

CIVIL SOCIETY INDEX REPORT FOR CHILE

Chile: the associational reconstruction of a nation

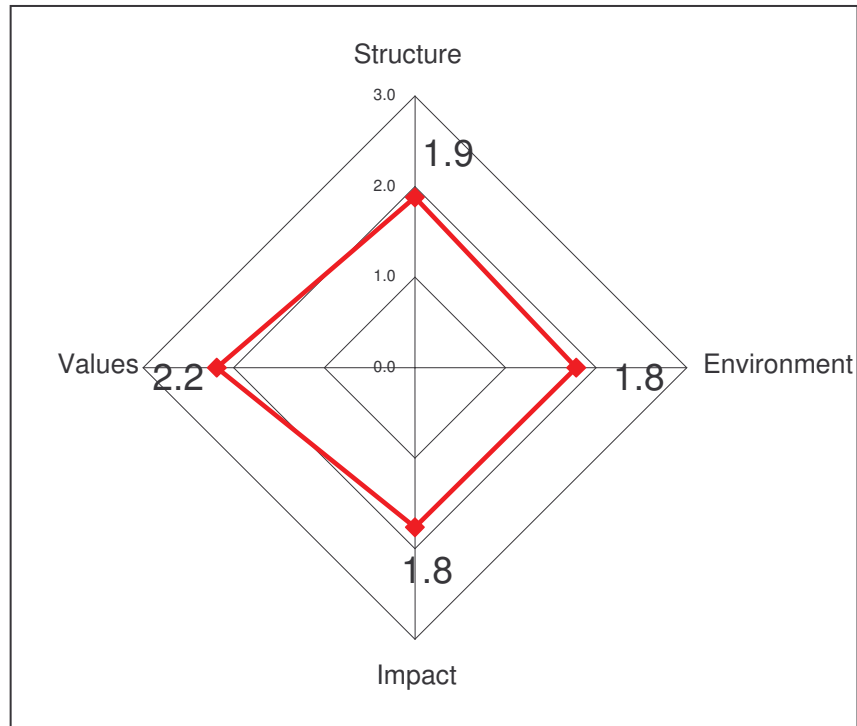
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Civil Society Index Shortened Assessment Tool (CSI-SAT) in Chile was conducted between December 2005 and March 2006. This process required the analysis of a wide range of secondary data sources, available through Civil Society Organisations, public libraries, private research centres, and universities. A few key informants, including Stakeholder Assessment Group (SAG) members, were also consulted with regard to the areas covered by the CSI study.

The SAG was made up of 15 prominent respected and experienced representatives of the non-profit sector, government, donor agencies, and the media, as well as other key sectors. SAG members were selected according to the methodology developed by CIVICUS CSI team, with which the Chilean National Index Team (comprising the Civil Society Expert and Project Coordinator) was liaising regularly. During its first meeting, on December 17 2005, the SAG analysed the working proposal, defined concepts, and established individual collaboration agreements with the Civil Society Expert (CSE) in charge of the research. This exchange of information contributed greatly to the research as it provided us with references to a wide range of resources, which were in turn used to lead the analysis of each indicator.

The final SAG Workshop took place on March 31 during which the Civil Society Diamond for Chile (Figure 1) was generated. Each of the 74 indicators was assessed by the experts on the SAG on the basis of a pre-scoring report compiled by the CSE.

FIGURE 1 Civil Society Diamond for Chile



As the Diamond shows, the various dimensions received rather similar scores, with **environment** and **impact** presenting the lowest scores (1.8).

The **structure** dimension is relatively strong with a score of 1.9. The breadth and diversity of citizen participation obtained the highest scores in the dimension. In Chile, a significant part of the population takes part in non-partisan political actions and community actions. The main weaknesses are civil society's lacking human and technological resources, capacity of self-regulation and CSOs' difficulty to generate international linkages

The **environment** dimension obtained a score of 1.8. This score indicates a somewhat enabling operating environment for CSOs. Roughly, the analysis indicates that there are still some weaknesses, especially with respect to the legal environment and the relations with the private sector. In general, though, the socio-economic context, the respect of rule of law and basic freedoms/rights render the Chilean environment rather conducive for civil society.

The **values** dimension obtained a score of 2.2 featuring as the highest dimension score of the CSI diamond in Chile and demonstrates that CSOs are generally committed to promoting and practicing some key values in society. In this dimension we can highlight the measures taken by CSOs to eradicate poverty and promote environmental sustainability. There are, however, some weaknesses, particularly with respect to the practice and promotion of financial transparency by CSOs.

The **impact** dimension, which obtained a score of 1.8, shows that the impact of civil society is only moderate, mainly due to the limited capacity of CSOs to influence public

policy (1.3) and to hold the state (and private sector) accountable (1.5). Civil society's poor impact on the national budget (0) law is highlighted as one of the key weaknesses of civil society in Chile. In spite of a rather limited policy impact, it is worth noting that Chilean CSOs exert a more significant impact on society at large. Subdimensions such as 'responding to social interests', 'empowering citizens' and 'meeting social needs' obtained higher scores (2).

In more general terms, one key element that characterises civil society in Chile is the sector's duality between the more and the less structured organisations, notably between Non Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and a broader community-based associational network. The former is professionalised and is able to access resources, technology, the media, and is thus that part of civil society that receives the greater visibility and has greater impact. The latter is characterised by organic engagement around key issues for the community and is constituted mostly by local volunteers, which results in the formation of active citizenship. This sector is mostly lacking technological and infrastructural resources and is scarcely linked with national and international organisations. These two sectors of organised civil society are often on opposite ends of the spectrum, particularly in terms of policy impact and collective action.

Within the current political environment, CSOS are beginning to recognise this duality and have started focusing on their overall impact in the public sphere. In this regard, CSOs have been trying to link their associational role and capacity to mobilise citizens with specific programmes to promote progressive values in society at large and influence policy-making.