CIVICUS Civil Society Index

A Summary of the Lebanon CSI Project Evaluation

Background: Purpose and Objective

This evaluation provides CIVICUS and the International Management and Training Institute (IMTI), the CSI country partner in Lebanon, 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 IMTI 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 outputs and outcomes of the project as developed by IMTI 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, the first in priority for the IMTI, was evaluated by both CIVICUS and IMTI as mostly achieved. For IMTI, the country report mostly provides comprehensive and accurate information on the state of civil society in Lebanon. The report offered a unique opportunity to provide information on CS in Lebanon based on a comprehensive scale of CSI indicators. For CIVICUS however, even though the report provides a lot of data on the state of CS in Lebanon, the data is not concise and sometimes gave information that did not answer fully the indicator question or provided way too much data to the extent that the reader got lost in all the data and was hard to relate the data back to the indicator. CIVICUS further noted that the report takes a political slant through out its analysis, perhaps, an imperative of the highly politicized nature of the Lebanese society. However, the report provided a clear scanning of the strength and weakness of civil society and thus relevant to CS strengthening in Lebanon.

Shared understanding of the state of civil society among a broad range of stakeholders

This output was assessed by IMTI as fairly achieved. This was based on the fact that the security situation that prevailed in 2005 and its repercussions hindered broad based consultations among the national stakeholders and thus limited the building of a shared understanding on the state of CS in Lebanon.

A set of strategies for strengthening civil society

IMTI evaluated this output as mostly achieved. IMTI noted that 'during the implementation of CSI, several CSOs expressed their interest in the methodology and its application and asked for an in-depth exposure and training on it.' The national workshop set up specific guidelines for follow-up actions. IMTI is exploring the possibility of conducting a workshop for active CSOs to assess the needs and identify priority.

Forums for sharing knowledge on civil society

This output was assessed by IMTI as completely achieved. The NCO noted that the 'CSI created an excellent space to share knowledge on civil society and several civil society activists and NAG members expressed their appreciation for this.' These forums and the consultative processes involved resulted in cooperation between different stakeholders that went beyond the project implementation. The NCO specifically notes that 'some CSOs and CSO networks benefited from the CSI consultation and established links and working mechanisms with each other.'

Outcomes

Increase in knowledge based actions by civil society stakeholders

IMTI did not score the achievement of this outcome as it is still too early to judge the achievement of this outcome, because guidelines for future action produced in May 2006 hadn't had the chance to be implemented due to the war by Israel against Lebanon. As such, there are no examples on the ground of any actions based on knowledge generated by CSI. Nonetheless, several CSOs and donors have indicated that they are going to use the CSI findings whenever the report is finalized as the basis for their proposed policies and action plans.

Increased collective voice of civil society in governance and development

IMTI assessed this outcome as fairly achieved because 'CSI helped in enhancing the lobbying force/capacity of CSOs by providing evidence based data/information and by identifying civil society strength and weaknesses.'

Increased receptivity of civil society by external stakeholders

This outcome was evaluated as fairly achieved. 'Donors and private sector have showed interest in opening up to civil society concerns and to establish better communication.

The media monitoring/review identified key obstacles that are hindering a better civil society-media partnership and certain media institutions (e.g. the LBCI, An Nahar, Al Safir) were interested in the data produced by the CSI.'

Project Relevance

How relevant is the project for NAG, civil society, the IMTI and other stakeholders in the country?

The project was seen as completely relevant for IMTI because they work towards supporting CSOs, in capacity building, enhancement of partnerships among the stakeholders, promotion of good governance and poverty reduction, all which the CSI was able to scan. The project was perceived as fairly relevant to other stakeholders however low their interest in partnerships with Civil Society is.

Project Validity

- **a)** Secondary data review was evaluated as somewhat to mostly (IMTI), and fairly (CIVICUS) able to generate data/information on the state of the civil society in Lebanon.
- **b)** Social Forces Analysis at 1st NAG meeting was evaluated as somewhat to fairly (IMTI), and fairly to mostly (CIVICUS) able to generate data/information on the state of the civil society in Lebanon.
- **c)** Regional Stakeholder Questionnaire & Consultations were evaluated as somewhat to fairly (IMTI), and fairly to mostly (CIVICUS) able to generate data/ information about the state of the civil society in Lebanon.
- **d)** Community Survey was evaluated as fairly to mostly (IMTI), and mostly to completely (CIVICUS) able to generate data/information about the state of the civil society in Lebanon.
- **e)** Media review was evaluated as somewhat to fairly (IMTI), and mostly (CIVICUS) able to generate data/ information about the state of the civil society in Lebanon.
- **f)** Fact finding studies (policy impact, corporate social responsibility) were evaluated as not at all to mostly (IMTI), and fairly (CIVICUS) able to generate data/ information about the state of the civil society in Lebanon.
- **g)** NAG scoring exercise was seen as somewhat to mostly (IMTI), and somewhat (CIVICUS) able to generate data/ information about the state of the civil society in Lebanon.
- **h)** National Workshop was somewhat to mostly (IMTI) and somewhat to fairly (CIVICUS) able to generate data/ information about the state of the civil society in Lebanon.

Project Participation

Several participatory approaches were employed during the various stages of the project implementation. Many of these methods worked fairly well. However, not all participatory methods worked out well due to several circumstances (political and security) that were beyond their team's control. These included the NAG scoring meeting and national workshop.

Capacity Building

IMTI CSI team gained new research skills as a result of taking part in the implementation of the CSI because 'the orientations given by CIVICUS toolkit and the continuous coaching by CIVICUS staff. IMIT team however, indicated that they already had skills in training and facilitation as well as in networking and convening.

Evaluation of CIVICUS Assistance and overall implementation

According to IMTI, CIVICUS by and large provided mostly adequate support in the entire project implementation process through CSI toolkit and constant communications offering guidelines. The NCO specifically noted that the CSP was very helpful inspite of the monumental political and security challenges for the CSI implementation in Lebanon as she tried, and was effective in providing creative solutions to the problems faced by the NCO. CIVICUS is mostly satisfied with the support it offered.

Sustainability/Replicability

IMTI is planning to implement the CSI again in the future because they believe that the CSI will provide valuable knowledge about CS and will enhance its capacities. Repeating the CSI implementation will also provide them with an opportunity to compare the state of CS in Lebanon during different times. CSI project has informed current IMTI programme activities and is currently capitalizing on the CSI findings in its civil society training programs.

Project Resources

Financial Resources
According to IMTI they mostly had sufficient financial resources to successfully implement the project. They were able to stay within the budgeted costs.

Human Resources
Both IMTI and CIVICUS assessed IMTI human resources as being mostly sufficient to successfully implement the project. CIVICUS is completely satisfied with the work done by the project coordinator because he was very committed and enthusiastic about the CSI. He was always ready with monthly progress reports and for CIVICUS monthly calls. He also thought creatively about the project and about potential add-on activities such as a stand-alone media review project.

Both CIVICUS and the NCO were mostly satisfied with the work done by the PR and the CSE. However, CIVICUS noted that the CSE writing style was not the most concise.'

Time
IMTI evaluated the time allocated for the project as mostly sufficient. IMTI however noted 'certain delays in the project implementation that were caused by the security situation during 2005 and the negative effects of severe polarization among the Lebanese groups.' CIVICUS on the other hand felt that the time was somewhat sufficient for them to satisfactorily implement the CSI.

Short/Long Term Impact

Changes within the NCO
Capacity building: research and networking capacities as well as on project management skills

Changes within partner organisation
Enhanced interaction between different CSOs who were involved in the process
Several CSOs expressed interest in using the CSI as a self-assessment tool

Donors/ Funders
CSI implementation and findings attracted the attention of a few donor agencies

Media
CSI helped uncover a big gap between CS and media. Initiatives should be launched to address this group

Conclusion

In general, the findings of the evaluation are largely positive in most instances. It needs mention that the CSI implementation in Lebanon came at a time of great political instability. This might have affected the political leanings that the report writer adopted.

CIVICUS is specifically thankful to the NCO for all their hard work and commitment to this project despite all the hardship their country has gone through over the past 2 years. The NCO appreciates that the successful implementation of the CSI in Lebanon was a joint efforts for all and are also thankful for CIVICUS support.