CIVICUS Civil Society Index (CSI)
A Summary of the Bolivia CSI Project Evaluation

Background: Purpose and Objective

This evaluation provides CIVICUS and the Catholic Relief Services- (CRS Bolivia) and the Centro de Investigación y Promoción del Campesinado (CIPCA), the CSI country partners in Bolivia (referred in the summary as the National Coordinating Organizations or NCO), with an assessment of the implementation of the Civil Society Index project. It is hoped that the evaluation will be used to generate lessons that will inform current and future phases of the project as well as the final global evaluation undertaken by CIVICUS. It is also expected that CSR-Bolivia and CIPCA will gain out of this evaluation through the process of self reflection as well as gauging any important lessons learned. The evaluation might also help to develop strategies for future civil society strengthening initiatives.

The evaluation attempted to assess the outcomes and outputs the project as developed by CRS-Bolivia and CIPCA, and CIVICUS. Besides, it also assessed the project against other key criteria, such as relevance, validity, participation, capacity building, CIVICUS assistance, and sustainability, effective use of project resources, unintended changes and early impacts.

The evaluation included a mix of self-assessment surveys by the project partners as well as their evaluation of the outputs and outcomes of the project. The report was shared with the country partner and a final phone call was organised to discuss the evaluation and next steps. This document presents a brief summary of the key findings.
Key Findings

Project Outputs

A body of knowledge on the state of civil society and civil society strengthening practices at national level
This output has mostly been achieved. For the NCO the existing body of knowledge about civil society was collected by the CSI project while “new frameworks of analysis were developed”.

Shared understanding of the state of civil society among a broad range of stakeholders
The NCO felt that this output was fairly achieved. This assessment was justified by the fact that some stakeholders did not participate in the two workshops held for the NAG, nor in the National workshop, in particular representatives of the private sector. So, the NCO concluded that, in the future, it would be important to enlarge the spectrum of stakeholders that can provide views on the state of civil society in Bolivia.

A set of strategies for strengthening civil society
According to the NCO this output was fairly achieved, since the CSI report sparked discussions about the strengths and weaknesses of civil society in Bolivia, however there is still a need to keep disseminating the results and discussing them with different stakeholders. No specific plans (other than dissemination of the findings) have been planned by the NCO, nor have specific actors been approached to implement the recommendations.

Forums for sharing knowledge on civil society
This output has been mostly achieved. According to the NCO, the workshops and report presentations gave the opportunity for people to learn more about the report and its findings, even though a more thorough attainment was undermined by the limited (or nonexistent) input of some groups (i.e. private sector) that, although invited, did not participate in the forums. It is also of note that participation was low in some regional stakeholder consultations. To date, none of the various consultations has resulted in visible cooperation between stakeholders.

Project Outcomes

Increase in knowledge based actions by civil society stakeholders
The NCO considered this outcome the main priority of the project; however, it was only fairly achieved. Actions have been taken by the organizations that took part in the implementation of the CSI in Bolivia, but the NCO was not aware of any action taken by other stakeholders. Of course, it must be noted that, due to the specific nature of this outcome, it is still early to identify concrete outcomes of the CSI as far as knowledge based action is concerned.

Increased collective voice of civil society in governance and development
This outcome was assessed as somewhat achieved.

Increased openness to civil society by external stakeholders (eg. Government, donors, business)
According to the NCO, this outcome has also been fairly achieved. An interesting example of the (although partial) attainment of this outcome was that the international donor community
gathered together to discuss the findings of the Report. This initiative led to a workshop organized by DFID. At the same time, though, other sectors remained quite uninvolved.

Project Relevance

_How relevant is the project for civil society, the NCO and other stakeholders in the country?_

1. 50% of the NAG members who responded to the evaluation agreed that the CSI project is **completely** relevant to their work, while another 50% stated that it is **mostly** relevant. In the words of one NAG member, the CSI project provided “adequate information and enriched the debate” in which he was involved.

2. The evaluation finding is rather positive. All the participating NAG members perceive that the project is **completely** (33%) or **mostly** (67%) relevant for civil society strengthening. As remarked by one NAG member, “a diagnostic tool of this kind allows for detecting strengths and weaknesses that can guide future action. Moreover, the participation of social and institutional actors allowed for a capacity building process.”

As a recommendation for the future, the NCO pointed out that, although it is important to employ comparative parameters and apply methodologies that are consistent with this goal, the very concept of civil society requires more flexibility when conducting analytical research.

Project Validity

_Did the project succeed in providing an accurate picture of the status of civil society in the country?_

The assessment given by the NCO varied. NAG scoring meeting and National Workshop were seen as mostly accurate, while the fact finding studies ad secondary data review were assessed as mostly accurate by some and **fairly** accurate by others. The NCO also raised some doubts about the validity of the stakeholder consultations and the community surveys. According to CIVICUS, however, the final results of the participatory techniques were **mostly** (in the case of the community survey even **completely**) accurate, as opposed to the less positive assessment given by the NCO. CIVICUS is also aware of the fact that some adaptations (i.e. additional indicators and a slightly different format for the study of Corporate Social Responsibility) benefited the accuracy of the findings.

Capacity Building

_Have any specific skills been gained as a result of implementing the CSI project?_

The evaluation also attempted to assess whether any specific skills were gained by the NIT as a result of implementing the CSI project. According to the members of the NIT, CSI helped build capacity in training/facilitating activities and convening meetings. Research skills were also improved and participatory methods were “enriching”, even if the tools would benefit from more flexibility. In terms of data analysis and secondary data gathering, the CRS Bolivia/CIPCA felt that significant research skills were already in place, even though the CSI might have strengthened them further.

_CIVICUS Assistance_
What was the quality of CIVICUS’s support to the NCO as well as the NCO’s role in executing the project?

1. According to the NCO, the support provided by CIVICUS has been completely satisfactory. The NCO was mostly satisfied with the guidance provided by the CSI toolkit, even though some parts of the Spanish version of the toolkit (mainly the Matrix and the civil society concept) were not properly translated. According to the NCO, the review process would have been smoother if most of the comments to the English version were targeted at an early stage (preferably on the Spanish version). As regards the guidance provided by CIVICUS with respect to fundraising, the NCO was completely satisfied.

2. Complete satisfaction was shown with regard to the assistance of the Country Support Person (CSP). The NCO underlined that the CSP was always available and open to discuss and that chats/phone-calls were particularly helpful.

3. CIVICUS was completely (“CRS BOLIVIA/CIPCA were incredibly dedicated and passionate about the project”) or mostly satisfied with the implementation undertaken by the NCO, and mostly satisfied with the systems and procedures put in place by the NCO. In particular, CIVICUS points out that the primary research was implemented very thoroughly and wishes the NCO will try to disseminate the findings of the various research tools through additional publications, other than the Country Report.

Sustainability/Replicability

What is the NCO’s perception regarding implementation of the project in the future?

1. The NCO and all the participating NAG members are of the view that the project should be implemented again in the future. Some NAG members underlined that since Bolivia is undergoing a new political phase, in which civil society might be playing a major role, the CSI could become a “baseline survey” against which to measure advancements or regressions in the future. The new project phase should be carried out after the conclusion of the works of the Constituent Assembly (about end of 2007).

Project Resources

To what extent have the human and financial resources and the time frame been appropriate for the implementation of the project?

1. The NCO states that the financial resources for the project were completely adequate for the successful implementation of the project and that the project stayed within the budgeted costs.

2. The evaluation reflects that the NCO is mostly satisfied with the quality of staff capacities in the project and very satisfied with the work undertaken by the participatory researcher and the civil society expert. CIVICUS was completely or mostly satisfied with the human resources provided by the NCO. It was pointed out that CRS BOLIVIA/CIPCA has a big and interested team working on the project.

3. According to the NCO, the time allocated for the project was fairly sufficient. The NCO (PC) remarked that the team was pressured to implement all the tools “in such a short time”. Nevertheless, in her view, “time constraints were handled well since the team put extra time
to carry out their activities”. According to CIVICUS, the time allocated to the project was completely/mostly sufficient, even though in the end the timeline changed various times.

**Short/Long Term Impact**

*What are the early signs of impact of the project? Have there been any unintended changes (negative and/or positive)?*

1. The research findings engendered interest by several development cooperation organizations that participated in the launch of the Country Report in La Paz. Questions were raised around the role these organizations are playing in the country, especially with regard to local civil society organizations. As a result of the presentation of the CSI results, the UK Department for International Development (DFID) is currently conducting a specific study on the impact of international development cooperation on civil society in Bolivia. Furthermore, a strategic planning exercise was conducted by Danish cooperation for local NGOs and it bases itself on the findings of the CSI in Bolivia.

2. The CSI project did not exert significant impact on the mass media. Nevertheless, the wealth of information collected for the project encouraged CIPCA and CRS Bolivia to conduct an in-depth study about how the media perceives civil society in the country.