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Civil Society Rapid Assessment: Liberia

Search for Common Ground in Liberia

West Africa Civil Society Institute

CIVICUS: World Alliance for Citizen Participation

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Table of contents

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS 4

LIST OF FIGURES AND TABLES 6

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS 7

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY 8

CIVIL SOCIETY INDEX – RAPID ASSESSMENT PROJECT AND APPROACH 8
KEY FINDINGS 8

1. INTRODUCTION 10

1.1 NATIONAL CONTEXT 10
1.2 CHANGING REALITIES AND PRESSING NEEDS OF CSOS IN LIBERIA 12
1.2 ABOUT THE CIVIL SOCIETY – RAPID ASSESSMENT (CSI-RA) 14

2. CSI-RA IMPLEMENTATION 17

3. ANALYSIS OF CIVIL SOCIETY 20

3.1 OVERVIEW OF CSOS AND PROGRAMME CAPACITY 20
ISSUES COVERED BY CSOS 20
ACTIVITIES IMPLEMENTED BY CSOS 21
MONITORING AND EVALUATION CAPACITY 23
3.2 ORGANISATIONAL MANAGEMENT AND HUMAN RESOURCES CAPACITY 24
HUMAN RESOURCES CAPACITY 24
INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY 29
3.3 FINANCIAL AND FUNDRAISING CAPACITY 30
3.4 COLLABORATION AND RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN CSOS, COMMUNITIES AND GOVERNMENT 34
CSO COORDINATION AND COLLABORATION 34
COLLABORATION WITH GOVERNMENT 35
RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CSOS AND COMMUNITIES 36
3.5 CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FACED BY CSOS 36
EMERGING OPPORTUNITIES 38

4. FINDINGS: STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES OF CSOS IN LIBERIA 39

5. RECOMMENDATIONS 41

7. APPENDICES 42

APPENDIX I: QUESTIONNAIRE 42
APPENDIX II: 50

INDICATORS **50**

List of abbreviations and acronyms

AC	Advisory Committee
AFT	Agenda for Transformation
CBO	Community-based organisation
CIVICUS	CIVICUS: World Alliance for Civic Participation
CPA	Comprehensive Peace Agreement
CRC	Constitutional Review Committee
CRL	Community Rights Law
CSI-RA	Civil Society Index-Rapid Assessment
CSO	Civil society organisation
DDRR	Disarmament, demobilisation, reintegration and rehabilitation
ECC	Elections Coordinating Committee
FIA	Freedom of Information Act
FRL	Forest Reform Law
GOL	Government of Liberia
ICT	Interactive communication technology
INGO	International non-governmental organisation
IRCL	Inter-Religious Council of Liberia
IT	Information technology
LACC	Liberian Anti-Corruption Commission
LGA	Local Governance Act
M&E	Monitoring and evaluation
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
NCSACL	National Civil Society Advisory Council of Liberia
NGO	Non-governmental organisation

NLP	National Land Policy
NOVIB	Netherlands Organisation for International Development Cooperation
NRM	National Road Map
SFCG	Search for Common Ground
TJWG	Transitional Justice Working Group
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNMIL	United Nations Mission in Liberia
WACSI	West Africa Civil Society Initiative

List of figures and tables

Figure 1: Map of Liberia 12

Figure 2: Issue areas covered by CSOs.....20

Figure 3: Number of issues targeted per CSO.....21

Figure 4: Activity types implemented by CSOs.....22

Figure 5: Range of CSO activities. 23

Figure 6: Percentage of CSOs with an M&E plan and trained M&E staff.....24

Figure 7: Staff composition of CSOs. 25

Figure 8: Gender breakdown of CSO staff 26

Figure 9: Education levels of CSO staff.....27

Figure 10: Self-assessment of skills of CSO staff.....28

Figure 11: Stated motivations of CSO staff 29

Figure 12: Frequency of CSO board meetings 30

Figure 13: Distribution of CSO income 31

Figure 14: Sources of funding: CSOs outside Montserrado.....32

Figure 15: Fundraising challenges for CSOs based outside Montserrado .. **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Figure 16: Fundraising challenges for CSOs based in Montserrado..... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Figure 17: CSO collaboration issue areas 35

Table 1: Organisations interviewed 17

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We apologise that we are unable to list all those who have in one way or another contributed to this project or are associated with it. We spoke to many people, one on one and in groups, about their realities, histories and dreams for civil society. We interviewed staff and leaders of CSOs, academicians, and other experts. We went beyond one on one interviewing and tried to create discussions in small groupings with community members who are largely not linked to CSOs. Altogether, we extend very big thanks to over 200 people who we interviewed, representing the interests of CSOs and communities throughout Liberia.

We close by extending heartfelt thanks to the team of researchers, research assistants and vehicle operators who spent many days and nights on the rough roads up country. There, we were accorded enormous hospitality by residents of communities that we visited across the five regions of Liberia. We owe everyone a depth of gratitude for contributing to this report on the state of civil society in Liberia.

Executive summary

Civil Society Index – Rapid Assessment project and approach

More than a decade since the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement in Accra, Ghana, Liberia continues its long walk to restoration and reconciliation. Though Liberia has stayed relatively stable and peaceful in the post-conflict period, challenges remain. Many of the structural causes of the war persist, including political and economic elitism, powerful patronage networks, systemic and wide-ranging corruption and high levels of youth unemployment. The government is continuing to enact a number of reform initiatives to try to transform these structural conditions, including on-going efforts to reform the security sector, and the establishment of the Liberian Anti-Corruption Commission (LACC) and the Constitutional Review Committee (CRC). Across all of these areas, civil society is an evolving and important counterpart that can bring diverse voices to the table, as well as serve as a check on government power. New laws and policies have helped to boost the role of CSOs. Laws such as the Freedom of Information Act, passed in 2010, provide opportunities for CSOs to engage more with government.

It is within this context that Search for Common Ground-Liberia (SFCG-Liberia) and WACSI conducted a research study between June and November 2013 to assess the changing landscape for CSOs in Liberia. This study aims to capture the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, needs and challenges faced by CSOs, including community based organisations (CBOs), across Liberia.

The research commenced with desktop research and advisory group meetings to begin generating indicators and interview questions for key informant interviews. These would serve as the backbone of the research. Indicators and questions were then finalised and validated at the adaptation workshops.

Together with WACSI, SFCG-Liberia conducted 116 key informant interviews of individuals from 40 CSOs across 11 counties: Bomi, Bong, Gbarpolu, Grand Bassa, Grand Cape Mount, Grand Gedeh, Lofa, Margibi, Montserrado, Nimba and Rivercess. Individuals interviewed included executive directors, finance managers, programme managers and volunteers. The data collected from the interviews were then transcribed and input into a database to facilitate analysis and enable disaggregation of the data based on location and other important qualifiers.

Key findings

Analysis of the data revealed a number of key findings and trends about the status, divisions, roles and limitations faced by CSOs in Liberia. The Government of Liberia (GOL), local CSOs and CBOs, international donors and international non-governmental organisations (INGOs) should use the following findings to refine their work to strengthen Liberian CSOs.

Two classes of CSOs: Montserrado vs. the rest

Across all the data, a persistent dichotomy was seen between CSOs based in and around the capital Monrovia, and those based in other parts of Liberia, particularly more rural areas. CSOs in Montserrado, the county in which Monrovia sits, tend to have greater access to more skilled staff, more financial resources and more robust capacity in programme implementation and monitoring and evaluation.

Vulnerable funding streams

CSOs in Montserrado face a key vulnerability in their funding streams. Unlike CSOs based in other counties, CSOs in Montserrado tend to be dependent on funding from international donors. Whereas their counterparts in other counties have developed more diverse sources of income, those in Monrovia and its environs have had access to international donors during the post-conflict period and therefore have not developed alternative funding streams. As the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) draws down, the attention given to Liberia could fall and leave CSOs with less funding to compete over. If this occurs, Montserrado based groups will have to adapt quickly or cease their activities.

Limited capacity across CSOs

Despite some advantages held by Montserrado based CSOs, capacity limitations beset almost all of the CSOs interviewed. Common capacity constraints include weak writing and computer skills. CSOs frequently also offer only one or two activities, such as training or capacity building. This suggests that CSOs could benefit from support to improve their ability to adopt more innovative approaches. Other areas for capacity strengthening include organisational development, and monitoring and evaluation support.

Information technology infrastructure, software and training

Many CSOs face serious challenges in accessing quality internet, computers and software. Additionally, in cases where CSOs have these technologies, staff frequently lack of knowledge of how to use them properly. This constrains CSOs' ability to fundraise effectively, communicate with donors and collaborate with partners across distances.

Public infrastructure

Roads and mobile communications networks are amongst the major challenges facing CSOs that are outside their control. The poor condition of roads in many parts of Liberia makes it difficult for CSOs to access the rural areas that are often most in need of assistance. Additionally, this helps to drive up the cost of vehicle maintenance because of the damage sustained from rough roads. Weak mobile phone networks outside of Monrovia make communication across distances difficult. This can lead to problems when CSOs are planning joint activities.

1.Introduction

1.1 National context

Liberia has celebrated ten years of uninterrupted peace since the parties to its long-running conflict signed the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) in Accra, Ghana on 18 August 2003. Stability has created the political environment for the government to undertake numerous reform initiatives. Despite this achievement, which can be credited to the citizens, government and its international partners, Liberia remains a state characterised by multiple weaknesses and a still fragile security situation. There is scarce diffusion of governance beyond the national level, and little progress has been made in shifting power away from the centre, which is necessary to really make the government a reality for rural Liberians. Efforts to do this, such as the draft Local Governance Act, are being held up due to lack of political will, as well as constraints imposed by the 1986 Constitution, which will require amendment before the law can be viable. In terms of security, the technical, professional, human resources, and logistical capacities of the Liberian National Police are limited. Currently, the force stands at just over 4,000 personnel, but independent studies have suggested a force of 8,000 is necessary.[1] This, coupled with the gradual drawdown of the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL), means that the security situation could become increasingly fragile in the coming years.

The structural conditions and drivers of the decade of conflict that Liberia experienced remain to be addressed. Some of these conditions include political and economic elitism, political patronage and an overly centralised and powerful presidency. Other conditions include the lack of a transparent and accountable process and system in the management of state resources. This is contributing to corruption in almost every state institution, including the police, which erodes public trust in the government.[2] Strong rhetoric from the president on the fight against corruption has not been matched by decisive action, despite the establishment of the Liberia Anti-Corruption Commission (LACC).

Another condition that has the potential to trigger violence and undermine the gains that have been made is a very young population that is largely unskilled and lacks access to livelihood opportunities.[3] The government has recognised this issue as a potential threat to stability.[4] Other conditions that could cause unrest include the lack of a national programme for reconciliation, steady unemployment, limited access to basic social services and continuing poverty.

At the same time, the government has, to a large extent, protected civil and political liberties. To address governance issues, a series of initiatives are being implemented. First, the government

[1] See: Human Rights Watch Report. 'No Money, No Justice: Police Corruption and Abuse in Liberia', August 2013, page 2.
[2] Ibid.
[3] According to the National Population and Housing Census, 2008, 65% of the population is below the age of 35 years.
[4] The President mentioned this as an issue of concern in her inaugural address in 2012.

has established the Constitution Review Committee (CRC), with a mandate to amend parts of the Constitution. This process is due to take place in 2015. Challenges that may prevent this review process from having a credible outcome include the limited time for a quality national consultation targeting diverse actors, a high illiteracy rate, which may prevent citizens from making informed decisions, and a complex referendum process.

The second effort on the part of the government to address some governance issues is the formulation of a Local Governance Act (LGA) to decentralise economic and political authority to county level. The LGA is subject to a legislative review before it can be enacted as law. Even if the LGA is passed into law, its implementation will require a constitutional amendment.

The third initiative is the formulation, through a national consultative process, of a National Land Policy (NLP) to mitigate the potential for conflict over Liberia's natural resources and disputes arising from land ownership, management and utilisation. The NLP has established the policy framework that will be used as the basis for creating a new land law.

The last effort is the development of the Agenda For Transformation (AFT) and the National Road Map (NRM). These are the government's two main instruments for the promotion of national reconciliation and the transformation of society. However, the linkage between these two documents is not clear. Moreover, the implementation of the NRM should not be the sole prerogative of the government, because it has vested political and economic interests, and therefore is not morally placed to lead this process.

Figure 1: Map of Liberia

1.2 Changing realities and pressing needs of CSOs in Liberia

The emergence of CSOs in Liberia was greatly influenced by the advocacy work of the student movement in the early 1970s and 80s and social justice engagement by the media, the church and private citizens. The accumulative efforts of collective engagement became more visible at

the height of the Liberian civil conflict, where parties to the conflict were accused of committing gross human rights violations.

While some CSOs were engaged in monitoring and documenting human rights violations others, particularly the Inter-Religious Council of Liberia (IRCL), were involved in mediation efforts to find a peaceful solution to the conflict. With the collapse of the state, from 1992 to 1996, CSOs took on the role of providing and delivering humanitarian and basic social services, such as access to food, health and education.

During the various phases of the Liberian conflict (from 1992 to 1996 and 1997 to 2002), the work of CSOs was dominated by human rights monitoring and documentation. When work on disarmament, demobilisation, reintegration and rehabilitation (DDRR) officially ended in 2007, CSOs shifted their focus to reconciliation initiatives and to supporting the country's transitional process, including the 2005 general and presidential elections.

Following her election in 2005, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, President of Liberia, appointed several civil society leaders to key government positions in 2006. The loss of charismatic leaders who formed the CSOs, and possessed the ability to raise funds and manage organisations, created institutional challenges for CSOs, which tended to have weak middle management teams.

From 2003 to 2008, CSOs worked in a very fragmented manner with little coordination. In order to address this problem, CSOs, with support from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), established the National Civil Society Advisory Council of Liberia (NCSACL) to serve as the coordinating body of CSOs. CSOs have also made substantial efforts to work in networks on thematic issues as a way of building synergy and maximising results. Networks include the Elections Coordinating Committee (ECC), which focuses on electoral matters, the Transitional Justice Working Group (TJWG), which deals with human rights and reconciliation issues, the Security Sector Working Group and the Natural Resource Management Coalition.

As time has passed since the end of conflict, the relationship between CSOs and government has become increasingly confrontational. This is largely due to disagreements in their respective approaches towards nation building, as well as an adversarial stance taken by CSOs on issues such as corruption and impunity.

However, the government and its partners also see value in partnering with CSOs, on key issues such as anti-corruption, decentralisation, justice and natural resource management. Government continues to invite CSOs into its platforms. CSO are continuing to play a watchdog role, but have also moved beyond advocacy into helping government formulate and implement policy. Evidence of this can be seen in the reform process in the forest and land sectors. CSOs are acknowledged to have actively participated in the design of a series of laws, including the Community Rights Law (CRL) and the Forest Reform Law (FRL), and the consultative process that led to the formulation of the Land Policy. Another area of cooperation between government and CSOs is in the on-going engagement between the CRC and CSOs.

1.2 About the Civil Society – Rapid Assessment (CSI-RA)

This section provides an overview of the evolution and origins of the CSI-RA, its main elements and its potential applications to measure civil society realities.

From CSI to CSI-RA: history, evolution and origin of CSI-RA

Origins

Since its inception in 1993, CIVICUS has strived to make a significant contribution to understanding the rise and evolution of civil society around the world and to build a knowledge base of civil society-related issues through research led and owned by civil society. The first step towards achieving this was the compilation of civil society profiles of 60 countries in the New Civic Atlas, published in 1997. This report provided concise and current information on the basic features of civil society in those countries, although it lacked consistency with regard to the issues covered.

In order to improve this exercise and move towards a more rigid comparative framework of analysis that would allow lessons to be drawn across countries, CIVICUS, with financial assistance from the UNDP, the Netherlands Organisation for International Development Cooperation (NOVIB), and the Commonwealth Foundation, began to explore the development of the Civil Society Index (CSI).

After multiple consultations with members and partners, the pilot implementation phase began in 2000 in 13 countries, in partnership with national organisations. A first full phase of the CSI took place between 2003 and 2006, with the participation of more than 60 countries. However, it was acknowledged that there was need to better engage and reflect the views and priorities of informal citizens' associations.

A resulting revision of the CSI methodology led to a second phase of the project from 2008 to 2011. The CSI became a more locally owned, participatory action-research project. It intended to create a knowledge base and momentum for civil society strengthening, by encouraging civil society self-reflection and analysis amongst a broad range of civil society stakeholders.

During this second phase, a total of 35 countries implemented the CSI. The 2011 CIVICUS report *Bridging the Gaps: Citizens, organisations and dissociation*, summarises the findings of this second phase of the project.

Changing realities and pressing needs

Informed by its findings from the 2008-2011 CSI, CIVICUS sees that in many countries around the world, CSOs exist in a state of heightened volatility, flux and disconnect, with the paradigms that shaped definitions of and relations between state, market, media, civil society and other social actors in the late 20th century all coming into renewed questioning.

At the same time, CIVICUS' tracking of trends in legislation and policies towards CSOs suggests that there is a need for research and action to focus on the establishment and

promotion of a more enabling environment for civil society. No matter the shape that civic action takes, there must be appropriate legal and policy provisions to allow the maximum possibility for people to express themselves freely, demand alternatives and organise and gather in collective spaces.

About the CSI-RA: key features and how it works

The CSI demonstrated during its two phases the limitations of a standardised methodology: it could not adequately capture local nuances due to a requirement for international comparability, and it could miss rapid civil society evolution due to long project lead times. To address these, CIVICUS developed the CSI-RA tool.

The purpose of the CSI-RA is to support civil society self-assessments in order to enhance the strength and sustainability of civil society for positive social change. It intends to help civil society to better assess its strengths, challenges, potentials and needs in a range of different situations and contexts. This will contribute to strengthening the evidence base for civil society advocacy; provide a platform for civil society to identify shared needs; and assist the planning and strategising of civil society around common challenges and opportunities.

Some key features of the CSI-RA conceptual framework are:

Local ownership: The CSI-RA is a collaborative effort where CSOs lead the process of assessing their own context by involving a broad range of stakeholders. The CSI-RA seeks to be as empowering as possible towards national partners, while recognising a specific but limited role for CIVICUS in providing initial capacity building, international coordination, technical assistance and quality assurance. In the CSI-RA, local civil society actors take the lead as they design their own civil society assessments and action plans. The outputs produced from the assessment are determined by local partners according to what best adds value to civil society in the particular context. The process through which the research is conducted and the analysis carried out is important in its own right: implementing the CSI-RA is an opportunity for civil society actors to convene and form coalitions, raise awareness around critical issues, promote participation and reflection and build capacity for civil society.

Embracing complexity: It is impossible to capture the complex reality of civil societies across the globe with a small number of indicators, no matter how carefully chosen. Therefore, the CSI-RA promotes the use of multiple indicators and a mix of methods, and strives for an assessment that is able to identify civil society's key assets and challenges in a particular context, whether in general, or focused on a specific dimension as determined locally, and explore their causes.

Disaggregating data: As much as possible, the research methods that the CSI-RA provides are chosen to allow for optimal disaggregation of findings. In a number of indicators and variables, the disaggregation of research findings by crucial demographic characteristics (e.g. gender, socio-economic status, geographic location, CSO working area) is encouraged. Both quantitative and qualitative data can be generated.

Building on existing knowledge: In designing the project framework, and especially in defining dimensions and indicators, the CSI-RA encourages partners to draw as much as possible on

existing concepts, scales, indicators and operational tools relevant to the context. This increases local applicability and facilitates engagement with other civil society initiatives in the context.

Adaptability: The CSI-RA is designed to be highly adaptable to any context, including sub-national, sector-specific or thematic contexts. Depending on the context and objectives of an assessment, questions and indicators can be omitted, added or modified. A variety of processes and technologies can be used to address questions and indicators, according to what works and is appropriate, and tailored to resource and time constraints. As part of the adaptation process, the local partners, through intensive participatory techniques, identify the main goals and objectives, and expected outputs and outcomes of the project.

2. CSI-RA implementation

The rapid assessment methodology and implementation focused on qualitative and quantitative data gathering through regional focus groups, advisory group meetings, adaptation workshops, key informant interviews and a review of existing relevant literature. The National Civil Society Advisory Council has a matrix of CSOs in Liberia from which organisations that participated in the assessment were identified.

Advisory Committee

The Advisory Committee (AC) of the CSI-RA comprised key leaders of civil society, academia and the private sector. The role of the AC was to provide guidance to the overall implementation of the assessment and to validate the tools and methods used for the research. The AC also provided useful guidance for finalising the set of questions and the methodology in general.

Adaptation workshop

The adaptation workshop was held for two days and brought together 15 representatives from key CSOs across Liberia. It aimed to guide and develop the methodology of the assessment and select the priority areas to be addressed by the assessment. Additionally, participants identified issues they considered important that they wanted the study to focus on, and identified indicators and questions. The issues were grouped and categorised into thematic areas: organisational capacity, programmatic capacity, motivation of staff, financial capacity, networking and collaboration, government and CSO relations, community and CSO relations, and challenges and opportunities. The workshop participants conducted a SWOT analysis of CSOs, established a timeline for the assessment, mapped CSOs and identified potential problems.

Key informant interviews

Key informant interviews, using a structured set of questions, provided the major part of the data. These were conducted with 40 CSOs from across the 11 counties of Liberia, involving 113 people, in most cases encompassing the executive director of a CSO and two other people designated by the director: mostly programme and finance managers. These three positions constitute the foremost decision makers in most Liberian CSOs.

Table 1: Organisations interviewed

Organisation name	Location
Care for Humanity	Bomi
Catholic Justice and Peace Commission	Bomi
Foundation for International Dignity	Bong
Liberia Children Foundation	Bong
Rural Empowerment Foundation	Bong
Women 2005	Gbarpolu
Youth in Action for the Prevention of HIV/AIDS	Gbarpolu

Bassa Women's Development Association	Grand Bassa
Buchanan Child Community Based Care	Grand Bassa
Child Association Program	Grand Bassa
Cross Border Women	Grand Cape Mount
RIYMP	Grand Cape Mount
AMU-WULU	Grand Gedeh
Community Hut	Grand Gedeh
Grand Gedeh Youth Development Association	Grand Gedeh
Liberia Motor Transportation Union	Grand Gedeh
National Women Commission	Grand Gedeh
Save My Future Foundation	Grand Gedeh
South Eastern Association of Blind and Disabled	Grand Gedeh
Women Against Progress for Peace	Grand Gedeh
Community Safety Initiative	Lofa
District Dialogue for Platform	Lofa
Zorzor Women in Action for Assistance and Development	Lofa
Gio Quarter Youth Association	Margibi
National Youth United for Transparency and Accountability	Margibi
BEHOLD Liberia Inc.	Montserrado
Center for Transparency and Accountability in Liberia	Montserrado
Center for Media and Peace Studies	Montserrado
National Union of Organisation of the Disabled	Montserrado
National Youth Movement for Transparent Elections	Montserrado
Rights and Rice Foundation	Montserrado
Women NGO Secretariat of Liberia	Montserrado
Young Men's Christian Association	Montserrado
Collective Action for Rural Development	Nimba
Concerned Citizens Movement	Nimba
Intervisionary Artist	Nimba
Liberian Rural Women Network for Empowerment	Nimba
Women Action Group	Nimba
Echo for Christ	Rivercess
Foundation for Community Initiatives	Rivercess

Focus group discussions

FGDs were conducted in three regions with 30 people, 10 per group. The counties were grouped into three regions, from which a county in each was selected. The participants of the FGDs were randomly selected, with two FGDs composed of women and one composed of men. The all women FGDs were conducted by female staff, while the all male FGD was conducted by a male staff member of SFCG with technical support from the lead consultant.

Data entry and analysis

Data entry and transcription was conduct by an experienced data entry clerk using Excel and SPSS. The process was guided by the research team to ensure that the data represented what was gathered from the field.

3. Analysis of civil society

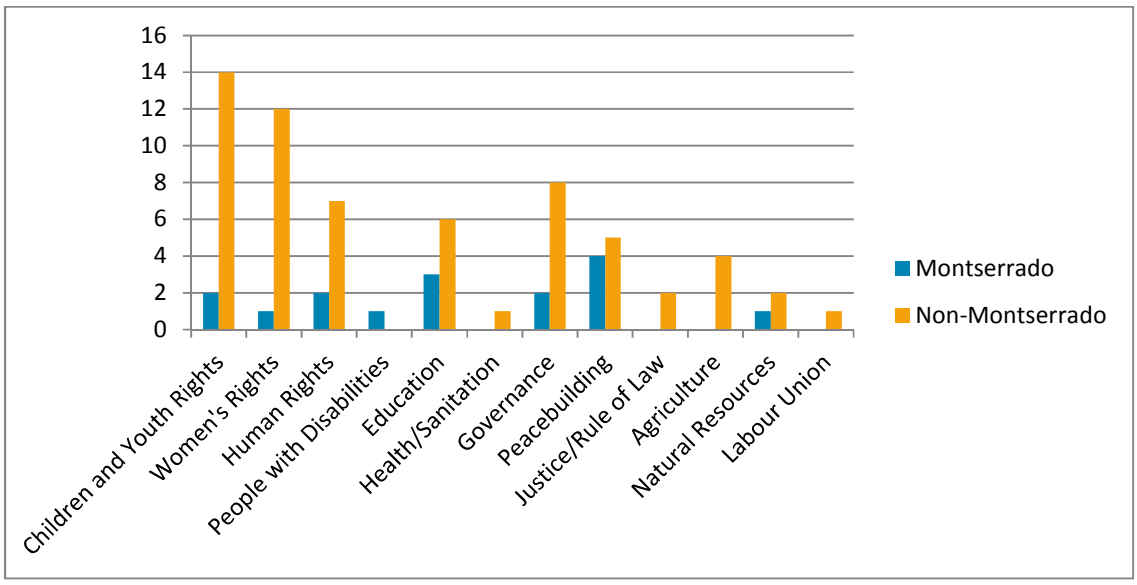
3.1 Overview of CSOs and programme capacity

This first section of the analysis covers areas such as programmatic capacity and provides an overview of the work CSOs perform. The key informant interviews sought information on the issue areas covered by CSOs, the activities they apply and their monitoring and evaluation capacities.

Issues covered by CSOs

Overall, the issue area most addressed by the CSOs covered in this study is children and youth rights: out of the 40 CSOs interviewed, 17 report having children and youth rights as one of their primary issue areas. The other major areas covered include education, governance, peace building and women's empowerment. When disaggregated between CSOs based in Montserrado, the county in which the capital, Monrovia is located, and CSOs based outside Montserrado, CSOs in Montserrado tend to cover issues such as peace building (25% of those interviewed) and governance (13%). Across other counties, children and youth rights (23%) is the most addressed issue area, followed by women's empowerment (18%), while only (8%) address peace building.

Figure 2: Issue areas covered by CSOs



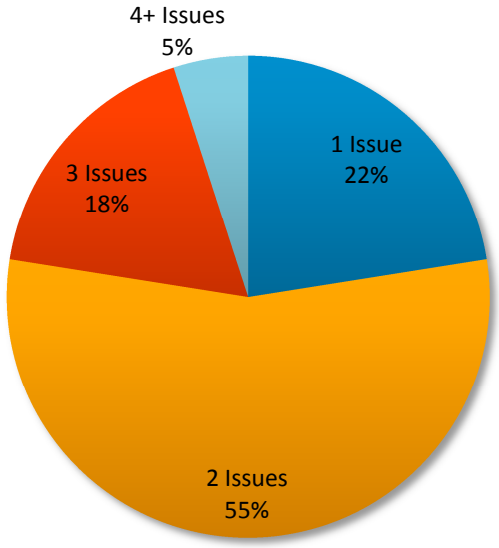
The majority of the CSOs interviewed target multiple issue areas: 57% identified two main issue areas as being covered by their organisation. Only 25% of CSOs address a single area.

As data were collected from different staff members in a CSO, not all respondents identified every issue area covered by their organisation. Therefore, when we collated and analysed the

data, we took account of all three respondents' answers. The diversity of answers could be a result of an organisation's structure, if specific sub-units focus on different issues, or could indicate that some respondents lack a comprehensive understanding of their organisation. The first suggested explanation is however unlikely, as most CSOs are fairly small, and staff would be expected to know the main areas covered. The more likely explanation is that there is not always consensus within CSOs on their purpose. In initial mapping for a project on 'Strengthening the Capacity of Civil Society to Promote Sustainable Governance in Liberia', a three year (2012-2015) Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA) sponsored project targeted at civil society strengthening, it was also found that CSOs frequently lack a clear vision of their purpose. As a result, they implement a range of interventions that do not fit within any larger vision or framework.

Further, during the interviews, it became apparent that there is much confusion when it comes to distinguishing between concepts such as activities, goals, objectives and outcomes. In many instances, when responding to questions about the purpose and vision of their organisation, interviewees merely discussed the activities the organisation was implementing.

Figure 3: Number of issues targeted per CSO

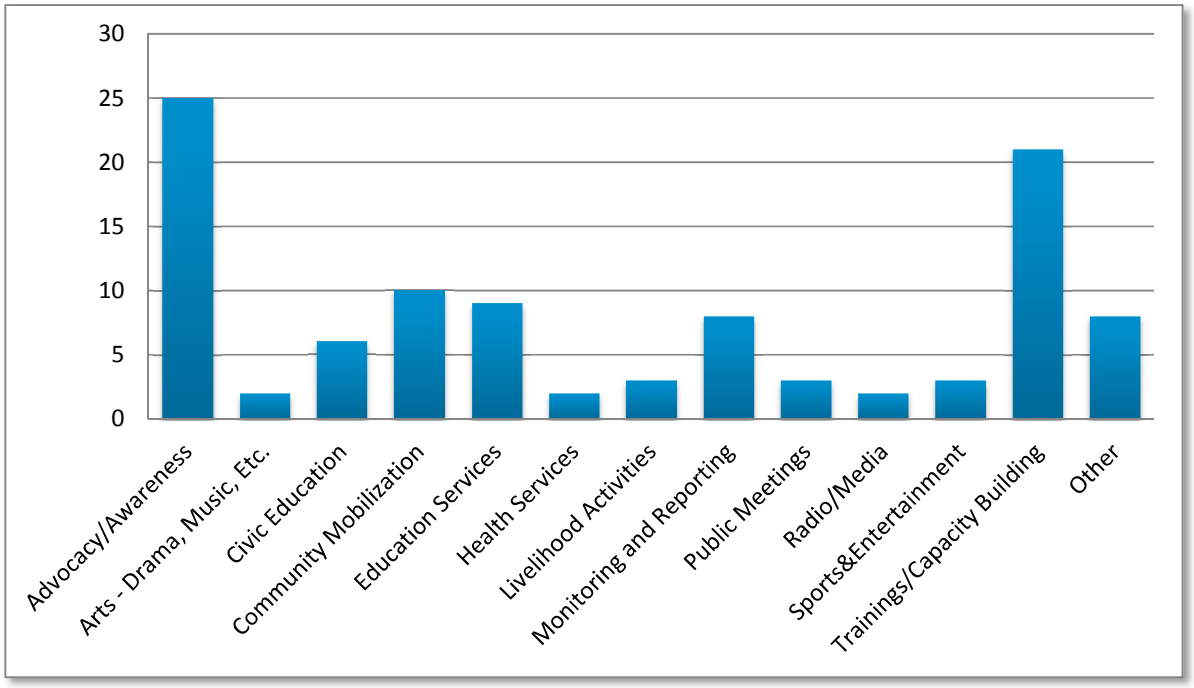


Activities implemented by CSOs

Analysis of the activities - the methods and tools - used by each CSO found that the two most common activity types are advocacy or awareness raising and training or capacity building. Twenty-five CSOs identify advocacy or awareness raising and 21 CSOs identify training or capacity building as an activity their CSO has implemented. The lowest scores came for arts-based activities such as drama and music, health services, and radio/media production, each at only two CSOs. For this last category, it is likely that despite the high impact that such activities

can have – particularly in sensitisation campaigns – they require particularly skilled staff and resources, neither of which are readily available to many CSOs.

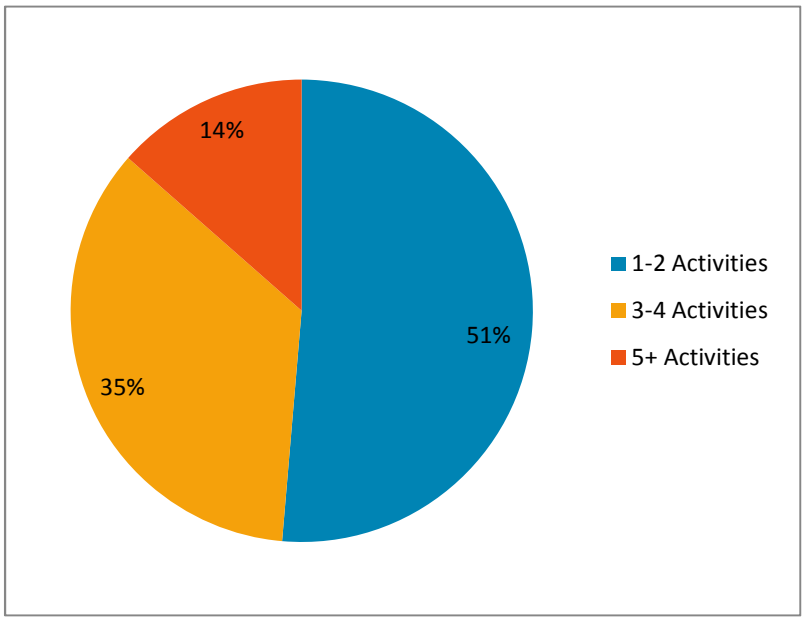
Figure 4: Activity types implemented by CSOs



The majority of CSOs (51%) implement one to two activity types, while 35% implement three to four types. Only 14% stated that they use five or more types of activities. While this may indicate a coherence of approach by individual CSOs in playing to their strengths, across civil society as a whole it suggests that opportunities to apply a wider, complementary range of tools and approaches that serve communities are being missed, and there may be a lack of understanding of the different tools available for designing and implementing programmes. While activities such as training can have a substantial impact on those receiving training, there may be currently unrealised potential to achieve wider societal impacts, if activities were complemented with tools that enable broader audiences to be reached, such as radio programming or public mobilisation campaigns, or if there was other support to trainees to help them follow up on training.

Of course, if CSOs had been found to implement a wide range of different activities, it could be the case that they lack coherence and specialisation. Good programme design should comprise a number of complimentary activities that have mutually reinforcing results to contribute to the achievement of project objectives. More detailed research is needed to try to understand the rationale behind the choice of CSO activities.

Figure 5: Range of CSO activities

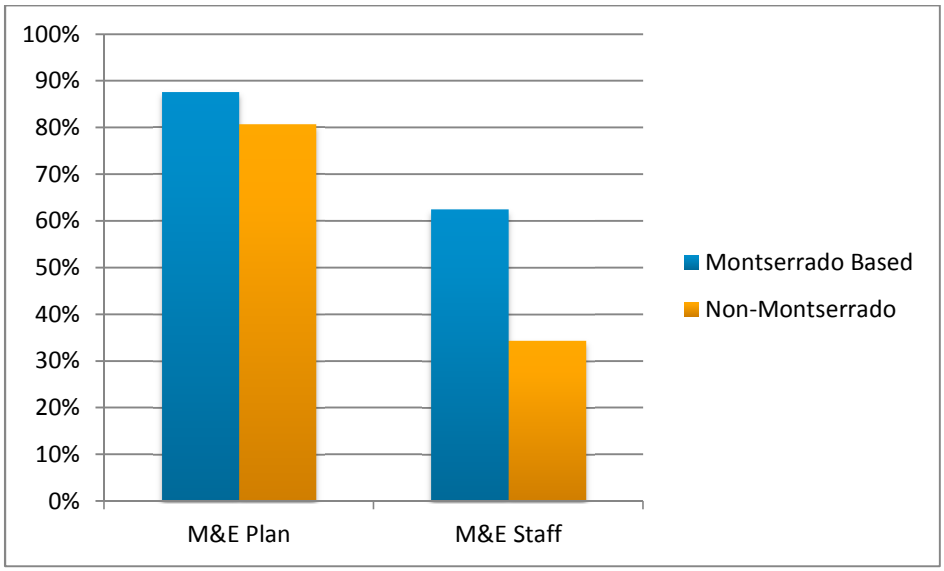


Monitoring and evaluation capacity

Another set of questions sought to gather information regarding the monitoring and evaluation (M&E) capacities of CSOs. Nationwide, 82% of CSOs interviewed report having an M&E plan. There is no real distinction here between Montserrado based CSOs (88% have M&E plans) and those based elsewhere in Liberia (81%). There is however a difference when it comes to the question of whether a CSO has a staff member who is trained in M&E skills. For Montserrado based CSOs, 63% report having a staff member trained in M&E, compared to only 34% in the rest of Liberia.

The high level of affirmative answers suggests that across Liberia, it is widely accepted that having an M&E plan is a necessity for CSOs, at least of the CSOs of the types interviewed. However, it can be considered that the capacity of CSOs to implement M&E plans in practice varies between Montserrado based CSOs and the rest, as indicated by the difference in trained staff capacity. This reflects a capacity gap that can be observed more generally, as discussed further below: consistently, Montserrado based CSOs have greater access to resources and skills.

Figure 6: Percentage of CSOs with an M&E plan and trained M&E staff



3.2 Organisational management and human resources capacity

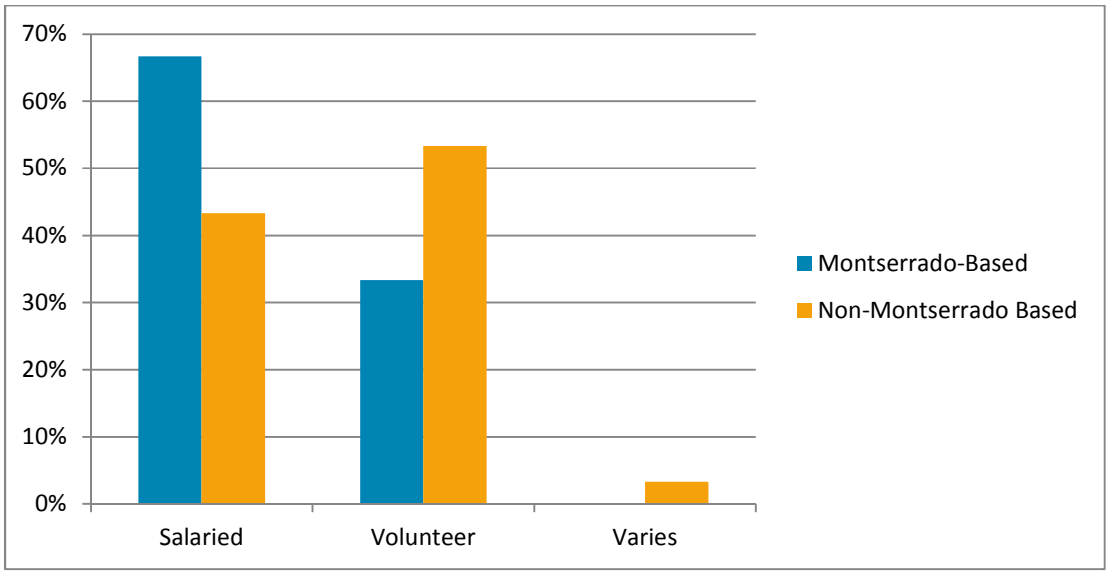
Key informant interviews sought information about how CSOs operate, and their institutional and human resources capacity. On the issue of human resources capacity, interviews examined the reasons CSO staff continue to do their work, despite the fact that many of them are not well paid or paid at all. Interviewees were also given the opportunity to self-assess their skills and competencies. Finally, as an indicator of institutional capacity, interviews asked whether there is a strategic and organisational framework in place to guide a CSO.

Human resources capacity

A number of questions were asked to determine the types and numbers of CSO employees. These were disaggregated by sex and the location of the CSO inside or outside Montserrado. Overall, the median number of staff members of CSOs interviewed is 8.3 staff members. In Montserrado, the average was slightly higher, at 9.3, compared to an average of 7.6 outside Montserrado. Similarly, Montserrado based CSOs tended to have a much higher percentage of salaried staff, with 67% of CSOs reporting that they have salaried staff, compared to only 43% of CSOs elsewhere. In contrast, 53% of CSOs based outside Montserrado assessed that they relied on volunteers to do their work, compared to only 33% of those based in Montserrado.

These differences can be attributed to the varied financial capacities and ability to access funds of the two camps. As will be seen below, Montserrado based CSOs tend to have much greater access to financial resources. This allows them greater scope to pay staff, but also to implement funded projects, which necessitate hiring qualified and competent staff.

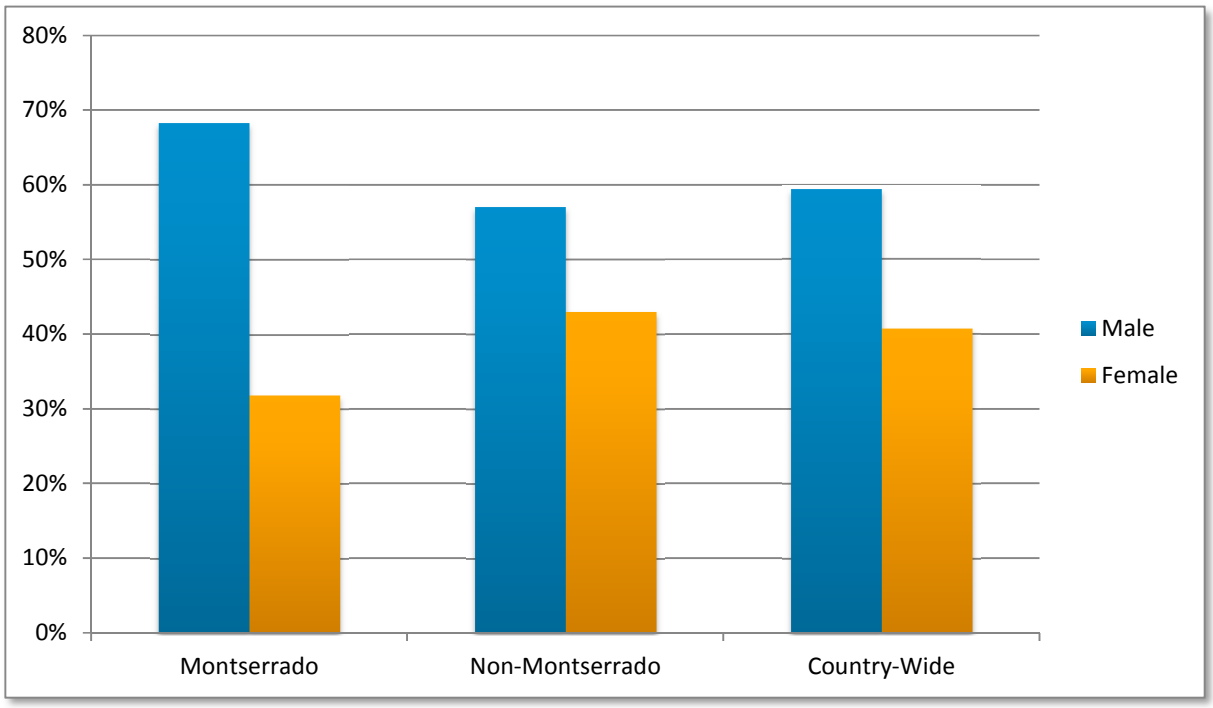
Figure 7: Staff composition of CSOs



In terms of gender representation, nationwide more men (59%) work in CSOs than women (41%). Organisations based outside Montserrado are a little closer to gender parity, with 57% men and 43% women. In Montserrado based CSOs, however, the make-up is 68% men and 32% women.

One of the reasons contributing to this variance may be the difference between the most common issue areas CSOs work on inside and outside Montserrado, as discussed above. Montserrado based CSOs give less attention to issues of women's empowerment and rights than CSOs in the rest of Liberia, and so may give less priority to recruiting women staff.

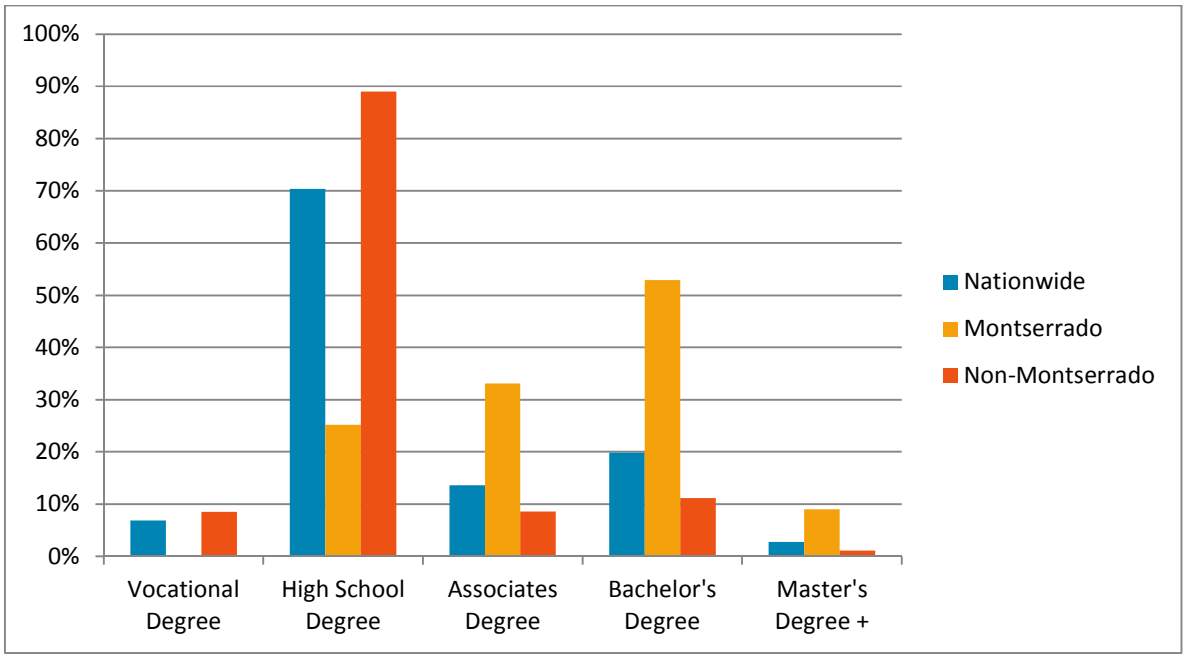
Figure 8: Gender breakdown of CSO staff



Interviews also asked about the level of education of CSO staff members. CSOs based in Montserrado are much more likely to have staff with higher levels of education: 62% have a bachelor's degree or above. This compares with only 12% with a bachelor's degree or above for staff of CSOs outside Montserrado. The nationwide average is that 23% of CSO staff members have a bachelor's degree or above. However, it should be noted that there appears to be an anomaly with how answers were collected in Montserrado, calling into question the high figure of 62%, although not the finding that staff members of CSOs based outside Montserrado have lower education levels.

Two reasons can be suggested for this divergence: first, better-funded CSOs in and around Monrovia are more likely to be able to afford more highly educated staff members. Secondly, as Monrovia is the hub for business, government and aid, those who have obtained higher levels of education are more likely to move there seeking employment.

Figure 9: Education levels of CSO staff

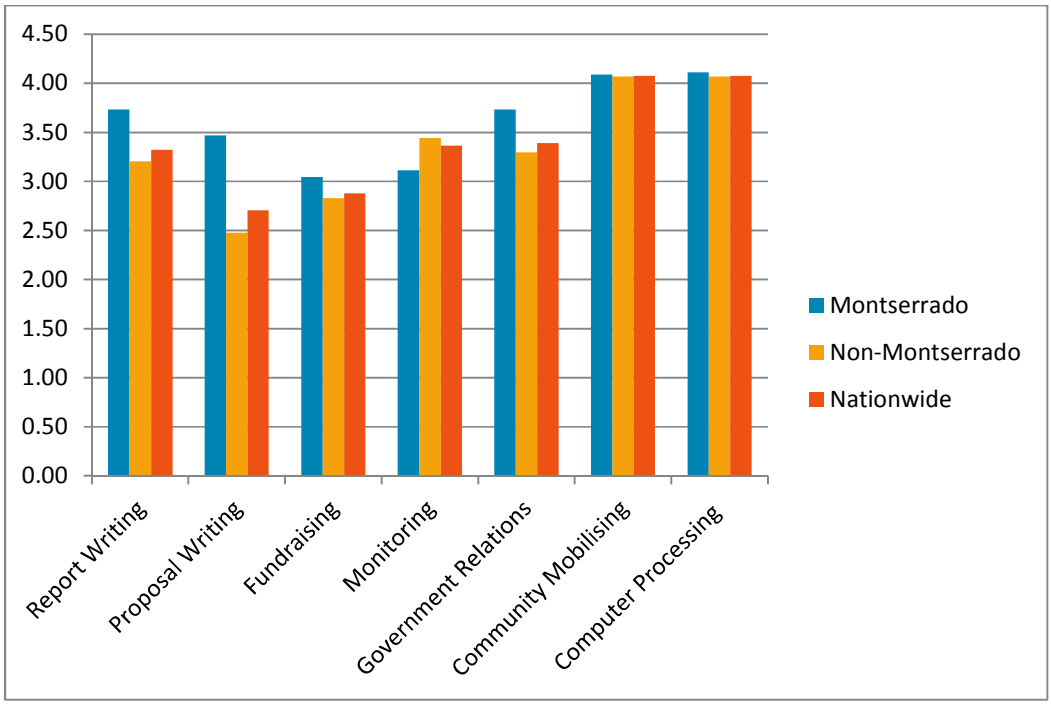


Interviewees were asked to assess their own skills, on a scale of one (poor) to five (excellent). On average, it was found that the weakest self-assessed areas for CSO staff skills in Liberia are computing (2.6), proposal writing (2.7), and fundraising (2.8). Meanwhile, the strongest self-assessed skill set is community mobilisation (4.1). Skills reported at the mid level, all at 3.4, are monitoring, report writing and government relations.

CSOs in Montserrado, with more highly educated staff, tended to assess themselves better for proposal writing, report writing, and computing. For report writing, the average score for CSOs in Montserrado was 3.7, compared to 3.2 for those outside Montserrado. The gap is larger when looking at proposal writing skills, with Montserrado and non-Montserrado CSOs scoring 3.5 and 2.5 respectively. This is unsurprising, considering that these skills often require formal training or education. In contrast, community mobilising is a skill that can be developed regardless of education level, as suggested by the fact that both region's scores round up to 4.1.

Some interviewees however also made remarks to the effect that their staff members were unable to complete tasks on time and with consistent quality.

Figure 2: Self-assessment of skills of CSO staff

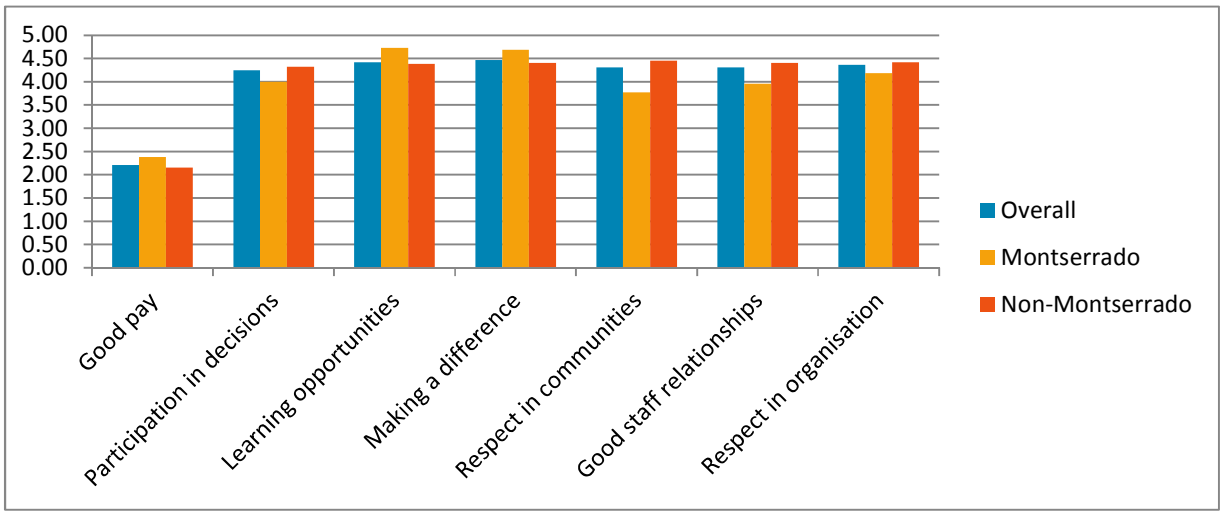


Staff members were also asked to rate out of five their motivations for working in their CSO. The highest scoring responses were “making a difference” and “learning opportunities”, each averaging 4.5 nationally. The lowest scoring answer was “good pay” at 2.2. The rest of the answers, including “participation in decision making,” “respect in the community,” “good staff relations” and “respect within the organisation” scored between 4.3 and 4.4. The scores are similar between CSOs based in Montserrado and those based outside Montserrado.

This suggests that people are motivated to work for CSOs for reasons beyond pay, and obtain job satisfaction from the opportunities and social benefits that come with the work, whether that be learning opportunities, the satisfaction of feeling they are making a difference, or the respect that comes from community members as a result of their work.

The most significant divergence in motivations between staff members of CSOs based in Montserrado and those based outside came in the response “respect in the community”: this scored 3.8 for staff members of Montserrado based CSOs and 4.4 for those based outside. This difference could be associated with a tendency towards different types of work: CSOs based outside Montserrado tend to work more on the community level, while Montserrado based CSOs work more at the policy level, on topics that are perhaps a step removed from the everyday concerns and happenings of communities.

Figure 3: Stated motivations of CSO staff

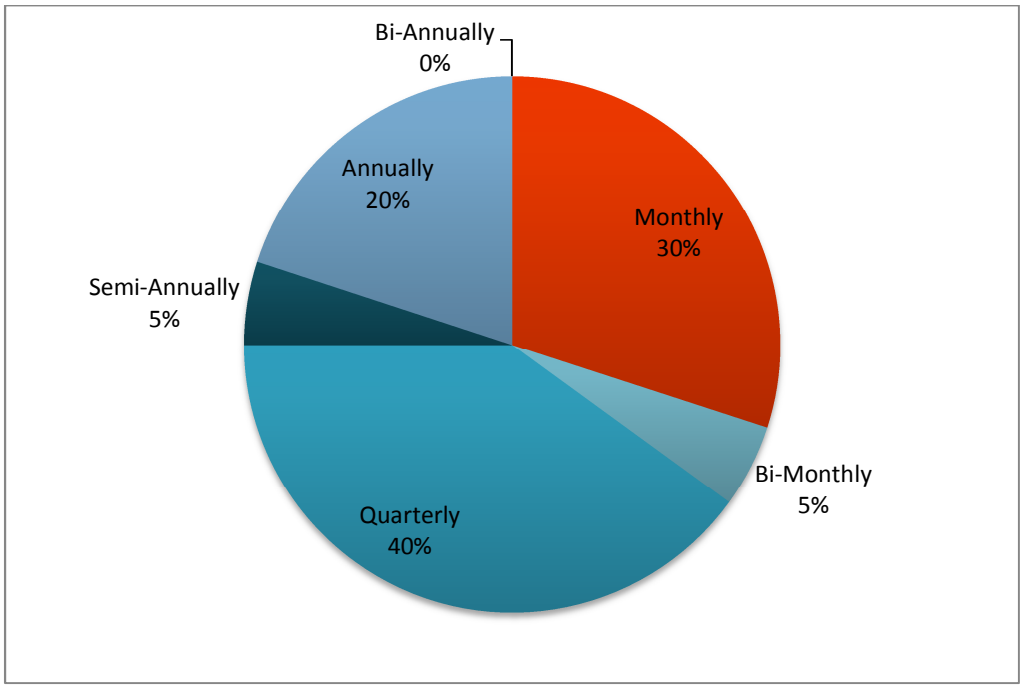


Institutional capacity

The holding of board meetings offers one indicator that a CSO has an active and engaged management that is capable of providing strategic direction. Interviews reported that over 70% of CSOs' boards met either monthly or quarterly. Only 4% of CSO boards did not meet at least once annually. The frequency of board meetings does not vary significantly between regions. Additionally, out of 28 CSOs that were asked whether they had a constitution, 27 reported that they had.[5] While these responses indicate that organisations have a framework in place that could be associated with well functioning and effective organisations, an important qualification here is that no follow-up questions were asked that might provide insight into the quality of constitutions or board meetings. Board meetings may indicate formal adherence to good governance procedures, but may be lacking in substance, and may not play a proper oversight role. The existence of constitutions does not imply that they will always be followed. Future research should attempt to examine the substance of board meetings and identify the value-added by board members. Research should look at who comprises the boards of organisations, examine board meeting minutes, and assess what concrete outcomes boards are having.

[5] After the first several rounds of interviews, several modifications made to the questionnaire, including the addition of this question. This explains why a smaller number of CSOs was asked this question.

Figure 12: Frequency of CSO board meetings



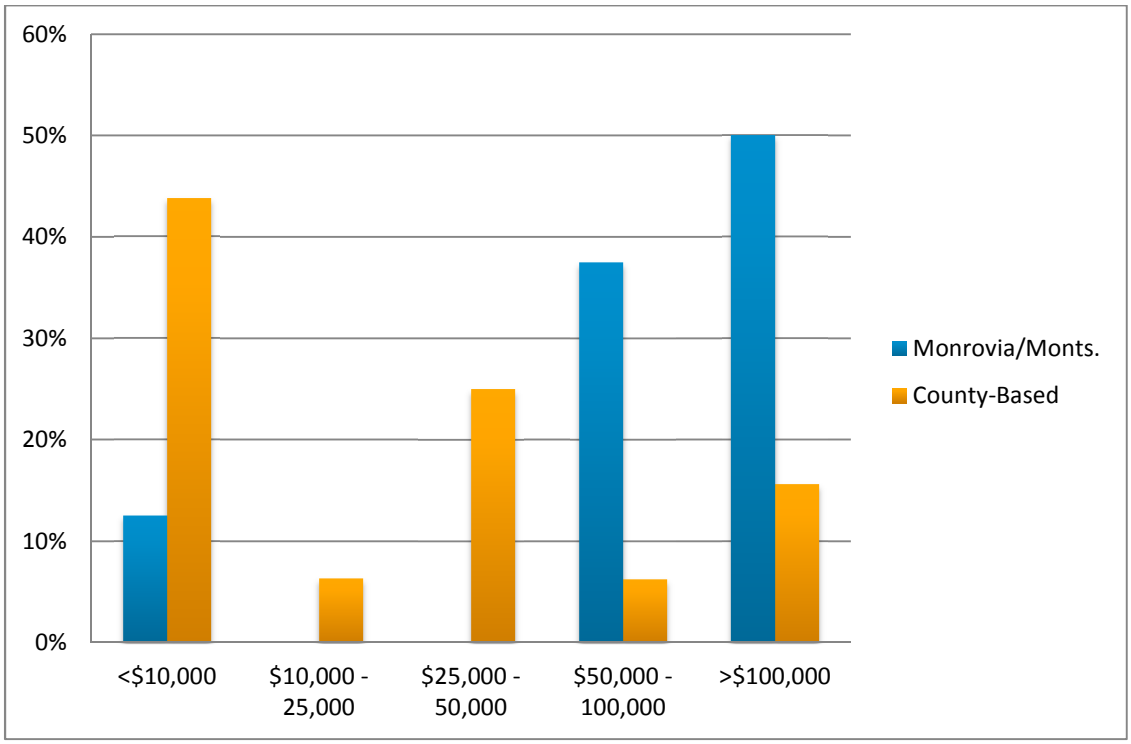
3.3 Financial and fundraising capacity

The following section focuses on the financial resources available to CSOs and how they are generated. Access to financial resources defines probably the largest gap between Montserrado based CSOs and those in the rest of Liberia.

CSO staff members were asked about their organisation's financial situation over the past five years. For Montserrado based CSOs, 50% report having an income of over US$100,000. By comparison, only 13% of CSOs based outside Montserrado report having an income greater than US$100,000. At the other end of the spectrum, 47% of CSOs based outside Montserrado report having an income of under US$10,000.

This divergence in income reflects differences in CSOs' access to donors. With poor transportation infrastructure and weak mobile phone and internet access, it is a major challenge for CSOs based outside Monrovia to communicate with donors, which are almost all based in Monrovia. For CSOs based outside Montserrado, the primary challenges identified revolved around this question of access to information and donors: 47% of non-Montserrado CSOs identified either weak mobile phone networks, lack of access to opportunities, poor relationships with donors, or lack of knowledge as their primary challenges in fundraising.

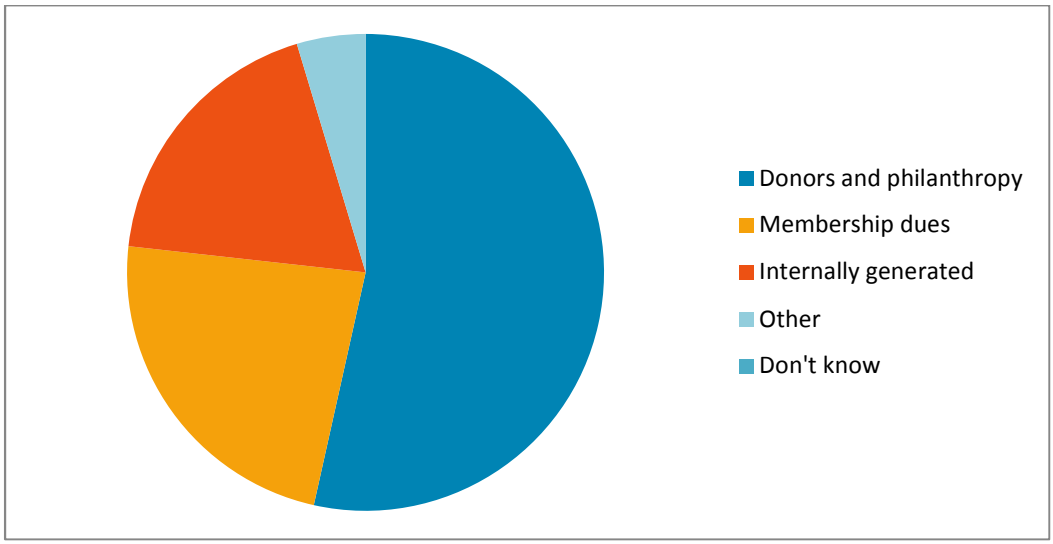
Figure 13: Distribution of CSO income



This division is also seen when looking at the diversification of funding by CSOs. For CSOs based in Montserrado, 100% identify donors and philanthropy as their primary means of raising money. Outside Montserrado, 53% identify donors and philanthropy, 23% membership dues and 19% internally generated income, reflecting that CSOs outside Montserrado have had to diversify their income generation sources.

Across all CSOs interviewed, 69% are reliant upon one donor while another 26% rely on two. This leaves only 5% with three sources, and none with four or more sources. In the context of the gradual withdrawal of the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL), which could presage Liberia's traditional donors reducing their support, many CSOs that currently rely on donor funds may need to reshape their business plans, or reduce their operations.

Figure 4: Sources of funding: CSOs outside Montserrado



Findings on how CSOs obtain information about donor funding opportunities also reflect a divide between CSOs based in Montserrado and the rest. The internet was reported as the key resource for obtaining information about funding opportunities for 32% of Montserrado based CSOs, compared with just 16% in the rest of Liberia. The main other responses for CSOs based outside Montserrado are: information sharing by other CSOs (20%), radio (18%) and newspapers (15%).

The poor quality of mobile phone and internet networks may account for the difference here between Montserrado based CSOs and those in the rest of Liberia. When asked to identify their most significant obstacle to accessing funding opportunities, 18% of those based outside Montserrado identified weak mobile phone networks, compared to just 5% of CSOs based inside Montserrado. The most significant obstacle identified for CSOs outside Montserrado was a lack of knowledge of available opportunities (30%). Other important obstacles they identified were weak proposal writing skills (18%) and poor donor relations (12%). Montserrado based CSOs identified lack of referrals – the absence of an intermediary body to help potential donors and CSOs connect – as their greatest challenge (56%). An intermediary body could help to distribute information to CSOs on funding opportunities or how to apply, or could recommend CSOs for donors to fund. Other challenges - donor relations, networking between partners and weak mobile phone networks – were each identified as the greatest challenge by 11% of respondents.

Another challenge discussed by many of the interviewees was stringent donor requirements. Many funding applications require information that CBOs are not in a position to provide, such as articles of incorporation or detailed records of past projects. As a result, they may find it difficult to find money to sustain operations. Funding cycles can also begin and end sharply, meaning that frequently staff must be retrenched when funding runs out, only to be re-recruited when a new project begins.

Implementation through local partners is often attractive to international donors because of the low overhead costs entailed. However, this can be at the expense of the institutional development of local CSOs. In order to strengthen CSOs, donors should provide support for capacity-building components, such as staff training.

Figure 15: Fundraising challenges for CSOs based outside Montserrado

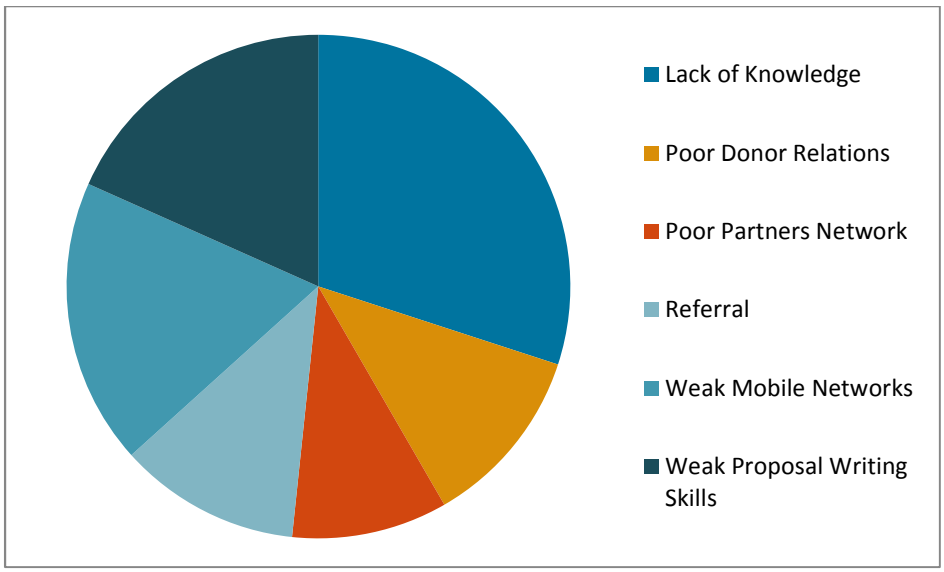
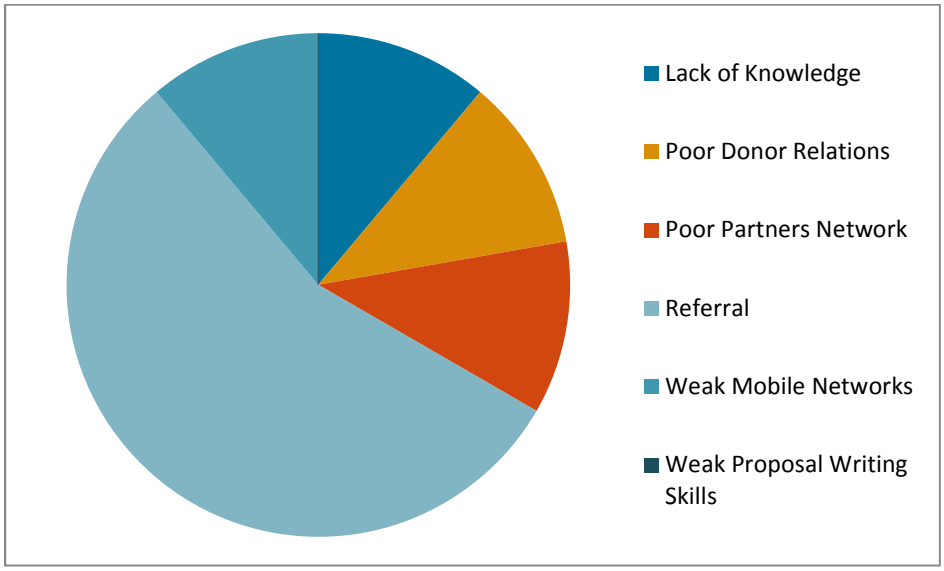


Figure 16: Fundraising challenges for CSOs based in Montserrado



3.4 Collaboration and relationships between CSOs, communities and government

With extensive, interconnected challenges facing Liberia, and a wide range of actors attempting to address them, collaboration and coordination between CSOs and government is necessary to ensure complementarity and avoid duplication of efforts. Generally, interviews reported a high level of collaboration within civil society and between civil society and government. However, it was difficult to discern what the quality of the collaboration is from the questions that were asked. Many of the respondents noted some significant challenges, including access to rural areas, challenges in communicating, low levels of education and reconciling divergent organisational missions and mandates.

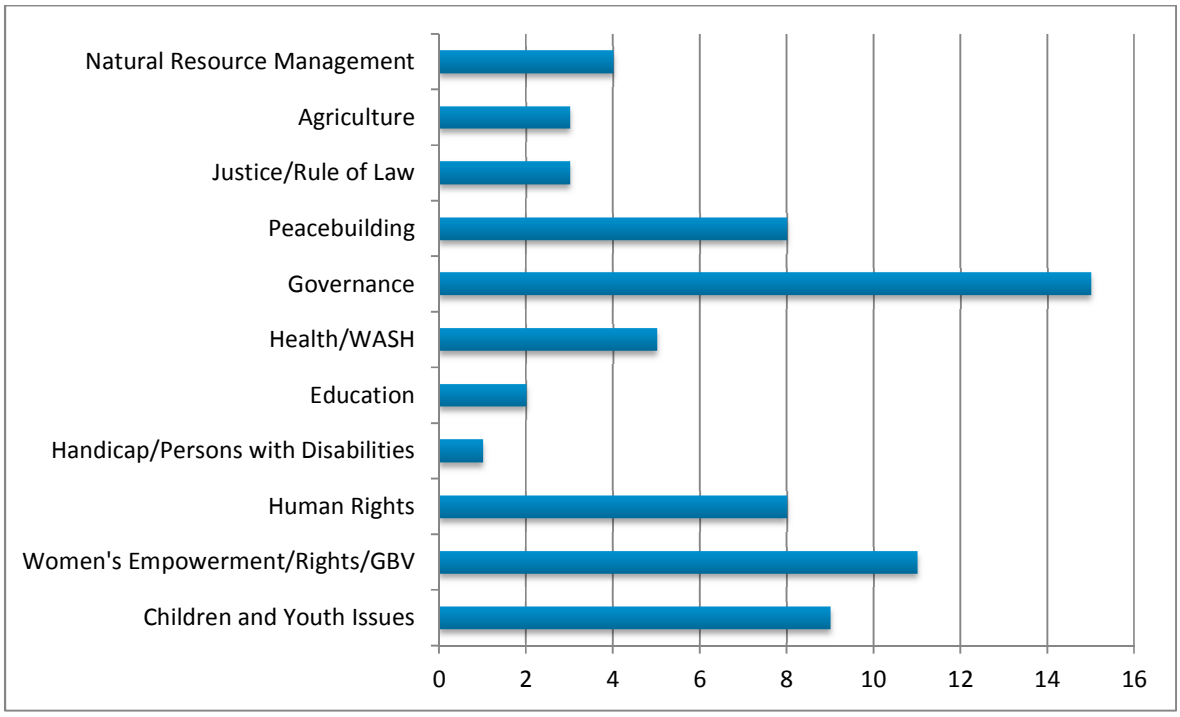
CSO coordination and collaboration

Interview questions sought information on the nature of collaborations within civil society and the levels at which CSOs are collaborating: are they working predominately with local, national or international CSOs? The highest collaboration rate between organisations is at the local level, with 72% of those interviewed stating that they partner with local CSOs. The lowest level of collaboration is with national CSOs, at 52%, while 62% report partnering with international CSOs. In terms of the regional differences, CSOs based in Montserrado County report having partners with CSOs at every level (100%), while outside Montserrado levels of partnerships are lower, with 66% partnering with local groups, 41% with national CSOs, and 53% with international CSOs.

There are a number of reasons why this may be the case. Many national-level CSOs have a local focus for their activities and are therefore likely to partner with local level groups. This may also reflect a belief that national-level CSOs don't offer added value to partnerships, or more cynically, that larger CSOs are viewed as competitors. From their point of view, some national CSOs may not see local CSOs as credible partners due to their limited capacity. For both of these groups, partnerships with international CSOs can be attractive because of the opportunity to subcontract on larger contracts from major international donors, giving access to pools of funding that, on their own, local and national CSOs are unable to access because of eligibility requirements or lack of technical expertise.

Interviews indicate that CSOs collaborate on a large range of issues, with governance and women's empowerment being the issues with the greatest number of collaborations. The majority of CSOs collaborate only on one or two issue areas. The average number of issues of collaboration for a CSO is 1.7.

Figure 17: CSO collaboration issue areas



Despite a seemingly high level of collaboration among CSOs, many respondents identified challenges in the quality of the collaboration. First, it was repeatedly stated that there are very few methods for sharing information. Poor road networks, lack of transportation, weak mobile phone networks and poor internet infrastructure contribute to challenges in communication. For example, poor roads and lack of access to transportation inhibit the ability of CSOs to meet in person, particularly in rural areas. The second challenge faced in collaborations is lack of mission or vision overlap. Each organisation brings a different set of perspectives and has its specific mission. Many respondents reported that there are difficulties in getting organisations to look more broadly and compromise in collaboration. This alludes to the third challenge faced in collaboration: competition. Liberia has an extensive universe of CSOs and there are limited donor funds. As such, CSOs frequently view each other as potential competitors, rather than as organisations that could substantially add to the overall impact of CSOs' work. Further research should be performed to determine the quality of cooperation occurring within civil society.

Collaboration with government

A high rate of collaboration between government and civil society is reported. According to our interviews, 72% of CSOs state that they collaborate with government in some way. The majority of CSOs report that they worked with government in town hall meetings or other public forums. Unfortunately, no definition was set to determine what exactly this collaboration meant. Therefore, collaboration could be interpreted as encompassing anything as simple as attending a public meeting to something as extensive as implementing a joint project. No follow-up questions were asked to determine the nature of collaborations. Several of the CSOs interviewed believe that the passage of the Freedom of Information Act will open up

opportunities for further collaboration between CSOs and the government in the future, because it provides CSOs with an institutional mechanism to request documents and hold the government accountable. It establishes a precedent that CSOs can request documents from the government, and if the government fails to respond, gives CSOs the possibility of taking legal action. Further, the passage of this law can be taken as an indication that the government is interested in being more transparent and working more closely with CSOs.

Relationship between CSOs and communities

Information on perceptions of the relationship between CSOs and communities was gathered through FGDs. Generally, those taking part in discussions stated that their relationship with CSOs was positive. The fact that many CSO staff members are not paid suggests to communities that they are passionate about their work. One challenge identified in Zwedru, Grand Gedeh County is that CSOs need to work to reach more remote communities.

3.5 Challenges and opportunities faced by CSOs

Despite significant progress for civil society since the end of the civil war in 2003, major challenges persist. Limited funding, lack of qualified and educated staff, poor infrastructure and continuing challenges in collaboration and partnerships continue to hinder Liberian CSOs. Another major issue, related to the on-going need to consolidate a democratic society in Liberia, is a general lack of understanding of the roles of civil society. This limited understanding affects CSOs, the government and communities, and can result in strained relationships between them. For instance, communities can at times conflate the role of CSOs and government, expecting CSOs to provide them with essential health or education services that are the responsibility of government. When CSOs step up to help fill gaps in services, it raises community expectations, with the prospect of disillusionment if expectations then go unfulfilled. A further problem besetting many CSOs is the exclusion of women from decision-making, as indicated by the gender imbalance in CSO staff. This challenge connects with broader issues of societal perceptions of the role of women, and women and girls' access to quality education.

Limited funding and technical resources

A consistent challenge identified in interviews was a lack of access to sustained, long-term funding. Funding amounts received are generally small and donors tend to provide funding on a project-to-project basis. Challenges of limited funding are exacerbated by weak proposal writing skills, stringent donor regulations and requirements that are not understood by local CSOs, and high levels of competition amongst CSOs. Limited funding makes it difficult to hire and maintain highly skilled and qualified staff. Additionally, it prevents CSOs from being able to invest in capacity development to enable lower qualified and skilled staff members to improve their skills.

Connected challenges, as discussed above, are weak IT capacity and difficult access to rural areas. CSOs that lack on-going funding are not able to invest in IT technology, such as high quality internet, computers, software and staff training in technology. This has a compounding

effect, because if staff lack access to popular software or do not know how to use it, they will find it more difficult to apply for funding opportunities and produce donor reports, thereby further straining their fundraising capacity. Weak internet infrastructure also has a negative impact on collaboration between CSOs, because it limits communication. Limited access to rural areas remains a challenge, partly because donors don't provide resources to buy vehicles.

Perception of CSOs

Perceptions of CSOs amongst the public and government are mixed. Interview respondents often stated that communities see them as noisemakers with the sole intention of attacking the government. As a result, some citizens suspect that civil society is interested in only advancing itself, and not in improving governance, accountability and transparency. A potential reason for this perception was offered by some respondents, who suggested that many CSOs are only able to have their voice heard in decision-making after drawing attention to themselves and, in effect, forcing their way to the table. This leaves Liberian CSOs in a dilemma: either advocate quietly and risk remaining on the side-lines of decision-making, or cause a stir and gain the attention of government, but in the process risk alienating constituents.

To become a more credible actor, CSOs need to know how to proceed more collaboratively once they get to the table, not least so they can pave the way for CSOs to have less contested routes into decision-making in future. Other respondents suggested that here stronger CSO networks, focusing on building more linkages with government and local authorities, would help. If CSOs are seen to be working collaboratively with other CSOs and the government, communities will be able to see that CSOs are working in the interests of the community. This will help to build communities' trust in CSOs and make CSOs more credible actors.

Some communities, as expressed in FGDs, believe that while CSOs criticise government for transparency and accountability issues, CSOs have transparency issues of their own. In the FGD in Zwedru, a group of women complained that CSOs do not provide information about the funds they are receiving from donors to implement projects in their communities. This lack of transparency reinforces some feelings that CSOs misuse money provided to them. Transparency concerns were also expressed about the recruitment of staff. The group complained that, whenever new projects are started, CSOs tend to give the project to someone within their network or organisation to handle, without advertising a vacancy publicly.

Collaboration

Collaborative efforts among CSOs are still relatively weak and disjointed. Although many CSOs partner with others, the quality of partnerships remains questionable. Many CSOs interviewed believe that poor information sharing and persistent difficulties in coordinating activities are inhibiting effectiveness. Additionally, attempts at coordination and collaboration are occurring in the context of a highly competitive civil society landscape where CSOs are vying for limited funding. Another challenge identified by respondents was that differing personal and organisational agendas can hinder genuine collaboration. There can also be difficulty in

reconciling different CSOs' missions. The result of this weak and at times disjointed coordination and collaboration is duplication of efforts and initiatives. In response, there needs to be a greater emphasis on encouraging CSOs to work cohesively together, not least to be able to engage the government with a unified voice.

Poor logistics and infrastructure

As discussed above, logistical and infrastructural challenges both within CSO and across Liberia continue to make CSOs' work more difficult. On the organisational side, lack of IT equipment and means of transportation makes it harder for CSOs to reach their constituencies, particularly in rural areas that require four-wheel drive vehicles, and where mobile phone networks are also weaker. Poor roads mean that organisations without access to a suitable vehicle are unable to visit more remote areas. Additionally, this means high maintenance costs as vehicles sustain heavy wear and tear. The primary remedy suggested by respondents was that donors should increase their willingness to pay for suitable vehicles.

Capacity gaps

The technical capacity of staff was a challenge that was almost universally identified by CSOs that were interviewed. Liberia's weak education system means that many students leave high school and university lacking skills important for CSOs, such as writing. This makes it difficult for CSOs to write high quality proposals and reports, thereby making it difficult to obtain new sources of funding. Limited funding to provide for internal staff training exacerbates this problem. Many respondents recommended that more emphasis be given to internal capacity building.

Emerging opportunities

Improving political space to conduct advocacy

Many respondents believe that there is an improving relationship between government and civil society, as can be evidenced by the formation of joint initiatives such as the Integrity Forum and the Liberian Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative, and the presence of CSO representatives on the board of the new Gbarnga Regional Justice and Security Hub. Along with the further consolidation of peace and security in the last decade, this means that political space is opening up for CSOs to operate and conduct advocacy. The passing of the Freedom of information Act has helped foster a sense amongst many in civil society that the government is demonstrating willingness to work in partnership to solve some of the accountability and transparency issues besetting government. For civil society's part, it has similarly expressed interest in working with the government. These developments mean that CSOs feel greater freedom to be critical without fear of retribution. In the coming years, this space may widen further, in the light of reforms such as the Local Governance Act (LGA), which will expand sub-national government through the devolution of government services to the county level, thereby creating fresh opportunities for CSOs to engage with government at different levels.

Another emerging opportunity to improve advocacy is increasing access to information communication technologies (ICTs). As has been shown in other countries, ICTs such as SMS, social media, mobile phones and GIS mapping can provide more tools for CSOs and citizens to hold public officials accountable, and for CSOs to engage at low cost with larger populations. Of course, for ICTs to come into more use in areas not accessible by mobile phone, there will need to be an increase in mobile networks.

INGO and donor engagement

Global initiatives, such as processes to define post 2015 development goals, and the Open Society Initiative, which calls on governments to become more transparent and accountable, are creating new opportunities for Liberian CSOs to become involved in governance reform processes. These initiatives have placed the need for the inclusion of local CSOs at the centre of international development debates. This means that donors are becoming more willing to support local CSOs that they haven't worked with before, as well as encouraging INGOs to work more with local CSOs in the implementation of projects. This can provide opportunities for Liberian CSOs, including those based outside Montserrado, to have greater access to financial resources.

4. Findings: strengths and weaknesses of CSOs in Liberia

Two classes of CSO: Montserrado vs. the rest

The difference between Montserrado based CSOs and CSOs based elsewhere in Liberia is striking. CSOs in Montserrado, and specifically those based in Monrovia, tend to have greater programmatic, financial and organisational capacity to operate and pursue their missions. For example, in terms of programmatic capacity, we have seen that while similar numbers of CSOs across Liberia have an M&E plan, the proportion of CSOs with staff members trained in M&E is significantly higher in Montserrado. Montserrado based groups also tend to have better human resource capacity, with access to more skilled staff with higher levels of education. They are more able to provide their staff with salaries.

Perhaps the starkest division between CSOs based in Montserrado and those based in other counties is in access to financial resources. Montserrado based CSOs tend to have much more money coming in than their counterparts elsewhere in Liberia. However, looking into the sources of funding for CSOs, there are warning signs for Montserrado based CSOs. CSOs in Montserrado have heavy reliance on donor and philanthropy funding, given their proximity to international donors and INGOs in Monrovia. This could make them vulnerable as international attention moves elsewhere, given that time has now passed since the civil war. CSOs based elsewhere in Liberia tend to have a more diverse funding base, including income derived from membership dues and internally generated activities

Need for capacity building

It is evident that there are significant capacity building needs for CSOs. Some of the weakest skills of CSO staff are in writing and the use of computers. Additionally many CSO staff members acknowledged weak project management skills. Other areas for capacity building intervention include:

- M&E, given that most CSOs do not have a staff member trained in M&E.
- Programme design, not least given widespread confusion between goals, objectives, activities and outcomes among CSO staff. Further, the high prevalence of advocacy and training as the primary activities being implemented suggests a lack of capacity and creativity in programme approaches.
- Proposal and report writing; as discussed above, weak capacity to write funding proposals and donor reports is a major challenge which makes fundraising harder. A related issue is that many CSOs have weak understanding of how to write donor reports and the need to capture information about projects and activities they implement. When CSOs have limited ability to document success and lessons learned, they are unattractive to donors.

This group of findings is particularly interesting considering that training and capacity building are among the main activities that CSOs are implementing. This suggests that, if the capacities of CSOs that provide trainings are increased, this could have a multiplier affect by improving the quality of the training they provide.

Infrastructure issues

Consistent issues found across most CSOs include poor IT and mobile phone infrastructure. According to many interviewees, this has inhibited collaboration with government and other CSOs, constrained their access to information about funding opportunities and led to programme management challenges. Many CSOs further mentioned that poor road networks limit CSOs' access to rural areas.

5. Recommendations

Key recommendations emerging from this study are aimed at Liberian CSOs, the government and the wider international community.

For Liberian CSOs:

- Liberian CSOs should place more emphasis on building the capacity of their staff, including by earmarking funding for staff development.
- Montserrado based CSOs should seek to diversify their funding sources to make them more sustainable.
- CSOs should employ a wider range of activities to accomplish their organisational goals. A broader pool of activities will allow CSOs to take a more adaptable and nuanced approach.
- CSOs in Liberia should work vigorously to bridge the divide between Montserrado based CSOs and CSOs based outside Montserrado.

For the Liberian government:

- The Government of Liberia (GOL) should provide more opportunities for CSOs to engage with policy makers and government officials.
- The GOL should take steps to further implement the Freedom of Information Act.
- The GOL should continue efforts to improve critical infrastructure such as roads, electricity and communications networks.
- In the long term, the GOL and international community should invest more in education, particularly in developing writing and comprehension skills.

For the international community, including international CSOs:

- Further efforts should be made to invest in Liberian CSOs, including partnering with them to implement projects and increasing capacity strengthening support.
- CSOs should be provided with support to develop their capacities in fundraising, programme management and IT. Additionally, more targeted support should be provided to fit the programming needs of CSOs.
- International donors should provide more support for capacity development and core funding for Liberian CSOs.
- More support should be provided to increase linkages between CSOs in Montserrado and those in the rest of Liberia in order to encourage CSO development beyond the capital.
- Donors should work to expand support to CSOs working outside Montserrado.

7. Appendices

Appendix I: Questionnaire

Questionnaire for civil society organisation (CSO) representatives in Liberia

Use of survey information: The essence of this survey, part of the Civil Society Index Rapid Assessment (CSI-RA), is to collect information from civil society practitioners to contribute to a civil society self-assessments in order to enhance the strength and sustainability of civil society for a positive social change. Its main purpose is to help civil society to better assess its own challenges, potentials and needs in a range of different situations and contexts, and to proffer internally-driven strategies that are adaptable to Liberia.

Respondent No: ( )

Position of Respondent:_____

☐ **Male** ☐ **Female**

Organisation_____
Location_____

Year Established_____

Organisational Capacity

1. State the purpose of your organisation and the issue areas you focus on

2. What kinds of activities do you do to achieve your goals?

3. Is the organisation a volunteer organisation or are staff members paid?

4. How many staff members do you have? Male ( ) Female ( )

5. Who makes up the management team?

6. How often does the management team meet to discuss the organisation?

7. How many staff members have the following qualifications?
    a. Masters and above:
    b. Bachelors Degree:
    c. Associate Degree:
    d. High school Degree:
    e. Professional or Vocational Studies:
    f. Other:

8. How well qualified are your staff members for the work that they do?
    a. Very Qualified
    b. Qualified
    c. Less Qualified
    d. Not Qualified

9. What are the strengths of your management team in terms of their ability to run the organisation?

10. What are the weaknesses of your management team in terms of their ability to run the organisation?

11. Are they recruited or elected? _____ If recruited, how are they recruited?
    a. Open and competitive process
    b. Scouting
    c. Recommendations from other CSOs
    d. Other

12. Is there a formal process to hire or fire someone? If so, what does it involve?

a. Hiring:

b. Firing:

13. If salaried, what types of contracts do your staff members have?
    a. Open ended
    b. Fixed contracts between 1-12 months
    c. Fixed contracts between 1-6 months
    d. Fixed contracts between 1-3 months

14. How often does your board meet? _____

15. Do you have a constitution and policies and procedures that regulate your work?

Programme Capacity

16. Do you have a monitoring and evaluation (M&E) plan?

17. Do you have a trained M&E staff member?

18. Has your organisation produced a report? If yes, how would you rate the quality of report that your programme produces?
    a. High Quality
    b. Quality
    c. Lesser Quality
    d. Not Quality

19. Has your organisation written a proposal, if yes, how would you rate the skills of your staff to write a proposal?
    a. High Quality
    b. Quality
    c. Lesser Quality
    d. Not Quality

Motivation:

20. What keeps you working or volunteering in the organisation? You will be asked to rate each reason on a scale of 1 – 5. 1 being very low importance and 5 being very high importance. (Start each question with "I work/volunteer because….")

	Very low relevance				Very high relevance
a. I get a good pay	1	2	3	4	5
b. I participate in decision making	1	2	3	4	5
c. It is an opportunity for learning	1	2	3	4	5

d.	Our work is making a difference	1	2	3	4	5
e.	Respect in the community	1	2	3	4	5
f.	Good staff relations	1	2	3	4	5
g.	I feel respected in the organisation	1	2	3	4	5

Please indicate, in your own words, why you think you and others continue to work with this organisation?

21. If salaried, do you receive the following benefits? Check if yes.
    - ☐ Annual leave
    - ☐ Christmas bonus
    - ☐ Maternal/Paternal leave
    - ☐ Per Diem
    - ☐ Education for children
    - ☐ Insurance
    - ☐ Study opportunities
    - ☐ Contribution to birth/marriage/bereavement
    - ☐ Other:_____

22. Does your organisation invest in capacity development for its staff through education and trainings? If yes, how many staff have been trained?

23. In your work, what are you good at doing?

		Very poor	Not so good	Good	Very good	Excellent
a.	Report writing	1	2	3	4	5
b.	Proposal writing	1	2	3	4	5
c.	Fundraising	1	2	3	4	5
d.	Monitoring	1	2	3	4	5
e.	Government relations	1	2	3	4	5
f.	Community mobilising	1	2	3	4	5
g.	Computer skills	1	2	3	4	5
h.	Other:_____	1	2	3	4	5

24. Have you seen many staff join the organisation and then quit? If so, how many would you say quit over the past year?

25. Why did they leave?

26. What did your organisation do after they quit?

Financial Capacity:

27. What are the core sources of funding for your organisation?
    a. Donor and Philanthropy
    b. Membership Dues
    c. Internally Generated
    d. Other
    e. I don't know

28. Other than the executive director, has anyone in your staff been involved in raising money for the organisation?

29. Over the past five years, what has been your financial situation?
    a. Less than $10,000
    b. $10-25,000
    c. $25-50,000
    d. $50-100,000
    e. $100K and above

30. How do you hear about funding opportunities?

31. What have been the challenges in getting information on funding/grants?

32. If you have received grants:
    a. How long does it take your organisation to hear back from donors once you submit a proposal?

b. How many grants did you receive last year that you are still using this year?

c. What is the annual income from these grants?

d. What is the longest period of funding from a grant?

33. Do you envision the same kind of funding for the next five years? If no, what are you planning to do differently?

Networking and Collaboration among CSOs

34. Do you consider your organisation to work with a large number of CSOs? If yes, how many CSO partners do you work with?
    a. Locally:
    b. Nationally:
    c. Internationally:

35. If you work with other CSOS, what are the issues that you work on together?

36. How/Where do you work with them? (Meetings, forums, town hall, etc.…)

37. Who coordinates the collaboration?

38. How do you share information among these CSOs?

39. How do you share information from the collaboration with the community?

40. What benefits do you get from working with other CSOs or in networks?

41. What are some of the challenges of working with local, national, and international CSOs?

42. In the future, do you see yourself continuing to work with other organisations? How?

Government/CSO Relations

43. Do you work with the government? If yes, in what ways?

44. Over the past two years, do you think you've been involved in making government policy? If yes, how?

45. Over the past two years, do you think you've been involved in implementing government policy? If yes, what policy and how?

46. What is the platform upon which you are able to talk with the government (town hall, radio, public hearings, community meetings, etc.….)

47. Do you think the government recognises the work that CSOs do? Why?

48. Does the government regulate your organisation? How? If yes, do you think their regulation is helpful?

49. In the future, do you see yourself continuing to work with the government? If yes, how?

Community and CSOs

50. Who benefits from your work?
    a. Direct beneficiaries:
    b. Indirect beneficiaries:

51. Do your beneficiaries perceive civil society positively or negatively or both? Why?

Challenges and Opportunities

52. State three general challenges facing civil society, including for your organisation.
    1.
    2.
    3.
53. How can these challenges be addressed?
    1.
    2.
    3.
54. State three emerging opportunities that civil society, including your organisation, can leverage in their work.
    1.
    2.
    3.

Appendix II: List of indicators

The following is a table of indicators that were collected. However, not all were used in the analysis due to incompleteness or data or doubts about their reliability. For example, questions about the average length of grants were dropped from the analysis because many didn't answer the question and those who attempted it were often unsure about their answers.

Organisation background and programme capacity
1. Purpose of the organisation
2. Activities of the organisation
3. M&E plan
4. M&E staff
5. Quality of reporting and proposal writing

Human resources
6. Staff type: volunteer or salaried
7. Number of staff (disaggregated by sex)
8. Staff education level
9. Self-assessment of staff qualification
10. Staff recruitment and termination processes
11. Length of contracts
12. Staff motivation
13. Benefits incurred
14. Staff development opportunities
15. Self-assessment of skills
16. Staff turnover and replacement processes

Organisational capacity
17. Management team
18. Frequency of team meetings
19. Strengths and weaknesses of team
20. Frequency of board meetings
21. Organisation constitution in place

Financial capacity
22. Core sources of funding
23. Financial situation over the last five years
24. Sources of information on funding opportunities
25. Challenges to obtaining information
26. Number of grants received
27. Average period of grant lengths

Collaboration with other CSOs
28. Partnership with other organisations (disaggregated by type)
29. Issues of collaboration
30. Platforms for information sharing
31. Challenges

Government and CSOs
32. Work with the government: yes or no
33. Involvement in policy formulation in past two years: yes or no
34. Involvement in policy implementation in past two years: yes or no
35. Platforms to engage government
36. Government recognition of CSOs
37. Perceptions of government regulation

Communities and CSOs
38. Beneficiaries: direct and indirect
39. Beneficiary opinion of CSOs

Challenges and opportunities facing CSOs
40. Challenges
41. Measures to mitigate challenges and risks
42. Opportunities for growth