CIVICUS Civil Society Index

A Summary of the Ukraine CSI Project Evaluation

Background: Purpose and Objective

This evaluation provides CIVICUS and the Center for Philanthropy (CfP), the CSI country partner in Ukraine 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 CfP 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 CfP 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

According to the Center for Philanthropy (CfP), this output has been completely achieved as they believe that the "CSI is a very systematised collection of knowledge on civil society and have tried to capture that as much as possible."

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

For the NCO, this output has been mostly achieved. Some civil society stakeholders had difficulties agreeing with CS definition. The NCO also reported that they always have to explain "the essence of the project rather than the expected outcomes."

A set of strategies for strengthening civil society

This output merited a completely achieved rating from the CfP. They have come up with detailed action plans though did not include in the English version of the report as it is quite lengthy. These were widely discussed, published and distributed among CS stakeholders.

Forums for sharing knowledge on civil society

For the NCO, this output has been completely achieved. The NCO reported that they were able to conduct more than 10 CSI-related events where the findings of the CSI served as the knowledge base for specific aspects of civil society development. These CSI-related events include a Forum of Ukrainians (about 3000 participants), monthly workshops on CS strategy development, and briefing in capital and regions of the country – all of them were follow up events of the CSI project.

Project Outcomes

Increase in knowledge based actions by civil society stakeholders

For the NCO, this outcome has been completely achieved. The findings of the CSI were used by the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine for the development of Government-CS cooperation strategy and the Ministry of Justice consulted said findings for the NGO law update. The CSI findings were further used to justify a proposed policy and were specifically cited in the Ukrainian publication "Directions of Civil Society Development in Ukraine – for the Fourth Forum of Ukrainians."

Despite these accomplishments, the NCO noted that the action agenda that was agreed and identified in the CSI National Workshop has only been fairly implemented. The NCO shared that since not so much time had passed since the national workshop, they cannot really say that the agenda were not fully implemented "but today we see the outcome and it is changing our perception, specifically, in advocacy measures to improve the state of CS and in developing corporate social responsibility."

Increased collective voice of civil society in governance and development

The NCO reported that this outcome has been mostly achieved. "CSOs, backed up by the findings of the CSI, were able to introduce more flexible laws for NGOs and stop the Volunteers Law, which does not meet international standards." According to the NCO, the CSI scoring matrix was used to set the criteria for these documents.

Increased openness of civil society by external stakeholders

This outcome has been fairly achieved. The NCO explained that CSI happened in good timing as the Ukrainian government and NGOs started to come up with CS development action, and the CSI team was invited to present the CSI results and findings. However, the NCO shared that it is difficult to prove that the CSI per se is the rationale behind the increased openness to CS by external stakeholders because the current policy of the Ukrainian government already addresses openness, making it difficult to assess the impact of the CSI in this particular aspect. It is also interesting to note that "the press conference on the CSI evoked debates in the media on the role of CS, but then again, the current political situation was in itself stimulating media coverage thus making it difficult to attribute this impact to the CSI project."

Project Relevance

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

The CSI project has been completely relevant to the work of the NCO based on the evaluation. As their mission is "to develop a culture of philanthropy and citizens participation through research, information, education and action" this said, the project provided "a solid knowledge base for the activities and further development of the organization, according to the NCO.

Project Validity

a) Secondary data review. For the Center for Philanthropy, this methodology was able to generate a completely accurate assessment of the state of civil society in Ukraine by providing an opportunity to "systematize and analyse all the available research on the Index, determine weak points, and orient CSI field research in a more accurate and explicit way." CIVICUS gave a mostly accurate rating for this methodology.

b) Social Forces Analysis at 1st NAG meeting. This methodology merited a completely accurate rating from the NCO while CIVICUS gave a fairly accurate rating. The NCO explained that "this method cannot provide accurate picture per se as this analysis is very dependent on personal views, but it accomplished its role completely by giving the CS picture which is very close to reality."

c) Regional Stakeholder Questionnaire & Consultations. The NCO believes that this methodology generated a completely accurate assessment of the state of Ukrainian CS. Through these methods the NCO was able to generate experts' opinions from the majority of regions of Ukraine and provided the opportunity to reach out, discuss, share insights and develop action for CS strengthening. In CIVICUS view, this method generated a mostly accurate assessment.

d) Community Survey. This methodology was able to generate a mostly accurate assessment of the state of civil society in Ukraine. The NCO shared that this was not sufficient to collect the data that they initially aimed. According to the Center for Philanthropy, the national survey is a better tool for this; nevertheless, the community survey may be used for comparing civil society involvement of citizens in communities with different social, cultural, and economic conditions. For CIVICUS, this method merited a fairly accurate rating.

For CIVICUS, the community survey was implemented by volunteers and therefore raised some concerns about quality. In general, the CSI implementation took place before, during and after the Orange Revolution, which raised challenges for the cut off of data, the way it should be interpreted and promoted. In the end, it was decided not to include CS after the Orange Revolution in the assessment, which was the right decision according to the view of a CIVICUS member.

e) Media review. This methodology was able to generate a completely accurate assessment of the state of civil society in Ukraine from the point of view of the NCO and CIVICUS. The NCO explained that "this method is a very good monitoring tool to get

information, which was needed for some indicators. We used it selectively and did not try to measure all using the media review. Also the media review findings did not contradict the findings from other sources to this or that indicator. This means that the method was sufficient."

f) Fact finding studies (policy impact, corporate social responsibility). The NCO believes that this methodology generated a completely accurate assessment of the state of Ukrainian civil society. These provided deep insight on the specific and important aspects of civil society development. In the point of view of CIVICUS, this methodology merited a mostly accurate rating.

g) NAG scoring exercise. For the Center for Philanthropy and CIVICUS, this methodology was able to generate a mostly accurate assessment of the state of civil society in Ukraine.

h) National workshop. This methodology was able to generate a completely accurate assessment of the state of civil society in Ukraine in the point of view of the NCO while for CIVICUS, the national workshop only generated a mostly accurate assessment.

Project Participation

The NCO shared that they used mapping exercises to analyse and develop action agenda during regional consultations, National workshop, and NAG scoring meeting. According to the Center for Philanthropy all participatory processes worked according to plan.

Capacity Building

The CfP indicated that they were able to gain research skills in secondary data gathering, participatory and quantitative survey research methods, data analysis and interpretation and report writing. According to the NCO, it was the first time that they have used participatory research methods in Ukraine. They were also able to develop training and facilitation skills and somewhat improved their convening and networking capacities.

Evaluation of CIVICUS Assistance and overall implementation

The Center for Philanthropy expressed complete satisfaction with the overall support provided by CIVICUS. They also expressed satisfaction with the systems and procedures that were put in place. According to the NCO, it was a very good system and works as long as NCOs follow it. The guidance received from the toolkit and the support provided by CIVICUS for the fundraising activities initiated by the NCO were both satisfactory in the view of the NCO.

Sustainability/Replicability

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

The Center for Philanthropy indicated interest in replicating the project in three years time. It was decided during the World Ukrainians Forum to continue the CSI project to have comparable data over the years, and the NCO said that they will follow this decision. Since they have the experience of implementing the CSI, the NCO shared that they plan to be the head organization in future implementation with several other partners.

The CSI project was also able to inform current program activities of the NCO. The NCO reported conceptualizing projects to develop civil society and philanthropy; in particular they have a project on private philanthropy development for 2006-2008 funded by Mott Foundation which are based on the CSI findings.

The NCO expressed hope that CIVICUS CSI would continue to support NCOs around the world, as there is a lack of civil society specialists in many developing countries. It is very difficult to do such a project alone.

Project Resources

Financial Resources

The NCO felt that financial resources have been fairly adequate. It was impossible to acquire the needed funds because of the elections in 2004 and 2006 but CIVICUS was able to help the NCO in raising funds for the project. The NCO also shared that they were able to stay within and even below the budgeted cost.

Human Resources

Human resources were fairly adequate in the point of view of the NCO. The Center for Philanthropy shared that the HR was under-funded and they have to rely on the NAG members who proved to be professionals and can be relied upon. While for CIVICUS this was mostly adequate explaining that "it would have been useful to have an external CSE to give the data an external perspective."

Time

The NCO felt that the time allocated for the project was completely and even overly sufficient. CIVICUS agreed that there was indeed "too much time" allotted for the implementation of the CSI project in Ukraine.

Short/Long Term Impact

What are the early signs of impact of the project? Have there been any unintended changes (negative and/or positive)?

Unintended Changes

The NCO reported that they are now being seen by the government as a knowledge base on civil society in Ukraine.

Changes within the NCO

- Better knowledge of the clientele/ beneficiaries as they serve the civil society
- Raised the credibility of organization

Changes within the sector

- Forged better relationships between and among different NGOs, academia, government through understanding of a common goal
- Improved networking: knowledge-based strategy for CS development which is created by NGO coalitions.
- Recognition of trade-unions, religious organizations, credit unions - as equal

agents of CS not only NGOs (as written in the government cooperation strategy). At the conferences and meeting of CSOs I see more and more of such organizations representatives – may be it is not a direct impact of CSI, but maybe it is.

Changes within the government

- The Ukrainian government, in particular the Cabinet of Ministers and the Ministry of Justice use CSI information to develop the government-CS cooperation strategies. According to the project coordinator, the CSI will be a part of a government document, in fact, a government person said: "it is extremely hard for us to monitor CS development over years, but CIVUCUS Index is a pretty good tool for getting indicators (benchmarks) and see the changes."

- The government expressed interested in setting up a system for monitoring state-civil society cooperation.

- Local government's better knowledge and improved networking with CSOs – in regions, this was evident during a briefing with CS stakeholders after project realization (Fall 2006).

- The government had a clearer view of what they want from civil society and how can they work together.

Changes within Donors/ Funders

- CSI pilot data were used by donors; Donors including UNDP, UN, and the International Renaissance Foundation (IRF)) appreciated the current CSI report, even invited the project coordinator to be a part of the national grouping on CS development within their bodies. IRF expressed interest to fund the next phase of the CSI project. The project coordinator cautioned however that "donor's attitude is very encouraging but we need to be clear that donors are driven by their own agenda and do not always have secured funds for such complex projects as CSI. They often are interested in some narrower data rather than overarching data which the CSI provides."

Changes within Media

- CSI provides data on CS that may be useful for journalists for public awareness-raising. The project coordinator shared that "Ukrainian journalists have very limited knowledge of CS issues. We redeveloped CSI language due to the understanding mass-media and had a number of briefings (6 in Fall 2006) to inform and educate journalists. We also distributed press releases not only about the CSI project but mostly about burning points of CS development and organized press-conferences to discuss them. At the beginning, journalists were not interested in the issue, but our title *Can civil society become an everyday element of life of Ukrainians* has attracted their attention."

Conclusion

The political upheaval during the Orange Revolution affected the implementation of the CSI in Ukraine. However, the Center for Philanthropy strongly believed that they were able to accomplish an undertaking which comprehensively capture the state of civil in their country.

Despite initial difficulties in securing funds, the NCO came up with a satisfactory report that reflected the weaknesses of Ukrainian civil society and provided directions for change. Upon reflection, the NCO shared that the academic community in Ukraine was somehow critical of the CSI as a research tool and this, according to the NCO was understandable because of research stereotypes prevalent during the Soviet years.

Lastly, it is interesting to note the impacts of the CSI project specifically in encouraging collaborations between the NCO and the government as well as the positive effect of the CSI findings in informing the actions of groups lobbying for better NGO laws in Ukraine.