

Aotearoa/New Zealand
Civil Society: A Framework for
Government-Civil Society Dialogue

A PRELIMINARY REPORT ON THE CIVICUS INDEX
ON CIVIL SOCIETY PROJECT IN NEW ZEALAND

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*Association of
Non-Governmental
Organisations
of Aotearoa*

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New Zealand Social and Civic Policy Institute*

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Contents

Acknowledgements	i	
Table of Contents	ii	
Part I	Introduction	1
Part II	General Overview of the Project	3
Part III	Stakeholder Survey Report	6
Part IV	Civil Society Index Workshop.....	19
	Structure	22
	Space, Context or Legal Environment	23
	Values.....	23
	Impact.....	24
Part V	Key Civil Sector Issues.....	26
Appendices	Appendix 1–Index Project Questions.....	29
	Appendix 2–Suggested Changes to Survey.....	32
	Appendix 3–Community/Government Working Party Report.....	33
Bibliography	37	

Part I

Introduction

Civil Society is a complex and contested topic and is a term not commonly used in New Zealand. That being said, New Zealand does have a rich tradition of association-type organisations and collective action, most often referred to as community organisations. For the purpose of the global CIVICUS *Index on Civil Society* project (hereafter referred to as the *Index*) it has been defined in very broad terms as:

The sphere of institutions, organisations, and networks and individuals located between the confines of the family, the state and the market, in which people associate voluntarily to advance their common interests.

Under this definition, civil society therefore includes faith-based organisations, trade unions, grant-making foundations, developmental civil society organisations, organisations active in education, training and research and literacy, environmental groups, advocacy organisations, women's associations, student and youth organisations, social services and health organisations, ethnic and traditional societies, indigenous people's organisations, cultural and arts groups, social, recreational and sporting groups, professional and business associations, organisations of people with disabilities, community development organisations, community-based and informal self-help groups, mutual aid and co-operative organisations, economic interest groups such as the unemployed, credit unions and loans associations.

The *Index* focuses on the nature and health of organisational forms of collective action. In discussions on civil society in New Zealand in recent years it has been suggested that building civil society requires more than a rich network of voluntary associations.

These organisations need to be created and supported by active and knowledgeable citizens who have the opportunity to take part in forums for public discussion and deliberation.

Our participation in the *Index* project gives the opportunity to see whether we can draw these three factors of agency, actors and opportunity together into a framework that can enable us to assess the status and health of civil society in New Zealand. The CIVICUS concept of considering civil society organisations in terms of four dimensions offers the opportunity to examine their roles in a more comprehensive manner, than provided by the usual emphasis on structural factors.

We have viewed this exercise as a way of developing an analytical tool for looking more deeply into our own society rather than a comparative exercise among countries.

To assess the strengths and weaknesses of civil society, the project considers civil society in respect of four dimensions:

- (1) **Structure** focuses on the structure and composition of civil society. How large and active is civil society in terms of collective citizen action? What are the relationships among its component parts, and what are the resources it commands?
- (2) **Space** refers to the context in which civil society develops. That is, the legal, political and socio-cultural environment that in which civil society organisations (CSOs) operate; the laws

and policies which enable or inhibit their development and the socio-cultural norms which foster or inhibit civil society.

- (3) **Values** deals with the values, norms and attitudes CSOs represent and propagate; how inclusive or exclusive they are as well as organisational values such as accountability and democracy.
- (4) **Impact** deals with the contribution of CSOs to solving specific social, economic and political problems. This includes the role of civil society in the public policy process.

Our interest in developing the *Civil Society Index* coincided with the beginning of a lively discussion on issues concerning the changing role of the state and of community associations. This has drawn attention to the nature of all forms of collective association, from informal grassroots groups to the local and national state. Maori tribal groups and urban associations have raised specific issues relating to governance and to the future of New Zealand as a bicultural nation.

This emerging discussion has been restrained by the absence of good data on the size, nature and role of the wide range of community organisations and the lack of an effective framework for analysing the relationship between the different dimensions of civil society.

The experience in New Zealand over the last 15 years of state sector reform, has involved the reduction of state involvement in all areas of community life and the transfer of a number of functions and responsibilities to the community. This has made the examination of the changing nature of civil society of critical importance.

In this report we have attempted to weave together some of the activities of government and community in this area and the information they have gathered with the initial outcomes of implementing a pilot of the *CIVICUS Civil Society Index*.

In some areas we have found a direct relationship or overlap between these themes, while in others, the links are more distant.

In this report we first present material relating directly to the *Index* — a general over-view of the project, the survey findings and preliminary Civil Society Diamond and the report on our stakeholder workshop. In the text of the survey findings (*Section 3*) we have included relevant data from existing statistics and from current community initiatives. Key issues raised in the *Index* project and in the community research follow this section.

A key theme of our dialogue has been the importance of building strong and healthy relationships between civil society and government and we have included a brief report on the work initiated by government on this issue in *Appendix 3*.

Part II

General Overview of the Project

At a global workshop held in Mainz Germany, project groups from around the world involved in the pilot phase together with the CIVICUS Index coordination team discussed their hopes for the project. The emphasis varied among countries dependent on their degree of development of civil society but there appeared to be agreement that the project had five main goals:

- (1) To identify the nature (size, form, roles and impact) of CSOs in each country.
- (2) To ascertain the areas (or dimensions) of civil society needing improvement using existing data, stakeholder surveys and workshops.
- (3) To engage citizens and community organisations in discussion about an action plan to improve the areas of civil society identified in the *Index* project.
- (4) To identify areas needing further research and explore strategies to bridge the information gap by collaborating with universities and government statistics offices.
- (5) Finally to come out of this project with a robust methodology, based on the Civil Society Diamond Concept that could be used as an analytical tool to increase understanding of civil society in the country as a whole and in specific sub-groups within each country.

Although we are at an early stage in developing this methodology in New Zealand the project has already proved extremely useful in developing collaboration between CSOs and government (including the Statistics Office) to work together on goals 1, 2 and 4 above, while discussions over the last year in similar exercises, have built the willingness and capacity of CSOs to take action (goal 3 above). Progress on the final goal of developing the Diamond Methodology will require more time, discussion and practical experimentation.

A major initiative of the Coalition Labour/Alliance government elected in 1999 was setting up a Government/ Voluntary Sector Working Party to review relations between the government and community, voluntary and Maori organisations (*see Section 7 for a report on its findings*). In announcing the Working Party in 2000 the Minister for the Community and Voluntary Sector said:

In recent times relations with the community and voluntary sector have been characterised by mistrust and insecurity. We want to move past the narrow focus on the contents of a contract and develop strong relationships, which ensures that we provide effective programmes meeting real needs. The Working Party will have the key task of defining this new relationship. ... it will look at issues of funding, accountability and communication. It will also consider whether we should continue to develop a formal agreement as other countries have done.

The Working Party was chaired by a non-governmental representative. The Party also included three government officials and eight community members including representatives from Maori and Pacific communities. At the same time the community sector formed the Community Sector Roundtable, administered by the Association of NGOs in Aotearoa (ANGOA), to help inform the voluntary sector, generate debates and engage with government and other sectors to better meet the needs of the community.

As a result of this dialogue taking place between government (officials and politicians) and community, we decided to develop a collaborative approach in the *CIVICUS Index project*, rather than using the project as a way of ‘confronting’ government with data about the sector. The *Index* in New Zealand has involved numerous discussions with key government policy advisors and politicians to foster the acceptance of the value of this approach, while community agencies had already recognised the value of co-operation and a dialogue. It was not clear, however, what information about the sector was already available, what was desirable and how it could be collected, analysed, ordered and presented.

The *Index* approach appeared to provide a way to help us progress in these areas. In particular we saw it as a way of building interest in a project that would:

- (1) Collate the wide range of existing or planned work.
- (2) Provide a framework for organising research and analysis.
- (3) Enhance the understanding issues of collective well-being and place them alongside the growing data on individual, family and environmental status.

The *Index* helps us to understand how our society organises itself collectively outside the arena of formal state action, to identify areas needing improvement and to discuss possible solutions.

Preparatory work included making a presentation at the Statistics New Zealand Five-Yearly Users’ Conference in November 2000, which focused on the gaps in current social statistics, suggesting ways in which these could be met. This was followed by meetings with the government statistician, the general manager of Community Policy, the Department of Internal Affairs and policy advisers at the Ministry of Social Policy.

These discussions revealed two major gaps in the government’s current strategy for gathering social statistics.

The first was the general focus on social statistics relating to individuals and *individual* well-being, assembling information on the employment, economic, health and education status of citizens, among others. There was little understanding or collection of data focusing on how we experience our *collective* well-being.

The second issue was that there was no focal point or procedure for bringing together this data on individual social status and the various reports on government social policy. These discussions led us to put three key questions to the government officials (questions repeated in the stakeholders workshop). These were:

- (a) Would it be valuable to gain a rounded understanding of civil society? In other words, would indicators of ‘collective well-being’ be useful?
- (b) How can we most effectively graphically illustrate the status of civil society? We suggest using the CIVICUS Diamond Methodology¹ as a way of drawing a range of information together and giving it graphic illustration. Is this useful?
- (c) How can we best collect the data needed to complete the Diamond?

There was general agreement on the value of the concept and it was agreed that we should test the CIVICUS *Index* project’s methodology in the process of data collection as well as its presentation through the Diamond. There were, however, a number of concerns about the value of the stakeholder survey and it was considered that this should be tested as a pilot rather than implemented as an agreed method of collecting data.

¹ The CIVICUS Diamond Tool and analytic framework was developed for CIVICUS by Dr. Helmut Anheier, Centre for Civil Society, London School of Economics. For more information see Anheier, H. K. and Carlson, L., *Civil Society: Measurement and Policy Dialogue*, London: Earthscan, forthcoming.

We held a focus group and individual discussions with representatives of the community sector to verify the questions set out in the global stakeholders' questionnaire. Although some questions appeared to be less relevant than others in the New Zealand situation (such as the question on the use of violence by CSOs), it was agreed that the questionnaire should be tested in a pilot run and the results discussed in a focussed workshop of questionnaire respondents.

It is important to contextualise the *Index* project with other current research on community issues and government-community relations in New Zealand

For example, a research programme on the nature of social capital in New Zealand has been considering related issues. In developing a framework on social capital it was noted that there are five separate areas that require consideration:

- (1) The underlying political and legal environment.
- (2) The terms of engagement (i.e., whose norms and values are dominant, including issues of recognition and permission).
- (3) The rules of engagement (i.e., forms of relationships such as giving/sharing and the openness of information including issues of privacy/publicity).
- (4) Processes of interaction e.g. deliberation.
- (5) Physical and financial resources.

Each of these features can be analysed in terms of the degree to which they are internal or external to a particular system, whether they are locally determined or national in nature and whether they are open to influence or closed.

In general, government investment in social structures has begun with an emphasis on the fifth aspect, the financial and physical resources required to deliver a service. We suggest that it would be more useful to consider the other factors before making any financial investment.

These five aspects of social capital can be set alongside the four dimensions of the Diamond Tool. Apart from the physical and financial resources (structure) they tend to fit alongside the space and values dimensions. In particular the underlying political and legal environment is similar to the space dimension and the terms of engagement relate to the values dimension.

These two forms of analysis reinforce the importance of looking beyond the more common concern with issues of structure (including physical and financial resources) and impact (or outcomes). It is the space or context within which civil society operates and the values that underpin this activity that are of critical importance.

These areas may be difficult to measure but to ignore them is to draw an extremely limited and flawed picture of civil society and the role of community associations.

Acknowledging this challenge encouraged us to proceed with testing the CIVICUS *Index* on Civil Society.

A project reference group has been established to ensure the relevance of the project in New Zealand and provide an opportunity to feed ideas and information into the policy arena. Members of this group include representatives of ANGOA, Social and Civic Policy Institute, the Maori Congress and three key government agencies: Statistics New Zealand, Ministry of Social Policy and the Department of Internal Affairs.

Part III

Stakeholder Survey Report

Survey Method

The *Index on Civil Society* project stakeholder survey was undertaken as a means of determining the usefulness of the mail survey method generally and to consider the appropriateness of each of the questions. It was not intended that the survey results would provide a confident basis for describing civil society in New Zealand at this time. Rather it was seen as an opportunity to test the methodology for possible future application.

One hundred questionnaires were mailed to a broad cross-section of civil society stakeholders and 47 responses were received and analysed.

The survey originally provided by CIVICUS, was discussed by a group of CSO leaders and they decided to proceed with little modification to the original questionnaire.

The questions relating to each of the dimensions (*see Appendix 1*) were intended to be answered by the respondents with respect to the whole of civil society in New Zealand. We did not attempt to obtain respondent's views on their particular area of activity within civil society, as the sample was too small for this approach. Although this did make the questions more difficult to answer, New Zealand is a small country and many people are active in a wide range of organisations. Information generally flows relatively easily between sectors of civil society. That said, in the future we would not repeat this approach and would rather we invite respondents to answer the questions based on their experience and knowledge of the sector (or sectors) in which they are actually engaged, such as health, environment, Maori organisations and so on.

The survey sample was selected on the basis of obtaining views from all relevant stakeholders. In addition to those directly involved in civil society organisations we also included representative of the media, community-based researchers, public servants, and funders.

The 47 responses were consistent with the stakeholder range we were seeking. Ages ranged from 31 to 76 years with a good gender balance. Under-sampling occurred in respect of Maori who make up 15% of the New Zealand population while our responses included only 6% by Maori.

Respondents generally regarded themselves as competent to answer the questions but nevertheless most found the questions very challenging. Over half the respondents provided substantial notes on both the subject of the questions and on the nature and usefulness of the questions themselves.

It can be concluded that the survey is a useful method, when used with other hard data and preferably in conjunction with a series of workshops.

The Structure of Civil Society

From other data sources we know that New Zealand has a well-developed civil society, with New Zealanders being very active participants in voluntary activities.

The total number of community organisations (incorporated societies, charitable trusts and unincorporated associations) is unknown as there is no requirement to register except for taxation purposes.

However, at 30 November 2000, there were 21,443 registered incorporated societies and 11,582 charitable trusts. This does not take into account the many incorporated societies which are not on the register but may still be active. Also not included are school Boards of Trustees and organisations that are not legal entities

Voluntary activity is widespread in New Zealand in formal voluntary organisations, with government agencies such as schools, on marae (Maori meeting places) and with informal associations. From the census we know that in any given month, about half the population will be doing some kind of voluntary work. A pilot time-use survey carried out by Statistics New Zealand in 1990 indicated that 44% of the population participated in some form of unpaid work for organisations in the last year while 48% had also given unpaid help to people outside their own household.

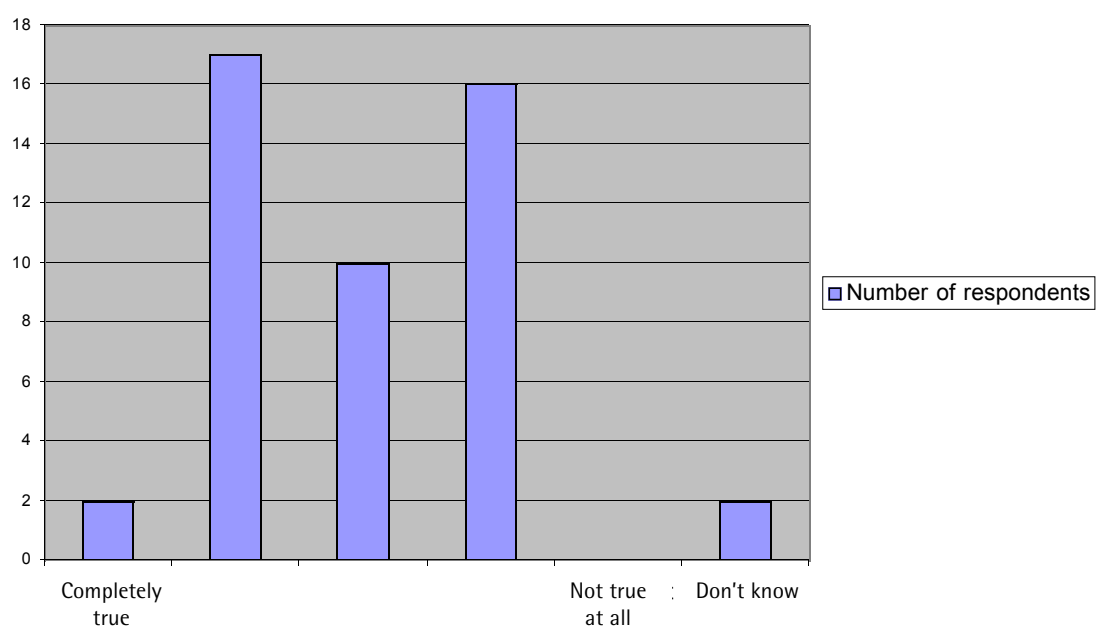
A comprehensive time-use survey carried out by Statistics New Zealand in 1998/1999 gathered information from 8,500 New Zealanders who each completed a 48-hour diary. Analysis indicated that three out of five people are involved in unpaid work outside the home. Gender difference was not significant in the amount of unpaid work done, but age did make a difference with the most active group being those aged 55 – 64 and the least active young people aged 12 – 24.

In 1998, an economic review estimated the volunteer workforce in the area of physical leisure to be 47,680 as well as 19,200 paid workers

The survey results raise a number of questions worth further investigation. For example, we have little hard data on the spread of organisations throughout New Zealand or among different types of communities. When asked if civil society organisations 'are spread in a balanced way across the regions' the responses were quite mixed as shown below (Figure 1).

Figure 1.

Q. 1.3 Spread of CSOs across regions



A significant number of respondents did not think there was a balanced spread, but further information is needed to determine whether this is true or not and to determine the nature of any imbalance, for example urban compared with rural communities

Two questions related to relationships between CSOs. The first question (Q. 1.7) asked if CSOs co-operate with each other (*see Figure 2*) and the next question (Q. 1.8) asked if CSO join alliances with other CSO to further citizens' interests (*See Figure 3*).

Figure 2.

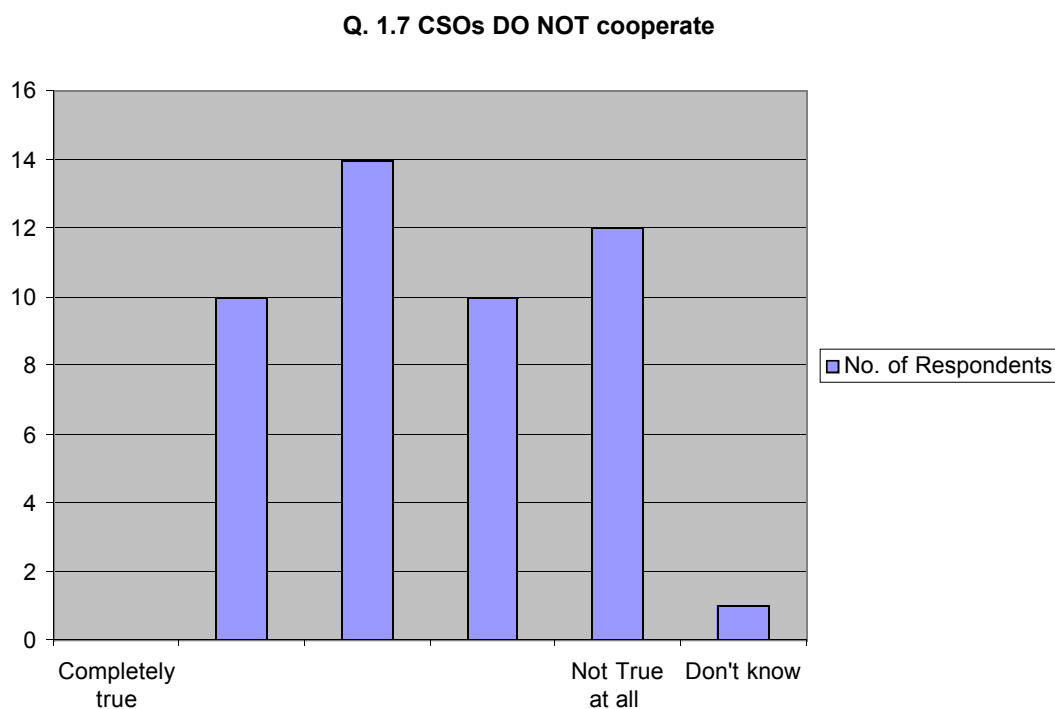
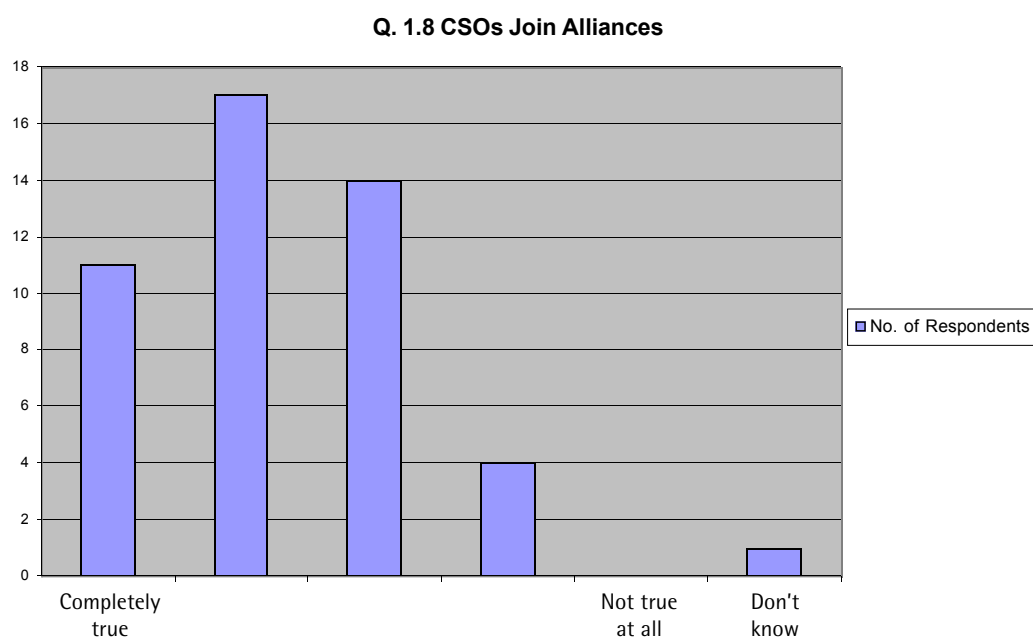


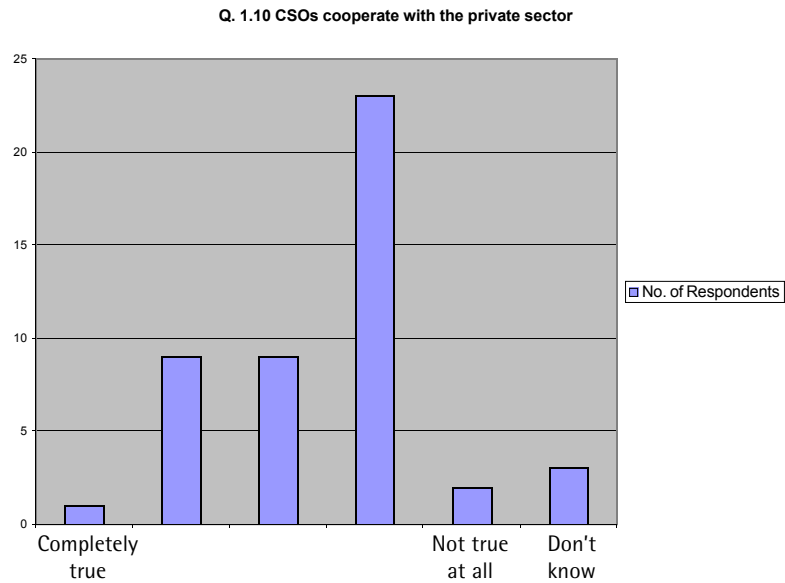
Figure 3.



These questions indicate that there is a perception both of conflict between organisations and a willingness to join alliances to further citizens' interests. This is a particularly important observation when efforts are underway to seek greater co-operation across the CSO sector and to enter into agreements with government, which require greater cohesion than has been evident in recent years.

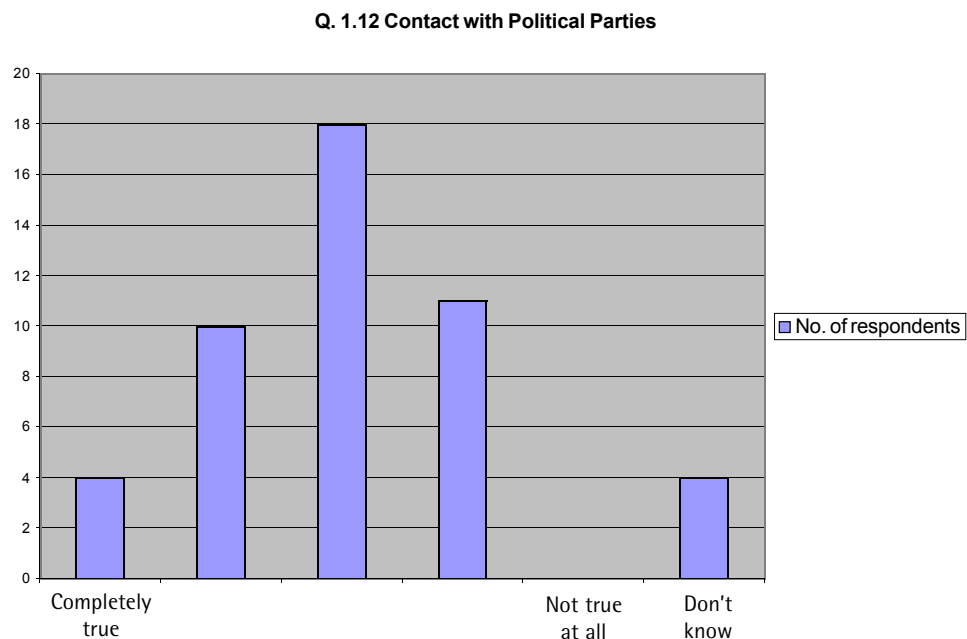
There is a general perception in New Zealand that the business sector is not very supportive of CSOs. This is borne out by the responses to question 1.10 shown in Figure 4 below, which suggests that the stakeholders surveyed believe there is a low level of co-operation between CSOs and businesses. This raises questions about whether or not such co-operation is important and if it is important, why is the level of co-operation low and how could it be enhanced. It would also be useful to ask businesses about levels of co-operation with CSOs.

Figure 4.



On the other hand respondents generally regard relationships with political parties more positively as shown in the figure below (Figure 5).

Figure 5.



On the issues of funding CSOs, the results reflect the very mixed sources of funding to the sector. The sector is not dependent on government funding or on private corporations. There is also very little foreign funding. Most organisations rely on private individuals and a mix of other sources.

CSOs are regarded as overwhelmingly non-violent in New Zealand, they are generally portrayed positively in the media but they do have trouble attracting much media attention.

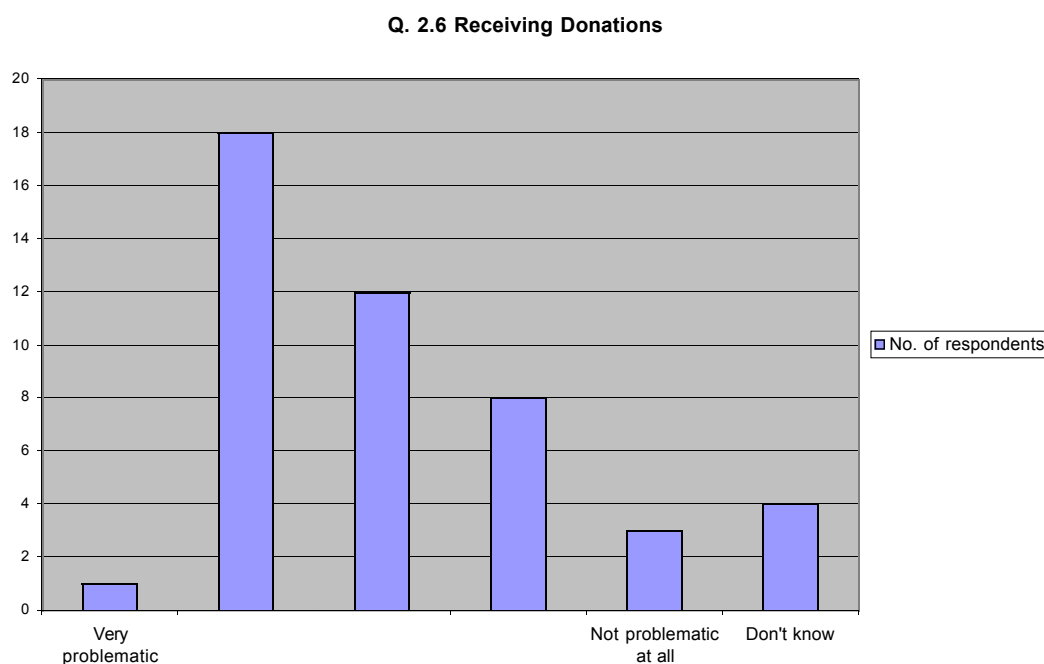
Space, Context and Environment

New Zealand has well-established laws and policies with regards to CSOs. It also enjoys a generally positive socio-cultural environment. Current legislation, particularly in respect of taxation and charity legislation based on the 1601 Statute of Elizabeth, is seen to require modernisation. A review of the taxation of charities is currently underway. There is also seen to be an unnecessarily complex and disjointed set of rules and regulations across a number of government departments. The current definition of charities excludes registration by some Maori organisations when they fail the public benefit test due to their status as kin-based organisations.

There is no compulsory registration of voluntary organisations and no central database. There is also no specific law, standard procedure or government department concerned with the accountability of charities. CSOs are usually formed as an incorporated society or a charitable trust. There are also a large but unknown number of informal community groups that are not incorporated and have no legal status. Groups incorporated under the Incorporated Societies Act must produce annual accounts, have a constitution and hold an annual general meeting while charitable trusts are only required to be accountable to the standards set in their trust deeds.

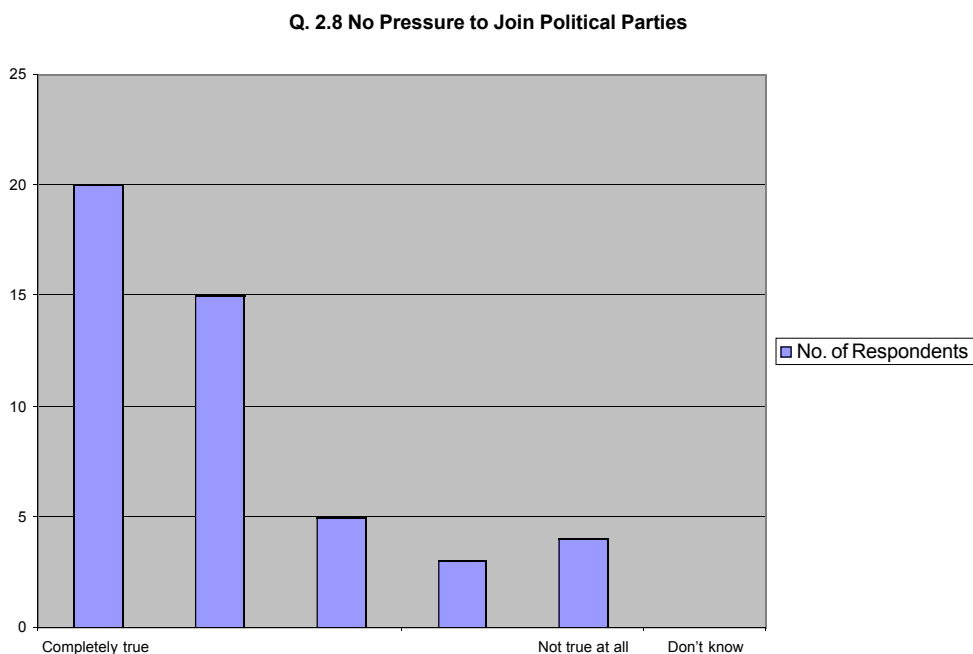
These views were well represented in the survey results. The question relating to tax legislation in terms of receiving donations from individuals and businesses (Q.2.6) indicates concern that the tax system does little to promote philanthropy in New Zealand. Figure 6 below indicates that well over half the respondents thought this was a problematic area requiring attention.

Figure 6.



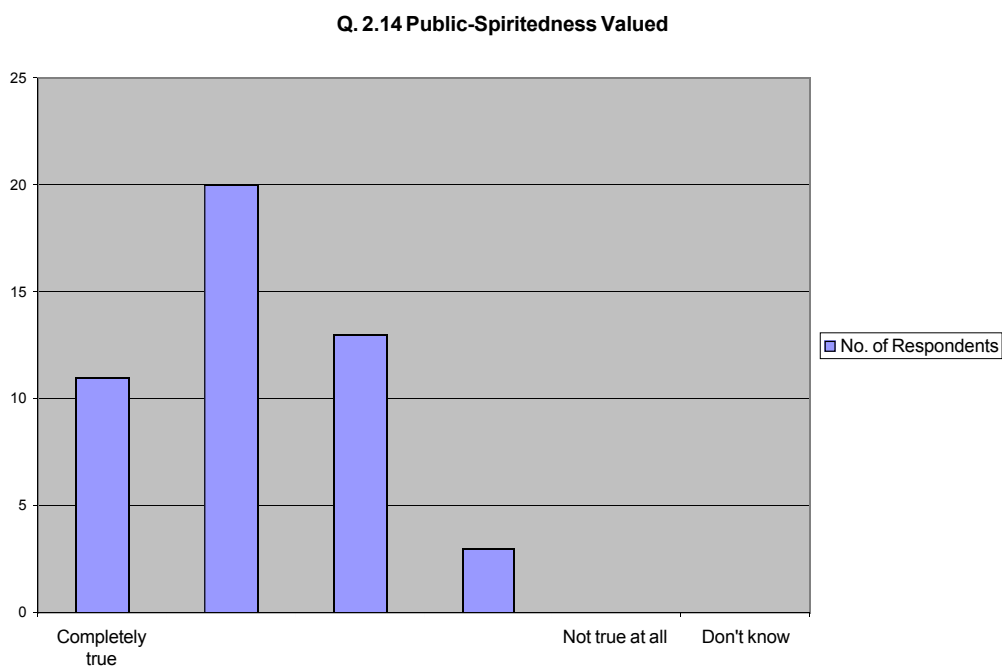
It was agreed that organisations generally operate independently without political interference as shown by Figure 7 below.

Figure 7.



The results of the survey indicate that people involved in CSOs are respected and recognised for their contributions. As Figure 8 indicates, in New Zealand public-spiritedness is seen as an admirable trait.

Figure 8.



However, while public-spiritedness is generally valued, 80% of respondents felt that businesses were not supportive of their employees' role in CSOs and over 60% did not believe that businesses were 'actively engaged in philanthropic programmes supporting CSOs' (Q. 2.15 and Q. 2.16).

Given the overall supportive environment for CSOs in New Zealand, it is timely that a review of charities legislation and taxation provisions affecting the sector is now underway. Other research confirms that the level of corporate giving in New Zealand is low by international standards but whether increasing levels of tax deductibility will have the desired positive effect remains to be seen.

There has been increasing concern about the transfer of responsibility for funding services, including health, welfare, arts and sports, from government to the community, but there is little information on funding patterns. Available data appears to have consistently under-valued the worth of the sector.

Statistics New Zealand gave the private non-profit sector's output as measured for GNP purposes at \$771 million in 1993. This only counted the "economically significant" non-profits that are registered for Goods and Services Tax.

A 1996 Philanthropy New Zealand report covered resource flows to non-profit agencies from a wide range of sources. In some cases funders do not keep separate records of payments to non-profit agencies and estimates were collected through a search of relevant service areas. Health authorities purchase services from private, public and community agencies without consideration of the nature of the provider.

The figures for each funding source for the financial year ending June 1996 were:

(1) Central Government	- \$185 million
(2) Regional Health Authorities	- \$376 million (government funded)
(3) Local Government (City and District Councils)	- \$26 million
(4) Lottery Board (operated by the government)	- \$108 million
(5) Personal Donations	- \$259 million
(6) Bequests	- \$25 million
(7) Philanthropic and Community Trusts	- \$71 million
Total	- NZ\$1 050 million.

No information was available on corporate giving or fees and payments for services.

An estimate of this funding based on the Johns Hopkins Comparative Nonprofit Sector Project in comparable countries suggests that the total annual dollar value of the sector is over NZ\$2 000 million or approximately 2.3% of GNP. This is considerably larger than the Statistics New Zealand figure of NZ\$771 million in 1993. Neither of these figures includes the value of voluntary work. A new survey is currently being carried out by Philanthropy New Zealand with a report expected to be available in October 2001.

A growing source of funding for CSOs is from profits of gaming machines in bars and hotels. The funds are allocated locally and it is difficult to get accurate figures on their distribution. Funds tend to be allocated to sporting organisations (especially those using the hotel making the funding decision). In 1997 the Department of Internal Affairs estimated that funding from gaming machines contributed almost \$18 million in the Auckland region compared to \$11.36 million from the Lottery Distribution Committees. This suggests that across the whole country gaming machines could allocate up to \$100 million in a year.

Civil Society Organisations and their Values

The report of the Third New Zealand Study of Values, 1999 showed that 50% of those surveyed had taken part in a community project in the last three years. When asked if they would take the initiative to do what needs to be done if there is a community issue, even if no one asked them to do so, 59% said yes. This indicates a high level of willingness to be actively involved in a basic community issue.

In relation to confidence in politicians there was a negative response with 85% saying that the public has little control over what politicians do once they are in office.

This may help to explain why people are so willing to take up community initiatives themselves or to work together in community organisations. They do not feel that important matters can be left to the government to deal with.

In relation to honesty in the public arena there is a high expectation of honesty among officials. In response to a question about whether it was justifiable to accept a bribe in the course of duty 89% said this was never justifiable.

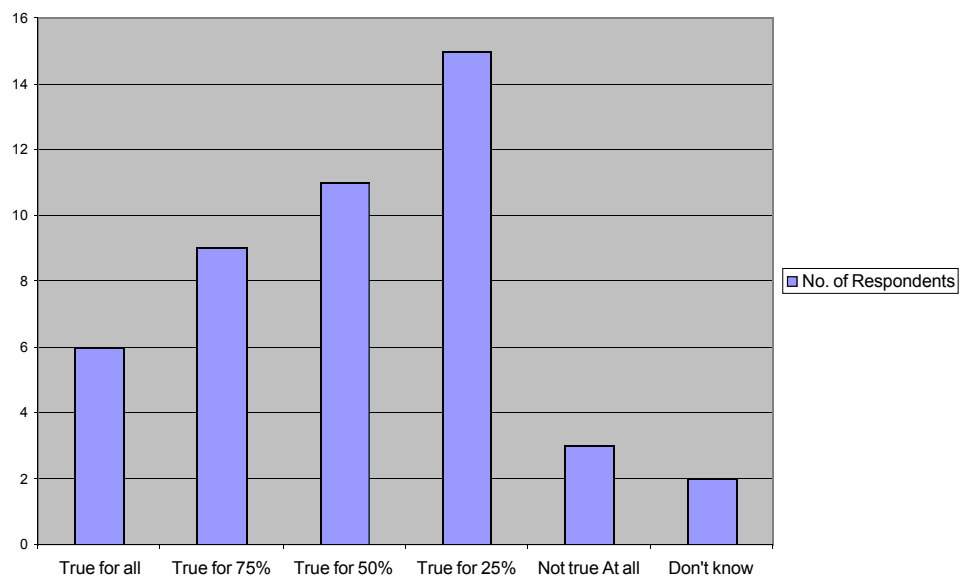
Questions relating to the values of CSOs resulted in quite a mixed expression of views. This reflects, in part, the nature of the questions, the fact that there is very little hard data available and that many people had simply never addressed the underlying issues within their own organisations.

One point that needs to be emphasised is the failure to include any questions on equity in respect of people with disabilities. In any future survey we would include a question on disability equity and encourage other countries to do the same.

Cultural equity, and more specifically the position of Maori, the indigenous people of Aotearoa, is a critical issue for CSOs in New Zealand. Views were mixed on how well CSOs mirror our cultural diversity. However the results of Q. 3.4 which states 'The cultural diversity of our country is mirrored in civil society' raises concerns as only about half the respondents thought this was true of 50% or more of civil society organisations. (See Figure 9). There were views that diversity is apparent in the sector as a whole but this diversity is not reflected within individual organisations. This is a matter requiring further analysis given the critical state of relationships between Maori and other sectors of society.

Figure 9.

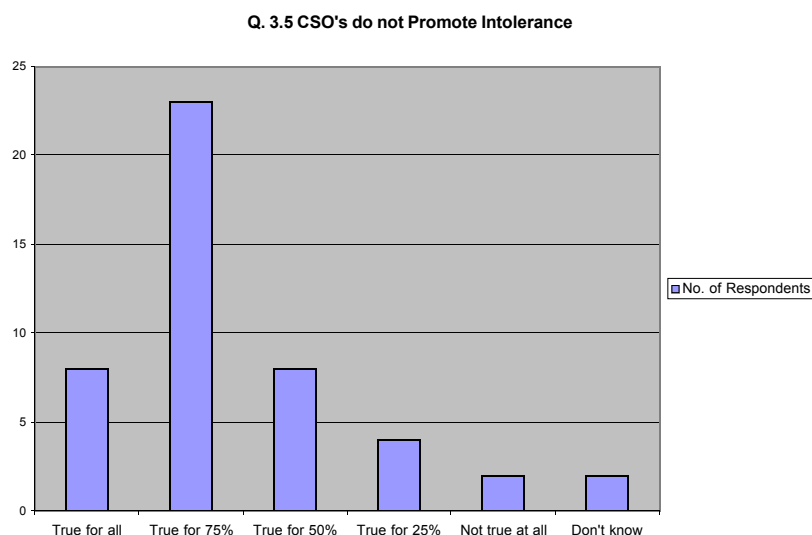
Q. 3.4 Cultural Diversity Mirrored in CSOs



The questions of cultural diversity also need to be examined in terms of the legal barriers to registration for kin-based groups and Maori perspectives on the concepts of charity and volunteering, which are essentially European constructs.

It was generally agreed by respondents that all cultural groups are actively and peacefully promoting their interests and do not promote intolerance (Q. 3.5) as shown in Figure 10.

Figure 10.



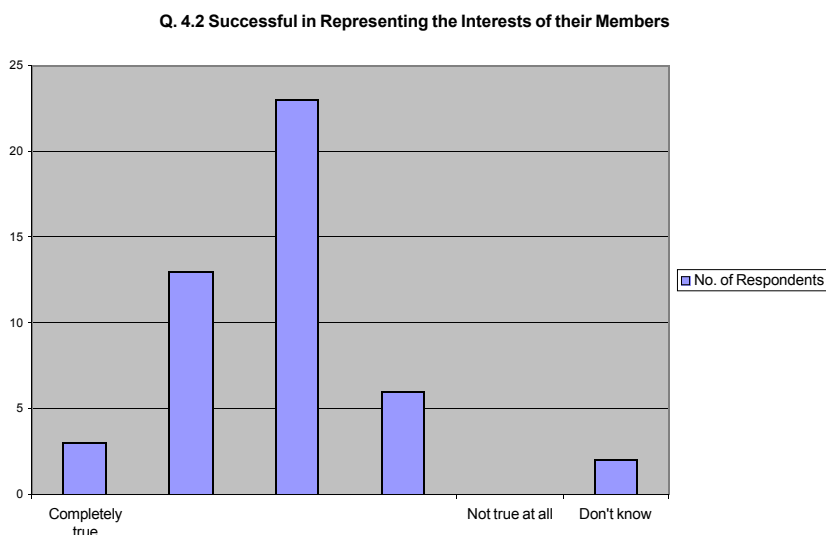
The question on corruption (Q. 3.11) generally received a 'Don't know' response because while New Zealand has very low level of public corruption, respondents were very unclear as to the level of unacceptable self-interested behaviour within CSOs. In the New Zealand context more analysis is required regarding internal corruption, particularly in light of the absence of formal monitoring of charitable and not for profit organisations.

The Impact of Civil Society in New Zealand

This section of the survey raised some unresolved issues regarding the appropriate and actual role or impact of CSOs. Should their impact be reflected in public policy, civil society itself or on society in general?

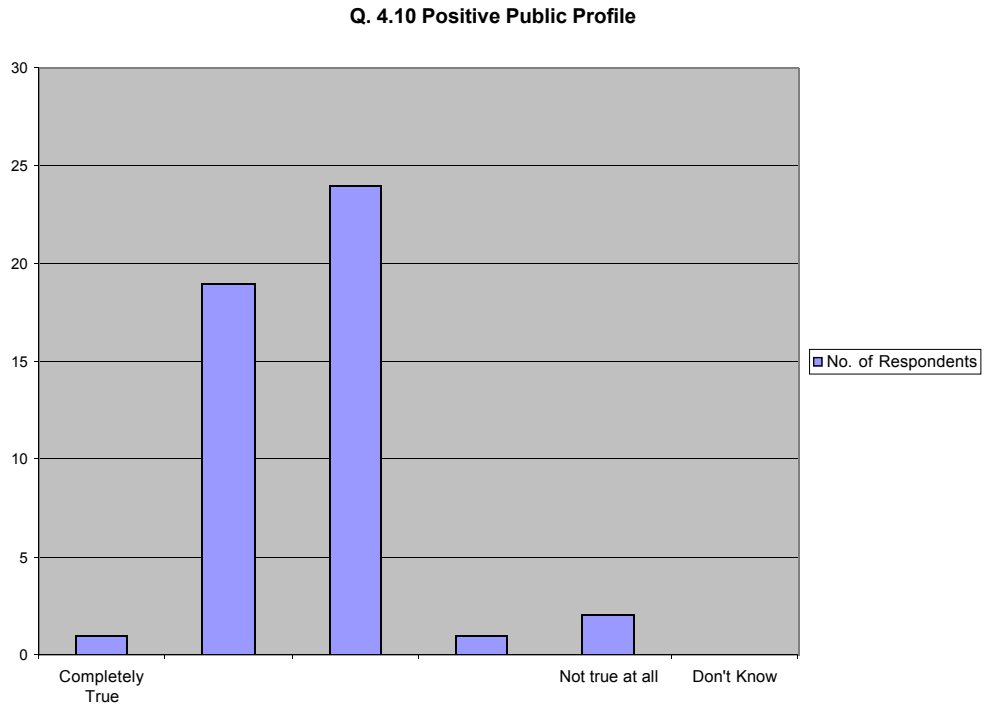
Most participants agreed that 'Civil Society Organisations are successful in representing the interests of their constituents and putting them on the public policy agenda' (Q. 4.2).

Figure 11.



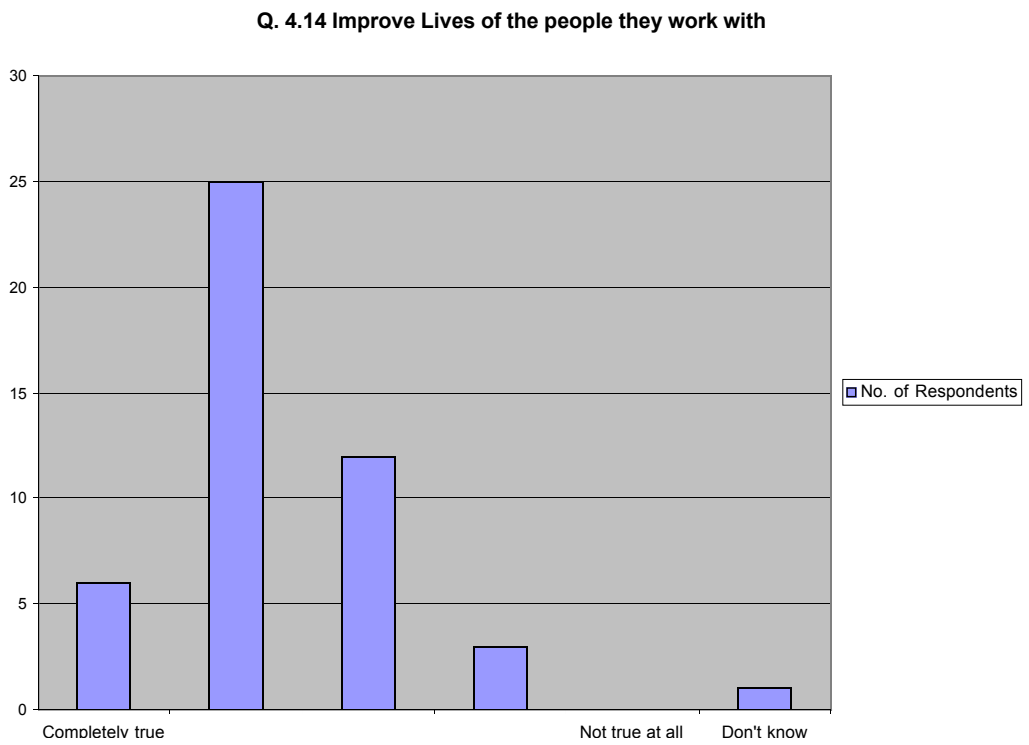
It was also mostly true that 'Civil Society Organisations have a positive public profile' (Q. 4.10) as shown at Figure 12.

Figure 12.



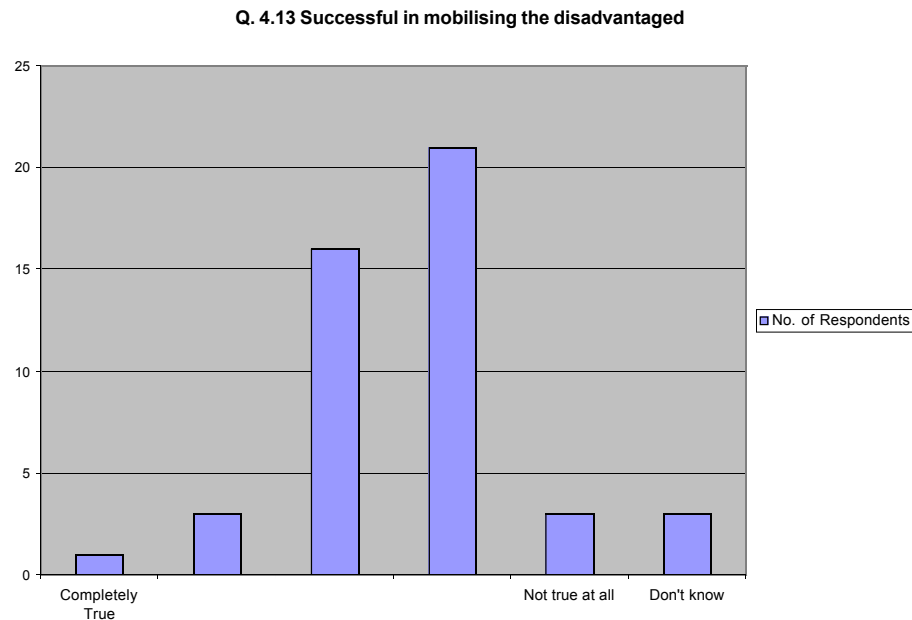
It was generally felt that “Civil Society Organisations improve the lives of the people they are working for (Q. 4.14) as reflected in Figure 13

Figure 13.



However, the responses to the questions relating to role of CSOs in resolving conflicts (Q. 4.11) and ‘mobilising the disadvantaged’ (Q. 4.13, see Figure 13 and Figure 14) raises questions about just how effective CSOs are in influencing either communities or the policies of the state.

Figure 14.



There is therefore some question as to the nature of the impact of CSOs in New Zealand. Even if it is agreed that ‘Civil Society Organisations succeed in benefiting the public good’ (Q. 4.15), as was the case with respect to survey respondents, we need much more information in order to decide what constitutes the public good in the context of civil society.

Over the last five years both the Social and Civic Policy Institute and ANGOA have been able to conduct a number of research projects relating to broad issues of concern to civil society.

Two initiatives by the Social and Civic Policy Institute are particularly relevant to the *Index* project. The Institute conducted a series of workshops throughout New Zealand in 1998 on the topic of ‘partnership.’ This resulted in the publication in 1999 of a report, with the Institute of Policy Studies, Victoria University Wellington, entitled *Partnership — From Practice to Theory*. Last year the Institute published *Public Politics in Practice*, a handbook on the deliberative process, which promotes citizen participation in public policy issues.

ANGOA has been involved in two other related initiatives. ANGOA was the national lead organisation for the Commonwealth Foundation’s ‘Civil Society in the New Millennium’ Project. The New Zealand report published by ANGOA is titled *Mahi Tahī : Working Together — civil society in Aotearoa*.

Three basic questions were asked across the Commonwealth;

- *What roles are best played by citizens, the state and other sectors in a good society?*
- *What limits the playing of such roles in today’s society?*
- *What would enable citizens to play their role in the future?*

In New Zealand an indigenous research project and a non-indigenous research project was carried out. Both included interviews and small group discussions. A literature review was also undertaken.

Participants included urban and rural Maori, low-income groups, migrants, academics, politicians, farmers and refugees.

Last year ANGOA initiated an NGO Confidence Survey. The Confidence Survey is modelled on the Business Confidence Surveys, which have been in use for many years. ANGOA felt it was important to begin to document the views of non-governmental organisations in a way that would be comparable to these surveys.

Two researchers, Eileen Davenport and Will Low, were commissioned to design and pilot the NGO confidence survey, which is now conducted on a quarterly basis. The questions are:

- *Do you feel that general social conditions in Aotearoa New Zealand will improve, remain the same, or deteriorate over the next three months?*
- *Do you feel more or less confident that your NGO will be able to fulfil its mission over the next three months?*
- *Please indicate how you feel about the direction the government has set for public policy in the area which most directly affects your NGO (for example health policy, environmental policy, development assistance policy).*

There are currently 300 participating organisations with around a 50% response rate. Participants are generally obtained from among the memberships of national umbrella organisations such as the New Zealand Federation of Voluntary Welfare Organisations, New Zealand Council of Social Services, Council for International Development and ANGOA. The survey also collects other data relating to the responding organisation's activities, funding, lobbying and advocacy. The results for September 2000 – March 2001 are shown below.

Confidence in Social Development in March 2001 Survey

The March 2001 quarter survey by the Association of Non Governmental Organisations of Aotearoa (ANGOA) found optimism had risen for two key questions.

Net Balances (Optimists Minus Pessimists)

	September	December	March
General Social Conditions	7%	15%	(35.8 – 10.6) = 25.2%
Confidence in own Mission	20%	24%	(34.4 – 9.3) = 25.1%
Direction of Public Policy	57%	59%	(69.5 – 18.5) = 51%

The results are expressed in terms of positive responses minus the negative responses. So that as shown in March 35.8% of respondents were generally confident about general social conditions and only 10.6% were negative. The most positive result was in terms of the direction of public policy, which shows that nearly 70% of NGO respondents were positive about government direction.

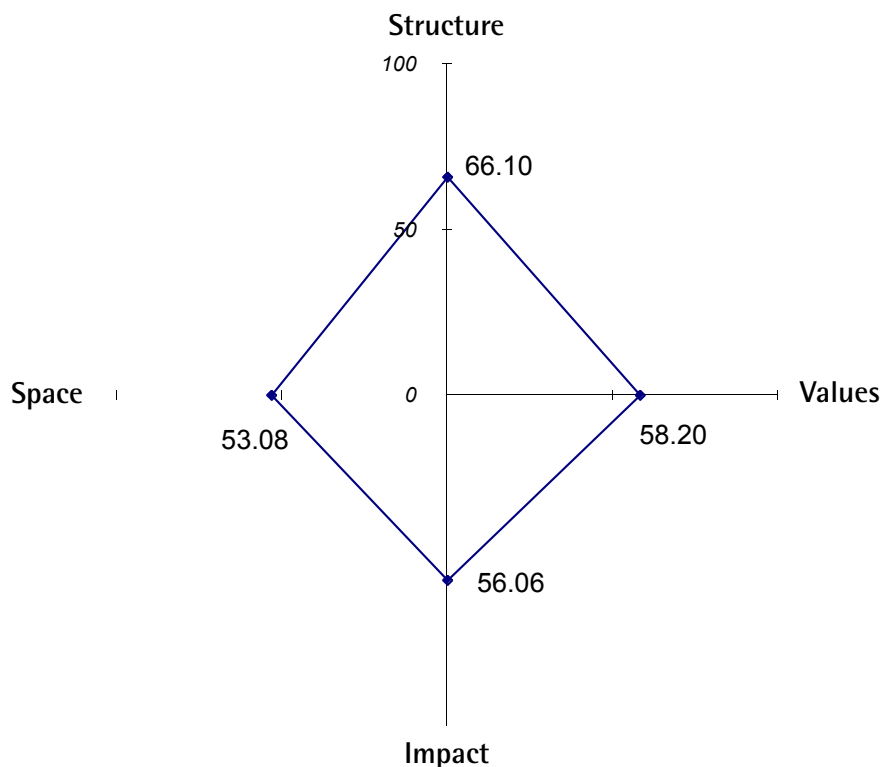
We consider the Confidence Survey provides a very useful tool that relates well to the *Civil Society Index project*.

There have also been a number of collaborative initiatives from within the community sector. Most notably, the sector established an Accountability of Charities and Sporting Bodies Working Party. Research was undertaken and forums held around New Zealand. The final report focused in particular on the need for some form of sector owned and operated accountability agency. These recommendations have not been acted upon to date but are once again up for discussion as the government reviews the taxation and accountability of charities.

Conclusions

Using the Diamond Tool methodology the four dimensions of civil society can be illustrated as shown in Figure 15.

Figure 15.



A Perspective on the Status of New Zealand Civil Society

We regard the shape of the diamond as indicative of the desire of all civil society stakeholders to enhance all aspects of civil society in New Zealand. We also acknowledge that the shape of the diamond would be quite different if developed from a Maori perspective.

We conclude that the survey approach has merit, but only in conjunction with other data sources and related workshops and focus groups. The data and analysis has raised numerous questions that require further research and discussion.

The Diamond Tool is a unique and valuable means of relating critical data which permits a much more integrated approach to exploring and understanding civil society in New Zealand.

Part IV

Civil Society Index Workshop

The stakeholder workshop was held in Wellington as a focussed discussion of the concept and implementation of the *Index on Civil Society*. It considered the purpose of the project and how it could be effectively implemented in New Zealand, rather than being a review of a completed project. Twenty people who had all completed the stakeholder survey attended the workshop.

Participants came from the following sub-groups: local government, international development, indigenous associations, grant-makers, youth, social services, sport and recreation, umbrella groups, women's groups, people with disabilities, government policy advisers, environment, community health, professional association (social workers) and community education. Although the majority were based in Wellington (as are most head offices of community organisations and government) the workshop included participants from two other major cities and three rural areas.

It was agreed that the workshop would consider the following key questions:

- (1) Would it be valuable to gain a rounded understanding of civil society? In other words, would indicators of 'collective well-being' be useful?
- (2) How can we most effectively graphically illustrate the status of civil society? We suggest using the CIVICUS Diamond Methodology as a way of drawing a range of information together and giving it graphic illustration. Is this useful?
- (3) How can we best collect the data needed to complete the Diamond?

After introducing the project and a general discussion on these issues, the meeting broke into small groups to consider each of the index dimensions in terms of:

- (1) Is the way this dimension is conceptualised of value?
- (2) How useful has the survey been in understanding this dimension?
- (3) How could we improve data collection and analysis of this dimension?
- (4) What action should we take to improve the situation/ranking on this dimension?

In general it was considered that the workshop discussion had added to the level of understanding in the group. Participants felt that a focus group approach would be more effective than completing the survey as isolated individuals. This would help people to clarify their views on a complex and difficult concept. However, the survey was highly effective in encouraging discussion on civil society issues and the following comments should be read in that context. While there was criticism of the Index and Diamond Methodology, the exercise of completing the survey and taking part in the workshop enabled these comments to be made. There was overwhelming support for the project and the opportunity to explore the issues. The pilot survey was extremely useful in stimulating interest and discussion in civil society.

However, the workshop participants did not have enough information at this stage to evaluate the value of the Diamond Methodology as a way of describing the status of civil society in New Zealand.

Key Issues

An Alternative Indigenous Model

It was suggested that Maori would not relate to the Diamond Approach. They might prefer to use a concentric circle model. (Figure 16) In this model values would be at the core, the structure would surround (and ideally grow out of) the values and the space or context would sit between the structures and impact which could be depicted in terms of arrows moving out from the circles into the surrounding society.

The nature of civil society illustrated by these circles would be shown by the direction of influence (arrows) with structures either being formed from values or imposed from the legal environment (space).

In this model, civil society can more clearly be shown to be dependent on, and exist within, different relationships. The different dimensions overlap and interact with each other rather than existing at the end of straight lines (with the implication of conflict or tension between those at opposing points) as in the Diamond.

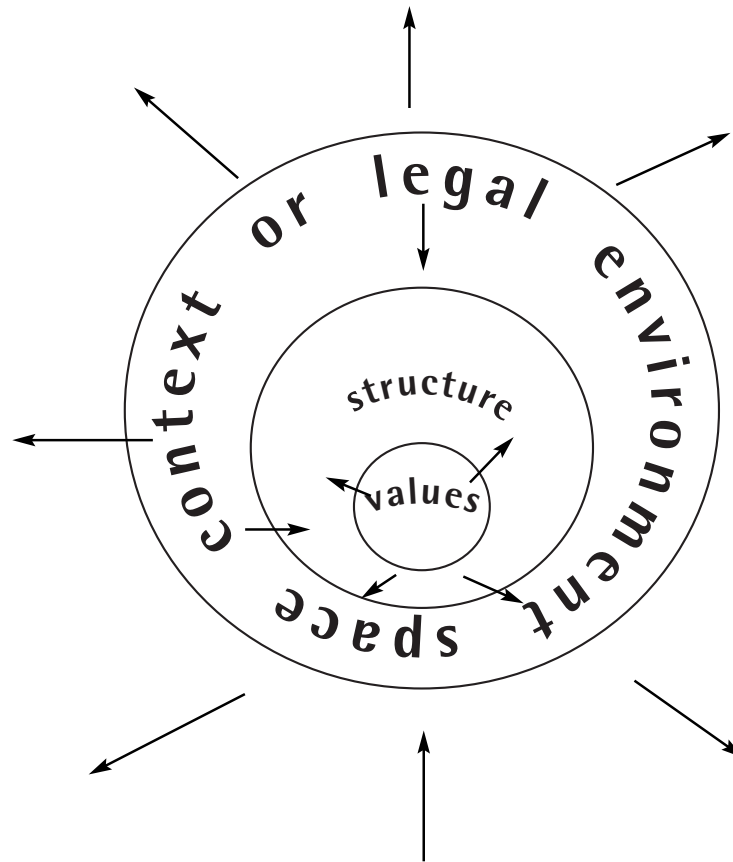
There are a number of different possibilities in terms of the direction of relationships (indicated by the arrows in Figure 16). In customary society values influence the structures used by collective groups (or customary CSOs), then, ideally, the laws and space also reflect these values and provide for the relevant structure.

However, when the state or the values of a majority culture dominate society, then the norms and legal regulations can determine what structures are allowed and these may not be compatible with the core values of the indigenous people or other groups within that society.

The Maori participants at our workshop, and in other workshops on cultural perspectives on voluntary activity, have suggested that a model using concentric circles might better reflect their understanding of civil society as being intrinsically organic in nature. Values cannot be placed on opposing sides of a framework to structure or space, rather they are at the core of all community activity and their influence spreads out from this centre. This is graphically illustrated in Maori culture by the koru, or unfolding fern frond.

The diamond suggests a causal relationship between dimensions that are adjacent to each other. That is, the straight lines between the dimensions in the diamond indicate that there is a direct link between the dimensions that sit alongside each other. Joining the different dimensions together into the diamond shows a line between space and structure, structure and values, values and impact, impact and space- in that order. Once such a line is drawn in an illustration then it implicitly denies that alternative lines exist.

Figure 16. Impact by civil society on society at large.



Need for Additional Data

The survey does not work effectively on its own due to the lack of clarity of concepts and the reflective nature of the questions and responses. To create a meaningful description of civil society or to construct a relevant diamond requires other data that can be placed alongside that gathered from such a survey. This would require collaboration with agencies such as Statistics New Zealand and the Local Government Association of New Zealand to collect the relevant material (see *Quality of Life in New Zealand's Six largest Cities by six City Councils and Framework for the Measurement of Social Capital in New Zealand, and Around the Clock — findings from the New Zealand time use survey 1998–99* by Statistics New Zealand.)

Response to Crisis

It was suggested that the best measure of a civil society might be its capacity to respond to a situation of crisis and form a collective to deal with it. This capacity to respond is the crucial issue, not whether groups already exist in a formal sense. It was also considered that the sustainability of community activity is important — does civil society have the capacity to continue an activity rather than just initiate it?

The Issue of Time

There was concern over the issue of 'time' (i.e., the length of time over which the impact of community action is being measured). Frequently the impact of community action is not apparent until, for example, there is an electoral change or some other change in thinking or action, which may take several years.

Structure

What is Civil Society?

The main discussion on the structure dimension concerned various definitions of what should be included within the term ‘civil society.’ In New Zealand CSOs are generally referred to as voluntary or community organisations.

There were several different ways in which participants understood the term civil society and it was felt that a clearer definition of what is included within the term is required. This may vary in different societies.

The survey could include a section to get respondents’ views on what constitutes civil society, focusing on questions like whether civil society excludes all forms of central and local government. Another suggestion was that the survey could ask for the five most important aspects of a healthy community, listed in order of importance. This would help identify the ideal balance between conflicting values, such as freedom of information and privacy (publicity), diversity and conformity (social cohesion) etc.

Cultural Bias

Some participants thought the survey was culturally biased in areas such as the emphasis on formal organisations. The problem of defining a CSO is was particularly evident in relation to Maori. The Maori Congress (an advocacy group) and the Maori Women’s Welfare League (delivering education and health services) can be identified as CSOs but what about the wide range of ‘spaces’ where Maori express their collective, community identity? Such as hapu, iwi, marae (family, tribal and community-based) activities that are not carried out by formalised, registered CSOs?

The project does not explore how a community organises itself in terms of community support and governance, but suggests a pre-determined model and asks the degree to which this exists.

It also assumes a standard form of organisational arrangement, however, if this is not true of a small country like New Zealand it is debatable how realistic this is elsewhere?

Informal Organisations

Two areas of concern over definitions were:

- (1) Does civil society only include formal organisations? That is, those with a significant degree of organisation and does this organisation have to be ‘officially recognised’? Does it include informal support groups (such as neighbourhood support groups) and/or ad hoc campaign groups?
- (2) Where is the boundary with government or the state? Are all forms of local government excluded? It was suggested that where an organisation has been mandated into existence by the state (local or central) then it should not be included. This would cover District Health Boards, City Council established arts and cultural trusts, advisory bodies etc.

There was some confusion over where this kind of boundary would lead, as it could exclude advisory groups (on disability or Maori issues for example) that had been set up by a Council or government agency.

Question 1.9 asked whether CSOs relate to ‘grassroots organisations’, indicating that they are not included in civil society. It was felt that these grassroots organisations are the basis of civil society. An alternative view was that a group becomes a CSO when it develops protocols about the way in which it will operate. In this view CSO refers to the ‘organisations’ that make up civil society. There

may be many other important forms of association within civil society that are not organised and therefore do not conform to this current definition and project. However, the majority viewpoint was that informal groups must be included in any meaningful definition of civil society.

Structure and the State

The form of structure developed by CSOs might depend on the type of interface with government. That is, a contractual relationship with government could lead to CSOs acting as ‘agents of the state’ rather than as expressions of community.

Space, Context or Legal Environment

What is Space?

A number of workshop participants (and members of the project reference group) did not consider the term ‘space’ was clearly understood. They suggested that ‘context’ or ‘environment’ would be more relevant terms.

Economic Context

Society is dominated by an economically driven agenda that influences the environment we work in. The survey should include questions that assess the degree to which this is happening. For example, ‘economic’ space could be included in the definition of this dimension, which would then read, ‘This section focuses on the legal, political, *economic* and socio-cultural space’ etc.

Requirement to Consult

It was suggested that the questionnaire should consider the degree to which government is required to consult effectively with the community and whether adequate resources are made available to enable this consultation to take place. The responsiveness of government to the community is an important aspect of the space in which CSOs operate.

Access to Information

Easy access to information is crucial and it was suggested that there should be one access point in government for information on community issues including registration procedures. Some participants disagreed with this approach and suggested that providing this information is a key role for umbrella groups and specialist CSOs such as Community Law Centres and Citizens Advice Bureaux.

Values

The Value of Diversity

A major issue concerning values was the tension between cohesion and diversity. A question on the degree of control that CSOs have over their own destiny was suggested. How independent are they in reality? Does legislation liberate or inhibit CSOs? Is there space available for CSOs to make the difference they wish to make and does it allow for a diverse range of organisations from different parts of society to participate? Diversity is a key value of the community sector in New Zealand. Having a space where we can disagree is an important aspect of civil society.

Collaboration and Competition

In relation to the issue of collaboration versus competition there needs to be opportunity for the expression of differences of opinion. The survey may emphasise conformity and agreement too much, which can under-value the role of civil society in providing an opportunity for values to be challenged. Differences of opinion are important and civil society provides a crucial space within which these differences can be expressed. CSOs are often at the leading edge of innovation and change and they often champion unpopular causes.

The Value of Independence

The development of a more collaborative relationship between government and community in New Zealand may indicate the outcome of positive experiences or it may be an attempt by government to correct a dysfunctional environment. However, a key aspect of civil society is that it can act as the 'guardian' of the community in times when the state moves to impose its values and directives. Community groups are formed in order to have more control over their environment; they are not just service delivery agencies. Their function also concerns community self-governance. We need to encourage this and build the capacity of CSOs to control their activities and environment.

Impact

Impact on Society

The survey considers the impact of CSOs on government rather than impact in a broad societal sense. Civil society has a basis and a role that is wider than the operation of government. It enables the expression of the aspirations of ordinary people and gives them opportunity to take action on these issues. CSOs can also play a monitoring role with respect to other aspects of society such as the church, business and changes in family structures.

Impact on Process of Government

Is the process of government in forming advisory groups etc. a part of civil society even if the groups themselves are not? Progress in this area could be an important measure of the effectiveness and impact of civil society. Breaking down barriers between government and the community could be an indicator of a positive impact.

The Direction of Influence

An important consideration is the direction of discussion between government and community. Who initiates the dialogue? A healthy society is one where government is responsive to civil society rather than attempting to control it.

There was concern over situations where government usurps the operation of CSOs and takes their institutional form to carry out its own activities, without providing adequate resources. Examples are Safer Community Councils and youth at risk programmes where government has moved into communities, called meetings and established 'false CSOs.'

Future Development of the Survey

- (1) An amended survey could be a very useful tool in schools, especially in rural areas, and form the basis for a school project that would help students understand the concept of civil society and identify the range of CSOs active in their area.
- (2) The survey form could be used in a focus group format to survey government officials and elected people (Councillors, MPs) about civil society.

By co-operating directly with specific umbrella groups in the community sector, such as the Council for International Development or Philanthropy New Zealand, it might be possible to increase the response rates within that group. Sub-sectors could use the survey in focus groups as a way of raising awareness of civil society issues among their members and also providing input to the *Index* project.

Part V

Summary of Key Civil Society Issues in New Zealand/Aotearoa

The *Civil Society Index Project* in New Zealand has tended to reaffirm a set of inter-linked issues which have been the subject of other sector and government initiatives and which remain largely unresolved. These issues are:

- (1) The lack of community-based research capacity
- (2) The role and place of Maori organisations within civil society
- (3) The capacity of civil society organisations, individually and collectively, to have an impact on public policy
- (4) The need for improved relationships and understanding between civil society and government
- (5) The role and functions of umbrella and national organisations within civil society and in relation to government
- (6) The need for education of public officials regarding civil society and the education of civil society organisations regarding public policy-making.

The Lack of Community-based Research Capacity

There is a need to better resource the sector to enhance its own research capacity, thereby strengthening the sector. Lack of knowledge about the community and voluntary sector seriously inhibits sound policy development. Although some research has already been undertaken within government and within the sector, there needs to be greater collaboration and co-ordination.

The *Civil Society Index Questionnaire* asked a number of questions which respondents could only guess the answer to such as the distribution of CSOs throughout New Zealand, (Q.1.3), or whether or not any organisations had had to close down due to lack of funding. These are quite basic matters for which we lack data. Respondents found themselves having even more difficulty with questions of values and impact. These areas all require research, preferably based within Civil Society Organisations.

The Role and Place of Maori Organisations Within Civil Society

Te Tiriti O Waitangi (the Treaty of Waitangi) is the founding document and basis of representative democracy in New Zealand. While many community organisations have a desire to work effectively within the Treaty framework, it is acknowledged that a significant number of organisations do not know how to achieve this. Work is needed to establish good practice for community organisations in respect of the Treaty. *The Treaty of Waitangi signed in 1840 between Maori and the British Crown sets out a relationship between Maori as the indigenous people and the settlers in the country. Under the Treaty Maori retain certain rights of governance and this requires CSOs to develop relationships in the governance and delivery of services with Maori.*

Survey responses to questions on ethnicity raised the issue of how well civil society organisations

reflect the diversity of New Zealand society. The concern is that Maori are not well represented among participants and supporters and Maori organisations may be isolated from other organisations within civil society. (Q. 1.11 and Q. 3.4)

There is also a need to address, in future work, the particular place of Maori as the first peoples of Aotearoa within civil society and to distinguish this role from that of 'ethnic groups' more generally.

The Capacity of Civil Society Organisations, Individually and Collectively, to Have an Impact on Public Policy

Numerous meetings held around New Zealand in the past year have identified a sense of powerlessness among community organisations in terms of their ability to have an impact on government policy. Both Questions 4.4 and 4.5 in the *Index* survey deal with this issue and in both cases less than 20% of respondents strongly or completely agreed that 'CSO successfully influenced government policy' and 'CSOs successfully co-operate with government on implementing policies.'

The community sector believes there is a need to establish clearer processes within government that are responsive to the sector on matters of policy and operations. The ideal would be one 'point of entry' or single desk approach within the bureaucracy for issues of concern, ensuring grievances are addressed appropriately and information can be obtained about developments across government. A community and voluntary sector section has been established in the Ministry of Social Policy. Whether this constitutes a single 'point of entry' needs to be clarified.

The Need for Improved Relationships and Understanding Between Civil Society and Government

Relationships between government and CSOs have been very strained over recent years and are at a critical point as both government and the sector consider future strategies for building a co-operative, constructive relationship.

In February 2000 a forum called the Community Sector Roundtable was established by a number of national umbrella organisations specifically to look at these issues. Over 100 organisations are associated with the Roundtable, which provides an opportunity for sector leaders to discuss ways of improving relationships with government.

Last year the government appointed a Community and Voluntary Sector Working Party (Appendix 3), which has recommended a 'Statement of Intent' by the Prime Minister on behalf of the whole government to provide clarity for the sector and all departments and ministries on the direction and purpose of the desired relationship. The Roundtable has endorsed this recommendation as critical to enhance relations between the sector and government.

Contracting is a critical issue in relations with government. The Roundtable has recommended the need to monitor and evaluate the impact of a rigid, contracting regime as the primary means of providing government funding to the community sector and to investigate more flexible funding alternatives. Treasury recently released a set of NGO Contracting guidelines and the Roundtable has urged government to include CSOs directly in any monitoring and evaluation of these guidelines.

In addition we have called for the development of model protocols setting out the nature and understanding of the relationships between individual organisations and specific Departments and Ministries. This is particularly important where an organisation deals with several agencies of government.

The Role and Functions of Umbrella and National Organisations Within Civil Society and in Relation to Government

Strengthening the sector requires understanding the roles played by the different types of organisations that make up the community sector from local, single purpose groups to interagency associations and national bodies including ‘umbrella’ organisations that may include national bodies within their membership. The role played by national and umbrella organisations within the sector, locally, regionally and nationally, needs to be clarified by the sector and understood by government.

Section 1 of the survey had a number of questions relating to the role and function of umbrella groups. (See in particular Q. 1.4 – 1.8) There were mixed responses to these questions indicating the need for the sector to establish more clearly the role and functions of these organisations in order to work more effectively with government. The lack of impact on public policy, reflected in Section 4 of the questionnaire, may reflect the weak position of umbrella organisations in New Zealand.

The Need for Education of Public Officials on Society and the Education of Civil Society Organisations About Public Policy-making

The capacity of public servants to work effectively within a collaborative framework could be enhanced through opportunities to learn from skilled people in the sector about what does or doesn't work, and how to improve outcomes for both parties. The sector requires resources to develop training programmes for the public service.

The relationship with government would be enhanced through more regular forums involving both politicians and senior officials focusing on ongoing relationships and critical developments affecting the sector.

Many organisations do not have the capacity to undertake research and policy development. They may also lack access to quality information and alternative policy perspectives, and are, therefore, unable to input into major policy issues. Resources to enable skilled people to provide information and training throughout the country would greatly assist in broadening participation on public policy matters.

The issues discussed above were identified from a number of sources including the Community and Voluntary Sector Working party and the Community Sector Roundtable. *The Civil Society Index* project, although only a pilot project at this stage has been extremely useful in demonstrating a number of relationships between these issues, which had not been apparent previously. It demonstrates, for example, how issues of values and impact within civil society are related to structure and space and helps clarify the complexities that are inherent in civil society. We believe that using this framework will enhance the strength of civil society in New Zealand and increase our capacity to address the critical issues we face.

Appendix 1

New Zealand Civil Society Index Project Questions

Structure

- 1.2 Civil Society Organisations have an active membership base.
- 1.3 Civil Society Organisations are spread in a balanced way across the regions of the country.
- 1.4 There is at least one networking umbrella body of Civil Society Organisations.
- 1.5 This umbrella body encourages membership and participation.
- 1.6 This umbrella body is able to promote the common interests of the sector.
- 1.7 Civil Society Organisations do not co-operate with each other on issues of common concern due to conflicts among them.
- 1.8 Civil Society Organisations join alliances with other Civil Society Organisations to further citizen interests.
- 1.9 Civil Society Organisations work closely together with local grassroots organisations.
- 1.10 Civil Society Organisations co-operate with the private sector.
- 1.11 Civil Society Organisations have a culturally diverse support base.
- 1.12 Civil Society Organisations contact political party officials to express their interests in the public sphere.
- 1.13 Civil Society Organisations use non-violent demonstrations or boycotts to express their interests in the public sphere.
- 1.14 Civil Society Organisations use violent means of participation, such as damage to property or personal violence, to express their interests in the public sphere.
- 1.15 Civil Society Organisations had to close down during the last year due to lack of funding.
- 1.16 Civil Society Organisations are dependent on indigenous public funding only.
- 1.17 Civil Society Organisations are dependent on public funding only.
- 1.18 Civil Society Organisations are dependent on foreign funding only.

Space

- 2.3 How many weeks does it usually take to register a Civil Society Organisation? ____ weeks
- 2.4 Registering a Civil Society Organisation.
- 2.5 Tax legislation in terms of receiving tax exemption on moneys and membership dues.
- 2.6 Tax legislation in terms of receiving donations from individuals and business entities.
- 2.7 People are generally aware of how and why to register.
- 2.8 Civil Society Organisations are not pressured to join or endorse political groupings.
- 2.9 Civil Society Organisations are requested by local and national government to be involved in policy formulation.
- 2.10 Civil Society Organisations have good access to the legislature to express their point of view.
- 2.11 The state has in place ways of recognising people who have shown great public service in civil society.
- 2.12 All in all, the state assists Civil Society Organisations to carry out their work.
- 2.13 A citizen who joins a Civil Society Organisation is respected for this action.
- 2.14 Public spiritedness is an admirable character trait in this society.
- 2.15 Businesses support their employees' role as activists in Civil Society Organisations.
- 2.16 Businesses actively engaged in philanthropic programmes supporting Civil Society Organisations.

Values

- 3.2 Civil Society Organisations are active in initiatives promoting harmonious relationships between different political, cultural, religions and ethnic groups in society.
- 3.3 Civil Society Organisations are active in promoting human rights.
- 3.4 The cultural diversity of our country is mirrored in civil society.
- 3.5 All cultural groups of society are actively and peacefully promoting their interests in civil society without promoting intolerance towards other cultural groups.
- 3.6 Civil Society Organisations promote gender equity within their own ranks.
- 3.7 Civil Society Organisations promote gender equity within broader civil society, business and the state.
- 3.8 Civil Society Organisations promote the sustainable use of natural resources.
- 3.9 Civil Society Organisations make information about their general activities publicly available.
- 3.10 Civil Society Organisations make their financial accounts publicly available.
- 3.11 Civil Society Organisations encountered a case of corruption or self-interest regarding their internal management within the last two years.
- 3.12 Civil Society Organisations involve their members and/or stakeholders in their activities.
- 3.13 Civil Society Organisations use elections to select their leadership.

Impact

- 4.2 Civil Society Organisations are successful in representing the interests of their constituents and putting them on the public policy agenda.
- 4.3 Representatives from Civil Society Organisations are regularly invited to participate in the generation and discussion of legislation.
- 4.4 Civil Society Organisations successfully influence government policy in favour of their constituents.
- 4.5 Civil Society Organisations successfully co-operate with government on implementing policies.
- 4.6 Civil Society Organisations are able to provide their services in a manner that would not be possible for the state or for businesses.
- 4.7 Civil Society Organisations are successful in keeping track of/monitoring government commitments and policies.
- 4.8 Civil Society Organisations are generally portrayed positively in the media.
- 4.9 Civil Society Organisations are able to attract the attention of the media to report about their cause.
- 4.10 Civil Society Organisations have a positive public profile.
- 4.11 Civil Society Organisations play a prominent role in resolving conflicts in society.
- 4.12 The goods and services Civil Society Organisations produce reflect the needs and priorities of their constituents and communities.
- 4.13 Civil Society Organisations are successful in mobilising the disadvantaged groups in society to take part in public life.
- 4.14 Civil Society Organisations improve the lives of the people they are working with.
- 4.15 Civil Society Organisations succeed in benefiting the public good.

Appendix 2

Suggested Changes to Survey

Self-interest

Question 3.11 which refers to ‘corruption or self-interest’ needs to be clarified. The term ‘self-interest’ had been interpreted in a variety of ways. Participants were uncertain as to whether it meant ‘self-serving’ in relation to gaining financial advantage. There was a fairly widespread view that this does happen but that the sector tends to ‘hush it up.’ There is a false appearance of non-corrupibility and purity in the community sector and there may be an overly rosy-eyed view of the community sector among many groups.

However, for self-help support groups ‘self-interest’ is an integral part of their operation.

Disability Issues

The disability sector should be acknowledged and included in the questions about human rights.

Human Rights

The question asking whether most CSOs promote human rights needs re-drafting. Most of the human rights promotion is carried out within the CSO sector – but this is by specific organisations not by most CSOs.

The question could be divided into two parts:

- (1) Do CSOs recognise and comply with human rights legislation/ideals?
- (2) Are human rights promoted by the sector?

Appendix 3

Communities and Government: Potential for Partnership –Whakatoopu Whakaaro

A key feature of the *Civil Society Index* project in New Zealand has been to explore the relationship between government and community and to identify the role of civil society in forming and monitoring public policy – not just in delivering services or organising activities.

During the same time frame as we have been implementing the *Civil Society Index* a parallel process has been carried out at the initiative of government. This project has consulted widely with national and local community organisations throughout the country, including many of the same people and organisations contacted by the *Index* project. For this reason it is important to acknowledge this work and its outcomes and to place them alongside our work.

Recognition of a lack of community focus in government policy and strains in the relationship between government and community led the government to establish a Working Party (WP) in August 2000 to consider this issue and what might be done about it.

The WP was made up of people from community organisations, Maori and government officials. It met with people from *iwi* (Maori tribal groups) and Maori, voluntary and community organisations, considered written submissions and existing data and research, and sampled the views of people from Maori, Pacific, urban and rural communities across New Zealand. There was almost unanimous agreement from these people on the barriers to their relationship with government. Its report, *Communities and government: potential for partnership*, was publicly released in May 2001 by the Ministry of Social Policy. The report identified several underlying problems that have led to difficulties in the relationship between government, community, voluntary and Maori organisations.

These include:

- concerns about the relationship between Maori and the Crown
- a sense that community and Maori organisations have been excluded from key policy decisions and a desire for a more participatory style of government
- frustration with government funding arrangements (especially contracting) concern about the strength and health of the community sector and its ability to pursue its own goals
- concern about the ‘culture of government’ i.e. the attitudes and behaviour of officials and their lack of understanding of community and Maori organisations.

The report provides guidance on what people want from government, including:

- officials who listen and respond to community organisations' concerns
- processes for interaction
- building trust and respect
- access to information
- timeframes that enable people to consider options
- working with people who can facilitate and negotiate, who have cultural and local knowledge
- leadership – within government and within the community
- policy which enables achievement of mutually desired outcomes.
- Above all, people active in community organisations want their expertise and knowledge to be utilised by government agencies.

The report recommended four streams of work:

- developing participatory democracy or a style of government which enables members of community organisations to participate in making key policy decisions
- reviewing the resourcing and accountability arrangements of community organisations delivering services
- strengthening the community sector, and
- improving the 'culture of government', i.e., improving the attitudes and behaviour of central government officials and their ability to understand and work with community organisations.

In addition the report noted that unresolved issues relating to the 1840 Treaty of Waitangi (between Maori and the State) were perceived by many to be a barrier to improving relationships between government and the community sector. Because the implications of these broader concerns fell outside the WP's terms of reference, it was proposed that they be addressed through a separate process.

Participatory Democracy

The WP suggested working with Maori and community organisations to audit and review central government agency practice, and on-going training and process improvements.

There was also specific reference to joint work between local and central government to ensure improvement of community engagement in strategic planning and inter-agency policies and practices. This theme is also included in the discussion document on the current review of the Local Government Act 1989.

There was seen to be a requirement for central government to do more than inform people about policy changes. The WP considered that central government is in a position to model, stimulate, inform and engage citizens in discussion on policy direction. This is more than market research. The WP noted that it required an environment in which options and priorities could be considered in open debate. This requires officials who can facilitate, mediate and negotiate; who have cultural and local knowledge; and who can work in ways that enable those who are traditionally 'silent' to be heard alongside the articulate, persistent and powerful.

Part of the work to achieve this is to provide quality information – such as information on the social state of the nation (social indicators), alongside economic indicators required under the Fiscal Responsibility Act, or the bio-physical indicators provided by Ministry for the Environment.

Ministry of Social Policy has now published a Social Trend analysis for 2001.

The WP noted issues around the silo approaches of government departments that are problematic in finding solutions to the complex and urgent problems confronting communities. Central government is working on processes to advance 'joined-up' government.

Renegotiating Funding and Accountability

The WP reported that a number of community organisations that deliver social and other services have struggled to survive. This has resulted from expanded demand for services and the transfer of many functions to the community sector without commensurate funding.

The WP considered that work to address the problems identified would include:

- working out mutually agreed performance and accountability measures
- receiving funding on time
- having longer term contracts giving greater security and enabling effective planning
- exploring different models of funding
- fitting contract size and complexity to the amount of money provided, or utilising grants (which have more open and flexible accountability requirements).

Current initiatives noted include Treasury's guidelines for government contracts with non-government organisations. These were developed in response to an identified need for substantial improvements in the management of contractual relationships between government agencies and service providers (especially those in the community and voluntary sector).

Strengthening the Community Sector

The WP noted that the community sector is itself in need of greater support if it is to play an effective role in rebuilding relationships with the government. It needs access to information, the ability to advocate, network and have informed debate on local, regional and national issues. Resourcing is required for this to happen. Support mechanisms suggested included:

- opportunity for people to express opinions without fear that funding would be cut or reduced
- increased resourcing for national and umbrella groups to act as members' advocates
- support in strengthening Maori and community organisations' own processes so that tension between those at the grassroots and those representing them is minimised.

Capacity of Central Government Officials to Understand and Work with Community Organisations

This area of work reflects the importance of officials' understanding and respecting Maori, community and voluntary organisation values, objectives and operating constraints. It includes officials having knowledge of:

- an organisations' governance and accountability arrangements (trustees, members, beneficiaries, executive committees, boards, bicultural and multi-cultural structures, etc).
- their advocacy and information roles.
- impact of governance structures on consultation timeframes (requirement to build in time to work with regional bodies and part-time voluntary executives/boards).

This stream of work was seen to be of major significance and, because it crosses all other areas of

work and should form a part of the work agenda of each of the other three key areas.

Some specific actions to enable this to happen include secondments, forums for the regular exchange of information, using community expertise on a regular and paid basis, and developing agreed frameworks for interaction.

Relationships between Local Government and Community Organisations

- Local government's policies, like those of central government, impact on the community sector.
- Local government roles were seen to include: advisor, funder, catalyst, advocate, facilitator (particularly between central government and the community sector, and in co-ordinating services delivered locally by central government agencies).
- The community sector can provide useful input into local planning and policy.
- Local government does not 'represent' the community sector.

Next Steps

The government is now considering the Working Party report. A number of initiatives are already underway to address issues raised in the report, while further planned initiatives await ministerial endorsement.

Processes that have been put in place to improve the relationship between government and community include:

- improvements in government funding practices
- work to build the capacity of Maori and Pacific Island service providers
- regional development initiatives
- a forum between central and local government
- on-line access to information about community funding and registration procedures
- reinstatement of government services in rural towns.

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