

CIVICUS Civil Society Index Shortened Assessment Tool (CSI-SAT)

A Summary of the Togo CSI-SAT Project Evaluation

Background: Purpose and Objective

This evaluation provides CIVICUS and Plan Togo/FONGTO (Plan/ FONGTO), the CSI country partners in Togo 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 Plan/ FONGTO 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 in Togo.

The evaluation attempted to assess the outputs and outcomes of the project as developed by Plan/ FONGTO and CIVICUS. Besides, it also assessed the project against other key criteria, such as relevance, validity, participation, capacity building, CIVICUS assistance, and project 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. 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 mostly been achieved. However, due to lack of secondary data in Togo it was not possible to collect complete information, limiting the scope of the assessment. The NCO states that “there was only limited information on the role of civil society in Togo prior to the CSI. The CSI process therefore strongly contributed in shedding light on the role and state of civil society in Togo”.

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

The main occasions for creating a shared understanding on the state of civil society among key stakeholders came through the national workshop and the broad advertisement that was undertaken by the NCO as well as three SAG meetings that were conducted. It has to be noted that the methodology of the CSI SAT does not prescribe a National Workshop. However, the main objective for the CSI-SAT implementation in Togo was to stimulate discussion and reflection, which is why in this context it was considered useful and important. These occasions were very relevant in the achievement of this output according to Plan/FONGTO.

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

According to the NCO evaluation, there is still a lot of work to be done at this stage for the country report to be widely disseminated, i.e. through sensitisation and training workshops as this was the first project of its kind that stimulated in-depth discussion on the state of civil society in the country. This output was perceived as mostly achieved by the NCO.

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

The NCO perceived that this output was completely achieved, “as all aspects of civil society’s roles and responsibilities were analyzed and assessed”. The consultative activities within the project have given space for participants to debate and share information on issues concerning civil society in Togo according to the NCO. However, due to time constraints the consultative activities were not completely sufficient to build cooperation between stakeholders. Whether any of the consultations that were undertaken resulted in any cooperation between stakeholders beyond the CSI project is yet too early to assess.

Project Outcomes

Increase in knowledge based actions by civil society stakeholders

The CSI- SAT findings show that there are generally very little knowledge-based actions taken by the Togolese civil society. Hence, there is a great need for various types of projects such as the CSI that can provide a comprehensive body of knowledge for future knowledge-based action by civil society. Examples of stakeholders making use of the CSI’s findings are SCAC: Service de Cooperation et d’Actions Culturelles of the French

Embassy, from CSO, UNDP and officials. This outcome is suggested to have been completely achieved already at this stage.

Project Relevance

How relevant is the project for Plan/ FONGTO, the civil society and other stakeholders in the country?

The CSI has been very relevant according to the NCO. An achievement for Plan/ FONGTO is that the CSI-SAT project has facilitated in the mobilization of their members. It also strongly contributed in increasing the visibility of Plan/ FONGTO in Togo, especially since the CSI-SAT has identified CSOs' lack of visibility in Togo to be a major weakness. According to the NCO FONGTO has due to lack of funding not been able to start up any new projects to mobilize its member. The CSI was therefore a much welcomed project. For Plan Togo, an organization that mainly focuses on issues regarding children and teenagers, the CSI-SAT has contributed in broadening its scope.

According to NCO the CSI-SAT relevance to other stakeholders such as government, donors, academics and media is considered to be mostly relevant. "They perceive this project as a justification to elaborate a CSO capacity building program in Togo".

Project Validity

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

The view of NCO is that the report mostly depicts an accurate reflection of civil society in Togo, while CIVICUS was of the view that the report was somewhat accurate as several of the outputs were not completely achieved. The argument for this opinion stated again by the NCO, is that it was difficult to get hold of secondary information that would do justice to the relatively rich dynamics in Togo. "The real reason is the poor availability of secondary data. There is not a specific organization (neither from the state nor from the partners, or CSO), which is involved in survey activities. For example the last general population survey was taken in 1981".

Capacity Building

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

According to Plan/ FONGTO, skills were built on most aspects including participatory research methods as more consultations than originally envisioned for the CSI-SAT were conducted; other capacities built include data analysis and interpretation, report writing, training and facilitation as well as convening and networking. The areas where capacity was not built included those that were not applicable (for example: quantitative survey research methods) and activities such as secondary data gathering, which was undertaken by an external consultant. Even though it was a challenge to use an English toolkit and to write a report in English, the challenge gave the NCO an important opportunity to use English as well as compare different ways of reporting.

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. The fact that Togo started its CSI-SAT at a relatively late stage gave the NCO a limited time to master both the methodology and the toolkit. The NCO was mostly satisfied with the overall support provided by CIVICUS. According to the NCO the methodology used was both relevant and useful. As stated earlier, the project encountered several obstacles due to lack of secondary data on civil society. Despite this the CSI-SAT team managed to collate a large amount of data and information. The area that was considered as mostly helpful by the NCO includes the monthly communication between Plan/ FONGTO and the country support person's assistance. The guidance that came from these calls was helpful and thus much appreciated according to the NCO. This also helped detect any potential errors at an early stage.
2. CIVICUS is completely satisfied with the overall implementation of the NCO, especially considering the challenges arising from the Togolese context. "The project was approached with a very high level of commitment and interest in a short time span". However, the project was heavily delayed due to during the report writing phase due to reasons such as lack of information, illness and problems of translations in various phases of the project.

3. Sustainability/Replicability

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

According to Plan/FONGTO it is important to continue this process, through the implementation of the full CSI, preferably in the beginning of 2007. The NCO explained that they are "interested to collect information about community-based organizations, youth and women organizations and their implications in the development of CSO-strengthening activities". A further indicator that Plan/FONGTO suggests for the project to consider in the future is the role that youth play within the greater context of civil society.

Project Resources

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

The financial resources were deemed by the NCO to be somewhat adequate for the implementation of the project. The main reasons advanced for this were the unexpected amount of time needed to fully implement the project and the underestimated budget.

The human resources of the project were considered to be between completely and mostly adequate. The Project Coordinator, together with a strong research team, was considered essential for the satisfactory outcomes, according to CIVICUS. Due to language issues most of the communication between CIVICUS and Plan/FONGTO was held in French.

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. The NCO reported that there was an improvement in relationships between Plan/FONGTO and partner organizations since the implementation of the CSI-SAT in Togo.

2. Plan/FONGTO reported that there was an improvement in the relationship between government officials and CSOs, which has led to an increased acceptance of CSOs by institutions.
3. According to the NCO, the CSI-SAT has spurred discussions about new partnerships between CSOs and other institutions. The institutions involved in these discussions and who are also making use of the country report are SCAC service de coopération et d'action Culturelles from the French embassy, UNDP in Togo and AFVP. The CSI project has also contributed to an increased co-operation between the two national civil society federations (FONGTO and UONGTO) in Togo after periods of polarisation, as UONGTO is considered to be more loyal to the government. According to the NCO the CSI has contributed in bringing civil society together.

5. Recommendations

- Organize training on the project methodology before starting the project, also for the CSI-SAT
- Have the full toolkit translated into French.
- Allocate more time to implement the project and appoint a full time person to the project.
- It is recommended by the NCO that the redesign looks closer into how youth groups could be more involved in the project.
- Organize a support system to assist the NCOs through e.g. regional CSI networks.

6. Conclusion

The findings of the evaluation are largely positive with respect to most aspects. CIVICUS states that the country report was successful, however not in regards to CIVICIUS' original objectives, but rather because it fulfilled other relevant objectives such as starting the civil society debate in Togo and getting different stakeholders involved. The relevance of the project was considered quite high given the lack of secondary data, a relatively disabling environment and the lack of prominence of civil society in Togo. Civil society is still a new concept that is gaining visibility and momentum in Togo. The validity of the project was hampered by the scarcity of secondary information. The capacity of the NCO was built mostly with respect to conducting research specifically on the topic of civil society. With regard to the relationship between CIVICUS and the NCO – both in terms of CIVICUS' assistance and NCO's systems and responsiveness – was deemed as largely positive. Both CIVICUS and the NCO expressed satisfaction with each other's support and intervention during the implementation of the project. However, the evaluation reveals that training prior to the implementation was not sufficient, due to the late entrance of the Togo CSI-SAT.

According to Plan/FONGTO the early sign of impact includes increased visibility for the NCO as well as the civil society as a whole, improvements in relationships between Plan/FONGTO and partner organizations as well as with government officials and CSOs, which has led to an increased acceptance of CSOs by institutions since the implementation of the CSI-SAT in Togo. Furthermore the CSI-SAT has spurred discussions about new partnerships between CSOs and other institutions. Although it is still early to detect further impact of the CSI-SAT all parties involved agree that it would

be of great benefit to implementing the full CSI in Togo as soon as possible in order to benefit from the momentum established. Moreover, civil society currently seems to be a nascent area of study in Togo and the CSI could benefit from this new interest in the topic.