CIVICUS Civil Society Index Shortened Assessment Tool (CSI-SAT)
A Summary of the Taiwan CSI-SAT Project Evaluation

Background: Purpose and Objective

This evaluation provides CIVICUS and the Center for International NGO Studies at National Sun Yat-Sen University (CINGOS), the CSI country partner in Taiwan with an assessment of the implementation of the Civil Society Index - Shortened Assessment Tool 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 CINGOS 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 CINGOS and CIVICUS. Besides, it also assessed the project against other key criteria, such as relevance, validity, participation, capacity building, CIVICUS assistance, project sustainability, effective use of project resources, and 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. 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 has been mostly achieved. The justification for this assessment is the fluidity of information given the constant changes in social phenomenon such as civil societies it is only fair to state that this output was mostly achieved.

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

CINGOS evaluates this output as mostly achieved. ‘Taiwan’s CSI-SAT was undertaken in collaboration with a broad range of CSOs and stakeholders and will be widely distributed throughout Taiwan. This will serve as a catalyst for disseminating knowledge about civil society throughout Taiwan, although the academic nature of the report may be an obstacle for some local or community type CSOs’ (CINGOS).

Improved self-understanding of civil society and better appreciation of its roles

CINGOS evaluates this output as mostly achieved. Given that the CSI report is one of the first of its kind in Taiwan, it serves as a powerful tool in helping CSOs, the state, and the general public in understanding civil society and the roles it plays in shaping Taiwan’s society.

An assessment of civil society’s strengths and weaknesses as well as priority areas for policy and action

CINGOS evaluates this output as mostly achieved. This study brought together a wealth of data on Taiwan’s civil society. ‘The CIVICUS CSI findings will be viewed by many actors from the state and civil society, and because it is one of the first studies of its kind in Taiwan, will serve as a useful tool in helping to set strategic policy actions on civil society’ (CINGOS).

Project Outcomes

Increase in knowledge based actions by civil society stakeholders

CINGOS evaluates this outcome as mostly achieved. ‘This is the first time so much information on such a broad range of issues dealing with Taiwan’s civil society has been collected. The national youth commission will be widely distributing this report and therefore, greatly contribute to the knowledge based actions of civil society stakeholders…. The government is more willing to help the development of NGOs in Taiwan. The CSOs are also willing to do their best in enhancing their capacity. While this is not a result of CSI alone, the fact that this study involved so many different actors from Taiwan’s society, including both the state and CSOs, has helped to build further trust among the various actors and should help to contribute to future capacity building’ (CINGOS).

Project Relevance

How relevant is the project for CINGOS, the civil society and other stakeholders in the country?
CINGOS evaluated the CSI project was completely relevant to their work because they are a research center dedicated to the study of civil society, and to helping Taiwan’s CSOs to internationalize their work. The one SAG member who took part in the evaluation also held that the project was completely relevant to their work. Many SAG members are also heavily involved in research on civil society as well.

Both CINGOS and the SAG member held that the project was completely relevant to the goal of strengthening Taiwanese civil society. “All of the parties involved in this project realize that since Taiwan’s civil society is a relatively new phenomenon, a study that brings together a wealth of information on a broad range of topics on Taiwan’s civil society is vital to the further development and strengthening of the civil society” (CINGOS).

**Project Validity**

*Did the project succeed in providing an accurate picture of the status of civil society in the country?*

CINGOS and the Civil Society Expert (CSE) held that the project’s methodology was able to completely generate an accurate assessment of the state of civil society in Taiwan. ‘CIVICUS CSI project methodology, with its focus on the deliberation and debate of the SAG was an excellent way to provide an unbiased view’ (CINGOS). On the other hand, CIVICUS was of the view that the project methodology was mostly able to generate an accurate assessment of the state of civil society in Taiwan.

**Capacity Building**

*Have any specific skills been gained as a result of implementing the CSI project?*

According to CINGOS and the CSE, skills were built on the aspects of secondary data gathering, participatory research methods, quantitative survey research methods, data analysis and interpretation, report writing, as well as training, convening and networking capacities.

**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. Particular areas of support that were considered as helpful by CINGOS include the CSI-SAT toolkit, the methodology, as well as the systems and procedures put in place by CIVICUS to assist them in the project implementation.
2. It was noted that CINGOS was mostly satisfied with the Country Support Person’s assistance and overall support particularly on the methodology and the analytical framework and understanding of the indicators and in editing of the report’ (CINGOS).
3. CIVICUS CSP and the Project manager were mostly satisfied with the project implementation in Taiwan. It was noted that the project was approached with a very high level of commitment and interest in a short time span. However, the issue of the NCO non-adherence to the scoring methodology and the lack of constant contact from NCO were singled out as challenges during the implementation.
Sustainability/Replicability

What is the NCOs perception regarding implementation of the project in the future?

CINGOS and SAG members agree that it would be of importance to implement the full CSI in future. The CSI being the first comprehensive analysis for Taiwan civil society, a full CSI would be important to educate the government and the public

Project Resources

To what extent has the human and financial resources been appropriate for the implementation of the project?

1. The financial resources were deemed to be mostly adequate for the implementation of the project.

2. The human resources of the project were considered to be mostly adequate to successfully implement the project by all parties asked. Both CSE and Project Coordinator were considered as essential for the satisfactory implementation of the project. However, Project manager points out that the ‘CSE had a very academic approach, which makes the report not very relevant to practitioners’.

3. There were some discrepancies in opinion about the time frame of the project. CINGOS held that the time was insufficient while the CSP felt it was completely sufficient.

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. Civil society in Taiwan is now enjoying more attention from the academic community. The CSI-SAT has raised new interest in conducting scholarly research on not only Taiwan’s civil society, but international CSOs and international civil society as well.

2. There is now a more solid foundation of trust between the state and CSOs, on which the strengthening of civil society can be built upon. The reason for this is that the project implementation was itself funded by a government agency (National Youth Commission) and happened without interference from them in terms of our research or methodology, and as such contributed to a better working relationship between these two sectors within Taiwan’s society.