CIVICUS Civil Society Index
A Summary of the Italy CSI Project Evaluation

Background: Purpose and Objective

This evaluation provides CIVICUS and Cittadinanzativa, the CSI country partner in Italy 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 Cittadinanzativa will gain out of this evaluation through a 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 outputs and outcomes of the project as developed by Cittadinanzativa 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.
According to the NCO, this output has been completely achieved

Shared understanding of the state of civil society among a broad range of stakeholders
For the NCO, this output has been fairly achieved.

A set of strategies for strengthening civil society
This output merited a mostly achieved rating from the NCO

Forums for sharing knowledge on civil society
For the NCO, this output has been mostly achieved

Outcomes

Increase in knowledge based actions by civil society stakeholders
For the NCO, this outcome has been fairly achieved

Increased collective voice of civil society in governance and development

For the NCO, this outcome has been fairly achieved.

Increased receptivity of civil society by external stakeholders
For the NCO, this outcome has been fairly achieved

Project Relevance

How relevant is the project for NAG, civil society, the Cittadinanzativa and other stakeholders in the country? Implementing the CSI project has been completely relevant to the NCO. On the other hand, three out of five NAG members felt that the project was mostly relevant to their work while for the rest, it was completely and fairly relevant.

Project Validity

a) Secondary data review The NIT rated the secondary data review to be between completely and mostly able to generate accurate assessment of the state of civil society as "secondary sources provided different definition of CSOs compared to that of CIVICUS' definition." CIVICUS also gave a mostly accurate rating.

b) Social Forces Analysis The NIT members reported that despite the different composition of the NAG members they were still able to reach a convergent opinion during the Social Forces Analysis and gave this indicator a completely accurate rating while CIVICUS gave a mostly and somewhat accurate rating.

c) Regional Stakeholder Questionnaire & Consultations The NIT believed that it generated between fairly and somewhat accurate assessment of the state of civil society. According to NIT members, "the stakeholders often misunderstood the questions and gave non-pertinent answers." CIVICUS completely agreed to the given ratings.

d) Media review One NIT member gave a completely accurate rating while the rest of the team rated this methodology as fairly accurate as "some of the news gathered was not pertinent to the study." CIVICUS believed that the media review was able to generate a mostly accurate assessment of the state of civil society in Italy.

e) Fact finding studies (policy impact, corporate social responsibility) These were rated by the NIT as completely accurate because "they were analyzed accurately," a CIVICUS member however gave this methodology a somewhat accurate rating.

f) NAG scoring exercise The NIT members have different views regarding the, for one member, this project methodology was able to provide a completely accurate assessment of the state of Italian civil society while the rest of the team gave a mostly accurate rating sharing that "sometimes NAG members were influenced by their pre-existing knowledge about civil society" affecting their judgment in terms of scoring the indicators. The CIVICUS team also had different opinions, giving a completely

and fairly ratings to this activity. Lastly, the national workshop was given a mostly accurate rating by the NIT citing the NAG members' pre-existing knowledge on civil society as one of the factors which affected the accuracy of this methodology in providing an accurate view of the civil society in Italy. CIVICUS on the other hand, gave a completely accurate rating.

Capacity Building

With regard to capacities or skills acquired by the NIT team members during the CSI project's implementation, they indicated that they were able to gain research skills particularly in secondary data gathering, the conduct of participatory and quantitative survey research methods, data analysis and interpretation and report writing. By engaging in the CSI research activities, the NCO reflected that they worked very hard in finding all kinds of secondary information and consulted with a lot of stakeholders.

Evaluation of CIVICUS Assistance and overall implementation

Cittadinanzattiva expressed complete satisfaction with the overall support provided by CIVICUS as well as with the systems and procedures that were put in place, the guidance received from the CSI toolkit and the CSP assistance. However, the NCO reported that they were not at all satisfied with the support provided by CIVICUS in fund raising for the budgetary requirements of the project.

In CIVICUS' point of view, the NCO's overall implementation is between completely and mostly satisfactory. According to one CIVICUS member, the NCO was able to complete the project on the given time frame, the NCO did not take a lot of time particularly in drafting and completing the country report.

Sustainability/Replicability

Cittadinanzattiva indicated interest in replicating the project all (5 out of 5) of the NAG members agreed with this. The NCO believed that the CSI project was able to inform their current programme activities.

Project Resources

Financial Resources

The NCO felt that financial resources have been fairly adequate to successfully implement the project.

Human Resources

Human resources were mostly adequate in the point of view of CIVICUS because of the high turnover rate project coordinators who are well-versed in English. CIVICUS shared that it is mostly satisfied with the work of the project coordinator. The civil society expert received a completely and mostly satisfactory rating from CIVICUS and a very

satisfactory rating from the NCO. The participatory researcher received a completely and fairly satisfactory rating from CIVICUS and a very satisfactory rating from the NCO.

Time

For the NCO, the time allocated to implement the project was fairly sufficient. CIVICUS believed that it was mostly sufficient even though the project dragged on for quite some time because the NCO decided to piggy back some of the CSI components in its other activities, for example the national workshop was carried out as part of the NCO national meeting. Also, funding proved to be problematic for some components which affected the project's time frame.

Conclusion:

The implementation of the CSI project in Italy has been far from smooth. Several challenges were met by the NCO as well as by CIVICUS. Foremost is in the financial side of the project and the inadequacy of such led to the failure of implementation of some project methodologies that were vital in writing a comprehensive and accurate country report. However, the NCO was able to conduct small research activities which helped tremendously in filling the data gaps. As the NCO suggested, the project methodology still needs to be fine tuned but expressed willingness and interest in implementing the project again in the near future.