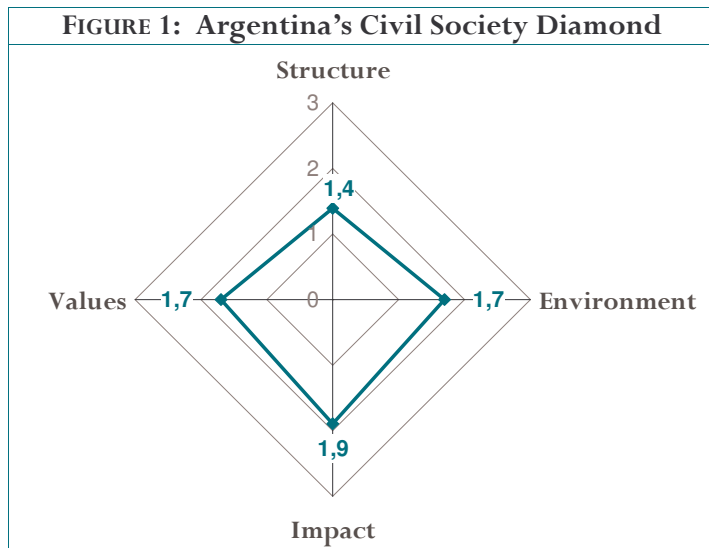


EXECUTIVE SUMMARY – CSI ARGENTINA

During 2004 and 2005, the Argentinean National CSI Team, using a comprehensive framework of 74 indicators, gathered secondary data and sought the opinion of Argentina's diverse civil society actors, including CSO members, expert researchers, and representatives of other sectors (academic, governmental, corporate) to assess the state of the country's civil society. The wide range of information, resulting from this research process, was systematically arranged and subject



to review by the National Advisory Group (NAG), which jointly evaluated the status of Argentina's civil society giving a score (on a scale from 0 to 3) to each of the 74 indicators. The results were analysed and discussed at a national workshop, where new contributions and recommendations for developing Argentinean civil society emerged. The final results are graphically depicted as the Argentina Civil Society Diamond (Figure 1). What emerges from the diamond is that the four dimensions have a moderate level of development and are relatively well balanced. Environment, Values and Impact show similar levels, while Structure is somewhat lagging behind as the weakest dimension of the sector.

The CSI Project enabled the identification of primary strengths and weaknesses of Argentina's civil society and the recognition of future challenges and some key findings, which are summarised below.

Civil society in Argentina was found to have a relatively weak *structure*, and an *environment* that is perceived as unstable but without significant obstacles for its activities. It is inspired mainly by positive values which give meaning to its existence and which play an important role in the promotion of a large number of activities. Particularly during recent years, its impact was clear for mitigate the effects of the country's socio-economic crisis and support vulnerable groups. In this context of increased activity and levels of success, it is not surprising that civil society's Impact dimension received the best score.

A more in depth analysis of the Structure shows the diversity of participants and interests expressed by civil society, as one of its main positive features. On the other hand, it is clear that the lack of resources (financial, human and technological) threatens the sustainability of many organisations and is an impediment to the full achievement of goals. The high degree of commitment from members of these institutions is a variable that mitigates the impact of the

lack of resources. Among the most important challenges, the need to strengthen horizontal cooperation, communication and networking stands out.

The external *environment* of Argentina's civil society can be described as relatively conducive, although there are socio-cultural challenges that have negatively impact the development and consolidation of a strong civil society. Examples are low public trust -only 15% of the population states that most people can be trusted- (Latinobarómetro: 2004) and public honesty levels -only 32% of the population has strong stance towards the law- (UNDP: 2005), which are widely present throughout society. In terms of the socio-economic context, while the recent 2001-2002 crisis became an important roadblock to civil society's sustainability, paradoxically it also showed the increasing role that CSOs play providing social services and propelling multiple solidarity initiatives. This socio-economical context also helps explain the outstanding efficiency of CSOs to operate with scarce resources, and the growing recognition on the part of other actors about the key role the sector plays in the public arena. This recognition became evident through the creation of new coordination instances with the government and the private sector, and in the growing number of consultative and joint-management experiences.

The measurement of *values* practiced and promoted by civil society is generally positive. In addition to the already mentioned key role played in fighting poverty, Argentina's civil society is widely recognised for its commitment to the promotion of positive values, such as environmental protection, democracy, citizen participation and non-violence. The exception is the shortage in the promotion, both within and outside CSOs, of transparency practices, which is likely the result of the unfavourable socio-cultural context. In this area and in those previously mentioned, there are important pending tasks, such as increasing the visibility of CSOs actions and programs, and promoting a public image which could show CSOs as indispensable actors in the promotion of positive social values.

With regards to *impact*, an important item is the increasing capacity of civil society to participate in public policy decision-making. It is likely to see this capacity increased in the near future based in the expansion of both joint initiatives involving different actors and participatory citizenship at the local level. The greatest identified weakness regarding CS impact was in control roles of state and private sector. This is particularly true for the private sector, where the demand to expand transparency practices and social balances is still scarcely executed by CSO and has a weak support base among the public opinion.

The CSI serves as an exceptional evaluation tool to evaluation civil society in Argentina. It was both comprehensive and participatory and succeeded in identifying a set of recommendations for the years to come. The future development of Argentina's civil society requires the strengthening of cooperation, communication and networking efforts, as well as the strategic use of available resources, including information about the sector. A primary goal of the CSI, through its participatory nature, is to expand the foundation of a common vision and the promotion of stakeholders' joint efforts, in order to seek a stronger and more sustainable civil society. It is hoped that this country report can serve as a reference and starting point for the creation of such a common vision in Argentina.