings of civil society and its diverse forms and functions as observed in different countries. In particular, the CSI attempts to avoid 'Western' bias in its definition and choice of indicators.[13] The CSI contends that collective citizen action is a feature common to all societies around the world and civil society is an adequate concept to describe this universal reality, irrespective of its philosophical roots (Heinrich 2004).

Moreover, CSI also recognises and tries to accommodate the validity of normative content disputes prevalent among civil society scholars on whether or not civility is a definitive feature of civil society. Here, contrary to some scholars who argue that in order to belong to civil society, actors have to be democratic and oriented towards the public good or at least adhere to basic civil manners (Munck 2006; Keane 2004; Kaldor 2003; Knight and Hartnell 2001; Diamond 1994; Shils 1991). Rather, the CSI holds that such a conception is useful in defining civil society as an ideal. However, it is less useful in seeking to understand and assess the reality of civil society across the globe (Heinrich 2004; van Rooy 1998). Since the CSI seeks to assess the state of civil society, this assessment should not be predetermined to yield a particular result through excluding the undesirable or 'uncivil' elements from the definition. As van Rooy states, we have to 'keep analysis separate from hope,' particularly when devising effective civil society strengthening strategies that are grounded in the reality of civil society (1998: 30).

The CSI, therefore, adopts an inclusive and realistic view by acknowledging that civil society is not a homogenous and united entity, but rather a complex arena where diverse and often competing values, ideologies and interests interact and power

[12] For a detailed discussion on the conceptual contestations see Mati (2008) or Heinrich (2005).

[13] For a detailed discussion on the applicability of the concept of civil society in a non-western context, given its historical roots in the Scottish Enlightenment and the subsequent discourse around the Western nation-state and capitalism, see Kasfir (1998), Blaney and Pasha (1993), Lewis (2002) or Hann and Dunn (1996).

struggles occur. These can manifest in peaceful, but also violent forces or ways, that may advance or obstruct social progress (Mati 2008; Wild 2006; Welch and Nuru 2006; Ballard, Habib and Valodia 2006; Evans 2005; Heinrich 2004; Held and McGrew 2003; and Fowler 1996). In this reality, the scope of interests advanced collectively in its sphere, and the methods used by those actors, are very broad and include democratic, progressive and civil interests and methods. These can however also include undemocratic, fundamentalist and uncivil methods, such as violent demonstrations, hate speech and deal-striking agreements occurring behind closed doors. The attempt at inclusiveness is not an effort at offering a one-size-fits-all conception of civil society. Rather, the intention of the CSI is to firstly *assess* civil society in its totality, including its 'dark' and 'uncivil' sides, and secondly to seek to *strengthen* those elements that contribute to positive social change and, where possible, perhaps contribute to making 'uncivil' elements more 'civil' (Heinrich 2004).

Moreover, given the CSI's acknowledgement of the diverse manifestations of civil society, its methodology is flexible and adaptable to local needs. This methodology also gives scope for implementers to use it in a way which is specific and relevant to their own national contexts, without compromising the scientific objectivity that underpins the CSI's analysis. As such, while there is strong interest at the international level, especially among policy makers and academics, to have access to cross-country data that is comparable across nations and regions, the local needs of the implementing partners and their countries are also accommodated by national civil society partners. The CSI is however cognisant of tensions between seeking 'standardised' information that can be compared across countries, and that of maintaining adequate flexibility to ensure country-specific factors can be taken into account. Indeed, the CSI is specifically designed to achieve an appropriate balance between these two opposing demands. It is hoped the new conceptual and methodological developments will further enable the CSI to continue generating information that meets both scientific rigour and cross-country comparability.

VI. CSI Analytical Framework

To render the abstract concept of civil society useful for empirical research, an operational concept must be established (Sartori 1984). In this task, we were guided by the specific goals of the CSI programme. This includes the generation of an accurate, comprehensive and comparable assessment of the state of civil society in a given country, which can be used to detect specific strengths and weaknesses, and eventually to design strategies and activities to improve the state of civil society (Heinrich 2004).[14] To measure the current condition of civil society holistically, the CSI uses a set of indicators that covers the structural and normative manifestations of civil society. It also encompasses the conditions that support or inhibit civil society's development, as well as the consequences of civil society's activities for society at large.

The indicators are the heart of the CSI's attempt at generating an accurate, comprehensive and comparable assessment of the state of civil society in a given country. The indicators set are further aggregated into sub-dimensions and later these dimensions form the CSI diamond. Below, we explain the main logic in the selection of the core indicators and the dimensions and sub-dimensions following this.

The CSI Indicator Selection

While the CSI's conceptual framework aims to offer a universally applicable, comparative, inclusive, measurable and comprehensive tool for assessing civil society, the actual indicator selection process proved to be quite an onerous task. Reflecting upon the guidelines in the selection of the indicator for the 2003-2007 phase, Heinrich (2004: 24) writes:

> The CSI attempted to keep the golden mean and carefully balance divergent needs and interests: the need for a common definition and analytical framework vs. the recognition of the contextual particularities of civil society; the push towards a universal normative standard vs. the rationale for 'relative' standards per country; the incentives for cross-country comparisons vs. the requirements of valid contextual description in each country; the benefits of a common programme approach vs. the attention to country-specific constellations. In most cases, this approach results in a 'midway position' between two ideal extremes.

The same approach proved useful for the 2008 redesign team. Consequently, a few of the 2003-2004 phase indicators were discarded and new ones implemented. The CSI indicators are therefore only representative of some carefully selected universal core indicators and are by no means exhaustive. In selecting and designing the core indicators, CIVICUS consulted with, and drew upon, existing efforts to develop and measure indicators to facilitate engagement with ongoing research and to avoid duplication (Anheier 2004; Krishna and Shrader 1999; Bothwell 1998; and Hyden 1995). The programme re-design team was also guided by the principles of SMART, representing Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant and Time bound indicators. It also made use of the SPICED system, which are made up of Subjective, Participatory,

[14] In this regard, the CSI resembles the Democratic Audit which attempts a participatory assessment of the state of democracy at country level (Beetham 1999 as cited in Heinrich 2004).

Interpreted, Cross-checked, Empowering and Diverse indicators (see Roche 1999). The following guidelines were particularly important in selecting and developing the CSI indicators:

- **Relevant:** The CSI aims to undertake a comprehensive assessment of the state of civil society. Because of the potentially endless number of issues, questions and features relating to the state of civil society, the CSI only seeks to assess the *most prominent and relevant* features of civil society.
- **Measurable:** Indicators focus on measurable issues. Various features of the state of civil society might be relevant, but are not observable and/or are very difficult to gather data about. In designing the CSI indicators, the team sought to ensure that relevant information and data would be obtainable in a reasonable time and with limited resources.
- **Unambiguous:** The CSI's aim of achieving cross-country comparability necessitated that all indicators be clearly defined to minimise ambiguity and subjective interpretation. In order to establish universal benchmarks, it was particularly important to describe and define the indicators in precise and "real-life" terms.
- **Cross-checked:** The programme team proposed multiple sources for each indicator so that individual data sources can be cross-checked. Several checks are built in through the involvement of the Advisory Committee at the national level, by colour coding the results of different indicators, as well as the validation of the results during the regional focus groups and national workshops.
- **Empowering:** The indicators and other data gathered by the CSI research provide the information on which the analysis of civil society's strengths, weaknesses and subsequently any action points is based. Therefore, indicators were selected according to how amenable they are to 'change'. This includes whether specific interventions can be designed to improve the indicator score and thereby the state of civil society.

  The indicator scoring process in the previous phase which converted the scores into a four point scale, from 0 to 3, was discarded in the current phase. The main reason for this, was to do away with the subjective scoring process, in favour of a more scientifically objective, verifiable and valid process of constructing the diamond. Therefore, the quantitative and qualitative data have been separated for the current phase. The diamond is now constructed using only data from the quantitative analysis. As such, only raw percentages from the quantitative data feed into the diamond, where the higher the percentage, the better the civil society on the various indicators in a country.

Key Features of the CSI 2008-2010 conceptual framework

The CSI 2008 redesign team, informed by the earlier conceptual framework, reflecting upon the experiences of the 2003-2007 implementations, and drawing upon the CSI's dual objectives of generating an assessment of civil society and initiating an action-oriented exercise among civil society stakeholders, adapted the following as the key building blocks for the CSI Conceptual Framework:

1. **Explicit normative stance:** In selecting indicators and framing the indicator questions, the CSI takes normative judgments as to the defining features of civil society; what functions civil society should serve and what values it should embrace as examples. These judgments are based on a set of values that flow directly from

universal standards, such as the UN Declaration of Human Rights, the broad academic and practitioners' literature on civil society's characteristics, roles and enabling factors. They are also based on CIVICUS's vision into its work, namely accountability and transparency, democracy, inclusiveness, non-violence and peace, participation and tolerance.[15]

2. **Context specificity and cross-country comparability**: The pilot phase and the 2003-2007 phase participants clearly stated the importance of comparable information for learning lessons across countries and to identify best, and less successful, practices. As already mentioned, however, there is tension between seeking 'standardised' information that can be compared across countries and maintaining adequate flexibility to ensure that country-specific factors can be taken into account. While cross-country comparability of the CSI findings is sought, priority is given to understanding country-specific features of civil society. The CSI uses a multi-layered building block approach allowing for a common definition, conceptual framework and a method. This allows for considerable flexibility for countries to prioritise specificity at the expense of comparability and therefore, the need to adopt certain instruments and methods to strengthen their research. The CSI encourages the NCOs, along with their Advisory Committee (AC) to adapt or redefine these as necessary. The CSI toolkit and technical annexes highlight where modifications are possible in the methodology, while making clear what is essential in the CSI framework and approach to ensure comparability of results across countries.[16] Countries that aim to produce comparable information above all else have to respect specific standards that ensure a higher level of comparability.

3. **Core indicator set**: In order to balance context specificity and cross-country comparability, the CSI multi-layered methodology identifies a set of core or generally applicable indicators to assess the state of civil society that must be applied irrespective of the primary goal or priority for a country. In many countries, additional country- or issue-specific indicators may be added, so that the indicator set covers all the main features of civil society. This includes issues such as civil society's role in peace-building, crisis management or emergency relief, as examples. The added indicators do not jeopardise cross-country comparability *as long as* they are a valid indicator for the respective subdimension. Recognising the immense variety of social, cultural and political contexts of civil society across the world, the CSI is not striving for *identical*, but *equivalent* assessments of civil society (van Deth 1998; Przeworski and Teune 1966-1967). Thus different indicator sets in different countries can, if thoughtfully modified, actually be a sign of a valid and contextual assessment. However, to ensure that the methodology meets the comparability rigour, only the core indicators are compared across countries and in the calculation of the representative diamonds.

4. **Embracing complexity:** In the interests of easy measurement and understandable results, the CSI might have been composed of a small number of proxy indicators and created a simple ranking of countries. However, it was reasoned that such an over-simplification of the concept of civil society would be counter-productive. This is because it is impossible to capture the complex reality of civil society across the globe

[15] See online: http://www.civicus.org/who-we-are for more details on CIVICUS's values.
[16] See the *CIVICUS CSI Toolkit 2008* for more details.

with a small number of indicators, no matter how carefully chosen. Therefore, such a ranking would be of limited practical value. A low score for example, would indicate that 'something is wrong', but would not detect strengths and weaknesses or illustrate underlying causes. Taking this into consideration, the CSI uses multiple indicators and strives for a comprehensive assessment that is able to identify civil society's major strengths and weaknesses and explore their causes. That said, the CSI acknowledges that no amount of indicators can represent civil society in its entirety. As such, choices were made by the team conducting the methodology redesign in early 2008. It is important to note that the CSI's assessment of civil society is *not* reduced to a single numerical score, but rather assesses and scores multiple dimensions of civil society, accompanied by a detailed description and analysis.

5. **Disaggregating data:** To the extent possible, research methods are designed to allow for optimal disaggregation of findings. They aim to gather information that is as detailed as possible. For a number of indicators and variables, the disaggregation of research findings by crucial demographic characteristics is strongly encouraged. This includes characteristics such as gender, socio-economic status, geographic location or CSO sector.

Dimensions and Sub-dimensions

Far-reaching implications of the vigorous evaluation process were the changes made to the CSI dimensions, namely the axes of the CSI Diamond. The initial CSI four-dimensional framework and Diamond tool utilised in the 2003- 2007 phase was first developed for CIVICUS by Dr. Helmut Anheier in 1999, who was then Director of the Centre for Civil Society, at the London School of Economics. In this previous phase, the four dimensions that made up the axes of the Diamond were: the *Structure, Environment, Impact* and *Values* of civil society in the particular national context.

For the new phase, the dimensions now number five. The *Structure* dimension from the previous version of the methodology was divided into two separate dimensions, namely *Civic Engagement* and *Level of Organisation.* -These then join *Practice of Values* and *Perceived Impact* as the four axes of the diamond. The fifth dimension, the *Environmental* Context in which civil society must operate, is now represented by a circle surrounding the Diamond. The main reasons for the change of dimensions were that the environment was not directly a part of the dimensions of civil society, despite it having direct affect over, and influence on, civil society. These five dimensions are graphically represented as the Civil Society Diamond, as shown below.

Figure 2. The CSI Diamond

As a result of the changes in the dimensions, some sub-dimensions have also been adapted. In the current phase, all of the CSI indicators are grouped into 24 sub-dimensions which in turn, are composed of a number of individual indicators. Individual indicators are each scored from 0 to 100. These scores are then aggregated into sub-dimension and dimension scores, which then provide each axis score for the Diamond. It is important to note that the Diamond represents the 'state of civil society' and therefore must not be turned into a uni-dimensional index, or a ranking as the methodology was never developed for such ranking.

The Five CSI Diamond Dimensions

1. Civic Engagement

Civic engagement, or 'active citizenship'[17], is a crucial defining factor of civil society. It is the hub of civil society and therefore is one of the core components of the CSI's definition. Civic engagement describes the formal and informal activities and participation undertaken by individuals to advance shared interests at different levels. Participation within civil society is multi-faceted and encompasses *socially-based* and *politically-based* forms of engagement. The number of ideas, as well as the amount of energy and time, invested in any activity for the benefit of the organisation or community they belong to, will depend on their level of social and political engagement. Socially-based engagement refers to those activities of citizens that include exchange within the public sphere to advance shared interests of a generally *social* or *recreational* nature. Examples range from participating in food kitchens, to running sport clubs or cultural centres and spending time with friends or families. CIVICUS considers these activities extremely important for civil society; not only because they promote mutual care and offer ways of spending one's spare time, but also because they build social capital. On

[17] Taskforce on Active Citizenship (2007): *The Concept of Active Citizenship*. Available online: http://www.activecitizen.ie/UPLOADEDFILES/Mar07/Concept%20of%20Active%20Citizenship%20paper%20(Mar%2007).pdf (accessed 16 April 2008).

the other hand, politically-based engagement refers to those activities through which individuals try to advance shared interests of some *political* nature. These activities might include for example, participation in demonstrations, boycotts or signing petitions. They are also often dependent on the country's context. As a defining factor, these activities aim at impacting policies and/or bringing about social change.

Within each of these two areas of engagement, the CSI measures three specific aspects: 1) The *extent of engagement* of individuals, both as members and/or volunteers of organisations and associations;
2) The *depth of engagement*, which assesses the frequency and extent of people's engagement in civil society activities;
3) And the *diversity or inclusiveness of civil society.*
This emanates from the fact that the CSI regards civil society as an arena where conflicting interests and power relations are played out. As such, it treats the presence of different social groups, especially traditionally marginalised groups, as an important empirical element in the health of civil society. This sub-dimension therefore examines the distributions of gender, socio-economic background, ethnicity and geographical region of those participating in civil society, by comparing the levels within civil society with those in society at large. In order to explore in detail these three levels of civic engagement, the dimension is further divided into six sub-dimensions and fourteen indicators. The sub-dimensions include:
1) Extent of socially-based engagement
2) Depth of socially-based engagement
3) Diversity of socially-based engagement
4) Extent of political engagement
5) Depth of political engagement
6) Diversity of political engagement

2. Level of Organisation

This dimension assesses the organisational development, complexity and sophistication of civil society, by looking at the relationships among the institutional and organisational actors within the civil society arena. In order to do this, the CSI assesses these aspects in a carefully selected sample of civil society organisations in each implementing country. The dimension is composed of sub-dimensions and indicators that examine features of the infrastructure for civil society, its financial stability, as well as its capacity for collective action. This dimension therefore addresses a number of questions related to the level of organisation. How organized is civil society? What is the degree of institutionalisation that characterises civil society? What kind of institutional and organisational infrastructure exists for CSOs? What is the geographical and sectoral distribution of civil society in a country? What are the connections and linkages with international civil society networks?

Data and information on these questions feeds into indicators grouped under the following sub-dimensions:

i) ***Internal governance:*** The CSI contends that internal organisation and governance of CSOs denotes a level of development and complexity for civil society. This sub-dimension assesses the formal governance and management systems, such as Board of Directors or Trustees or Steering Committee, of CSOs and their roles and system of selection.

ii) ***Support infrastructure*:** This sub-dimension assesses the support structures like federations or umbrella bodies available for civil society. While the implicit assumption in this sub-dimension is that networking and connections among civil society organisations is a sign of strength, the CSI is also aware that this might not be true for all country contexts. This is particularly so considering that the existence or high level of registration under umbrella groups can be a common trait within some non-democratic political environments. As such, umbrella organisations and networks might not necessarily be effective, and in some instances could in fact be used by the state to control civil society. To ensure that this is allowed for, the CSI assesses the existence and effectiveness of umbrella and support bodies. This sub-dimension is also correlated with the data for the legal environment sub-dimension in order to establish relationships between the two.

iii) ***Self-regulation:*** This sub-dimension assesses civil society self-regulation mechanisms and their adequacy. The key questions it addresses include whether there are efforts among CSOs to self-regulate; the percentage of CSOs abiding by a collective "code of conduct" or some other form of self-regulation; and how effective and enforceable are the existing self-regulatory mechanisms.

iv) ***Peer-to-peer communication*:** An important determinant of the strength of civil society is the extent to which diverse actors communicate and cooperate with one another. This sub-dimension explores examples of networking, information sharing and alliance building to assess the extent of linkages and productive relations among civil society actors. The key questions answered here include: how much do civil society actors cooperate with each other on issues of common concern? Can examples of cross-sectoral CSO alliances/coalitions, around a specific issue or common concern, be identified?

v) ***Human resources*:** This sub-dimension assesses the sustainability and adequacy of human resources available for CSOs in order to achieve their objectives. This is done by measuring the ratio of volunteers to paid employees within the organisation. The general assumption here is that CSOs should have sufficient numbers of paid staff to be sustainable.

vi) ***Financial and technological resources:*** This sub-dimension assesses financial and technological resources, such as sources of funding and regular access to or availability of telephones, fax, internet or email and computers, that are wielded by civil society. The sub-dimension therefore looks at specific concerns. These include the level of financial and technological resources available to CS; how adequate CS stakeholders judge them to be; and the estimated overall amount of financial resources used by civil society. The sub-dimension also assesses the distribution of these resources among different parts or members of civil society, the numbers of people working for civil society and the estimated financial value of paid/unpaid work within civil society.

vii) ***International linkages:*** This sub-dimension assesses the level and nature of international linkages. It includes CSO membership in international networks and participation in global events, as well as the nature and quality of existing relationships between national civil society and global civil society actors.

3. Practice of Values

An assessment of the state of civil society should also consider the internal practice of values within the civil society arena. Since the CSI does not assume that civil society is

by definition made up of progressive groups, nor does it take for granted that civil society is able to practice what it preaches, it is therefore of paramount importance for this project to treat the practice of values as an empirical question that must be tested. In order to do so, CIVICUS identified some key values that are deemed crucial to gauge not only progressiveness but also the extent to which civil society's practices are coherent with their ideals. As a consequence, the following sub-dimensions are considered under values:

i) *Democratic decision-making governance*: how decisions are made within CSOs and by whom.
ii) *Labour regulations*: includes the existence of policies regarding equal opportunities, staff membership in labour unions, training in labour rights for new staff and a publicly available statement on labour standards.
iii) *Code of conduct and transparency*: measures whether a code of conduct exists and is available publicly. It also measures whether the CSO's financial information is available to the public.
iv) *Environmental standards:* examines the extent to which CSOs adopt policies upholding environmental standards of operation.
v) *Perception of values within civil society*: looks at how CSOs perceive the practice of values, such as non-violence. This includes the existence or absence of forces within civil society that use violence, aggression, hostility, brutality and/or fighting, tolerance, democracy, transparency, trustworthiness and tolerance in the civil society within which they operate.

Through these sub-dimensions, this dimension focuses both on the internal, measurable praxis of values, as well as on the values that civil society, within its diversity, portrays and represents as a whole towards society at large.

4. Perception of Impact

The fourth important measure of the state of civil society is the impact civil society actors have on politics and society as a whole (Smith 1983; Salamon et al. 2000; Fowler 1999; and Kendall and Knapp 2000). From a theoretical perspective, the CSI is interested in the consequences of collective action, because it believes that they matter and are of importance. That is, the CSI studies actors such as NGOs, movements, advocacy networks and citizens groups in part because of their ability to bring about significant changes. From a more pragmatic perspective, the issue of 'impact' links to monitoring and evaluation mechanisms that donors and practitioners use when it comes to assessing the performances of CSOs in the areas of governance and development. Against this background, the CSI analyses the issue of 'civil society impact' from the perspective of *perceived impact*, as recounted by both observers within civil society, namely the internal perception, as well as external stakeholders belonging to actors such as the state, private sector, the media, academia, international governmental organisations or donor organisations, which covers the external perception. The CSI approaches the issue of 'impact' from a perception perspective, as it is an extremely problematic concept and because change is often caused by a multiplicity of factors, many of which might span several years. This can make it difficult to establish and identify the causality underpinning the change and 'impact'.

In order to avoid these problems, the CSI concentrates on *perceived* impact. This has the notable advantage of being measured through opinion surveys. It is worth noting that

examining perceptions, instead of 'reality', does not as one may think, diminish the significance of the results. Indeed, in the game of power, perceptions and beliefs can have greater significance than realities, as they are often the main motor behind many political decisions. If civil society is perceived as a powerful actor by policy makers, it is indisputable that this will increase its chances to create effective impacts. Finally, the issue of effective impact is not completely dismissed by the CSI. The CSI methodology dedicates to the issue of impact a more qualitative approach, addressing the matter in specific case studies. The case study format allows for flexible methods, based on causal process tracing, which can be tailored to catch the micro and meso dynamics involved in the reconstruction of impact.

Methodologically, perceived impact is therefore captured through two opinion surveys: the Organisational Survey and the External Perception Survey. The distinction between 'external' and 'internal' was developed to single out discrepancies between how civil society perceives its own importance and how those who exert power judge the relevance of civil society. Divergent perceptions could be evidence of the malfunctioning of the relationships between the state, the market and civil society. This dimension adopts a very broad notion of impact that encompasses policy results to change of social and cultural frameworks. Specifically the CSI covers the following aspects:

i) ***Responsiveness (both internal and external*)**: addresses civil society's impact on the most important social concerns within the country. How well civil society's positions and priorities mirror the real grievances of the population at large is a crucial indicator of civil society's 'grounding' in society. Civil societies around the world differ strongly on this indicator, resulting in both "elitist" types of civil society that are 'out-of-touch' with citizens, as well as "responsive" types of civil society that are effectively taking up and voicing societal concerns. This sub-dimension analyses civil society's function as a "representative" or "articulator" of societal interests.

ii) ***Social impact (both internal and external):*** measures civil society's impact on society in general. An essential role of civil society is its contribution to meet pressing societal needs. This sub-dimension looks at civil society's perceived performance in meeting these needs directly.

iii) ***Policy impact (both internal and external):*** covers civil society's impact on policy in general. It also looks at the impact of CSO activism on selected policy issues by determining how active and successful civil society is in influencing those policies.

iv) ***Impact on attitudes*:** includes trust, public spiritedness and tolerance. The sub-dimensions reflect a set of universally accepted social and political norms. These are drawn, for example, from sources such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, as well as CIVICUS' own core values. This dimension measures the extent to which these values are practised within civil society, compared to the extent to which they are practised in society at large. The underlying idea, therefore, is to assess the positive contribution of civil society to the overall promotion of these values.

5. Context Dimension: External Environment

In assessing the state of civil society, it is crucial to give consideration to the social, political and economic environments in which it exists, as the environment both directly and indirectly affects civil society. Some features of the environment may enable the

growth of civil society. For example, the prevalence of social values, such as trust and tolerance, among the general population may foster associational activity. Conversely, other features of the environment hamper the development of civil society. For example, restrictions on freedom of association or the legal framework would directly affect and limit civil society's growth. However socio-economic factors, such as an economic depression, might also impact civil society negatively. Three elements of the external environment are captured by the CSI:

i) ***Socio-economic context*****:** The Social Watch's basic capabilities index, which combines a country's level of social development, infant mortality, health care resources and access to basic education, is used as the basic indicator for this element of the environment. Measures of corruption, inequality and macro-economic health are also used to complement the basic capabilities index to portray the socio-economic context that can have marked consequences for civil society, and perhaps most significantly at the lower levels of social development.

ii) ***Socio-political context:*** This is assessed using five indicators. Three of these are adapted from the Freedom House indices of political and civil rights and freedoms, including political rights and freedoms, personal rights and freedoms within the law and associational and organisational rights and freedoms. Information about CSO experience with the country's legal framework and state effectiveness round out the picture of the socio-political context.

iii) ***Socio-cultural context:*** utilises interpersonal trust, which examines the level of trust that ordinary people feel for other ordinary people, as a broad measure of the social psychological climate for association and cooperation. Even though everyone experiences relationships of varying trust and distrust with different people, this measure provides a simple indication of the prevalence of a world view that can support and strengthen civil society. Similarly, the extent of tolerance and public spiritedness also offers indication of the context in which civil society unfolds.

VII. CSI implementation process

This section outlines key programme activities required for implementation of the CSI programme and the main structures that are to be established. CIVICUS provides a comprehensive implementation toolkit, develops capacity and provides technical assistance and quality assurance to the in-country work, throughout the whole implementation process. The end of the CSI phase culminates with an Analytical Country Report and Policy Action Briefs, which are produced by each country using the knowledge generated through implementation of the CSI. A global report and additional papers and documents will be published by CIVICUS upon completion of this implementation phase in late 2010. It is envisaged that the CSI could eventually become a regular benchmarking and monitoring tool implemented by national civil society stakeholders every two to three years. The figure below illustrates the life cycle of the CSI implementation process, while each step will be described in detail in the following section.

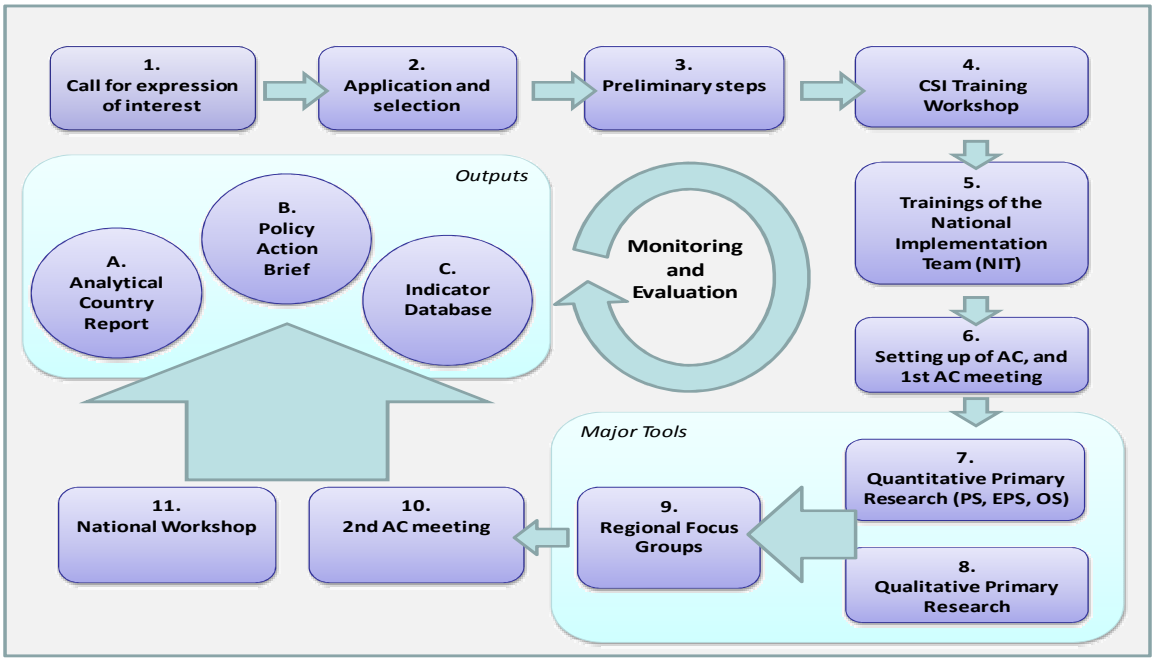


Figure 3: CSI Implementation flow chart

Step 1 and 2: Call for and selection of National Coordinating Organisation (NCO)

The CSI's implementation in a given country is usually demand-driven. As such, it is a civil society needs assessment programme that is carried out by civil society. The beginning of this process is the call for the expression of interest to participate in CSI implementation. NCOs are responsible for leading the various programme activities at country level, as well as for raising the necessary financial resources. These NCOs should be prominent civil society organisations that take responsibility for co-ordinating input from a wide range of civil society actors and other stakeholders including government, business, international agencies, media and academia. This call is followed by a thorough selection process that includes in-country peer reviews. While the selection is not entirely based on strategic or methodological considerations, it is practice for CIVICUS to select CSOs based on their capacity to carry out research in a

participatory manner, as well as their ability to convene other stakeholders in the country. In the current 2008-2010 phase, over 50 NCOs were selected from around the world to implement the CSI programme.[18]

Step 3: Preliminary steps

Once selected to implement the CSI, the NCO has to undertake nine preliminary steps in order to prepare for successful implementation. These steps can be undertaken concurrently and can be conducted by various members of the National Implementation Team (NIT) that will be formed to lead the CSI implementation in the country. The nine preliminary steps are outlined below.

- ***Preliminary step 1*: *Preliminary mapping of available secondary research and the identification of data gaps***

This activity entails conducting a preliminary mapping of the secondary research data available in the country. It also entails identifying gaps in existing data in order to determine the nature and extent of what primary research is to be conducted. This comprehensive review seeks to cover the widest possible range of data sources; both the international, as well as locally available data. From this, an overview report is prepared (step 9) on the state of civil society. This is structured according to the CSI analytical framework and forms the basis of the final CSI country report. This particular exercise is important, as it aids the subsequent preparatory steps, such as identifying programme activities and drafting the budget.

- ***Preliminary step 2: Definition of country-specific objectives***

The CSI contends that civil societies in different countries have different needs, strengths and weaknesses. Moreover, knowledge gaps in different countries also differ. As such, the CSI is designed to allow the NCO, in consultation with different stakeholders in the country of implementation, to define the specific objectives for the CSI project. In a way, this exercise enables the partners to envisage what benefits, results, outcomes and impacts the implementation of the CSI would contribute to civil society in their country. This flexibility does not mean that partners may end up with a totally different set of outcomes from those envisioned by the CSI programme design. Rather, as the design offers a menu of outcomes and outputs, this exercise requires the NCO to review these and thereafter rank and order them as per the country's priorities. This same ranking and order is validated by the AC at a later stage, and subsequently helps the NCO in formulating a coherent work plan and fundraising strategy, if so necessary. The priority list may also highlight possible outcomes that will inform the Policy Action Briefs that the NCO will be preparing towards the end of the CSI implementation.

[18] For a list of participating countries and organisations, see Annex 2 of this paper.

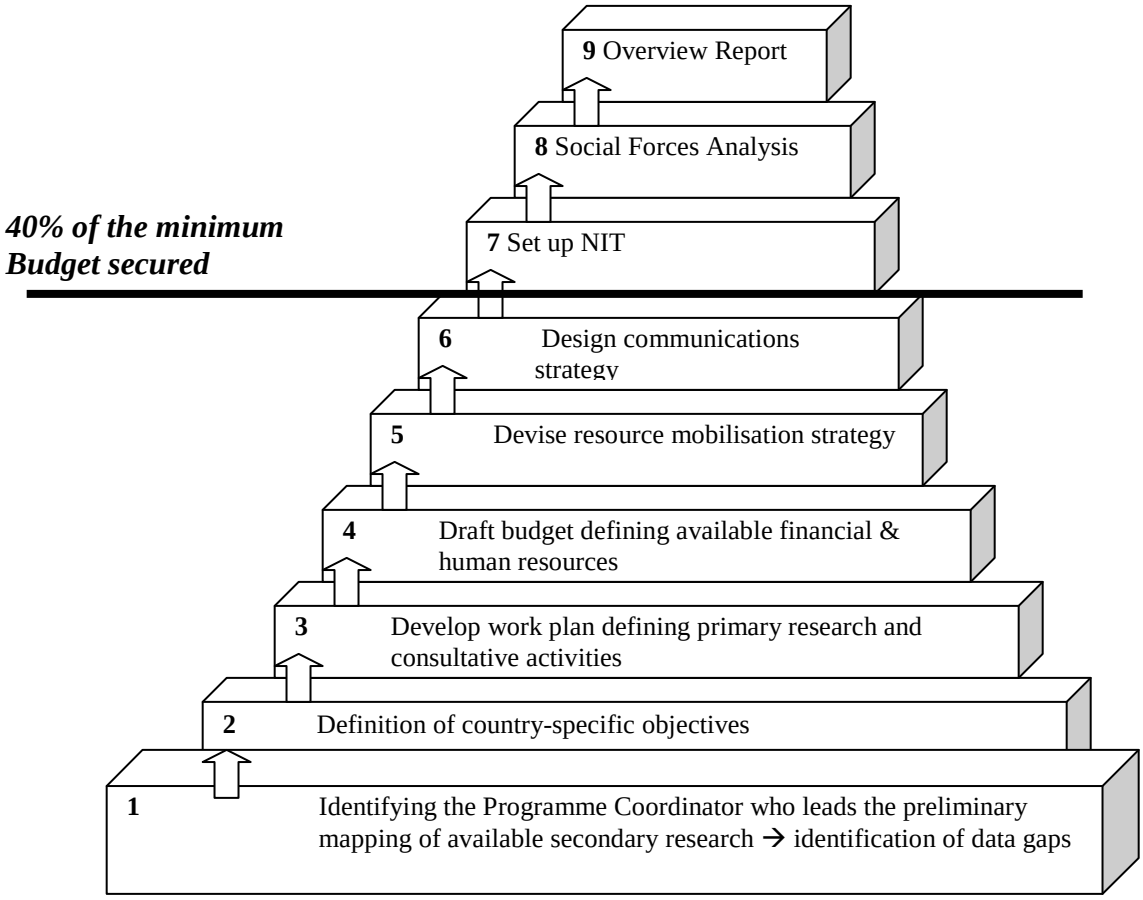


Figure 4: Preliminary Steps

- ***Preliminary step 3: Develop a work plan defining primary research and consultative activities***

Once the output/outcome priority list has been drawn up, the NCO drafts a work plan detailing the various programme activities. For example, this would include the Organisational Survey sample size, the number of external stakeholders to be surveyed, and the number of cases studies to be performed. At this stage, the NCO is also expected to identify the ideal structure of primary research. It is also expected to structure the consultative activities that will be conducted, in order to yield meaningful and valid findings, as well as create a momentum for action that matches the priority objectives of the implementation process.

- ***Preliminary step 4: Draft budget defining available financial and human resources***

The current CSI programme is designed to minimise data collection costs, thus allowing for *more emphasis to be placed on the consultative activities* that are the cornerstone of the CSI. It is crucial that the programme budget prioritises implementation of case studies, a meaningful sample for the two key surveys, namely the Organisational and External Perceptions surveys, the AC meetings, as well as the National Workshop. This

step also requires the preliminary identification of the NIT. The lead person in the NIT, who is usually the National Coordinator, must be prepared to devote a considerable amount of time to the programme, even prior to the implementation phase.

- ***Preliminary step 5: Devise resource mobilisation strategy***

On the basis of the programme budget, a resource mobilisation strategy is then developed. The strategy identifies potential donors at both local and international levels. Where feasible, NCOs are encouraged to work together to draft joint proposals, particularly when covering a particular geographic region for example. This step is crucial in determining whether it is feasible for a NCO to continue implementing the CSI. A 60% threshold of the total budgeted costs is encouraged before the NIT is established for the implementation of the CSI.

- ***Preliminary step 6: Design communications strategy***

In order to achieve the greatest level of impact and visibility, NCOs are encouraged to publicise different aspects of the CSI. These include purposes, activities and preliminary results, at salient points throughout the CSI implementation process, not just at the end of the process. Therefore, the NCOs must devise communication and dissemination strategies, which CIVICUS believes are the most important ways of ensuring the CSI has broader impact in a country. While this is done at the preliminary step, CIVICUS encourages NCOs to review and update their plans and strategies constantly as programme implementation proceeds and opportunities develop.

- ***Preliminary step 7: Set up National Implementation Team (NIT)***

Once the six steps outlined above have been completed, a NIT is established. At the bare minimum, the NIT includes the following individuals and roles:

1. **National Coordinator (NC):** is responsible for the overall co-ordination and management of the programme. The NC takes the lead during the nine steps and co-ordinates the resource mobilisation efforts. He/she is responsible for inviting and sourcing other NIT members. It is usually the NC who attends the international training workshop organised by CIVICUS, and therefore in turn, who trains the rest of the NIT and the AC.
2. **Civil Society Specialist (CSS):** is responsible for drafting the research reports and participating in various other activities within the programme.
3. **Researcher:** is responsible for implementing and facilitating the primary research, particularly focusing detail and attention on the Organisational Survey, the External Perceptions Survey, the Population Survey and the in-depth case studies. The researcher leads all consultative activities including the focus groups, the AC meetings and the National Workshop.

The NCO(s) can define additional research and human resource needs and actors for the implementation process. Ideally, these roles will be fulfilled by separate individuals, but may be used in combination according to individual and organisational skills and capacity. The NIT can be established while these preliminary steps are being undertaken. What is important in conducting the preliminary tasks and activities is to have the necessary structures and plans in place, in order to implement the programme successfully, before attending the training workshop.

- ***Preliminary step 8: Background analysis The Social Forces Analysis (SFA)***

In addition to the above, the NIT will conduct the social and civil society forces analysis. The SFA exercise creates two visual 'maps' of influential actors in a country in order to:
a) Identify and discuss the relationship between civil society actors and other influential actors within society at large,
b) And identify and discuss relationships among influential civil society groups within civil society.
Moreover, the SFA helps establish which key areas of civil society, as well as society at large, should be represented as members of the AC. It is also useful in helping with fine-tuning the sampling frame for the Organisational and External Perceptions Surveys. The outcomes of this exercise are later validated and discussed in the first AC meeting.

- ***Preliminary step 9: Review of secondary data and creation of overview matrix***

This is not necessarily an independent step from the first preliminary step, but instead stresses the need for the NCO to write a brief report on the basic analysis of the available secondary data, both the international and national sources. In this step, the NCO conducts a comprehensive review of all existing and necessary quantitative and qualitative data referring to each CSI indicator. Whilst conducting the comprehensive data review, the NCO should identify possible case study suggestions which can be discussed at the first AC meeting.

Step 4: Training workshops

Once the preliminary steps have been completed, CIVICUS organises a capacity building and training workshop for the NCOs, in each region of the world. Each NCO nominates one member of the NIT, usually the Co-ordinator, for these trainings. The training workshop is designed to ensure that the CSI is successfully and consistently implemented, in the variety of contexts and countries around the world. The training takes three days and all implementing partners must attend before undertaking the CSI process in their countries. The focus of these workshops is for participants to become familiar with the methodology, as well as the major activities and research tools, that will be used during the implementation process. The workshops are also designed to provide opportunities for networking with partners within the same region, helping to establish professional relationships and linkages that could act as support throughout the implementation process.

In order to provide regionally relevant trainings, that allow participants to share and discuss issues of particular importance or significance to them, the countries participating in the 2008-2010 phase of the CSI were divided into seven regions and trained together in a variety of locations around the world. The seven regions linked together were: Anglophone Africa, Francophone Africa, Middle East and North Africa (MENA), Central Asia, Central and Eastern Europe (CEE), Latin America and the Asia Pacific Region.[19]

Step 5: NIT training

After completing the CSI Workshop, the NCO Programme Co-ordinator is expected to return to their country and train and brief the other two core NIT members on CSI programme methodology and implementation process.

[19] The Sub-Saharan Africa division was language based as opposed to geographic region. A few countries that joined a little late were trained separately, namely Russia and Belarus.

Step 6: Identification and setting up of the AC
At this stage, the NIT should revisit the areas of importance highlighted by the SFA, done in preliminary step 8, in order to identify between 12 to 20 individuals to form the in-country AC. The AC should represent the diversity of civil society and other stakeholder groups present in the country.

The AC's primary role is to provide overall guidance and assistance to the NIT in implementing the programme. AC members are the 'ambassadors' of the CSI and are expected to raise awareness and build support for the CSI among their constituencies and the broader public. Moreover, the AC reviews and either validates or revises the CSI's proposed conceptual framework, which includes the definition of civil society, and research methodology which is to be applied at the national level. It also provides feedback on the secondary data review and, later in the process, the final Analytical Country Report and the Policy Action Brief. Importantly, the AC also assists in organising and/or identifying participants for the Organisational Survey and the External Perceptions Survey, as well as mobilising civil society stakeholders for the national workshop.

Given these demands, the AC is made up of carefully selected members with a multiplicity of skills, experiences and backgrounds. Moreover, as the bottom line is to have a functionally active AC, its members should be people with diverse backgrounds in civil society, either as members and leaders of civil society organisations, donor agencies or government departments that interface with civil society. These members should be people who are able and willing to engage in this participatory assessment process, at least during the year-long implementation process necessary for the CSI, but also ideally beyond this. It is expected that the AC should formally meet to discuss various matters surrounding implementation at least twice in the course of the CSI implementation. The first meeting at the beginning of implementation and the second after a preliminary report is ready. However, the AC is consulted for advice and directions throughout the implementation.

Steps 7 to 9: Quantitative and qualitative data collection
Civil society is situated at the confluence of various societal forces and actors. The state, social norms and traditions, as well as the socio-economic environment, strongly shape the specific character of civil society in a country. Therefore, for a valid and comprehensive assessment of civil society, a variety of perspectives, ranging from insider to external stakeholder and outsider views, from national, regional and local levels, must be included. Finding the right mix of research methods and data sources is therefore vital to a successful measurement of the state of civil society. While the CSI draws on principles and techniques developed by participatory research, it also uses mainstream social research methods, such as surveys and desk reviews. This eclectic mix of research methods is deemed the most appropriate path to achieving insightful knowledge on the state of civil society at country level, as well as meaningful action by civil society stakeholders. With this in mind, the following CSI research methods have been designed:
1) The Population Survey
2) The Organisational Survey
3) The External Perception Survey

4) Case studies,
5) And regional focus group discussions.
Together, these tools enable the comprehensive collection of the data required for scoring indicators and preparing a narrative report on the state of civil society.

It should be emphasised that not all primary research methods need to be conducted in each location, and the sequencing of research tools can be determined by the NCO. The importance and relevance of each research tool and how each is implemented, for example issues such as sample size, number of participants, or regional spread, will depend on the extent to which secondary data is available for the CSI indicators. Thus, the right combination and sequencing of the primary research methods is assessed as part of the programme preparation process by the NCO.

Quantitative Research Tools:
1) Organisational Survey: The Organisational Survey collects data at the meso-level, and relates to the operations and governance of CSOs. It mainly centres on three dimensions of the CSI Diamond: the Level of Organisation, Practice of Values, and Perception of Impact.

2) External Perceptions Survey: In order to capture data on the more difficult concept of the impact of civil society, CIVICUS designed a survey for external stakeholders and experts in key sectors about their perception of civil society's impact. The survey addresses the perceived impact that civil society has in general, in specific fields and on policy-making.

3) Population Survey: The Population Survey collects data on the value dispositions of individual citizens in the country, their activities within civil society and their attitudes towards civil society. In some countries, such information may be readily available from the World Values Survey. Whenever such data exists and is up to date, CIVICUS recommends that the NCO should consider using it.

Once all survey research has been implemented, the NIT should assemble the quantitative findings from the surveys and 'construct' the CSI Diamond in their country. Ideally, these results will inform the issues on which the qualitative data methods should concentrate.

Qualitative Research Tools:

1) In-depth Case Studies: The case studies are the qualitative counterpart to the Diamond. It allows the NCO to conduct an in-depth, systematic analysis of specific issues or aspects that might not be captured adequately by the quantitative data. It also allows them to draw out and explore the strengths and weaknesses of civil society. As such, the case studies are not an optional part of the CSI methodology, but rather a critical input to develop a more complete picture of the state of civil society.

2) Regional Focus Group Meetings: The regional focus group meetings are expected to couple research with action. These meetings also aim to empower a diverse set of participants to discuss and deliberate the main strengths, weaknesses, challenges and opportunities facing civil society in their country, based on the basis of the quantitative findings. It is suggested that a minimum of four regional focus group meetings be held

with approximately 15 to 20 participants, helping to ensure a total of approximately 60 to 80 respondents overall. The focus groups should be *heterogeneous* and should consist of 80% civil society and 20% other sector stakeholders. Efforts should be made to ensure a representative balance with respect to gender, age, ethnicity, ability and other demographic variables. Furthermore, in order to increase the validity and diversity of the focus groups, they should seek to represent the urban/rural, centre/periphery, affluent/poorer composition of the country. The regional focus group discussions should explore main strengths and weaknesses of civil society in the country. The most crucial element is to facilitate a rich discussion, allowing for disagreements, but ultimately steering the group towards either reaching a common conclusion or 'agreeing to disagree'. With this in mind, it is important to capture the processes of focus group deliberations, as well as actual results, in a final focus group report.

Step 10: The Second AC Meeting
Once the data collection and the focus group meetings are complete, the AC should be brought together again to review and discuss the findings. The purposes of this meeting are to place the findings in the context of the initial perceptions discussion at the beginning of the CSI implementation, to assess the validity of the findings and also to define possible ways forward to be discussed at the national workshop.

Step 11: National Workshop
The CSI will only fulfil its ultimate objective of promoting social change, if the programme findings are properly and effectively disseminated and discussed broadly. This is done initially through the national workshop, which aims to bring together a broad range of civil society actors and partners from government, the business community, the media, the donor community and academia to discuss the CSI findings. This workshop is also to identify the strengths and weaknesses of civil society and plan appropriate strengthening initiatives as a result. Given the broad scope of the national workshop, the invitation list should be comprehensive. It should include those involved in the research process, including several representatives from each of the regional focus group meetings, and a diverse set of stakeholders from government, the private sector, academia and donor communities. Ultimately the workshop should have an ideal combination of 75% civil society and 25% non-civil society, as well as representation from a diversity of sectors, types of organisation, gender, ethnicity and geography among the civil society contingent. The workshop should have 75 to 200 participants, depending on the size of civil society and interest in the CSI in the country of implementation. Ideally, the national workshop should take place over two days. The agenda places priority on discussing the strengths and weaknesses of civil society, as well as to devising an action plan for strengthening civil society.

Step 12: Programme Outputs
The two main outputs of the CSI are the Analytical Country Report and the Policy Action Brief.

Analytical Country Report: This report summarises the CSI implementation process and synthesises the findings in an analytical manner. The report also summarises outcomes and recommendations arising from the national workshop. In addition, countries implementing the CSI a second time should include a section highlighting the differences in results between the first round and this round of implementation. The main audience

for the Analytical Country Report is civil society stakeholders who would be interested in the detailed findings of the CSI.

Policy Action Brief: This brief outlines the main CSI findings and highlights the action agenda and policy recommendations to rectify weaknesses and promote strengths, based on the outcomes of the national workshop. The Action Brief is aimed at policy makers and a broader civil society audience.

Indicator database: This is also one of the outputs of CSI. This provides data on all indicators collected in the participating countries.

Concurrent Step: Monitoring and Evaluation

The CSI involves a thorough monitoring and evaluation process, maintained throughout the implementation, in order to understand the outcomes and impact of the CSI at various levels and in different contexts. In terms of monitoring the implementation of the programme itself, there are various stages at which NCOs will be required to submit information to CIVICUS with regards to the activities undertaken and the impact of those activities. These activities will range, for example, from collecting feedback from AC members on the meetings held, to opportunities for personal and organisational reflection at various points during the process. At the end of the programme implementation, a thorough evaluation of the CSI implementation process is undertaken. All NIT members, and at least 25% of the AC members, should participate in the final evaluation process. The evaluation should also draw useful information from the documentation process of the CSI implementation. CIVICUS also commissions an independent evaluation of the programme. Finally, in addition to the monitoring and evaluation activities occurring during the implementation phase of the CSI, the programme also commissions a post-implementation impact assessment which explores opportunities for sharing the results of the process.

VIII. Conclusion

This paper has argued that conducting a participatory, cross-national assessment and action-planning programme on civil society is an enormously ambitious, but also tremendously important, effort. As stated throughout this paper, the scarcity of sound empirical studies on civil society is increasingly recognised by practitioners, scholars and policy-makers. The paper has also identified some of the causes for this situation, including the elusive and highly disputed nature of the concept of civil society and a lack of valid data in many regions of the world. This also includes the unfortunate trend of confusing the equally worthwhile tasks of a) advancing the normative ideal of civil society with b) honestly assessing its current reality. CIVICUS, as an organisation which is strongly committed to both these goals, is well placed to advocate the need for candid assessment processes, without running the risk of being accused of obstructing civil society's causes. For CIVICUS, these reflections on the current reality of civil society are necessary to strengthen civil society.In other words, only by knowing the current state of civil society, can one work to successfully improve it.

The paper has argued that cross-national research, covering a wide range of different contexts, is a conceptual, methodological, cultural and logistical minefield. Rendering concepts applicable in multiple contexts, achieving the right balance between cross-national comparability and contextual validity, dealing with vast differences in legal and political systems, data standards and availability, language and cultural norms are only some of the more obvious obstacles. By designing an assessment tool based on a deeply contextual phenomenon, and by designing it in a way which, in principle, should make it applicable in every country, the CSI is clearly pushing the boundaries of existing comparative work on the topic.

Reflecting on the CSI's unique design, without taking into account the concrete outcomes that will result from its implementation, it is already clear that the programme will generate a significant number of insights and experiences. These will be of relevance to a variety of audiences, such as civil society practitioners, policy-makers, donors and academics. CIVICUS is therefore confident that the CSI will make an important contribution to the knowledge base on the concept of civil society; both through its innovative design and methodology, as well as through insightful and revealing findings on the state of civil society. The CSI seeks to contribute to public recognition of civil society as a crucial feature of today's societies, and more importantly, as the very space for people to deliberate and act together for a more humane, just, peaceful and prosperous world.

Annex 1: CSI Indicator Scoring Matrix

Dimension 1: Civic Engagement	***Description***	***Variable Question***
Sub-dimension 1.1	***Extent of socially-based engagement***	
Indictor 1.1.1 Social membership 1	Active members of social organisations (such as church or religious organisations, sport or recreational organisations, art, music, or educational organisations).	Are you an active member, an inactive member or not a member of the type of organisation?
Indictor 1.1.2 Social volunteering 1	Percentage of the population that does voluntary work for at least one social organisation.	And for which of the following, if any, are you currently doing unpaid voluntary work?
Indictor 1.1.3 Community engagement 1	Percentage of the population that engage several times a year in social activities with other people at sports clubs or voluntary/service organisations.	For each activity, would you say you do them every week or nearly every week; once or twice a month; only a few times a year; or not at all?
Sub-dimension 1.2	***Depth of socially-based engagement***	
Indictor 1.2.1 Social membership 2	Percentage of population that is active in more than one social organisation.	Percentage of active members that are active in more than one organisation.
Indictor 1.2.2 Social volunteering 2	Percentage of the population that does voluntary work for more than one social organisation.	Percentage of people doing voluntary work for more than one organisation.
Indictor 1.2.3 Community engagement 2	Percentage of the population that engage at least once a month in social activities with other people at sports clubs or voluntary/service organisations.	The percentage of people spending time at sports clubs, etc. at least once or twice a month.
Sub-dimension 1.3	***Diversity of socially-based engagement***	
Indictor 1.3.1 Diversity of socially-based engagement	Percentage of members of organisations belonging to social groups such as women, indigenous people or people of a different ethnicity, people from rural areas in social groups or activities.	
Sub-dimension 1.4	***Extent of political engagement***	
Indictor 1.4.1 Political membership 1	Percentage of the population that are active members of political organisations.	Could you tell me whether you are an active member, an inactive member or not a

		member of a voluntary organisation?
Indictor 1.4.2 Political volunteering 1	Percentage of the population that does voluntary work for at least one political organisation.	For which political organisation, if any, are you currently doing unpaid voluntary work?
Indictor 1.4.3 Individual activism 1	Percentage of the population that have undertaken political activism in the past five years.	In the last five years, have you or have you not done any political activities?
Sub-dimension 1.5	***Depth of political engagement***	
Indictor 1.5.1 Political membership 2	Percentage of population that are active in more than one organisation of political orientation.	The percentage of active members that are active in more than one organisation.
Indictor 1.5.2 Political volunteering 2	Percentage of the population that does voluntary work for more than one political organisation.	The percentage of people doing unpaid work for more than one organisation.
Indictor 1.5.3 Individual activism 2	Percentage of the population that engage very actively in activism of political orientation.	The percentage of respondents that have been "very active".
Sub-dimension 1.6	***Diversity of political engagement***	
Indictor 1.6.1 Diversity of political engagement	Percentage of members of organisations belonging to social groups such as women, indigenous people or people of a different ethnicity, ageing people, people from rural areas in social groups or activities.	
Dimension2: Level of organisation	***Description***	***Variable Question***
Sub-dimension 2.1	***Internal governance***	
Indictor2.1.1 Management	Percentage of organisations that have a Board of directors or a formal Steering Committee.	Does your organisation have a Board of directors or a formal Steering Committee?
Sub-dimension 2.2	***Infrastructure***	
Indictor 2.2.1 Support organisations	Percentage of organisations that are formal members of any federation, umbrella group or support network.	Is your organisation a formal member of any federation, umbrella group or support network?
Sub-dimension 2.3	***Sectoral communication***	

Indictor 2.3.1 Peer-to-peer communication 1	Percentage of organisations that have recently (within the past 3 months) held meetings with other organisations working on similar issues.	In the last 3 months, have you held meetings with other organisations working on similar issues?
Indictor 2.3.2 Peer-to-peer communication 2	Percentage of organisations that have exchanged information with another organisation	In the last 3 months, have you exchanged information with another organisation?
Sub-dimension 2.4	***Human resources***	
Indictor 2.4.1 Sustainability of human resources	Percentage of organisations with a sustainable human resource base.	
Sub-dimension 2.5	***Financial and technological resources***	
Indictor 2.5.1 Financial sustainability	Percentage of organisations with a stable financial resource basis.	
Indictor 2.5.2 Technological resources	Percentage of organisations that have regular access to technologies such as computers, telephones, fax and email.	
Sub-dimension 2.6	***International linkages***	
Indictor 2.6.1 International linkages	International non-governmental organisations (INGOs) present in the country as a ratio to the total number of known INGOs.	
Dimension 3: Practice of Values	***Description***	***Variable Question***
Sub-dimension 3.1	***Democratic decision-making and governance***	
Indictor 3.1.1 Decision-making	Percentage of organisations that practice democratic decision-making internally.	Who takes decisions in your organisation?
Sub-dimension 3.2	***Labour regulations***	
Indictor 3.2.1 Equal opportunities	Percentage of organisation that have written policies in place regarding equal opportunity and/or equal pay for equal work for women.	Does your organisation have written policies in place regarding equal opportunity and/or equal pay for equal work for women?
Indictor 3.2.2 Membership to labour unions	Percentage of paid staff within organisations that are members of labour unions.	How many of your organisation's staff are members of labour unions?
Indictor 3.2.3 Labour rights trainings	Percentage of organisations that conduct specific training on labour rights for new staff members.	Does your organisation conduct specific training on labour rights for new staff members?

Indictor 3.2.4 Publicly available policy for labour standards	Percentage of organisation that have a publicly available policy for labour standards.	Does your organisation have a publicly available policy for labour standards?
Sub-dimension 3.3	***Code of conduct and transparency***	
Indictor 3.3.1 Publicly available code of conduct	Percentage of organisations that have a publicly available code of conduct for staff.	Does your organisational have a publicly available code of conduct for staff?
Indictor 3.3.2 Transparency	Percentage of organisations whose financial information is made publicly available.	Is the financial information of your organisation publicly available?
Sub-dimension 3.4	***Environmental standards***	
Indictor 3.4.1 Environmental standards	Percentage of organisations that have a publicly available policy for environmental standards.	Does your organisation have a publicly available policy for environmental standards to be respected within the organisation?
Sub-dimension 3.5	***Perception of values in civil society as a whole***	
Indictor 3.5.1 Perceived non-violence	Use of violence by civil society groups.	How would you describe the forces within civil society that use violence to express their interests?
Indictor 3.5.2 Perceived internal democracy	Civil society's role in promoting democratic decision-making.	How would you assess civil society's current role in promoting democratic decision-making within their own organisations and groups?
Indictor 3.5.3 Perceived levels of corruption	Corrupt practices within civil society.	Are there instances of corruption within civil society?
Indictor 3.5.4 Perceived intolerance	Racist and discriminatory forces within civil society.	How frequently do you see forces within civil society that are explicitly racist, discriminatory or intolerant?
Indictor 3.5.5 Perceived weight of intolerant groups	Isolation and denouncing of violent practices and groups within civil society.	What is the relation of these forces to civil society at large?
Indictor 3.5.6 Perceived promotion on non-violence and peace	Civil society's role in promoting non-violence and peace.	How would you assess civil society's current role in promoting non-violence and peace in your country?
Dimension 4: Perception of Impact	***Description***	***Variable Question***
Sub-dimension 4.1	***Responsiveness (internal perception)***	

Indictor 4.1.1 Impact on social concern 1	Impact of civil society on the first most important social concern in the country	In your country, what is the impact of civil society when it comes to an important social concern?
Indictor 4.1.2 Impact on social concern 2	Impact of civil society on the second most important social concerns in the country	In your country, what is the impact of civil society when it comes to the second most important social concern?
Sub-dimension 4.2	***Social Impact (internal perception)***	
Indictor 4.2.1 General social impact		How would you assess civil society's impact on civil society as a whole?
Indictor 4.2.2 Social impact of own organisation	Self perception on social impact	How would you assess your organisation's impact in the fields selected above?
Sub-dimension 4.3	***Policy Impact (internal perception)***	
Indictor 4.3.1 General policy impact	Civil society's policy impact	In general, what kind of impact do you think that civil society as a whole has on your country's policy making?
Indictor 4.3.2 Policy activity of own organisation	Self perception on policy impact	In the last 2 years, has your organisation pushed for any policies to be approved?
Indictor 4.3.3 Policy impact of own organisation	Success of activity in policy-related fields	What has been the outcome of your support for Policy 1,2,3?
Sub-dimension 4.4	***Responsiveness (external perception)***	
Indictor 4.4.1 Impact on social concern1	CS impact on two key priority social concerns	In your country, what is the impact of civil society when it comes to the first social concern?
Indictor 4.4.2 Impact on social concern2	Impact on social concern2	In your country, what is the impact of civil society when it comes to the second social concern?
Sub-dimension 4.5	***Social Impact (external perception)***	
Indictor 4.5.1 Social impact selected concerns	Civil society's social impact on key social fields.	How would you assess civil society's impact in the fields selected above?
Indictor 4.5.2 Social impact general	Civil society's social impact.	In general, what kind of impact do you think civil society has on the social context?
Sub-dimension 4.6	***Policy Impact (external perception)***	

Indictor 4.6.1 Policy impact specific fields 1-3	Civil society's activity in policy-related fields.	What do you think has been the outcome of their activism for Policy 1,2,3?
Indictor 4.6.2 Policy impact general	Success of activity in policy-related fields.	In general, what kind of impact do you think that civil society as a whole has on your country's policy making?
Sub-dimension 4.7	***Impact of CS on attitudes***	
Indictor 4.7.1 Difference in trust between civil society members and non-members	Civil society's impact on interpersonal trust	Generally speaking, would you say that most people can be trusted or that you need to be very careful in dealing with people?
Indictor 4.7.2 Difference in tolerance levels between civil society members and non-members	Civil society's impact on tolerance.	Are there people or groups of people that you would not like to have as neighbours?
Indictor 4.7.3 Difference in public spiritedness between civil society members and non-members	Civil society's impact on public spiritedness.	Do you think these actions can always be justified, never justified, or something between - Claiming government benefits to which you are not entitled - Avoiding a fare on public transport - Cheating on taxes if you have a chance - Someone accepting a bribe in the course of their duties
Indictor 4.7.4 Trust in civil society	Levels of trust in civil society	Do you have confidence in civil society organisations?
Contextual Dimension: Environment	***Description***	***Variable Question***
Sub-dimension 5.1	***Socio-economic context How favourable is the socio-economic context for the development of civil society?***	
Indictor 5.1.1 Basic Capabilities Index	The BCI average (mean) of three criteria	The Basic Capabilities Index (BCI) is comprised of the following three criteria covering health and basic educational provision: • The percentage of children who reach fifth grade at school • The percentage of children who survive until at least their fifth year (based on mortality statistics) • The percentage of births attended by health professionals
Indictor 5.1.2 Corruption	Corruption within the public sector.	What is the level of perceived corruption in the public sector?

Indictor 5.1.3 Inequality	Level of inequality in the country.	What is the level of inequality from 0 to 100?
Indictor 5.1.4 Economic context	Ratio of external debt to GNI	
Sub-dimension 5.2	***Socio-political context How favourable is the socio-political context for the development of civil society?***	
Indictor 5.2.1 Political rights and freedoms	FH's Index of Political Rights.	
Indictor 5.2.2 Rule of law and personal freedoms	Three of the four indicators which form the Index of Civil Liberties: • Rule of law (L) • Personal autonomy and individual rights (P) • Freedom of expression and belief (F)	
Indictor 5.2.3 Associational and organisational rights	One of the four indicators which form the Index of Civil Liberties: • Freedom of associational and organisational rights (A)	
Indictor 5.2.4 Experience of legal framework	Subjective experience of legal framework	Do you believe that your country's regulations and laws for civil society are restrictive?
Indictor 5.2.5 State effectiveness		To what extent is the state able to fulfil its defined functions?
Sub-dimension 5.3	***Socio-cultural context How favourable is the socio-cultural context for the development of civil society (levels of interpersonal trust, tolerance, public spiritedness)?***	
Indictor 5.3.1 Trust	Levels of trust in society	Generally speaking, would you say that most people can be trusted or that you need to be very careful in dealing with people?
Indictor 5.3.2 Tolerance	Level of tolerance in society	Are there some groups of people that you would not like to have as neighbours?
Indictor 5.3.3 Public spiritedness	Level of public spiritedness in society	Please tell me for each of the following actions whether you think it can always be justified, never be justified, or something in between, using this card. - Claiming government benefits to which you are not entitled - Avoiding a fare on public transport - Cheating on taxes if you have a chance - Someone accepting a bribe in the course of their duties

Annex 2: CSI Phase 2008-2010 Implementing Countries and the National Coordinating Organisations

Country	Phase 2008-2010 National Coordinating Organisations
Albania	Institute for Democracy and Mediation (IDM)
Argentina	Grupo de Análisis y Desarrollo Institucional y Social (GADIS) - Pontificia Universidad Católica Argentina
Armenia	Counterpart International/ USAID Civic Advocacy Support Programme (CASP)
Azerbaijan	Civil Society Coalition of Azerbaijani NGOs and International Center for Social Research (ICSR)
Bahrain	Bahrain Human Rights Society (BHRS)
Bulgaria	Open Society Institute - Sophia
Chile	Fundación SOLES
Croatia	Centre for Development of Nonprofit Organizations- CERANEO
Cyprus	The Management Centre of the Mediterranean and NGO Support Centre
Djibouti	Centre de Recherche de l'Université de Djibouti (CRUD)
Dominican Republic	Alianza ONG
DRC	Reseau Proddes
Georgia	Caucasus Institute for Peace, Democracy, and Development (CIPDD)
Ghana	Hedge
Guatemala	Luciernaga and Tzuk Kim Pop
Italy	Cittadinanza Attiva
Japan	Center for Nonprofit Research and Information (CENPRI), Osaka School of International Public Policy (OSIPP), Osaka University
Jordan	Al Urdun Al Jadid (New Jordan) Research Center (UJRC)

Kazakhstan	Public Policy Research Center (PPRC)
Kosovo	Kosovar Civil Society Foundation
Lebanon	International Management & Training Institute (IMTI)
Liberia	AGENDA
Macedonia	Macedonian Center for International Cooperation (MCIC)
Madagascar	Multi-Sector Information Service (MSIS) and Consortium National pour la Participation Citoyenne (CNPC)
Mali	Fédération des Collectifs d'ONG (FECONG)
Malta	The People For Change Foundation
Mexico	Centro Mexicano para la Filantropía (CEMEFI) and Iniciativa Ciudadana para la Promoción de la Cultura del Diálogo
Nepal	Institute of Cultural Affairs (ICA) Nepal
Nicaragua	Red Nicaragüense por la Democracia y el Desarrollo Local (RNDDL)
Niger	Cadre de Concertation pour la Promotion de l'Education (CaCoPEd)
Philippines	Caucus of Development NGO Networks (CODE-NGO)
Samoa	Samoa Umbrella for Non-Governmental Organisations (SUNGO)
Serbia	Research and Analytical Centre ARGUMENT
Slovenia	Legal-information Centre for NGOs
South Korea	The Third Sector Institute
Spain/Cataluna	Observatorio del Tercer Sector
Togo	Realite Gouvernance
Turkey	Third Sector Foundation of Turkey (TUSEV)

Uganda	Development Network of the Indigenous Voluntary Associations (DENIVA)
Ukraine	Center for Philanthropy
Uruguay	Instituto de Comunicación y Desarrollo (ICD)
Venezuela	SINERGIA
Vietnam	Centre for Community Support Development Studies (CECODES)
Zambia	Zambia Council for Social Development (ZCSD)

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