

CIVICUS Civil Society Index

A Summary of the Nepal CSI Project Evaluation

Background: Purpose and Objective

This evaluation provides CIVICUS and the Institute of Cultural Affairs-Nepal (ICA), the CSI country partner in Nepal 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 ICA 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 ICA 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 ICA, was evaluated by both CIVICUS and ICA as completely achieved. The country report was evaluated as fairly (ICA) to mostly (CIVICUS) able to provide comprehensive and accurate information on the state of civil society in Nepal. The report was assessed as completely relevant to organisations that work to strengthen the civil society.

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

This output, the third in priority for ICA was as mostly achieved. The NCO explained that 'because of the difficult political as well as geographical condition, they were not able to invite stakeholders from all districts.

A set of strategies for strengthening civil society

ICA evaluated this output (the 2nd in its priorities) as mostly achieved. ICA held that they are in the process of organising 'interactive' workshops in the future

Forums for sharing knowledge on civil society

This output was assessed by ICA as completely achieved. ICA noted that the 'CSI gave an opportunity to share views and opinion as well as a forum to enhance knowledge about CS especially in rural areas.' Not only did these forums and the consultative processes and activities involved in them completely provide space for civil society and stakeholders to debate and share information on issues concerning the civil society but also resulted in cooperation between the different stakeholders that went beyond the project implementation. The NCO notes that 'for some CSOs it was the first time they had ever met and they have remained in close contact so far.'

Outcomes

Increase in knowledge based actions by civil society stakeholders

ICA rated outcome, as mostly achieved. ICA held that 'the CSI findings are yet to be published. Therefore many CSOs which were not involved are still not fully aware of the project.' As such, there are as yet, no examples to show that the stakeholders are making use of the CSI findings to acquire knowledge on civil society.

Increased collective voice of civil society in governance and development

ICA assessed this outcome as mostly achieved because 'CSI has started to contribute to increased voice of the civil society in governance and development.'

Increased receptivity of civil society by external stakeholders

This outcome was evaluated as fairly achieved. The NCO held that despite their willingness and dedication, they could not gather all the CSO stakeholders. Many were unable to participate in their meetings because of the difficult political situation during the survey period. The then government was reluctant to promote CSOs and still there are no new regulations regarding suspension of the prohibitive legal environment for the CSOs.

Project Relevance

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

The project was evaluated by ICA as completely relevant to their work because their mission is to strengthen CSOs in Nepal. 'The CSI was first of its kind in Nepal and it has wide application to the Nepali context. It shows a great deal of how we can strengthen our CSOs' (ICA). The two NAG members who took part in this evaluation held that the CSI project was completely relevant to their work because 'they have been involved in the works of civil society for a long time particularly raising voices of highly marginalized and deprived groups of the society.' The project was also perceived as mostly relevant to other stakeholders.

Project Validity

- a) **Secondary data review** was evaluated by ICA as completely able to generate data/information on the state of the civil society in Nepal. CIVICUS evaluated the secondary data review for Nepal as being fairly to mostly able to generate accurate data and information on the state of the civil society in Nepal.

- b) **Social Forces Analysis** was assessed by ICA as having been mostly to completely able to generate accurate assessment of the state of the civil society in Nepal while CIVICUS assessed this as being somewhat to mostly able to generate accurate information on the state of the civil society in Nepal.
- c) **Regional Stakeholder Questionnaire & Consultations** were evaluated as between mostly to completely (ICA) able to generate accurate and relevant data/ information on the state of the civil society in Nepal. CIVICUS on their part were of the view that this methodology was fairly to mostly able to generate accurate data and information.
- d) **Community Survey** was evaluated as between mostly to completely (ICA), able to generate accurate data/information about the state of the civil society in Nepal. CIVICUS rated the community survey methodology usage in Nepal as mostly able to generate accurate data/information on the state of civil society.
- e) **Media review** was evaluated by ICA as being completely able to generate an accurate assessment on the state of civil society in Nepal. CIVICUS assessed it as fairly able to generate data/ information about the state of the civil society in Nepal.
- f) **Fact finding studies (policy impact, corporate social responsibility)** were assessed as being fairly to completely (ICA) and somewhat (CIVICUS) able to generate data/ information about the state of the civil society in Nepal.
- g) **NAG scoring exercise** was seen as completely (ICA) and fairly to mostly (CIVICUS) able to generate data/ information about the state of the civil society in Nepal. ICA explained that the NAG scoring went very well.
- h) **National Workshop:** This was assessed as completely (ICA) and mostly (CIVICUS) able to generate data/ information about the state of the civil society in Nepal.
- i) **Country Report:** Was evaluated the country as between mostly to completely (ICA) and fairly (CIVICUS) able to generate data and information about the state of the civil society in Nepal.

Project Participation

According to ICA, several participatory approaches and tools suggested by CIVICUS as well as others developed by them such as 'ORID' were employed during the various stages of the project implementation. All processes worked very well. 'The participatory process/tools enhanced the validity of the project and also made our work easier and trust worthy' (ICA).

Capacity Building

On the whole the ICA CSI team gained new research skills specifically on secondary data gathering, participatory research methods, quantitative survey research methods, data analysis & interpretation, and report writing. The team also gained skills in training and facilitation, convening and networking as well as in fund raising.

The NCO held that 'since civil society involves many groups of people including illiterate social workers, it would be good to make non-quantitative data presentation, visual and participatory as much as possible.'

Evaluation of CIVICUS Assistance and overall implementation

According to ICA, CIVICUS by and large provided complete and adequate support in the entire project implementation. They held that they could not expect more than what

CIVICUS provided. The NCO explained that they 'understood and appreciated the challenges of conducting the study globally and the support received from CIVICUS was tremendous.'

ICA is also completely satisfied by the systems and procedures put in place for the assistance of NCOs in the implementation of the project as well as with the guidance received from the CSI toolkit. The NCO is mostly satisfied with the support given to it by CIVICUS in fund raising.

Although ICA was mostly satisfied with the CSP support, they pointed out that because of frequent changes of CSPs, 'there were some difficulties such as getting help when it was urgent. They said that this may have contributed in the finalisation of the country report

The Evaluation reveals that CIVICUS is mostly satisfied with the overall implementation undertaken by the ICA especially given the extremely challenging circumstances of an authoritarian regime, a major political crisis, the lack of data on CS and the lack of quantitative social research training in Nepal. The systems and procedures put in place by ICA to implement the project were assessed by CIVICUS as fairly to mostly satisfactory.

Sustainability/Replicability

ICA is planning to implement the CSI again in the future after 3 years because they are 'dedicated to CSO strengthening in Nepal.' This position is also echoed by the two NAG members who took part in this evaluation. The NCO indicated that CSI project has informed their current programme activities. ICA also feels that the present study represents the status of CSOs in a transition state and there is a need of the repeat of the study once they have fully fledged democratic government.

Project Resources

Financial Resources

According to ICA they had fairly sufficient financial resources to successfully implement the project. They were able to stay within the budgeted costs

Human Resources

ICA held that they had completely sufficient human resources to successfully implement the project. CIVICUS noted that the NCO had fairly to mostly sufficient human resources to implement the project. The NCO is completely satisfied with the work done by both the CSE and the Participatory researcher.

CIVICUS is mostly satisfied with the work done by the project coordinator. They held that the project coordinator was a pleasure to work with and was very knowledgeable' CIVICUS is fairly satisfied with the work done by both the PR and the CSE.

Time

ICA evaluated the time allocated for the project as mostly sufficient. CIVICUS on the other hand felt that the time was somewhat sufficient for them to satisfactorily implement the CSI albeit the political changes which were outside of any of their control forced the NCO to postpone the CSI implementation timeline.

Short/Long Term Impact

Unintended changes

- The Nepal CSI implementation depended on the support and goodwill of various stakeholders in Nepal. Through this, ICA was able to build partnerships with diverse CSOs which they want to carry on in their future work.

Changes within the NCO

- Because of the CSI project, ICA has been able to strengthen its 'Civil Society Development Unit' and it is now able to give quality services using the CSI results as well as the methodology of the CSI study. ICA CSI team is also able to carry out CSI project on its own in the future.
- Increase of internal transparency in the NCO

Changes within partner organisation

- Networking and lobbying has improved

Changes within Donors/ Funders

- No changes have been noted among donors in Nepal. The NCO expects that they will be able to attract donor's interest on this study once they publicise it and that donors will be more willing to fund such initiatives.

Changes within the Media

- Established a positive image of CS

Conclusion:

In general, the findings of the evaluation are largely positive in most instances. It needs mention that the CSI implementation in Nepal came at a time of significant political changes that affected the civil society environment. This in turn affected the relevance of some of the data that had already been collected. However changes are expected from within the Nepal civil society and it would be important to implement the CSI in the future to monitor these changes