1. FOREWORD

The Civil Society Index (CSI) in Jordan is a participatory research that was implemented in the period between January 2010 and May 2011 by Urdun Jadid Research Center in cooperation with CIVICUS: World Alliance for Citizen Participation and supported by Foundation of the Future and The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP Jordan).

Amongst the various outputs of the project, the National Analytical Report on the Civil Society Index in Jordan (2010) was published in Arabic and English. In addition, five qualitative studies, which were conducted to reinforce the quantitative resources gathered through field surveys, were published. As one of the methodological requirements of the project, a series of meetings with the consulting committee took place and three other meetings were convened for the regional focus groups.

This paper includes a summary of the CSI in Jordan, the main strengths and weaknesses of civil society, a set of recommendations presented by the project to key constituencies and civil society and a proposed action plan to implement the necessary actions to strengthen civil society in the near future. The aforementioned are all derived from the discussions that followed the preparation of the report, the last of which was the workshop convened on 16 May 2011.

On this occasion, I would like to express my deep gratitude to CIVICUS, the Foundation for the Future, UNDP Jordan and all the other organisations, institutes and individuals who have participated in the discussions, especially the members of the national research team and those who prepared the case studies.

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2. SUMMARY OF CIVIL SOCIETY INDEX IN JORDAN

While analysing Jordanian civil society, it is noteworthy to mention the low level of civic engagement, as seen in specific aspects such as the membership of individuals and their activism within voluntary-based social organisations. Furthermore, engagement in political activities is also low, including in those carried out by parties or labour unions or professional associations, and there is a very low turnout when it comes to the membership of organisations that have political agendas.

On the other hand, the important changes that occurred within Jordanian society during the first half of 2011 need to be taken into account, as Jordan witnessed social and economic pressures on one hand and local and regional political mass movements demanding
comprehensive change in several Arab countries including Jordan, which considerably expanded the scope of civic engagement in Jordan as it saw the emergence of new movements and civic initiatives in different forms.

The Jordan CSI report also pointed out other weaknesses such as the poor internal evaluation of the impact the programmes and activities of civil society organisations (CSOs) can have on civil society at large and governmental policies in particular. This aspect reveals that organisations’ capabilities fall short of measuring the impact of these activities and programmes on the beneficiaries and on public policies as well.

The study also revealed the urgent need to develop the external environment in which civil society in Jordan operates. Without developing the state of freedoms, political rights and laws related to organisational and personal freedoms as well as the laws on establishing associations, the resources of civil society will be wasted and will fall short of achieving goals related to development and economic, social and political participation.

The recommendations from the Jordanian CSI focused on three main dimensions as follows: firstly, enhancing good governance within CSOs, enhancing transparency and internal democracy, which will help draw in new members and volunteers and consequently achieve a crucial improvement in the level of civic engagement. In addition, capacity building in networking and building coalitions will increase the impact on beneficiaries, public policies and private sector.

As for the second dimension, the recommendations call on the government to achieve political and democractic reforms that ensure the foundation of an environment that is more enabling and motivates civil society to play its role freely, which will require developing laws related to the rights of organisation, assembly and speech.

The third dimension calls on the private sector to fulfill its social responsibility and establish a partnership with CSOs, especially in underprivileged areas in order to combat poverty, design development programmes, create new jobs and limit the disparities between regions and governorates. In this aspect, CSOs shall work to qualify as an effective social partner in the implementation of corporate social responsibility.

3. ANALYSIS OF CIVIL SOCIETY

Jordanian civil society consists of approximately 5,700 organisations that fall under 18 clusters of civic organisations, among which the most important are social and cooperative societies, professional and labour associations, athletic and youth clubs, non-governmental organisations and non-profit companies. The registration of these organisations is subject to several laws and governmental entities. The overall number of civil society members stands at 1.5 million, constituting 43 % of the 3.5 million citizens of working age.

A large number of these organisations are categorised as charity and social associations, cooperative societies and professional associations. As for membership, the major segments of civil society are those categorised as charity and social societies, professional associations, women’s organisations, kinship associations, labour associations and athletic and youth clubs.

As illustrated in the figure below, Jordanian civil society revealed a low level of civic engagement that stood at 36.8 points out of 100, while the level of organisation achieved an average score of 55.3 points out of 100. Civil society’s practice of values scored 57.2 points out of 100, whereas the perception of impact of Jordanian civil society achieved a lower score of 46.9 points out of 100. As for the external environment for civil society, the findings show an average score of 55.3 out of 100 points.

There were several attempts to explain weak civic engagement, especially in terms of its scope or depth. Reasons suggested included “public frustration” due to the failure of reform and change agendas, which resulted in a lack of faith in the benefits of participation, particularly political participation. Other interpretations consider rigid and obsolete social organisations, in some cases, which are controlled by “traditional figures” refusing to apply
the periodical rotation of power, and are out-of-sync with current times. In addition, citizens do not participate due to harsh living conditions. Others have placed the blame on societal "idleness", which is a result of a weak sense of active citizenship that cannot see the light in a political and legal environment which is hostile to political participation and does not incentivise citizens to initiate participation.

**Figure 1: the Jordanian Civil Society Diamond**

![Diagram of the Jordanian Civil Society Diamond](image)

**Source:** The Jordanian Civil Society Diamond was prepared based on the CSI survey data, which includes the Organisational Survey for CSOs (2010) and External Perceptions Survey (2010) for external stakeholders in addition to several international surveys, most notably the World Value Survey (WVS).

Although civil society in Jordan enjoys a good level of organisation in general, with the vast majority of organisations having elected boards of directors, an increasing number of these organisations are selecting their leaders without going through competitive elections. Thus, the boards of these organisations, or the majority, are enabled to lead the organisations for a long time, which necessitates the intervention of legislation to determine a specific number of years for leadership and to facilitate change.

The Organisational Survey has also shown that 44% of CSOs prefer to pass decision-making authority to a small team or the president of organisations rather than elected boards.

**4. ACTION PLAN**

During the workshop, which was convened in Amman on 16 May 2011 to launch the CSI Report, more than 100 participants discussed the action plan. Six committees were formed for this purpose and recommendations were prioritized, and a task force charged with turning them into tangible projects and presenting them to the concerned entities. The task force was composed of diverse participants representing different sectors of civil society, government, international organizations, donors, media, universities and research institutes.

The following is a summary of the results of the action plan.
Main objective: Strengthening the components of Jordanian civil society, increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of CSOs and placing special emphasis on the governorates and underprivileged areas.

Scope of work:

✓ Enhancing the civic engagement of citizens through membership and participation in the activities of CSOs.

✓ Developing the values of CSOs through: promoting democratic values and practices, enhancing transparency and accountability and combating corruption, encouraging dialogue, negotiation and acceptance of the other, promoting the values of tolerance within civil society and outside it and activating its role to combat societal violence and manifestations of corruption.

✓ Calling on the government to achieve democratic reforms and develop laws and governmental procedures related to the rights of establishing organisations, assembly and the freedom of speech.

4.1. Areas of concern:

As we take into consideration the main weaknesses that characterise civil society in Jordan, the action plan seeks to address and remedy these weaknesses, while strengthening and bolstering the strengths outlined in the CSI with regards to the following five dimensions: civic engagement, organisation and institutionalisation, practice of values, measurement of impact and the general environment for civil society.

a. On civic engagement:

Objective: Work to enhance the civic engagement levels within Jordanian society.

Specific objectives:

✓ Enhance the capability of CSOs to draw in members and volunteers which will help expand their membership base.

✓ Enhance the presence of CSOs in the suburbs and underprivileged areas, helping vulnerable groups establish their own organisations and enabling them to convey their concerns to decision makers.

✓ Interact with the emerging "informal" social movements and civic initiatives, working on integrating these movements into the civil society structure and allowing them to acquire a legal status.

✓ Develop tools to improve the governance of CSOs and the criteria for transparency and accountability within these entities. In addition, focus on capacity-building regarding drawing in new members and volunteers, as well on as issues related to the evaluation, measurement and follow-up.
**Box 1 – Civic Engagement**

| The Jordan CSI revealed that the main weakness in civic engagement in Jordan is associated with indicators on the extent of engagement, both on a social basis (32.6) and political basis (6.5 points) which are the indicators that measure social membership and societal engagement. The weakness is manifested as well in indicators related to the depth of engagement on a social basis (32.6) or on political grounds (27.1 points). However, the weakness of the CSI civic engagement dimension has been negatively affected by the lack of necessary data on volunteerism in Jordan which has been published in international surveys. Thus it was excluded from the indicators of civil engagement in both the social and political fields. |

Despite the weakness of the civic engagement indicators in general, the study has revealed that the diversity of engagement on social grounds (85.6) or political grounds (59.8 points) is strong, as members of civil society have numerous diverse affiliations to several organizations, initiatives and social activities. In addition, civil society is active in the rural areas and among vulnerable and marginalised groups. It should be noted that civic engagement scored an average of 53.8 points, which measures the percentage of people who are engaged in activities with others at least once a month. |

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**Proposed activities:**

- Conduct surveys that tackle the reality of CSOs in the governorates in order to identify their characteristics and needs and help formulate plans that enhance their institutional capacities and leadership skills.

- Develop a holistic approach that encourages voluntary work in Jordanian society. The approach should include the legal and institutional (organisational) aspects and the incentives needed to promote voluntary work.

- Fill the void associated with some aspects of civic engagement, which was illustrated in the study, and develop appropriate tools to measure civic engagement in terms of its scope, depth and diversity. This will be carried out through practical workshops that design tangible criteria, taking into consideration traditional forms of civic engagement as well as informal forms, particularly new initiatives, assemblies and new civic movements.

**Concerned entities:**

- Leaders and activists in CSOs and experts who participated in the CSI project, forming a task force or a civic alliance to follow up on the project.

- Concerned ministries: Ministry of Political Development, Ministry of Social Development and others.

- Universities, economists and sociologists as well as experts on civil society, social movements and social interaction websites.

- International and local donors.

- United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and relevant international organisations.

**b. On the organisational level:**

**Main objective:** Develop the leadership skills and the institutional structures of CSOs, particularly in the governorates and underprivileged areas.

**Specific objectives:**

- Bolster internal democracy within CSOs, particularly the rotation of power among the leadership.
- Enhance the geographical and sectoral distribution of CSOs in order to cover different regions and social segments that lack CSOs.
- Develop a methodology to evaluate and measure the impact of the activities of CSOs in order to enhance their role in social processes and their impact on policies, and achieve optimal use of resources.
- Develop models of internal bylaws that address the rights of paid workers, especially women, and criteria and indicators related to the environment.
- Enhance the financial, administrative and technological capacity of CSOs that are facing shortcomings in these aspects, especially in the suburbs and governorates.

**Box 2 - Level of Organisation**

- The Jordan CSI revealed that the structure of civil society is diverse. In addition, the majority of organisations enjoy financial and administrative independence and are capable of reaching out to popular bases.
- There are regular and stable boards of directors in the vast majority of these organisations.
- Administrative committees are selected periodically; more than 85% of committees have been elected during the past three years.
- Election is the primary mechanism of selection of administrative committees: 59.8% are elected, 30% by recommendation (without competitive elections), 11% appointed.
- 80% of these organisations have supporting infrastructure (networks, national umbrellas).
- Several segments of civil society, which are backed by strong social support, fall short of achieving independence from the state, especially labour associations, cooperative societies and many charities.
- The sustainability of human resources recorded a low score that stood at 9.1%.
- International relations recorded a low score that stood at 8.3%.
- Sectoral interaction recorded an average score of 52.4%, which comes as a result of poor investment in resources such as networks and national umbrellas and the lack of cooperation or coordination between the similar organisations.
- Rotation of power among leadership is not a common practice in an increasing number of organisations. There is a growing phenomenon that excludes competitive elections in a number of civil society sectors, especially labour associations.

**Proposed activities**

- Design and disseminate a model for internal bylaws (basic rules) to provide guidance for emerging CSOs and assistance to develop the bylaws of existing CSOs.
- Develop codes of conduct that address good governance and transparency within CSOs and train organisations on the implementation of these codes.
- Design and implement training courses for the leaders of civil society regarding social entrepreneurship and recruitment skills in order to enable them to recruit new members and volunteers and empower them with the necessary skills to devolve power to lower levels of administration, garner support, evaluate and measure impact and strengthen networks and national umbrellas.

**Concerned entities:**

- The alliance of CSOs which participated in the CSI project.
- Concerned governmental institutions.
- Legal experts specialising in the laws governing civil society.
- Trainers with expertise in building capacities and networks.
- International and local donors.
- International organisations.
c. **On the practice of values:**

**Main objective:** Develop the civic values that govern civil society in Jordan.

**Specific objectives:**
- Promote democratic mechanisms and methods in the decision-making process within CSOs.
- Develop a model for bylaws that address the rights of workers and women as well as environmental criteria.
- Enhance the role of CSOs to limit violence, develop negotiation skills to resolve conflicts, improve the criteria of financial transparency and combat corruption.

**Proposed activities:**
- Implement programmes that promote civic culture on a wider scale, to include members and activists in civil society, through a series of seminars and workshops organised for this purpose.
- Develop and implement realistic and gradual criteria regarding the practice of values in civil society.
- Designate codes of conduct and train the concerned parties on ethical practices in the different segments of civil society.
- Integrate the emerging civic movements in training courses on the practice of values, especially those related to renouncing violence, rejecting chauvinism, bolstering acceptance of the other, using negotiation skills to resolve conflicts and the skills of garnering support.

**Concerned entities:**
- Social and voluntary-based organisations, especially the first generation of CSOs.
- CSOs in the governorates, suburbs and small cities.
- Movements and social and civic initiatives that are informal and recent.
- Concerned governmental institutions.
- Donors and concerned international organisations.
- Other stakeholders such as researchers, academics, civil society experts and training institutes.

**Box 3 – Practice of Values**

- The analysis of the practice of values in the Jordan CSI revealed that more than half of CSOs (54%) take their decisions through elected committees.
- There are policies on the criteria of work at 52.1% of CSOs, while 41.1% have codes of conduct.
- 56% of the sample of leaders of CSOs believe that civil society has a role that ranges between average to important in bolstering democracy, 32% believe it has a limited role, while 8.3% of the sample believe CSOs’ role in enhancing democratic decision-making is not important.
- The majority of CSOs (69.4%) do not have internal bylaws that safeguard the rights of women or paid workers.
- Financial transparency is poor in the majority of CSOs. In addition, a weak role in combating corruption led to suspicions about corruption in CSOs (approximately 47% believe corruption is present or highly present).
- 68% of CSOs do not have training courses for new staff.
d. On the perception of impact of CSOs:

Main objective: Enhance the leverage and impact of CSOs on public policies and social, economic and political processes.

Specific objectives:

✓ Achieve greater and more effective impact by CSOs on the social sphere including developmental, athletic and cultural fields.

✓ Find effective tools for CSOs to achieve a sustainable impact on economic and political policies, such as building networks that specialise in key issues such as the government’s general budgets, tax policies, combating poverty, unemployment, environment and human rights.

✓ Develop joint platforms with business associations to promote partnership between the private sector and civil society and encourage the practices of corporate social responsibility.

✓ Activate the role of civil society in combating societal violence, extremism, discrimination and enhancing social stability.

✓ Encourage the foundation of specialised networks that seek to influence education, health and other social policies.

Box 4 – Perception of impact

- The analysis of the perception of impact in the Jordan CSI revealed the following: an average internal evaluation of the impact of civil society on improving the quality of life (49.6 %) and a lower score for the impact on democratisation of laws governing political activity (47%); external stakeholders gave a higher evaluation of 54% and 49% respectively on the impact of the civil society on the two topics mentioned above.

- The evaluation of the impact of civil society on social issues according to external stakeholders is high (75.6%), which marks a positive difference of 12.3% from the self-evaluation by the civil society.

- The activities of civil society in the social development sphere are the most successful as they scored 52%, while their impact on policies does not exceed 22%, according to stakeholders.

- Generally speaking, there is relatively high confidence in civil society. While institutes of a religious nature rank first, environmental organisations follow (albeit with a considerable disparity) then charities and women’s organisations come next.

Proposed activities

- Develop and encourage the formation of networks and alliances based on specific issues.

- Develop educational and promotional material related to the topics mentioned in the objectives above that can be used in media campaigns and garnering support.

- Organise anti-violence campaigns that seek to instill the values of tolerance and acceptance of the other.

- Implement programmes to enhance the capacities of CSOs in garnering support, and evaluating and measuring impact on targeted social groups and policy makers.

Concerned entities:

- Members of parliament, specialised parliamentary committees.

- Media.

- Central government and municipalities.
- Donors and international organisations.
- CSOs.
- Experts and academics (universities and research centres).

e. **On External environment:**

**Main objective:** Founding a sustainable democracy and external enabling environment where civil society can operate, while concurrently working on promoting civic culture and values among the CSOs.

**Box 5 – External Environment**

- The analysis of the external environment for civil society in the Jordan CSI concluded that the geopolitical location that Jordan enjoys in addition to the political openness practiced by the government have encouraged international interest in civil society in Jordan and have provided important external resources for CSOs.
- The measure of basic capacities of Jordan reflects one of the main points of strengths in this aspect, at 97%, and is derived from primary education and public health indicators in Jordan.
- Public spiritedness scored 91 points.
- Satisfaction of CSOs with the legal environment recorded a relatively high score at 78.4.
- The efficiency of the state’s performance recorded a score of strength that exceeded the halfway mark (55.4).
- The social-political-cultural context in Jordan is still perceived as conservative, which explains the preference of an interventionist role for the state at the expense of civil society.
- There is a relative weakness in the economic context due to the rise of debt, the decline in the growth of GDP (49.7) and structural flaws in the Jordanian economy.
- Jordan’s rank, according to the international ranking for transparency, is continuously declining, as it ranked 53 out of 179 countries and scored 51 points on a scale of 100 points.
- Equality indicators show a decline, as these scored 61.2 points.
- There is a general weakness regarding the indicator for freedoms and political rights (32.5).
- There is a general weakness regarding the rights of assembly and establishing associations (41.7).
- The rule of the law and personal liberties were below the halfway mark (47.9).
- There is a weakness regarding public trust (31.3) and tolerance (27.5).

**Specific objectives:**

✓ Increase awareness of the importance of enhancing productivity and the competitive capacities of the Jordanian economy.

✓ Empower civil society and qualify it to act as a partner to bring about sustainable human development and promote democratic values.

✓ Develop a socio-economic model that suits Jordanian society and which combines the attainment of economic independence of the Jordanian state, sustainability of resources, regional cooperation and integration in the global economy.

✓ Seek to instill the concepts of equal opportunity, social justice, citizenship, national unity, a civic state and the rule of law in public policies and development strategies.
Proposed activities:
- Organise initiatives and activities to reach a national consensus on the socio-economic model of development that best suits Jordan.
- Encourage universities and research centres to conduct studies on the economic and social contribution of Jordanian civil society.
- Form alliances and multi-party networks that gather civil CSOs and other stakeholders such as the media, private sector, parliament, municipalities and governmental and public institutions in order to reach consensus and formulate action plans.
- Develop a curriculum to promote civic values, reiterate the objectives and values outlined above and serve as a reference on the rights and duties of the citizenry in cooperation with CSOs, the Ministry of Education and international concerned organisations.

Concerned entities:
- Concerned governmental institutions.
- Academic groups: economists, sociologists, political scientists, education and development experts.
- Business associations.
- Parliament and municipal councils.
- Donors and concerned international organisations.

6. CONCLUSION

The CSI project seeks to produce knowledge on civil society that can be used to motivate CSOs to formulate policies and strategies that can enhance their impact and role.

This Policy Action Brief constitute a solid base for urgent joint action between all the concerned parties (civil society, government, private sector, universities, knowledge centres, the media, international organisations and donors) in the next few years (2011 – 2013). A real social partnership that seeks to implement joint activities based on this knowledge is possible and can strengthen civil society and utilise its capacities to serve development, reform and constructive change.

We shall not neglect the critical current circumstances, which urge us to recruit and utilise human resources and reactivate our citizenship, volunteerism and all other forms of civic engagement in order to survive economic, social and political crises. All these efforts will help achieve a sustainable democratic participation and develop strong civic values in our society and individuals.