EXECUTIVE SUMMARY – CSI Togo

From July 2005 to March 2006 FONGTO worked in partnership with Plan Togo and CIVICUS: World Alliance for Citizen Participation to implement the Civil Society Index Shortened Assessment Tool (CSI-SAT) study in Togo.

A preliminary report was presented to the Stakeholder Assessment Group (SAG) providing information on the “Structure”, “Environment”, “Values”, and “Impact” of actions carried out by Togolese civil society to promote the development of the society in general. Members of the SAG are representatives of the country’s social forces. The report was analysed and scores were attributed to all indicators following CIVICUS’ scoring criteria. The results were used to generate a Diamond that reflects the situation of the civil society in Togo.

Figure 1: Diamond of the Togolese civil society

The Civil Society Index put together valuable information about Togolese civil society that was previously unknown to civil society stakeholders and is indicative of the challenges that lie ahead.
An in-depth analysis of the information on civil society was conducted using the following four dimensions: Structure, Environment, Values, and Impact.

**Structure**
With regard to the civil society’s structure, it is difficult to offer precise information on the percentage of the Togolese population that are involved in charity associations or carry out benevolent work on a regular basis. It is only recently that a National Volunteer Programme (PROVONAT) has been implemented.

The limited popularity of the notion of civil society and the roles of its actors limits CSO area and capacity of intervention. Currently, the country is experiencing a critical economic, social, political, and cultural environment that is not conducive to the evolution of its civil society. Whilst Togolese engage very rarely in non partisan political actions, the number of associations has multiplied since the democratic movement of the ‘90s. An important part (42%) of the population belongs to at least one CSO and is involved in mutual help actions that are comparable to benevolence.

Most Togolese CSOs that are nationally and internationally known are made up of intellectuals and other elite groups. The organisations are concentrated in the capital city, Lome, where they benefit from the opportunity of collaborating with the State administration’s technical services, representatives of political parties and development partners. Self-regulation mechanisms for CSOs exist but are not being effectively implemented and most CSO managers do not respect them.

There is a real deficit in citizenship education that will empower the population to participate in promoting its own development and institute a “report” culture.

Togolese CSOs have a very fragile sustainability as they strongly depend on abroad for the financing of their activities. Thus, their activities have been inhibited since the suspension of the cooperation between Togo and the European Union and other donors for insufficient democracy and transparency in public management. At the same time, these associations do not have strong interrelations and barely communicate, exchange information, share experiences or cooperate within strategic alliances to set up a framework for common actions.

**Environment**
The current operating environment is not favourable for the promotion of civil society and it is the responsibility of CSOs to work on improving it. On the political ground, the country is in the process of familiarising itself with democratic values, both at the level of the state apparatus and the political parties. The delay observed in the decentralisation process is a missed opportunity for the apprenticeship of democracy at the grassroots level.

Whilst there is an increasing impoverishment of the population, the socio-economic crisis with which the country has been confronted for the last two decades has diminished social trust.
Until now, neither the State nor the private sector considers civil society as a real partner in development. Compared to other populations in the sub region, the Togolese are known to be more pacific and tolerant. Nevertheless, frustration and tension exacerbated by politicians (based on ethnic or tribal differences) in order to maintain or change the existing system have been sparking violent clashes sporadically.

The analysis reveals that civil society operates in a very difficult political, social, economic, cultural and legal environment that contributes to curbing its development and promotion.

**Values**

Tolerance, non-violence, honesty and civic action are crumbling in favour of the pursuit of personal interests. The population is exposed to corruption on a daily basis but also witnesses a lack of transparency in the management of public affairs. Violence is gaining momentum within the population and reaches its peak during the electoral period, although some CSOs have been advocating for non-violence. The population which is the main victim of this violence has expressed great satisfaction following the implementation of a new political dialogue.

Democracy, gender equity and the protection of the environment are elements that better explain the “values” dimension in the case of Togo. Tolerance and non-violence are not yet a way of life for Togolese civil society. The score attributed to this dimension reflects the fact that a large majority of the values considered above are not applied much within civil society. Nonetheless, efforts are made to promote them within the Togolese society in general.

The majority of CSOs are engaged in the field of poverty reduction and environmental protection but their initiatives lack support and public visibility.

**Impact**

The impact of CSOs’ actions on the development of the country has been limited so far. Their efforts to influence social policies in favour of marginalised groups have had limited impact. They have not initiated actions that would make the state and the private sector accountable. Being closer to grassroots populations, CSOs have acquired a deep knowledge of their problems and thus use their limited means to strengthen community capacities and enable the populations to conduct collective actions in order to resolve their problems.

To facilitate the evolution of Togolese civil society, CSOs must improve their structural aspects by communicating and sharing information, cooperating among themselves and establishing self-regulation mechanisms. They should work to improve their current environment and effectively take up their “watch dog” role vis-à-vis the state and the private sector. In addition, they should build their social capital and gain the social trust of the population in general.
The CIVICUS Civil Society Index project provides CSOs and stakeholders with a wealth of information to better orientate their future capacity building activities. There are reasons to believe that, if CSOs and other relevant actors address the main deficiencies, Togolese civil society could become a key driving force towards the country’s democratisation and development.