CIVICUS Civil Society Index
A Summary of the Sierra Leone CSI Project Evaluation

Background: Purpose and Objective

The purpose of the evaluation is to provide CIVICUS and Campaign for Good Governance (CGG) with an assessment of the implementation of the Civil Society Index (CSI) project in Sierra Leone. The findings of 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 hoped that CGG will also 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 CGG 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 was evaluated by CGG as completely achieved. The country report was assessed as fairly (CIVICUS) to completely (CGG) able to provide comprehensive and accurate information on the state of civil society in Sierra Leone. For CGG, ‘the comprehensive nature of the research work done provides the authenticity for the information provided.’

Shared understanding of the state of civil society among a broad range of stakeholders
This output was assessed by CGG as completely achieved. The NCO holds that the CSI processes and implementation provided civil society actors with the opportunity to interact more effectively and discuss plans and ideas to strengthen the civil society. These forums have encouraged frequent interaction and have helped provide a space for civil society (and stakeholders) to debate and share information on issues concerning civil society. However, these interactions are yet to result to continued interactions beyond the project. The forums created the desired impact. Therefore the objective of sharing knowledge among CSO’s was met.
A set of strategies for strengthening civil society
The evaluation reveals that this output was completely achieved. The NCO held that the CSI project offered CSOs an opportunity to examine themselves and find solutions to their problems.’ CGG is currently identifying partners and soliciting funding for follow-up projects on the action-agenda developed in the National Workshop because as they stand, they are only documented and stands as a viable resource only if utilised.

Forums for sharing knowledge on civil society
For CGG, this output has been mostly achieved. CGG noted that during the consultative meetings and NAG scoring meeting, the debates revealed the issues on which there were divergent views on the state of the civil society in the country. The impression of CS are not static but in flux. Depending on the issues to be addressed or the resources available CSO’s engagement may change significantly. Therefore information on the state of CSO is not fixed.

Outcomes

Increase in knowledge based actions by civil society stakeholders
CGG evaluated this outcome as completely achieved because Civil Society groups are all geared towards putting into action areas identified to strengthen Civil Society in Sierra Leone. However, there are no examples of that show that the civil society is using the CSI findings to acquire information about the CS in Sierra Leone because these findings have not yet been published. The action agenda agreed during the national workshop are as yet to be followed up because the Civil Society groups are waiting to receive the final report. This outcome is ranked topmost the justification being that CSO’s can now take actions based on the findings of the CSI.

Increased collective voice of civil society in governance and development
CGG rated this outcome as mostly achieved. CGG held that CSOs in Sierra Leone are already intervening but waiting for the final report to develop a more structured intervention. As such, the NCO was not able to provide any examples that show that CSI has contributed to increased collective voice of the CS in governance and development. They further held that the guide for collective engagement in governance and development issues is available though a more thorough and structured intervention lies with publishing the final report.

Increased receptivity of civil society by external stakeholders
CGG assessed this outcome as mostly achieved. However, CGG believes that this outcome ‘could only be assessed effectively after the dissemination when all parties would have reviewed the content. It could also be assessed based on their involvement in the follow up activities’

Project Relevance

How relevant is the project for NAG, civil society, the CGG and other stakeholders in the country?
The project was seen as completely relevant for CGG and the NAG members. CGG held that ‘areas of activity is Civil Society strengthening. As such, the CSI work and report
serves as a baseline for further interventions.' One NAG member held that ‘as a national NGO coordinator in the country, he was able to interact with lots of NGOs registered with the ministry of development who were involved in the CSI work.’

The evaluation found the project to be between mostly to completely relevant to civil society strengthening in Sierra Leone. One NAG member held that given the recent history (civil war) the civil society strengthening was now a very relevant issue. The other held that the work has been very inspiring and insightful and ‘CSOs are now aware of the weaknesses and view this project as a step to moving in the right direction.’

The NCO noted that ‘there has been a lot of interest expressed by the external stakeholders to have copies of the final product. Some of them such as the media and academics have already been part of the process.’

**Project Validity**

a) **Secondary data review** was evaluated as fairly (CIVICUS) and mostly (CGG) able to generate data/information on the state of the civil society in Sierra Leone.

b) **Social Forces Analysis at 1st NAG meeting** was evaluated as somewhat (CIVICUS) and completely (CGG) able to generate data/information on the state of the civil society in Sierra Leone.

c) **Regional Stakeholder Questionnaire & Consultations** were evaluated as mostly (CIVICUS) and completely (CGG) able to generate accurate information on the state of civil society in Sierra Leone.

d) **Community Survey** was evaluated as mostly (CIVICUS) and mostly to completely (CGG) able to generate accurate data/information on the state of the civil society in Sierra Leone.

e) **Media review** was evaluated as fairly (CIVICUS) and mostly to completely (CGG) able to generate accurate and relevant information on the state of the civil society in Sierra Leone.

f) **Fact finding studies (policy impact, corporate social responsibility)** were evaluated fairly (CIVICUS) and completely (CGG) able to generate data/information about the state of the civil society in Sierra Leone.

g) **NAG scoring exercise.** This methodology was assessed as fairly (CIVICUS) and completely able to generate data/information about the state of the civil society in Sierra Leone.

h) **National Workshop** was evaluated as completely (CGG) able to generate data/information about the state of the civil society in Sierra Leone. CIVICUS did not rate this methodology.

**Project Participation**

The NCO did not respond to the question on whether they applied any participatory methodologies and tools in the course of project implementation. However, they noted that community surveys and the NAG meetings worked according to plan and that at most, all processes worked out well but at various levels of satisfaction.
**Capacity Building**
According to CGG, they were able to gain capacities in all areas of research and other skills such as in training and facilitation. They held that the reason for this was two fold: firstly, the CIVICUS’ CSI methodology was unique and rigorous and secondly, because the team was able and willing to learn. As such, the level of professionalism from the team improved with time.

**Evaluation of CIVICUS Assistance and overall implementation**
According to CGG, CIVICUS by and large provided mostly adequate and helpful support in the entire project implementation. They however noted the difficulties and frustrations with the constant change of CIVICUS personnel assigned the duty of supporting them. CGG is completely satisfied with the systems and procedures put in place for the assistance of NCOs in the implementation of the project as well as with the toolkit because it was very clear in terms of what was expected of the NCOs. CGG is also completely satisfied with CIVICUS support on fundraising for the project.

On their part, CIVICUS is fairly satisfied with the overall implementation undertaken by the NCO as well as with the support they gave the NCO. CIVICUS in agreement with the NCO noted the ‘rather unworkable turn over at the CSI, that forced Sierra Leone CSP to change four times in less than one year’ as an area of support that was inadequate. This has inevitably impacted on the implementation of the project, with rather negative consequences.’ They however also noted several delays that slowed the process down, in spite of funding and resources. CIVICUS is mostly satisfied with the systems and procedures put in place by the NCOs in the implementation of the project. CIVICUS noted primary research as an area done well by the NCO albeit they were ineffective in incorporating them all into Country Report.

**Sustainability/Replicability**
The NCO as well as the NAG members held that CSI should be re-implemented in Sierra Leone in two year’s time. The CSI has very much informed current and future programmes of the NCO and they currently have as one of its core programmes civil society strengthening As CSI was greatly important for them in providing specific areas of intervention. The two NAG members further noted that the concept and the role of civil societies in the present democratization process in Sierra Leone requires a further review, since there are some missing links as to how they can function effectively and not opposition to government.’

**Project Resources**

**Financial Resources**
CGG assessed the financial resources as completely adequate for them to implement to the project and they stayed within the budget.
**Human Resources**
CGG did not rate the human resources available to successfully implement the project. However, they noted that they assigned a staff to the project who was assisted by other staff members and this provided room for efficient delivery of the report. CIVICUS was of the view that the human resources available for successful implementation of the project were mostly adequate.

**Time**
CGG assessed the time available for the implementation of the project as somewhat sufficient and they had to get an extension to be able to complete the project. However, CIVICUS was of the view that the time allocated for the project was mostly sufficient.

**Short/Long Term Impact**

**Unintended changes**
According to the NCO, CSOs have identified CGG as being better placed through this project to guide further projects on strengthening civil society in Sierra Leone.

**Changes within the NCO**
The NCO held that they now have more expertise among staff involved in the project

**Changes within the partner organisations:**
CSOs are now more eager to partner with others to achieve common objectives.

**Changes within the government:**
The NCO held that the government ‘is not aware of the context.’

**Conclusion**
The CSI implementation in Sierra Leone although challenging in terms of time, has been a rewarding process for the NCO, the rest of the civil society and other stakeholder. The positive views on the utility of the CSI held by the NCO and other stakeholders and especially the NAG member representing the ministry of development and economic planning, that ‘the concept and the role of civil societies in the present democratization process in Sierra Leone requires a further review, to make them function effectively and not opposition to government’ is a pointer of these positive developments. As noted, by the NCO, the report forms positive basis building blocks towards civil society strengthening in Sierra Leone. Implementing CSI in the future would provide one with a good comparative view for the future.