

**A USERS' GUIDE TO  
CIVIL SOCIETY ASSESSMENTS**

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# Foreword

Governments increasingly accept civil society organizations (CSOs) as policy interlocutors and intermediaries that promote civic participation and representation of minorities and disadvantaged groups in decision-making processes. The pivotal role of CSOs is recognized and emphasized in a number of international agreements today, such as, for example, the Paris Declaration and Accra Agenda for Action on Aid Effectiveness. But, at the same time, concerns are also raised – and not only by governments – about the accountability of CSOs and their ability to show results and demonstrate impact.

There is, therefore, a growing interest and demand from not only donors, governments and development practitioners but also from a range of CSOs – from large international non-governmental organizations to local community-based organizations – for practical tools to assess and evaluate their performance, and capacity to deliver results and be accountable to their constituents.

This publication, 'A Users' Guide to Civil Society Assessments', is an attempt by UNDP to respond to this growing demand, particularly for national and CSO-led assessment processes. It provides a systematic yet easy-to-understand review of existing civil society assessment tools, methodologies and information sources. Since 2003, the UNDP Oslo Governance Centre has been supporting nationally owned initiatives for monitoring and measuring governance, and this Users' Guide is part of a series aimed at helping users navigate the crowded landscape of measurement tools (see the Governance Assessment Portal at [www.gaportal.org](http://www.gaportal.org)).

For UNDP, the value, and eventual success of such assessments lies in the extent to which they strengthen our efforts to support citizens and CSOs to hold governments and themselves to account. By helping CSOs to diagnose weaknesses within civil society and its organizations, civil society assessments can help to strengthen civil society and make it an effective force in building accountable and responsive governance systems. Assessments are, of course, only one of many factors: an enabling environment is key, one that protects and promotes a robust civil society to engage with the government and exert pressure for reform.

This publication is a result of a collaborative effort between the Oslo Governance Centre, which manages the UNDP flagship programme on country-led governance assessments, and the Civil Society Division of the Partnerships Bureau, which supports UNDP country offices in implementing the UNDP global strategy for strengthening civil society and civic engagement.

We hope that the guide will provide the reader with necessary information about various assessment tools and the merits and possible pitfalls of using them. We would also like to see this publication help local, national and global CSOs to develop viable tools to enhance their own accountability while strengthening their role in increasing the accountability of national governance systems.

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# How to use this guide



This guide is written in two parts. The first part provides generic guidance for users of civil society assessments, illustrated with specific examples, and takes the reader through the following sections:

1. Assessing civil society
2. The existing landscape of assessment tools
3. Current trends in civil society assessments
4. Conducting a civil society assessment.

The second part of the publication is a source guide, which takes the reader through specifics about the currently available methods for conducting civil society assessments, including snapshots of their methodologies, some details of their content, and the implications for the use of the assessment methods. The source guide also covers information sources, which are assessments that have already been implemented and published. This inventory of civil society assessment tools and methodologies will provide a global overview of extant approaches in this area. It will thus serve as a resource that can be drawn on for developing new assessment tools or adapting existing assessment approaches to users' specific contexts. It will prepare users to inform themselves about the nature of civil society assessment and conduct assessments of their own. All of the methods referred to throughout this publication are included in the source guide, which also includes contact information for each one.

## **Users of the guide**

The guide is aimed at the non-specialist user. This means that only limited background knowledge is required. To help in this, the guide aims to use the simplest terminology available.

Statistics and statistical techniques may be used to assess civil society. The publication, however, is not a statistical textbook and, therefore, excludes discussion on statistical techniques. Equally, we do not propose any new indicators or methods, as the focus is on existing indicator sources.

## Criteria for selecting indicator sources in this guide

The source guide in the second part of this publication includes only publicly available information. This means that the user can go to the websites of the producers to find further information about the source. However, some assessment methods that do not publish their full methodology have been included due to other salient features they offer.

For inclusion in this guide, we required that indicator sources meet the following criteria:

- They are designed to directly assess civil society organizations (CSOs) in general, or non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in particular; assessments of other specific types of civil society or other sectors are not included.
- They have a method or data publicly available.
- They are based on a method that is applicable in a range of contexts or that could be adapted.
- They are available via the Internet, in a major language, free of charge.

All sources referred to in the first part of this guide are included in the source guide. However, some sources provide assessments of civil society that could be useful in limited contexts but that do not meet all the above criteria. For those that might not be publicly available or might present added value, a list with only names and websites is provided.

## What is civil society?

Development agencies, international organizations and academic institutions define civil society in different ways. Moreover, the assessment methods reviewed in the source guide of this publication were designed with various understandings of civil society in mind. For the purpose of this guide, civil society should be understood to include all of the definitions provided below. These definitions are cited in many of the sources included in this publication.

### *Definitions:*

*'Voice and Accountability for Human Development: A UNDP Global Strategy to Strengthen Civil Society and Civic Engagement', UNDP*

Civil society is an arena of voluntary collective actions around shared interests, purposes and values distinct from families, state and profitseeking institutions. The term civil society includes the full range of formal and informal organizations that are outside the state and the market – including social movements, volunteer involving organizations, mass-based membership organizations, faith-based groups, NGOs, and community-based organizations, as well as communities and citizens acting individually and collectively.

*'What Is Civil Society?', London School of Economics<sup>1</sup>*

Civil society is the arena of uncoerced collective action around shared interests, purposes and values. In theory, its institutional forms are distinct from those of the state, family and market, though in practice, the boundaries between state, civil society, family and market are often complex, blurred and negotiated. Civil society commonly embraces a diversity of spaces, actors and institutional forms, varying in their degree of formality, autonomy and power.

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<sup>1</sup> [www.lse.ac.uk/collections/CCS/what\\_is\\_civil\\_society.htm](http://www.lse.ac.uk/collections/CCS/what_is_civil_society.htm)

*'Assessing the State of Civil Society: A Toolkit for the CIVICUS Civil Society Index (CSI); CIVICUS*  
Civil society is the arena – outside of the family, the state, and the market – which is created by individual and collective actions, organizations and institutions to advance shared interests.

*'Civil Society: Definitions and Approaches', John Keane*

Civil society is a realm of social life – market exchanges, charitable groups, clubs and voluntary associations, independent churches and publishing houses – institutionally separated from territorial state institutions.

*'What the hell is "civil society"?'; Neera Chandhoke*

Civil society can be seen as that part of society where people, as rights-bearing citizens, meet to discuss and enter into dialogue about the polity.

*'Comparative Nonprofit Sector Project, Methodology and Data Sources'; Johns Hopkins University Center for Civil Society Studies*

A civil society organization is an entity that is:

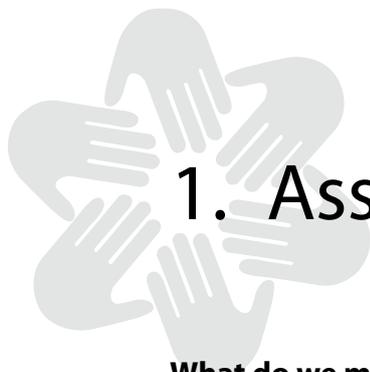
- Organized, i.e., institutionalized to some extent.
- Private, i.e., institutionally separate from government.
- Non-profit-distributing, i.e., not returning profits generated to their owners or directors.
- Self-governing, i.e., equipped to control their own activities.
- Voluntary, i.e., involving some meaningful degree of voluntary participation.

*'The Kenyan CSO Standards', Kenya PEN*

Civil society organizations:

- Are driven by values that reflect a desire to improve lives;
- Contain elements of voluntarism (i.e. free choice of association, voluntary contributions of time and money);
- Have private and independent governance;
- Are not for profit (i.e. do not distribute profit to staff and/or shareholders);
- Have clearly stated and defined public purposes for which they are accountable;
- Are formally constituted under the law and have an accepted identity in line with the culture and traditions prevailing in the country.





# 1. Assessing civil society

## What do we mean by civil society assessment?

For the purposes of this publication, civil society assessment is a process of understanding and analysing the context and organizational dimensions of CSOs based on a set of principles, indicators, and other information (see Box 1). Such assessments may be initiated by various actors including governments, donors, academic researchers, intergovernmental organizations, or civil society networks or organizations themselves (see Box 2).

Assessments can be of a general nature – assessing the contexts and spaces for civil society in relation to the state and market – or they can be specific, focusing on a particular segment of civil society. In this guide, we consider two main categories of civil society assessment:

- an assessment of the civil society sector as a whole; and
- an assessment of an individual CSO. This can be either an *external* assessment, implemented by donors, a university, intergovernmental organizations, another CSO or others, or a *self-assessment*.

The differences among these are clarified in the section ‘The existing landscape of assessment tools’.<sup>2</sup>

This guide does not consider assessment of individual civil society activities. It also excludes those assessments that focus solely on impact. Instead, it focuses mainly on methods to assess the organizational dimensions of CSOs and their environment more broadly.<sup>3</sup>

The purpose of civil society assessments can vary depending on the interests and context of those who are implementing them. For example, local CSOs could use self-assessment to improve their credibility in the eyes of their constituencies. Table 1 details the varied purposes of civil society assessment for different actors.

## Why do we need to assess civil society?

Assessing civil society is important for a number of reasons:

1. *Assessments enable CSOs to enhance the quality of performance and demonstrate results.*  
If the weaknesses of the CSO sector are not clear, they cannot be addressed. Assessments are crucial to understanding where improvement is necessary and to maintaining civil society as an effective force. CSO assessments can help in examining how programming decisions are made and whether the concerns of beneficiaries are considered in

<sup>2</sup> An alternative to traditional thinking on civil society is the ‘Civic Driven Change’ initiative of the International Institute of Social Studies. This initiative has highlighted the failure of states and markets, as well as CSOs, to bring about change, and focuses more broadly on the role of citizens in civil society. The initiative is also critical of the available assessment tools’ inability to go beyond CSOs. For more information on civic driven change, see [www.iss.nl/Portals/Civic-Driven-Change-Initiative](http://www.iss.nl/Portals/Civic-Driven-Change-Initiative).

<sup>3</sup> It is important to note that some methods listed in the source guide do attempt to assess civil society more broadly, i.e. by going beyond registered CSOs. This guide will, therefore, refer to these methods in general as ‘civil society assessments’ and not ‘CSO assessments’.

**Box 1: Where do the standards come from?**

Each method for assessment uses its own set of standards against which civil society is measured, each derived in its own manner. Most methods (e.g. the 'Checklist for CSO Laws') are based on a review of a range of international standards. Some (e.g. 'Civil Society Index' (CSI)) are developed through consultation with CSOs themselves. Others (e.g. 'Accountability Self-Assessment') are based on the established legal framework at the country level. Each set of standards can be valid in its own context, depending on the objectives of the method.

Assumptions about civil society and its assessment are frequently challenged, especially in countries with very different histories and cultures from Western Europe and North America. For example, Dr. Amani Kandil, Executive Director of the Arab Network for NGOs in Egypt, questions whether the very concepts used for civil society evaluation are relevant in the Arab region: "It is ... legitimate to ask ourselves whether these (Western) concepts and theories that were developed according to a specific economic (capitalist, liberal), political (democratic) and socio-cultural context (the civic culture), have succeeded to deal with the Arab reality."<sup>4</sup> She also expresses concern that the foreign nature of these ideas and the fact that they may not apply well may be a crucial factor in the building of a disengaged elite (see Box 8).

Most international standards have been determined through consultations in widely divergent cultures. Nevertheless, it is important to keep in mind that there is no universal consensus. Moreover, accountability depends on societal norms, which define to some extent the rights and responsibilities of CSOs. This is relevant to CSO self-regulation as well (see 'CSO self-assessment' below).

**Table 1: Purposes of civil society assessment by implementing organization**

Implementing organization	Purposes
Local CSOs	Improve credibility and legitimacy in the eyes of constituencies or other CSOs, seek accreditation, advocate for change
International CSOs	Raise awareness, inform partnerships with local CSOs, advocate for change
Donors and intergovernmental organizations	Inform funding decisions, monitor project outcomes, create strategic partnerships with CSOs
Academic institutions and researchers	Understand the landscape, identify trends
Government and other state actors	Improve interaction with civil society on issues such as policy-making and service delivery

<sup>4</sup> Dr. Amani Kandil, 'A critical review of the literature about the Arab civil society', research paper for Regional Conference on Research on Civil Society Organisations, Foundation for the Future, 26–28 January 2010.

**Box 2: To lead or not to lead**

Civil society assessments generally fall into two categories: those that are led by CSOs, and those that are not. In the latter, CSOs usually remain major stakeholders and may be consulted, participate in data collection or play some role other than leadership.

Donors continue to be the main promoters of assessments. Donor-led assessments cover the same range of topics as those that are CSO-led, but they tend to reflect the priorities of the international community rather than CSOs. For example, donor assessments may be more concerned with accounting for how donated goods (e.g. bed nets or medicines) were used or with meeting benchmarks set by boards or legislators than with CSOs' own missions and objectives. In extreme cases, a donor assessment may divert resources and attention from a CSO's own goals.<sup>1</sup> Donor methods also tend to be less transparent – often not published – and are rarely developed through a participatory process. This makes open and participatory CSO-led assessments that much more valuable.

On the other hand, donors are more likely than CSOs to consider international standards like the Millennium Development Goals. Donor-led assessments have a more consistent focus on gender (Millennium Development Goal number 3) as well as poverty (Goal number 1). In addition, because they are generally adequately funded, they can be more comprehensive.

In practice, CSO-led assessments give CSOs a greater opportunity to learn from the assessment process and have ownership over the results (see also 'Recommendations for designing effective assessments'). This makes future improvement in performance and impact more likely. The participation of CSOs in assessments is, therefore, vital to making them relevant, accurate and actionable. Moreover, as CSOs often speak for the most diverse groups in society, the assessments they lead are likely to include a broader range of interests.

<sup>1</sup>See Lisa Jordan, 'Mechanisms for NGO Accountability', Global Public Policy Institute research paper, 2005.

programme design and implementation. Assessments could enable the organization to improve its planning and overall performance. The findings could also serve as a baseline for developing future programmes and activities.

Results can be used as evidence in response to questions from government and the general public about programming decisions and inquiries about how funds are used. CSOs often have difficulty attributing results to the activities implemented and demonstrating impact (see 'Overcoming obstacles' below); evaluation is the primary remedy for this lack of knowledge. Furthermore, assessment can help a CSO determine whether its activities are in line with its mission, thus increasing its organizational effectiveness. Positive results are also of interest to donors, who monitor the projects and organizations they fund.

2. *Assessments improve CSOs' accountability, internal governance and legitimacy.*  
Over the past few decades, the size of CSOs, their number, scope and influence have grown massively.<sup>5</sup> This growth has raised understandable questions about their legitimacy, transparency, and accountability.

Assessments allow CSOs to be scrutinized against the same standards they demand of governments. Even if the results expose weaknesses, the simple process of conducting and publishing an evaluation increases organizational accountability and legitimacy, and also improves public perception. Civil society certification programmes have the added benefit of enabling an external seal of approval to be granted.

Scrutiny is important because doubts about civil society can undermine support for the genuine contribution that CSOs make to policy and society. If a donor withdraws funds due to concerns about corruption, a CSO might have to cease operations. If a government rebuffs CSO advocacy on the basis that the CSO does not maintain its own internal governance structure, an entire programme could be challenged. Public perceptions of CSOs may be tarnished by scandals or misperceptions that could be clarified by revealing internal processes.

3. *The process itself can make civil society stronger.*  
Learning how to implement an assessment often strengthens CSO capacity to conduct and disseminate research, as well as take action based on evidence. Assessments can also enhance connections between CSOs, promoting cooperation and mutual support.

In addition, if an assessment is led by a CSO, it gives the organization the opportunity to address the need for evaluation on its own terms, rather than leaving it to others who may have different objectives and interests. Through assessment, the CSO will gain knowledge about the state of civil society and its role in the country's governance and development in a way that does not threaten its independence.

4. *Assessments can help improve conditions for civil society.*  
Assessments of the environment in which civil society functions can provide valuable information about the external challenges CSOs face, such as weak public support or an antagonistic regime. The findings can be used to help devise strategies to improve conditions and support the strengthening of CSOs, as well as for awareness-raising. In particular, multilateral donors have an interest in assessment as the first step towards determining what kind of intervention is required, and the potential for partnership. This is in keeping with the Paris Declaration, which commits donors to strive for an enabling environment for civil society.

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<sup>5</sup> For instance in 2007, CSOs handled US\$12–15 billion in development and humanitarian relief work, representing 12–15% of total overseas development assistance dispensed that year (source: OECD-DAC Database).

## How have civil society assessments been used?

Civil society assessments have been conducted and used in countries around the world. Table 2 presents some highlights of their outcomes.

**Table 2: Examples of civil society assessment outcomes**

Country	Outcome	Description
Japan	modified legislation	Findings from the Johns Hopkins Comparative Nonprofit Sector Project were used to promote a significant new nonprofit law in Japan. This law provided a mechanism for formerly unrecognized nonprofit organizations in Japan to secure legal status.
Jordan	capacity development of small CSOs by larger CSO partner	CIVICUS's Civil Society Index identified weaknesses in the structure and functioning of CSOs. As a result, a training programme was implemented in Jordan that focused on capacity development of CSOs to improve the effectiveness of both leaders and staff. The Al Urdun Al Jadid Research Center launched the 'Study Days' project for influencing public policy, advocacy training, partnerships and other key areas for strengthening civil society.
European Union	change in policy-making	The European Commission has announced a European Year of Volunteering for 2011, in part as a response to the findings of the United Nations and Johns Hopkins 'Handbook on Non-Profit Institutions'. Individual Members of the European Parliament promote volunteering, referencing the Handbook.
Mauritania	increased donor support for CSOs	A civil society mapping study of Mauritania, <sup>6</sup> funded by the European Commission, discovered severe weaknesses in local CSOs. As a result, the Commission launched a bilateral cooperation programme to support CSOs.
Mongolia	CSO capacity-building, government-CSO partnerships, informed donor decision-making, improved governance assessment	As a result of a participatory process, the ARVIN assessment helped to inform and strengthen constituencies for 'good government' in Mongolia among CSOs. It also encouraged government to engage civil society more systematically, including through active partnerships between parliamentarians and CSOs. In addition, the assessment informed World Bank decision-making, and results were used for a subsequent governance assessment. <sup>7</sup>

Sources: author communication with World Bank, European Commission, Johns Hopkins University, and CIVICUS, 2010; 'Report on the role of volunteering in contributing to economic and social cohesion', European Parliament Session Document A6-0070/2008, 10 March 2008.

<sup>6</sup> Not publicly available.

<sup>7</sup> Author communication with Jeff Thindwa, Senior Social Development Specialist, World Bank, 2010.





## 2. The existing landscape of assessment tools

The current scope of civil society assessments can broadly be divided into two groups: those that aim to evaluate the civil society sector as a whole, and those that evaluate the performance of individual CSOs. Within each of these groups, a variety of assessment methods meet different needs. A simplified version of the assessment landscape is mapped in the flow chart below (see also the explanation of the flow chart under 'Building on existing assessment methods' [flow chart in separate document]).

### **Assessments of the civil society sector**

Some assessments aim to evaluate the civil society sector – or CSOs in aggregate. For instance, an assessment might consider how well CSOs are functioning in a particular region (such as the Pacific islands). Other examples are aggregated CSO capacity, engagement, governance, and impact; legal context; basic freedoms; and space for social and political action.

Civil society assessments can be part of a broader governance assessment<sup>8</sup> or concentrate exclusively on CSOs.

#### *Civil society assessment within a broader governance assessment*

Since a vibrant civil society is an inherent part of any system of democratic governance, most governance assessments include some evaluation of civil society. Evaluating civil society as one component of a governance assessment is useful for understanding civil society in the broader governance context.

Broad governance assessments with a civil society component include the 'Bertelsmann Transformation Index', Freedom House's 'Countries at the Crossroads', and ODI's 'World Governance Assessment'. Other governance assessments have a particular focus. For example, Global Integrity's 'Integrity Indicators' concentrate on corruption. Both International IDEA's 'Democracy Assessment Framework' and Estado de la Nación's 'Auditoria Ciudadana' focus on democracy.

In order to avoid duplication, synergies should be identified between civil society and broader governance assessments. A strong civil society assessment can feed a governance assessment by providing detailed information – something that broader assessments are often unable to do.<sup>9</sup> Most governance assessments focus solely on the context in which CSOs operate, as opposed to the performance of CSOs. Civil society assessments, therefore, fill a crucial gap by

<sup>8</sup> Governance assessments evaluate the system of values, policies and institutions by which a society manages its economic, political and social affairs through interactions within and among the state, civil society and private sector. (See also UNDP's 'Governance Indicators: A Users' Guide'.)

<sup>9</sup> Estado de la Nación's 'Auditoria Ciudadana' deserves mention as the only source described here that gives more than a cursory look at civil society within a method that examines broader governance issues.

assessing the other key dimensions of civil society: capacity, engagement, (internal) governance, and impact. The results of a more extensive civil society assessment can, therefore, help give more informed and nuanced results on governance. If a governance assessment determines that civil society is weak, a full civil society assessment is particularly important.

On the flip side, a civil society assessment is not always useful in isolation. The capacity, engagement, internal governance, and impact of a CSO are all affected by external governance aspects such as the political system, basic freedoms (association, speech, information), and the rule of law. Thus, a governance assessment can supplement civil society assessment results to give a better understanding and help develop a plan of action. Ultimately, both governments and CSOs must be evaluated to best gauge overall effectiveness.<sup>10</sup>

In some cases, governance assessments may be challenging, especially in countries with strong authoritarian structures. In these cases, a civil society assessment may instead be paired with another assessment such as a poverty assessment.

#### *Civil society sector without governance assessment*

Assessment methods that focus specifically on CSOs in a given country or region generally facilitate deeper analysis than do governance and other assessments. Box 3 takes a closer look at the CIVICUS Civil Society Index, and Box 4 examines the United Nations Statistics Division and Johns Hopkins' 'Handbook on Non-Profit Institutions in the System of National Accounts'. Other tools are highlighted below.

The International Center for Not-for-Profit Law (ICNL)'s 'Checklist for CSO Laws' is a method that concentrates on the legal framework within which civil society operates. Designed based on international good practice, the checklist is easy to implement but is one of the few methods that examines only the legal framework and not practice on the ground. Another example, CIET's 'Voice of Poor Households', was developed in the face of a humanitarian disaster in Nicaragua. Rather than examine the disaster response as a whole or specific activities carried out, it is an assessment of the CSO sector as it responded to the disaster.

Another example is the Overseas Development Institute (ODI)'s 'Evaluation of Citizens' Voice and Accountability', which analyses the socio-economic context that encourages or impedes citizens' ability to express views and the capacity and will of public officials to respond. The assessment includes state and non-state actors, with an emphasis on the actions donors can take. Thus, the section of the assessment on opportunities and constraints includes a subsection on entry points where donors could intervene and new areas where they could engage; a separate table catalogues areas for change and the criteria/indicators against which that change can be benchmarked.

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<sup>10</sup> It should be noted that broader governance assessments for the most part fall into the category this publication refers to as 'information sources': they were designed with a specific implementation in mind (not for general use), and the results have been published. The complete method may be proprietary and not publicly available. The only governance assessment method in this guide that is available publicly for implementation is International IDEA's Democracy Assessment Framework.

### **Box 3: The CIVICUS ‘Civil Society Index’**

Within the existing landscape of civil society assessments, one of the best-known is CIVICUS’s Civil Society Index (CSI). The CSI has extensive coverage globally and is very widely used – likely the most widely used civil society assessment – not least because of its comprehensiveness and coverage. The first round of CSI implementation covered 49 countries and territories, and the results of the second phase will be released in 2011.

The CSI’s greatest strength is its breadth: it enables a comprehensive evaluation of all major aspects of civil society. The method covers five dimensions of civil society: civic engagement, level of organization, practice of values, perception of impact, and environment. Among the tools reviewed in the source guide (below), the CSI is unique in covering all five of these dimensions. The CSI has great geographic breadth as well.

The CSI also has depth. Eschewing cursory evaluation, “the CSI uses multiple indicators and strives for a comprehensive assessment”<sup>1</sup>. The CSI examines 27 sub-dimensions, and does so through diverse methods – surveys, focus groups, and analysis. It includes ratings for comparison and reports for background and nuance.

A crucial achievement of the CSI is the generation and systematization of information on civil society. Prior to the CSI, knowledge about the state of civil society was scattered and disjointed; it was difficult to uncover trends or promote collaboration. Because the CSI has been implemented and used in so many contexts, it has created a common understanding of civil society among policy makers, advocates, and scholars. The CSI has mobilized donor support for civil society programming, sparked national policy dialogues and fed national strategies on civil society, and created an enabling environment for civic participation.

The CSI is a method created by and for civil society. A team of civil society representatives leads the process, and information is provided by other CSOs through workshops and surveys. The CSI is also one of the few CSO-led methods that consider the civil society sector as a whole.

The CSI’s greatest weakness comes from its strength: its comprehensiveness can make implementation challenging, as it requires substantial time and resources. This is likely the main reason the CSI has not been conducted in more countries or more often. But another reason is that it is not the right tool for all contexts. The CSI method favours comparability over adaptation, and while the method used for the 2011 release has increased space for local methodological changes, the CSI will always have requirements that will conflict with the diverse needs and priorities found around the world. Countries that, for example, wish to delve deeper into a single area or want to tie their civil society assessment to another governance assessment method being implemented will benefit from alternatives to the CSI. Moreover, the CSI is implemented in several countries simultaneously as part of an international effort – a timeline that may not fit with some local considerations.

In order to maintain certain global standards and project unity, CIVICUS has sacrificed some of the stakeholder ownership of local civil society assessments. This has meant that the CSI’s reach has not always been as broad as desired. The CSOs directly involved may learn from the process and promote change, but it can be difficult to impact other CSOs or policy makers in the country. In addition, the intense level of resources required for CSI implementation can be difficult to maintain, resulting in unrealized recommendations and findings that are never used for action.

The CSI addresses a crucial need for systematic understanding and examination of civil society. Like any assessment, it cannot fulfil every requirement. Local tools adapted for a specific context can fill the gaps left by the CSI.

<sup>1</sup>Assessing the State of Civil Society: A Toolkit for the CIVICUS Civil Society Index (CSI), CIVICUS, 2008.

#### **Box 4: The 'Handbook on Non-Profit Institutions in the System of National Accounts'**

The United Nations Statistics Division and the Johns Hopkins Center for Civil Society Studies developed the 'Handbook on Non-Profit Institutions in the System of National Accounts' to improve the way in which CSOs and volunteering are included in the compilation of official national statistics. The Handbook does this by aiding in the generation of statistical data on CSOs, producing a unique and important quantitative indicator on the civil society sector. It guides the user in first classifying existing organizations and then quantifying them – for example, in terms of the amount of their funding, the value of their volunteer work, and even the satisfaction of beneficiaries.

The Handbook's greatest strength is that it addresses a key yet neglected area of civil society assessment – namely, international guidelines for setting up economic accounts and statistical reporting on CSOs. In many countries, government statistical offices record little or no information on CSOs. This means that the size of the sector is not defined, making it more challenging to gain donor and policy makers' attention. Statistical reporting as conducted through the Handbook (and a parallel publication, the International Labour Organization's 'Manual on the Measurement of Volunteer Work') demonstrates civil society's strength by allowing it to be quantified – for example, as a share of GDP. Moreover, the Handbook puts in place a regular source of official information on the sector that can be updated over time.

Despite the technical nature of the Handbook, it is designed to be systematic and comprehensive. It is a document of over 300 pages that includes extensive documentation on how assessments should be conducted. Moreover, the method includes phases so that users can implement more or less depending on their resources. The United Nations Volunteers programme and Johns Hopkins have supported national statistical offices in efforts to implement the Handbook in Brazil, India, Kyrgyzstan, Mozambique, and the Philippines.

The Handbook is unquestionably for a specialized user, in most cases a statistician in a government statistical office. This narrow scope means it will have few users, and it is not easily adapted to other contexts. Nevertheless, the Handbook is making an impact. The European Parliament approved legislation in April 2008 calling on all EU members to implement it, to ensure that non-profit organizations are taken into account in policy formulation (see 'How have civil society assessments been used?' above). Such an endorsement for an assessment method is rare at the international level.

### **Assessments of individual CSOs**

In addition to assessments that evaluate the civil society sector as a whole, there are those that examine a single CSO (or a small group of designated CSOs). These assessments cover internal capacity, programme impact, engagement with beneficiaries, and accountability and other internal governance features. They also cover legal and political context, similar to assessments of the civil society sector.

Among this group of assessments, some are designed as self-assessments, in which a CSO evaluates itself, and others are external assessments, in which a CSO is evaluated by government, donors, academic researchers, intergovernmental organizations or other civil

society organizations. It is also worth noting that some assessment methods include a quantitative component, whereas others are only qualitative, as summarized below.

#### *Quantitative assessment methods*

The inclusion of a quantitative component in an assessment can serve many purposes. Numerical indicators facilitate comparison between targets and over time. Numbers can also be an easier reference than qualitative descriptions, and certain audiences such as the media and some donors look favourably on them. However, it can often appear simpler to compose an accurate narrative report than to calculate numerical values, since there is more space for elaboration and some people find numbers daunting. Therefore, quantitative methods are rarer than those that are only qualitative.

While most of the information sources included in the source guide at the end of this publication have a quantitative component, this is much less common among the assessment methods. This is likely due to concerns about maintaining quality in a publicly available quantitative method or because designing a quantitative method for non-experts may not be considered valuable. It also reflects the fact that not all information can be quantified.

Those methods that do generate numbers are varied. Some use simple 1-to-3 or 1-to-5 ratings, such as Observatorio del Tercer Sector's 'La Transparencia y la Rendición de Cuentas'. POET goes one step further, with worksheets for statistical calculations and detailed instructions with examples. POET is concerned with the generation of statistically sound data, an ambitious objective that is largely met through this extensive method. POET also has a focus on using the findings to generate a plan of action.

Finally, some indicators are not quantitative, but could be adapted. For example, the yes/no questions in PCNC's 'Guidebook on the Basics of NGO Governance' (see Box 7) could be changed to a quantitative ratings scale.

#### *External civil society assessment*

Diverse actors may seek to assess individual CSOs, including academic researchers and intergovernmental organizations. The most common are donors, who fund the activity of the CSOs being assessed, and other CSOs: often larger, international CSOs who do so in an attempt to bring benefit to local colleagues.

An example is the 'Social Audit' toolkit developed by the Centre for Good Governance in Hyderabad, India. A social audit is a method of monitoring the impact of an organization's operations by consulting the people these activities were intended to reach, as opposed to outside 'experts'. It is a form of public opinion survey that gives the perspective of some of the least-represented people in society. It has traditionally been used to bring in the perspective of the recipients of services in order to evaluate the performance of local government, especially in service delivery.

The Centre for Good Governance makes the social audit more accessible as a civil society assessment, with a toolkit designed for government departments, community organizations, and CSOs alike. Not only does this provide a rare 'citizens' perspective on CSO performance, but survey data can be more malleable than traditional expert analysis: results can be disaggregated in different ways, such as by gender or economic class. The Financial

Management Service Foundation also has a social audit method for NGOs, but this requires purchase and is paired with consulting services. Other large international NGOs such as Action Aid have used social audits to enable the general public to measure its performance and to enhance its accountability and transparency.

The Pakistan Centre for Philanthropy conducts assessments as part of its certification process for CSOs. The method is publicly available and includes a ratings system for each standard evaluated. One World Trust's 'Global Accountability Report' is an evaluation of a selection of international CSOs along with other international organizations and the private sector. Such cross-sectoral evaluation is rare. While the assessment is led by One World Trust, target organizations are invited to share information for a more inclusive process.

Many donor-led civil society assessments are internal documents used to assess capacity for partnership in project implementation; even when they are published, the methods are rarely publicly available. CIDA's 'Organizational Assessment Guide' is an exception: this tool is designed to be ready for any organization to use. While it reflects the donor's priorities, it was developed in consultation with civil society. The method emphasizes outcomes, helping users turn assessment findings into action.

External civil society assessments specific to challenging political environments are addressed in Box 5.

**Box 5: Assessments in challenging environments**

Two assessments in this guide focus specifically on CSOs in challenging political environments: UNDP Sudan's 'Mapping and Capacity Assessment of Civil Society Organizations in Darfur' and the Palestine Economic Policy Research Institute (Mas)'s 'Mapping Palestinian Non-Governmental Organizations'. Both methods examine CSOs in the unique position of providing services in the absence of a functioning state apparatus – something that requires special treatment in the assessment. They also face particular challenges in obtaining data that are addressed through methodological adaptation.

The complexities of the Darfur context as listed in Sudan's 'Mapping and Capacity Assessment of Civil Society Organizations in Darfur' include areas still involved in conflict, camps for the internally displaced, remote rural areas, and rebel-held territories. It includes questions such as whether CSOs are involved in peace-building and conflict resolution. Data collection was limited by a security situation that deteriorated after the terms of reference were published.

'Mapping Palestinian Non-Governmental Organizations' addressed the challenges of a conflict situation in occupied territories. For example, the method surveyed NGOs about changes in programmes, strategies and objectives resulting from the second Intifada. It asked about the impact of restrictions imposed by the occupation, and the unique role of NGOs in development in the occupied territories. The scope of the study was circumscribed by an inability to reach all target NGOs, especially those in the Gaza Strip.

It is interesting to note that, despite some context-specific details, a large portion of these methods would be applicable in any country. Thus, although challenging environments may require some unique methodological features, the fundamental aspects of civil society to be assessed remain the same.

### *CSO self-assessment*

Self-assessment, in which a CSO conducts an evaluation of itself, is an opportunity for CSOs to take the initiative to view their own performance and instigate positive change. It demonstrates a commitment to accountable programming and means that CSOs can conduct the assessment that best fits their needs, as opposed to allowing an external and perhaps more powerful group to set the agenda. Furthermore, self-assessment is integral to self-regulation of the civil society sector, through which CSOs strive to maintain and demonstrate high standards within their own operations. Self-regulation improves CSO performance and external perceptions.

There are many methods for CSO self-assessment, covering a range of objectives. For example, NGO Manager developed the 'Organisational Assessment Tool' with the specific goal of helping NGOs improve their performance. The tool applies SWOT analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats), a common method for strategic planning, to every question in the assessment method in order to prepare the implementer for action on each point. Another tool focused on outcomes is One World Trust's 'Civil Society Accountability: Principles and Practice' (see Box 6).

#### **Box 6: One World Trust's 'Civil Society Accountability: Principles and Practice'**

One World Trust, a UK-based CSO, developed the 'Civil Society Accountability' series of toolkits to identify good practices and weaknesses in CSO accountability principles and to provide practical tools to enable CSOs to be more accountable in their daily activities. Each toolkit was developed for a specific country or region based on a common framework. One World Trust engaged local CSO partners to lead a participatory design process involving a range of stakeholders. Toolkits have been developed for Belize, India, Uganda, and the Pacific region.

Some assessments are considered an end in themselves: the implementation process is a learning experience, and the final results are kept on hand for any potential uses that might arise. In contrast, 'Civil Society Accountability' is designed to translate evaluation into change. The method is brief, but it is accompanied by extensive documentation on how each response can lead to action. For example, there are tips on how to engage busy members of a CSO umbrella group in consultations if they are not actively involved in policy and strategy. There are also tools to use for everything from how to report financial information to effectively involving beneficiaries in learning and reflection events.

Although each toolkit is designed for a specific country or region, the common framework means that some aspects can be compared across countries. Moreover, given how it was designed, the method could easily be adapted to additional countries or regions.

'Civil Society Accountability' is solely a qualitative method and does not produce statistics, which might be more attention-grabbing than a narrative report. Since it only launched in spring 2010, it has not demonstrated its impact yet.

Another class of assessment method is more focused on standards. This relates to the large number of existing certification processes for CSOs but is specific to those that include a self-assessment method. For example, the Poverty Eradication Network (PEN) in Kenya led a collaborative initiative to develop a set of long-term so-called 'aspirational standards'. PEN paired these standards with a self-assessment tool that can be used to measure CSO performance against them ('Kenya CSO Standards'). PEN also provides management consulting services, which among other things can help CSOs meet the standards. The Philippine Council for NGO Certification (PCNC) offers similar services (see Box 7). The World Association of Non-Governmental Organizations (WANGO)'s 'Compliance Manual' is not linked to consulting services; it allows NGOs to assess whether they are acting in accordance with the 'Code of Ethics & Conduct for NGOs'. This code was developed by a global committee of NGO leaders in order to consolidate and build on existing codes. The 'Compliance Manual' forms the basis for a self-certification process.<sup>11</sup>

**Box 7: The PCNC 'Guidebook on the Basics of NGO Governance'**

The Philippine Council for NGO Certification (PCNC) is a CSO whose primary function is certification of NGOs. To this end, it developed the 'Guidebook on the Basics of NGO Governance'.

The Guidebook is designed to help NGOs learn to become better managed. It is written for small and newly formed NGOs, although other organizations are encouraged to use it as well. The format is similar to a workbook, in which definitions and other useful information are printed in the margins and space is given in each chapter to write notes. This makes the Guidebook accessible for organizations that might never previously have conducted an assessment.

The Guidebook is also tied to an optional certification process provided by PCNC. Certification can give small CSOs more exposure and credibility, improving their access to donors and other target audiences. Moreover, certification from the PCNC enables local organizations to receive tax-exempt donations.

The Guidebook was not developed according to certain principles of international good practice, such as a participatory process for design of the method or attention to issues of gender and poverty in the questions. This reflects different local priorities but also means that CSOs that implement the Guidebook may be missing these key aspects. The Guidebook was specifically designed for the Philippines, so any adaptation for other country contexts would benefit from attention to such areas. Nevertheless, the PCNC Guidebook remains one of the most widely used and cited local assessment methods.

With more cachet in the business world, the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI)'s 'Sustainability Reporting Framework' has been thoroughly adapted for NGOs, enabling these organizations to evaluate themselves against a set of standards comparable to those used by major corporations on human rights, labour and the environment. GRI's global reputation places participating NGOs among world-class peers such as Fortune 500 companies, but its impact is sometimes debated. A very different angle on standards is donor certification: AusAID has

<sup>11</sup> A useful database of civil society self-regulatory initiatives has been developed by One World Trust. It is available at [www.oneworldtrust.org/csoproject/](http://www.oneworldtrust.org/csoproject/)

an accreditation process for NGOs seeking funding that involves a self-assessment (the 'NGO Accreditation Criteria Table') followed by an external review.

Another class of self-assessment methods are those designed to be easy to implement. While these may cover similar topics to other methods, these tools are specifically intended for first-time users or others who require additional guidance. For example, Observatorio del Tercer Sector's 'La Transparencia y la Rendicion de Cuentas', which helps CSO boards integrate measures to improve their transparency, and HelpArgentina's 'Herramienta de Autoevaluacion', which examines internal governance, have both streamlined their methods and require limited evaluation expertise. The 'Herramienta' automatically generates basic ratings and comparisons when the assessment is completed on the HelpArgentina website, further simplifying the assessment process.





## 3. Current trends in civil society assessments

Based on the current landscape of civil society assessments, a number of trends can be highlighted.

### **There is consistent interest in civil society assessment**

Over the past 10 years, new and innovative civil society assessment methods have continued to be published on a regular basis. As shown in Figure 1 [separate document], the launch years of the assessment methods highlighted in the source guide are roughly evenly distributed since 2000, and the information sources have been implemented quite steadily over the same time period. Thus, interest in civil society assessment has not waned over the years, nor has the drive to develop and release new methods. This reflects the interest in accountability and strengthening civil society described above ('Why do we need to assess civil society?').

### **Self-assessment is on the rise**

Civil society assessments are still most often led by donors. However, CSO-led assessments have become not only more common but also easier to implement. This is due in particular to the wealth of methods for self-assessment, which give CSOs options and allow them to conduct an evaluation on their own terms. Self-assessment tools such as the Observatorio del Tercer Sector's 'La Transparencia y la Rendición de Cuentas', One World Trust's 'Civil Society Accountability', and GRI's 'Sustainability Report Framework for NGOs' have all been developed as recently as 2007–2009. There is also a trend towards good practice standards, such as those developed by Kenya PEN, in face of increasing external scrutiny. This is in addition to CSO-led evaluations that are not self-assessments, such as the CSI. Even donor-led tools are recognizing the importance of engaging with their object of evaluation and including CSOs in the data-gathering process (see Box 8).

### **The core dimensions for assessment are capacity and engagement**

This publication recognizes five dimensions covered by assessment methods: capacity, engagement, environment, governance, and impact (see Box 9). The differences among these are explained in more detail in the source guide. In addition, gender and poverty aspects are also highlighted if they are an integral focus of the methods (see Box 10).

Although a full range of assessment methods exists covering all of these dimensions, some topics garner more attention than others. Specifically, civil society assessments are most likely to cover civil society capacity (i.e. human and other resources) and engagement (with both beneficiary and governmental stakeholders), based on the methods gathered for this publication (see Table 3). The former is quite understandable: CSO-led assessments

**Box 8: Participatory assessments**

Broad participation of stakeholders is key for effective civil society assessment, i.e. assessment that is judged as legitimate and accurate by CSOs themselves and that is relevant to their needs. The wide reach of civil society activity means that it cannot be thoroughly understood without the involvement of a range of actors. Furthermore, participation facilitates ownership of results, which is essential for spurring positive change.

Broadly speaking, current assessment methods for civil society are highly participatory, meaning that they recommend engagement with a range of stakeholders during multiple stages of the assessment process. It is encouraging to note that nearly all methods in the source guide do this during the data-gathering stage (as opposed to relying on the perceptions of outsiders). This is true whether or not the assessment is led by a CSO and represents a positive trend over earlier expert-based assessment methods. An additional positive trend is that many of the methods were also participatory in their development, bringing together a diverse group for consultation. CSO-led assessments are those most likely to be participatory, but some donor-led exercises also use assessments as an opportunity to engage with CSOs (see Box 2).

However, as stated in the 'Guide Synergie Qualité', "While the desire to work in a participatory manner is often real (no one can say that they are 'against' this), reality quickly reminds us that it is not just a matter of wanting to do it."<sup>i</sup> In fact, although participatory methods exist, implementation lags. Despite the prevalence of participatory methods, few CSO-led methods have been completed using a process that includes a range of stakeholders. For example, a review by One World Trust of current practice in self-regulation of advocacy NGOs found that beneficiary participation in development, implementation and evaluation of NGO advocacy work was lacking.<sup>ii</sup> The review laments the fact that such organizations may promote participation in aid and development while failing to include disadvantaged groups in the evaluation of their own advocacy. Such a double standard can often seep into practice.

Traditionally marginalized groups may face challenges to inclusion from a failure of assessors to engage with them or even because the groups representing them may be less likely to implement an assessment. While there are clearly many reasons for this, including lack of awareness or capacity, another challenge is the elite nature of certain CSOs. In some countries, the massive influx of foreign aid for civil society has fostered an elite tier that works for CSOs but might be out of touch with society more generally. Because these CSOs may be more dependent on donors than on local members, they may not have contact with local stakeholders, and public participation may be outside their scope of activity. A failure of these groups to integrate into society not only produces less effective programming but can result in societal segmentation and antagonism. It is, therefore, important not just to emphasize a process that includes people outside the CSO in a general fashion, but one that specifically includes stakeholders representing all groups in society. The geographical and social distribution of society must be considered in this regard.

An example of how to engage stakeholders in a participatory process is the World Bank's ARVIN assessment. To implement ARVIN, the first step is a stakeholder analysis to identify individuals and institutions with an interest in the assessment process (e.g. government, lawyers, and civil society representatives). Based on this analysis, participants are chosen

for an orientation workshop that identifies participants for the assessment process, which includes interviews, focus groups, workshops, and surveys. Stakeholders can also comment on the assessment process and make recommendations at an introductory workshop. At the end, the ARVIN assessment produces an analysis of the constraints to CSOs in the legal framework and a set of recommendations for legal and policy reform.

Another interesting way to engage the public in an assessment is through a social audit. While social audits are a common method for evaluating government and specifically public services, they have been used less often to examine civil society. CIET's 'Voice of Poor Households' is a prominent exception. In addition, both the Centre for Good Governance and the Financial Management Service Foundation have developed methods specific for social audit of CSOs. (See also 'External civil society assessment'.)

It may be too easy to take for granted that civil society assessments reflect the priorities and concerns of civil society, when in fact they may only portray a single viewpoint. Only through full participation can the goal of effective and accurate assessment be achieved.

<sup>i</sup>'Guide Synergie Qualité', Coordination SUD, 2005.

<sup>ii</sup>Michael Hammer, Charlotte Rooney, and Shana Warren, 'Addressing Accountability in NGO Advocacy', One World Trust, March 2010.

are foremost concerned with capacity because resources are always the greatest obstacle, and donors want to know about capacity so that they can design programmes that can contribute to an enabling environment for civil society. Meanwhile, the focus on engagement is encouraging, as it indicates a widespread push to ensure that CSOs are rejecting an elitist model and communicating with stakeholders to take their interests into account.

Assessments of civil society impact (i.e. on social and policy outcomes) and governance are fewer but more or less evenly distributed among available methods. However, while many CSO-led information sources cover environment (i.e. context for civil society), most of these do not offer a publicly available method, and environment is rarely covered by the available assessment methods reviewed here. This may reflect a perceived preference among donors or other audiences for knowledge of the other dimensions or a reliance on international sources for that information.

### **Many assessments do not require major investment**

The idea of embarking on a civil society assessment can be daunting: the scope is broad, and some assessments require considerable human and financial resources. However, an informative and useful assessment need not involve major investments of time and money. Many available methods can be conducted using knowledge the organizational staff should already possess and can easily apply. In fact, assessment methods tend to fall into two categories: those that require only a few hours of desk-based work, and those that involve detailed methodological processes and field work.

### **Box 9: Sample Indicators**

This Users' Guide recognizes five dimensions covered by assessment methods: capacity, engagement, environment, governance, and impact. The following are examples of each dimension, drawn from different sources that appear in the source guide, to display the variety of available methodologies.

#### *Capacity*

- Are there enough skilled staff to implement program/project activities? (PCNC 'Guidebook on the Basics of NGO Governance')
- When it is appropriate, does the organization partner with other NGOs and civil society organizations who share similar missions and values to support the achievement of common objectives? (WANGO's 'Compliance Manual')
- We routinely offer staff training. (POET)

#### *Engagement*

- The organization establishes particular times when consultations are organized with major stakeholders to promote debate on policy issues, advocacy, needs assessment, funding, project design, implementation, monitoring and impact assessment. (NGO Manager's 'Organisational Assessment Tool')
- For [the following], could you tell me whether you are an official leader, an active member, an inactive member, or not a member: some other voluntary association or community group. ('Afrobarometer')

#### *Environment*

- Laws governing CSOs should be written and administered so that it is relatively quick, easy, and inexpensive for all persons (including natural and legal persons) to register or incorporate a CSO as a legal person. (International Center for Not-for-Profit Law's 'Checklist for CSO Laws')
- In practice, the government does not create barriers to the organization of new anti-corruption/good governance CSOs. (Global Integrity's 'Integrity Indicators')

#### *Governance*

- The CSO demonstrates accountable and proper utilization of resources as agreed. The CSO reports in a timely manner to donors and other relevant stakeholders. (PEN's 'Kenyan CSO Standards')
- The procedure adopted for the appointment of new Board members is democratic. (Pakistan Centre for Philanthropy's 'NPO Certification Model')
- Your organization incorporates learning from project and programme evaluations into the strategic planning process. (One World Trust's 'Civil Society Accountability')

#### *Impact*

- What changes in people's lives occurred as a result of the NGO's programs? (Peace Corps's 'NGO Capacity Profile')
- How has the hostel facility helped you? (Centre for Good Governance's 'Social Audit')

### **Box 10: Gender and Poverty Indicators**

Examples of indicators for measuring gender and poverty aspects in programme design and implementation include:

#### *Gender*

- NGO policy for promoting gender equality, tools for analysing diversity, and actions taken to enhance diversity (Global Reporting Initiative)
- How are women affected by the topics under consideration? (Assessment of Operating Environment for CSO/NGOs in Ethiopia)

#### *Poverty*

- Ensure voices of a range of actors are heard – men and women, the poorest and most vulnerable (One World Trust's 'Civil Society Accountability')
- How the constituency is encouraged to manage its own affairs and become self-reliant (CARE International's 'Participatory Capacity Assessment Tool')

### **Assessment tools can be adapted to suit specific contexts**

Often CSOs and external actors want to assess a certain aspect within organizational development or conduct assessments at various levels (local or national). The usefulness of an assessment tool, therefore, depends on its adaptability to meet these needs. Many of the assessment tools considered here are easily adaptable to suit specific contexts and allow for the use of certain components of the tool to target specific issues as opposed to conducting a whole assessment. Users could also combine elements from different tools to suit their context.

### **Progress on gender and poverty but room for improvement**

Many civil society assessments in this guide place special focus on how CSOs consider gender and poverty aspects and incorporate them in programme design and implementation (see Box 10). A few methods stand out in this regard.

Some include specific questions or even entire sections relating to gender or poverty. For example, under programme effectiveness, GRI includes an aspect called 'Programme Design and Implementation – Gender and Diversity' that reviews an NGO's policies for equality, tools for analysing diversity, and actions taken towards promoting diversity. POET includes a section on equitable participation that requests assessors to examine projects in consideration of measures to ensure equitable access to and benefit from project activities and equity in design and implementation. Christian Relief & Development Association's 'Assessment of the Operating Environment for CSO/NGOs in Ethiopia' includes a section at the end of the report on how women are uniquely affected by the topics under consideration.

The 'Guide Synergie Qualité' gives some of the most extensive guidance on how to mainstream sensitivity to gender and other disadvantaged groups into project activities. It includes a full chapter on the role of affected populations, in which users can evaluate in detail how well they engage with different groups. For example, this chapter includes a section on ensuring that participatory evaluation truly integrates all groups. There is also a chart for completion of who is engaged and at what stage of the project.

**Table 3: What do civil society assessments measure?**

	Gender focus	Poverty focus	Dimensions				Governance	Impact
			Capacity	Engagement	Environment			
<b>Civil Society Sector Assessments</b>								
Afrobarometer	x	x		x	x			
ARVIN Assessment Framework	x	x	x	x	x			
Assessment of the Operating Environment for CSO/NGOs in Ethiopia	x	x			x			
Auditoria Ciudadana sobre la Calidad de la Democracia	x			x	x	x	x	
Capacity Assessment and Strategy for Developing Capacity of CSOs in the Pacific (UNDP)	x	x	x	x	x	x		
Checklist for CSO Laws					x			
Civil Society Index (CSI)			x	x	x	x	x	
Comparative Nonprofit Sector Project			x					
Democracy Assessment Framework				x	x			
Evaluation of Citizens' Voice and Accountability		x	x		x			x
Global Civil Society Yearbook	x	x			x			
Global Integrity Index					x			
Handbook on Non-Profit Institutions in the System of National Accounts	x	x	x	x				
NGO Sustainability Index	x		x	x	x			x
UNDP Framework for CSO Mapping			x	x	x	x	x	
World Governance Assessment					x			
<b>External Civil Society Assessments</b>								
Global Accountability Report			x	x		x		
NPO Certification Model	x		x	x		x		
The Octagon			x	x		x	x	
Organizational Assessment Guide	x	x	x		x			x
Social Audit: A Toolkit		x		x		x		x
UNDP CSO Capacity Assessment Tool			x	x	x	x		
<b>CSO Self-assessments</b>								
Civil Society Accountability: Principles and Practice. A Toolkit for CSOs	x	x		x		x		
Compliance Manual			x			x		
Guide Synergie Qualité	x	x	x					
Guidebook on the Basics of NGO Governance			x					
Herramienta de Autoevaluación para Organizaciones de la Sociedad Civil	x		x					
Kenyan CSO Standards	x		x			x		
NGO Accreditation Criteria Table	x	x	x	x		x		
NGO Capacity Profile	x	x	x	x				x
Organisational Assessment Tool	x		x	x				x
Participatory Organizational Evaluation Tool (POET)	x	x	x	x				x
Participatory Capacity Assessment Tool (CARE)	x	x	x	x		x		x
Sustainability Reporting Framework	x	x	x	x		x		x
La Transparencia y la Rendición de Cuentas en el Tercer Sector						x		

Other methods attempt to integrate consideration of gender and/or poverty throughout the assessment process. For example, One World Trust specifically included women's organizations in the development of its 'Civil Society Accountability' method, helping to ensure that all questions were gender-sensitive. In terms of implementation, the Peace Corps's 'NGO Capacity Profile' reminds assessors "It is essential to consciously seek to involve those who are often ignored – the poor, women, minorities, the very young, and the very old. They too bring unique assets to the development process."<sup>12</sup> Another way to mainstream these issues is in presentation of data: Afrobarometer disaggregates all findings by gender to enable analysis of men's versus women's viewpoints.

Some assessment tools specifically consider issues of poverty and poor people's inclusion in the design and implementation of projects. For example, POET asks "For the three projects identified in the preceding question set, what specific measures have we taken to ensure that traditionally under-represented stakeholder groups (e.g., rural poor, women, ethnic minorities) have equitable access to project activities?" One World Trust's 'Civil Society Accountability' states "Identify who you will speak to within the community. ... You also need to ensure that the voices of a range of people are heard – men and women, the poorest and most vulnerable." AusAID's 'NGO Accreditation Criteria Table' includes a criterion devoted solely to poverty issues: for accreditation, an organization must have "a demonstrated record of undertaking aid projects/programs consistent with the objectives of the Australian Aid Program of poverty alleviation and sustainable development", which includes indicators such as "Aims/Goal of poverty alleviation and sustainable development should be reflected at all levels of the organization (from the mission statement through to project objectives)." Such examples should be repeated in more assessments.

### **There is a niche for locally produced assessments**

Most civil society assessments are produced at the international or national levels. An analysis by ODI found "Most of the funding [for assessments] is either directed at national NGOs and national governments (50%) or channelled through international intermediaries (30%)."<sup>13</sup> However, there are some assessment methods developed at and for the local level. These include PCNC's 'Guidebook on the Basics of NGO Governance', HelpArgentina's 'Herramienta de Autoevaluacion', and Christian Relief & Development Association's 'Assessment of the Operating Environment for CSO/NGOs in Ethiopia'. Interestingly, local initiatives in Kenya, Pakistan, and the Philippines are all tied to certification processes.

Many local methods are not published in English. They also tend to leave out features that are considered good practice at the international level, such as developing the tool through a participatory process (see Box 8) and focusing on poverty. This may indicate a need for greater awareness-raising on these issues at the local level. At the same time, assessments that are produced at the grassroots level and managed by local stakeholders are less likely to be subject to different types of intervention and manipulation than those produced at the international level.

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<sup>12</sup> 'An NGO Training Guide for Peace Corps Volunteers', Peace Corps, 2003.

<sup>13</sup> Marta Foresti et al., 'Evaluation of Citizens' Voice and Accountability', Overseas Development Institute, August 2007.

### **Assessment results could be used more widely**

The results of civil society assessments have been used in a broad range of ways, from improving CSO programming decisions to building advocacy campaigns to strengthening CSO coalitions (see also 'How have civil society assessments been used?'). However, the most common use for civil society assessments remains funding and programmatic decision-making among donors who produce their own assessments. Donors' assessments are perhaps those most likely to be used, since they have been developed with a clear objective in mind. This is a missed opportunity for CSOs, who could benefit from leading their own assessments and taking a more proactive role in the assessment landscape. Thus, it is not only important to conduct more assessments but also to apply the findings to meet CSO goals.

### **Assessments are rarely repeated to track results over time**

Although civil society assessments have been conducted for the past 10 years and longer, there is not yet a strong body of results that demonstrates performance over time. A few information sources have been implemented consistently at regular intervals, especially the broader governance methods but notably USAID's 'NGO Sustainability Index', which has been released annually since 1998. The 'NGO Sustainability Index' offers a wealth of information on trends in Europe and Eurasia. Unfortunately, to date it has been a regional tool that does not provide broader geographic information. Christian Relief & Development Association's 'Assessment of the Operating Environment for CSO/NGOs in Ethiopia' has been implemented multiple times, but it does not include quantitative information and, therefore, it is difficult to discern trends. The CSI has only been implemented twice (once as a pilot), and a third release is planned in 2011 but not with a consistent selection of countries. Few other assessments have been implemented more than once, especially the local and CSO-led assessments that can be most valuable. As a result, there is little systematic knowledge of how CSOs have changed and developed or of global trends over time.

The typical problem of funding shortages is especially acute with respect to repeating assessments over time, as donors tend to support activities with more limited timeframes and faster results. Thus even a method that was designed for repeated implementation may stall after the first release. Only sustained interest and donors' appreciation of the benefits of long-term results will reverse this trend. As stated by Alnoor Ebrahim, researcher on CSO accountability, "The complex nature of development suggests ... that attention to more strategic processes of accountability is necessary for lasting social and political change. ... Developing an internal capacity in NGOs for conducting long-term evaluations of their own work is an essential strategic response."<sup>14</sup> Concentrating on assessment methods that require less investment could help encourage repeated implementation.

### **There is a lack of participation**

As described in Box 8, most available methods were developed in a participatory manner and can be implemented through a participatory process. However, of those assessments that have already been implemented and published, few in fact include broad participation, especially in their method design. This is the case for tools such as the 'NGO Sustainability Index' or the surveys carried out for the United Nations 'National Human Development

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<sup>14</sup> Alnoor Ebrahim, 'Accountability in Practice', *World Development* 31, no. 5: 2003.

Reports' in Bosnia and Egypt. It also holds true for CSO-led assessments such as the Palestine Economic Policy Research Institute's 'Mapping Palestinian Non-Governmental Organizations' and the Afrobarometer.

There are positive examples (see Box 8), and these should be emulated in new assessment methods. Adapting existing methods to be more participatory can easily be done by: (1) identifying key stakeholders (especially through a stakeholder analysis); (2) holding a review workshop in which stakeholders critique and provide recommendations for the existing method; and (3) making revisions accordingly. Furthermore, when new iterations of assessments are implemented, stakeholders should be involved in data collection (through interviews, focus groups, surveys etc.). This will ensure that assessments are effective and accurate.

### **Assessments rarely look at how programming decisions are made**

Among various types of assessment, touching on different stages of CSO programming, a gap remains. Although many assessments evaluate CSO transparency, and transparency is a concept generally promoted among CSOs, little evaluation has been done of the reasons behind how programming decisions were made or the related point of whether a CSO is transparent on this subject. That is, assessments rarely examine whether there is evidence for why a CSO has embarked on one set of activities, project, advocacy plan etc. over another.

As One World Trust's review of NGO self-regulation states, current initiatives "are particularly weak in terms of commitments to disclose forward looking information, including the advocating organizations' rationale for advocating on a particular issue".<sup>15</sup> In many instances, this is because assessment is driven instead by donor funds and priorities. An exception is One World Trust's own 'Civil Society Accountability' method, which inquires whether CSOs incorporate learning from project and programme evaluations into the strategic planning process. The Pakistan Centre for Philanthropy's 'NPO Certification Model' also inquires about collection of baseline data for programmes. Nevertheless, the trend is problematic, as it reflects a lack of accountability in CSO programming and may also indicate that many CSOs in fact do not have any evidence to support their decisions.

Not only do many assessments fail to look back to programme planning, but they are also not used for future planning. A CSO might not have the capacity to follow up the recommendations, or other priorities might derail the momentum once an assessment is complete. Just as programme decisions should be based on evidence, the evidence garnered should be used. Only then will CSOs achieve real effectiveness and accountability.

### **Recommendations for designing effective assessments**

In conclusion, several characteristics can be recommended as beneficial for effective assessment.

#### *Ownership*

For the results of a civil society assessment to be used to effect change, the CSOs involved must be committed to it. This requires that they have ownership of the results: a feeling that

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<sup>15</sup> Michael Hammer, Charlotte Rooney, and Shana Warren, 'Addressing Accountability in NGO Advocacy', One World Trust, March 2010.

the findings are theirs (at least in part), and that they as CSOs are essential to future outcomes. Ownership is thus an integral part of turning results into positive change.

The best way to give CSOs ownership is to allow them to lead the assessment process. Barring that, civil society should be involved as much as possible, both in the design and implementation of assessments. To ensure CSO commitment, CSOs should be included early in the process, while simultaneously taking into account the many other demands on their time and resources.

#### *Accountability*

Civil society assessments naturally increase CSO accountability, as they reveal sometimes opaque practices and provide evidence as a foundation for future action. Even seemingly negative findings about CSO performance are useful, as they will be recognized as the product of commitment to accountability. CSO-led assessments in particular show that CSOs are prepared to hold themselves to the same standards to which they hold others.

Accountability not only includes internal governance but also accountable programming. This means planning activities that are in line with the organization's mission and that are founded in evidence-based decision-making. Assessments can help reveal whether this has been the case.

#### *Participation*

Effective civil society assessments plainly require broad participation of stakeholders (see Box 8). This ensures that the extent of the sector is fully understood and that stakeholders have ownership of results (see above). Participation can occur in a number of ways. Ideally CSOs will lead the assessment process, but they can also participate in method design, data collection, review and distribution of an externally led process through focus groups, interviews, and surveys. In addition to general participation of civil society, it is also important that all groups represented in society have a voice at all stages, including women and poor people. Given that such groups are traditionally excluded, reaching out to them in a proactive manner is essential. Full representation of stakeholders will make assessments more accurate and beneficial.

CSOs may face fragmentation and competition within civil society itself due to differing funding levels, locations, represented populations etc.; nevertheless, there is generally more to be gained from cooperation and collaboration. CSOs should reach out to similar groups to discuss how they can divide responsibilities and team up to maximize their effectiveness. Working on a common project, including but not limited to an assessment, can increase dialogue and build relationships. A CSO umbrella group can also facilitate communication and cooperation among organizations.

How broad the participation should be is a question that must be determined on a case-by-case basis. Each society has a different set of groups to be represented. A strong stakeholder analysis<sup>16</sup> will identify more groups than can be realistically engaged, and resources will generally limit how many participants can be involved. Moreover, too many voices at the

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<sup>16</sup> There are many methods for stakeholder analysis. One useful guide is WWF's 'Stakeholder Analysis: Cross-cutting Tool', available at [assets.panda.org/downloads/1\\_1\\_stakeholder\\_analysis\\_11\\_01\\_05.pdf](https://assets.panda.org/downloads/1_1_stakeholder_analysis_11_01_05.pdf).

table can undermine effective data gathering, especially in a focus group. Broad participation is important, but it must be balanced with good management of available resources.

#### *Transparency*

Transparency both allows assessment results to benefit the widest audience and improves accountability by demonstrating that “the organization in question has nothing to hide”.<sup>17</sup> Transparent assessments require full publication of the assessment development process, method, and results. This may include names of people involved, sources referenced, evidence for decision-making etc. Results should be published in full and distributed freely.

Transparency is an advantage that nearly all CSO-led assessments have over those implemented externally, as the latter generally publish limited information. Like accountability, transparency is a value promoted by CSOs that must be likewise upheld internally.

In some situations, full transparency may not be advisable. For example, if an assessment generates findings that could jeopardize a CSO’s activity because they will be sensitive for an antagonistic government, full publication may not make sense. Each CSO must evaluate its context individually and take this into consideration while still attempting to maximize transparency as much as possible.

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<sup>17</sup> Lisa Jordan, ‘Mechanisms for NGO Accountability’, Global Public Policy Institute research paper, 2005.





## 4. Conducting a civil society assessment

This section guides the reader through the process of conducting a civil society assessment. It is directed at individual users who are interested in assessment design and implementation.

### How to choose an assessment method

After deciding to conduct an assessment, a few initial steps should be followed. This is true whether or not you intend to use the tools included here in the source guide.

1. *Determine your objectives*

The first step in any assessment process is to know your objectives. Determine what you are trying to accomplish and who your target audience is. For example, are you trying to raise awareness, advocate an issue to the government or demonstrate accountability to potential funding sources? Is your audience local government, other CSOs, academics, the media or donors? The objective of the assessment should be in line with your organization's mission statement.

2. *Civil society sector vs. individual CSO(s)*

After you have determined your objectives, it should be clear whether you wish to evaluate the civil society sector as a whole or an individual CSO or group of CSOs. Assessment methods are designed for one or the other.

In the source guide for this publication, methods for assessing the civil society sector as a whole are listed as covering the assessment category 'civil society sector'. The assessment categories for assessing individual or a few CSOs are 'external civil society assessment' and 'CSO self-assessment'. Which of the latter two you use depends on who is conducting the assessment.

3. *Quantitative vs. qualitative*

There are many reasons to include numerical indicators as part of your assessment process (see 'Quantitative assessment methods' above), and whether you include them should be determined by your objectives. For example, if your objective is to raise awareness through a media campaign, quantitative results may be attractive, as they are most likely to be picked up in news stories. Likewise, if you intend to demonstrate improvement over time, numerical results will be easier to compare. Quantitative data can also be more useful in effecting policy change, as government officials are often swayed more by numbers than by anecdotal evidence. In contrast, it can be more challenging to generate quantitative results, especially those based on statistical methods, and fewer available methods include a quantitative component. Moreover, some concepts are too abstract or complex to be effectively measured in numbers.

Therefore, it is worth considering whether or not your objectives make numerical results a priority. Sometimes a combination of qualitative and quantitative is best.

4. *Dimensions*

It will also be necessary to determine which dimensions of civil society should be evaluated to meet your objectives. The source guide uses a modified version of the dimensions CIVICUS uses in the CSI.

For example, if your objective is to consider whether CSOs have effected change, **impact** should be assessed. To understand CSO networks, or to reveal the level of resources with which a CSO is functioning, **capacity** should be included. **Engagement** should be evaluated if you aim to determine how well CSOs reach out to their beneficiaries and other stakeholders. To show CSO accountability practices and the ways in which CSOs meet the standards they hold up for others, **governance** is relevant. And to determine the context in which civil society is operating, especially in situations in which it faces contravening forces, **environment** will give the relevant information. All of these dimensions are covered, often in combination, by the tools in the source guide (see also Table 3).

5. *Challenging contexts*

While every environment in which civil society functions presents its own unique challenges, some contexts merit particular attention through methodological adaptation. In circumstances such as a weak system of rule of law or a conflict, a civil society assessment may require specially adapted questions that can dig deeper into the impact on civil society and how CSOs are encouraging change. On the other hand, in situations where CSOs are perceived as partners of the state, assessment may be used to create a nuanced understanding of official practices and how CSOs fit within and outside them.

6. *Other considerations*

Your objectives may dictate a range of other considerations, including a regional focus, coordination with a national or local civil society or other governance strategy, donor engagement to ensure an enabling environment for civil society or internal considerations such as human or financial resources.

For example, if the assessment is part of a regional programme that evaluates civil society across several comparable jurisdictions, it may be important to highlight the similarities as well as contrast the differences. This is the case in One World Trust's 'Civil Society Accountability: Principles and Practice', which has an adapted methodology for the Pacific region. Many of the island states in this region face similar challenges from small population size and limited economies, but they have seen varying experiences in terms of national governance – factors that are taken into account in the method. More details of special considerations are outlined in the source guide under individual tools.

As another example, if your organization lacks capacity and does not have access to external expertise, a simpler method should be selected. Table 4 lists all of the assessment methods included in the source guide according to the level of resources required to implement them as well as the amount of documentation provided as guidance with the method.

**Table 4: Assessment methods, from easiest to most difficult to implement**

<b>Name of tool</b>	<b>Resources required</b>	<b>Documentation provided</b>
Guidebook on the Basics of NGO Governance	low: desk research	high: step-by-step guide
Civil Society Accountability: Principles and Practice. A Toolkit for CSOs	low: desk research	high: full report
La Transparencia y la Rendición de Cuentas en el Tercer Sector	low: desk research	high: extensive explanation, especially given simple method
Accountability Self-Assessment	low: checklist with scores that are automatically calculated	high: several worksheets
The Octagon	low: desk research	medium: some documentation, plus Excel document for generating octagon
Checklist for CSO Laws	low: desk research	medium: some documentation
Compliance Manual	low: desk research	low: minimal explanations
Sustainability Reporting Framework	low: desk research	low: minimal explanations, although some background info provided
Kenyan CSO Standards	low: desk research	low: minimal explanations
Herramienta de Autoevaluación para Organizaciones de la Sociedad Civil	low: desk research	low: minimal explanations
Guide Synergie Qualité	average: long method, but can be done with desk research	high: extensive documentation
Organizational Assessment Guide	average: many steps, but not especially challenging	high: extensive documentation
NGO Capacity Profile	average: many steps, but not especially challenging	high: extensive documentation
NPO Certification Model	average: many steps, but not especially challenging	medium: some documentation
NGO Accreditation Criteria Table	average: many steps, but not especially challenging	medium: some documentation
Organisational Assessment Tool	average: short form, plus SWOT analysis	low: brief introduction only
Participatory Capacity Assessment Tool	average: comprehensive questionnaire, option to use external facilitator	high: extensive documentation
UNDP CSO Capacity Assessment Tool	average: comprehensive assessment tool but not especially challenging	high: extensive documentation (tool available, accessible and adaptable)
Democracy Assessment Framework	high: very comprehensive, requires broad expertise	high: extensive documentation
Social Audit: A Toolkit	high: conducting surveys requires expertise	high: extensive documentation
UNDP Framework for CSO Mapping	high: quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis requires expertise	medium: framework available but requires specific adaptation and elaboration.
Handbook on Non-Profit Institutions in the System of National Accounts	high: technical knowledge of statistics required	high: extensive documentation
Participatory Organizational Evaluation Tool (POET)	high: statistical analysis required	medium: strong level of documentation, but given the complexity one might require more, and qualitative portions are minimally documented

## **Building on existing assessment methods**

After you determine the objectives and key features of your assessment, it is important to consider whether you will develop a new method from scratch or build on an existing method. The decision should be based on your needs as well as available expertise. The source guide in this publication is designed to facilitate such adaptation and enhancement. It includes a broad range of methods that can apply to varied purposes, many of which can be adapted without changing their fundamental features.

The flow chart (above) can be used as guidance when selecting from the tools in the source guide [flow chart in separate document]. The flow chart includes both assessment methods and those information sources that publish their complete methods, as all can be used for adaptation. The flow chart begins with Step 2 from the previous section: the choice between evaluation of the civil society sector as a whole or individual CSOs. From there, the choices under civil society sector are different from those under individual CSOs.

The flow chart presents two main groups of assessment methods under 'Assessment of civil society sector': those that evaluate civil society within a broader governance context and those that do not. Within these groups, the governance tools are distinguished by their focus within governance: democracy, corruption etc. The tools specific to CSOs are differentiated based on their objectives: to evaluate the legal framework, to support statistical reporting, to use the findings to produce further outcomes etc. It is not specified whether tools that evaluate the civil society sector include a quantitative component, as nearly all do.

Under 'Assessment of individual CSO(s)', the two main groups in the flowchart are those that produce quantitative results and those that are only qualitative. Each of these groups then breaks down between CSO self-assessments on the one hand and external assessments conducted by an organization other than the target CSO (donors, other CSOs etc.) on the other. Further differentiation is based on various characteristics of the methods.

You can also select methods for adaptation based on other details in the source guide, such as comparing your objectives against those listed for each tool. The strengths and weaknesses section of the source guide is also informative in determining whether a tool meets your needs. Contact information is provided for all tools, and you are encouraged to explore the individual methods on your own.

The final step is to do the adaptation itself. Some methods may seem ready 'off the shelf', depending on your needs. In other cases, a new method may be developed essentially from scratch. However, in either case it is always advisable to consider the draft method thoroughly through a participatory process involving key stakeholders before implementation.

For many CSOs new to assessment, the CSI should be considered as a possible starting point. It is well researched and comprehensive, and it has considerable international clout and the support of the CIVICUS network. However, the CSI is not appropriate for all assessment needs. If you find yourself facing many special considerations for which the CSI would require significant adaptation, a more flexible, locally produced method might be preferable. In face of severe resource constraints, many assessments are simpler to implement than the CSI. Moreover, CSI implementation is generally conducted simultaneously across many countries as part of an international effort – a schedule which may not fit with local needs.

## Overcoming obstacles

As for any activity, there are many obstacles to conducting a sound civil society assessment. This section details some of the ways in which common challenges can be overcome.

### *Challenge 1: Financing*

*Solution:* Finding funding is most CSOs' greatest challenge. However, assessments should be considered an opportunity rather than a burden. Most donors will look favourably on a commitment to evaluation; if they do not, refer to the section above on 'Why do we need to assess civil society?'. International affiliation with a CSO umbrella group can help fundraising as well. In addition, volunteers can be an invaluable resource when it is not possible to pay staff. If financing remains a challenge, there are many methods that require no more than your staff and a small amount of time. Such an assessment may even be an opening for further fundraising in the future.

### *Challenge 2: Capacity for data gathering and analysis*

*Solution:* Some CSOs have expertise in programming but lack research staff, making data gathering seem intimidating. The skills required for designing and conducting participatory research methods, drafting survey questionnaires, leading effective focus groups, analysing data etc. should not be underestimated. A first step is fundraising for capacity-building, which donors regularly support. Another option is collaboration or partnership with other interested groups who can bring additional skills to the table, or recruitment of volunteers. Whichever route is pursued, it is prudent to select a method that fits with your capacity. Comprehensive assessments can be taxing on a CSO's staff time and attention, and a simple yet sound assessment is preferable to one that is ambitious but incomplete.

### *Challenge 3: Political environment*

*Solution:* A hostile political environment, particularly a government that is antagonistic to or even suspicious of civil society, can severely constrict assessment. Violence and conflict are also challenges. In such circumstances, it is important to gauge the situation and act within the limitations. Keeping your objectives and mission in mind can help. For example, are you seeking to challenge the government or find a way to work together? Or are you more concerned with raising general awareness? The process should be conducted in a manner corresponding to your goals. In some situations, this may mean being selective in the results that are publicized. Challenging circumstances require imagination and flexibility – both of which are characteristics that affected CSOs likely already possess. CSOs should also draw on support from local representatives of international actors when possible.

### *Challenge 4: Availability of data*

*Solution:* In some contexts, data are scarce. The national statistical office may not collect information on CSOs, and governance assessments may not have been conducted. Poor communication and transportation infrastructure may also make it difficult to conduct surveys or interviews in some parts of the country. These challenges are especially relevant for evaluations of the civil society sector, as comparative data may be difficult to obtain. Under such circumstances, alternative sources should be sought. For example, case studies or focus groups can serve as a representative sample if government statistics are lacking. If resources permit, surveys can be conducted. If assessment is new or underdeveloped in your context, any contribution you can make will be significant.

*Challenge 5: Maintaining international standards at the local level*

*Solution:* Home-grown assessments are those best placed to capture local particularities and to have the ownership of local CSOs that helps translate results into change. However, local CSOs may also have less contact with international standards such as how to implement sound research techniques or how to take account of gender and poverty issues. The greatest challenge can be awareness that these standards exist at all. This user's guide should provide local CSOs with a more international perspective. Beyond this, CSO networks can help connect a local CSO with national or international information and support. On specific standards, such as gender sensitivity, tailored sources are available, such as The UNDP 'Measuring Democratic Governance: A Framework for Selecting Pro-Poor and Gender-Sensitive Indicators'.<sup>18</sup>

*Challenge 6: Difficulty in assessing impact with so many factors at play*

*Solution:* CSOs perpetually have difficulty assessing the impact of their activities. This is because their work is generally part of a larger and complex process of change whose many contributors cannot be disentangled: linking improvement to any one actor is not only impossible but often inaccurate. Moreover, the outcomes of civil society activity may take many years to manifest themselves, putting them beyond the time-frame for evaluation. To address this, CSO projects should have measurable goals. Even if there are broader objectives that we may or may not witness in our time, it is possible to set short-term goals as well. How to set goals is outside the scope of this publication, but the PCNC Guidebook is one place to start (there is also much publicly available information on this topic). Once measurable goals are set, assessment methods can be applied to them.

*And no matter what ...*

Assessments, like all CSO programming, always benefit from creativity and commitment. Keep the possibilities open and see where it leads you!

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<sup>17</sup> Available at [www.undp.org/oslocentre/docs06/Framework%20paper%20-%20entire%20paper.pdf](http://www.undp.org/oslocentre/docs06/Framework%20paper%20-%20entire%20paper.pdf).

# Source guide

The following pages contain information about 21 civil society assessment methods, and 16 completed assessments whose results may be useful information sources.

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## Assessment methods

### Assessment methods format

<i>Year developed</i>	<i>Applicability</i>	<i>Category of assessment</i>	<i>Dimensions</i>
the year the current method was first published	the regions or countries the method was designed for, as well as what the method assesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• civil society sector (aggregated for all CSOs)</li> <li>• external civil society assessment (individual CSOs evaluated by an external organization such as a donor, another CSO, or academic)</li> <li>• CSO self-assessment (CSO evaluation of itself)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• capacity (human and financial resources, networking)</li> <li>• engagement (both socially based and political)</li> <li>• environment (economic, political, and cultural context in which civil society operates)</li> <li>• governance (commitment to democratic decision-making, fair labour practices, transparency, democratic governance, environmental standards)</li> <li>• impact (on social and policy outcomes)</li> </ul>

#### *Stated objectives*

The objectives of the tool as stated by the producing organization

#### *Methodology*

Highlights from the methodology such as topics evaluated and number of indicators

#### *Data collection*

Method of data collection, sources and types of data

#### *Reporting format*

Kind of information generated (narrative report, survey etc.), including any quantitative component

#### *Ease of implementation*

Level of resources required and amount of documentation provided to assist implementation

#### *Strengths and weaknesses*

The positive and negative characteristics of the tool related to data collection, resources required, uses and applicability, gender sensitivity, pro-poor indicators, participation etc.

#### *Contact details*

Homepage and/or other web resources

#### *Stated objectives*

To assess whether CSO legislation currently on the books or in draft form meets generally accepted international practices

### Checklist for CSO Laws

International Center for Not-for-Profit Law

Year developed	Applicability	Category of assessment	Dimensions
2006	civil society sector worldwide: designed based on laws from over 150 countries	civil society sector	environment

#### Methodology

Four categories of provisions to be included in legislation governing CSOs: protecting fundamental freedoms; integrity and good governance; financial sustainability; accountability and transparency

#### Data collection

Desk research: local laws and codes

#### Reporting format

Qualitative results in yes/no checklist format

#### Ease of implementation

Level of resources: low (desk research)

Documentation provided: medium (some documentation)

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• simple method for comparing legal framework against international standards</li> <li>• could be implemented through a participatory process</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• does not examine de facto situation</li> <li>• lack of a quantitative output limits comparability across time and countries</li> <li>• no formal participatory process for method design</li> <li>• method does not give explicit attention to gender or poverty</li> </ul>

#### Contact details

[www.icnl.org/knowledge/pubs/NPOChecklist.pdf](http://www.icnl.org/knowledge/pubs/NPOChecklist.pdf); Discussion Guide

[www.icnl.org/knowledge/pubs/MTT%20\(eng\).pdf](http://www.icnl.org/knowledge/pubs/MTT%20(eng).pdf)

### **Civil Society Accountability: Principles and Practice. A Toolkit for CSOs [adapted to Belize, India, Uganda, and the Pacific region]**

One World Trust

Year developed	Applicability	Category of assessment	Dimensions
2009	individual CSOs in Belize, India, Uganda, and the Pacific region	CSO self-assessment	engagement governance

#### Stated objectives

To identify common principles of accountability for CSOs in each target country/region; to identify the current good accountability practices that exist among CSOs and identify areas where capacity needs building in the sector; to provide practical tools and frameworks that CSOs can use to achieve accountability in their day-to-day activities and interactions with stakeholders

### *Methodology*

The self-assessment is divided into four main components with underlying accountability standards: accountability basics; accountable governance; accountable programmes; accountable resource management.

### *Data collection*

Implemented individually or in a group, based on personal experience/observation

### *Reporting format*

Qualitative results in report format

### *Ease of implementation*

Level of resources: low (desk research)

Documentation provided: high (full report)

<i>Strengths</i>	<i>Weaknesses</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• provides steps to follow to improve based on findings</li><li>• some provision for cross-country comparison</li><li>• method developed through a participatory process that included gender-focused groups</li><li>• although limited to a few countries, could easily be adapted to other contexts</li><li>• some methodological mention of gender and poverty</li><li>• local partner CSOs were engaged to lead the process in place of One World Trust</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• lack of a quantitative output limits comparability across time and countries</li></ul>

### *Contact details*

[www.oneworldtrust.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=83&Itemid=70](http://www.oneworldtrust.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=83&Itemid=70)

## **Compliance Manual**

*World Association of Non-Governmental Organizations (WANGO)*

<i>Year developed</i>	<i>Applicability</i>	<i>Category of assessment</i>	<i>Dimensions</i>
2002	individual NGOs worldwide: developed through a global consultation process	CSO self-assessment	capacity governance

### *Stated objectives*

To help NGOs assess whether their policies and practices are currently in alignment with the Code of Ethics & Conduct for NGOs

### *Methodology*

The manual is divided into sections, each containing a set of standards: guiding principles; NGO integrity; mission and activities; governance; human resources; public trust; financial and legal; fundraising; partnerships, collaboration and networking.

### *Data collection*

Based on personal experience/observation

### *Reporting format*

Qualitative results in a form: yes/no checklist plus space for elaboration

### *Ease of implementation*

Level of resources: low (desk research)

Documentation provided: low (minimal explanations)

<i>Strengths</i>	<i>Weaknesses</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>part of an internationally recognized NGO consortium and its standards programme</li><li>method presented in a worksheet format for easy implementation</li><li>method developed through a participatory process</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>lack of a quantitative output limits comparability across time and countries</li><li>method does not give explicit attention to gender or poverty</li></ul>

### *Contact details*

[www.wango.org/codeofethics.aspx](http://www.wango.org/codeofethics.aspx)

### **CSO Capacity Assessment Tool**

UNDP

<i>Year developed</i>	<i>Applicability</i>	<i>Category of assessment</i>	<i>Dimensions</i>
2006	individual CSOs	external CSO assessment	capacity engagement environment governance impact

### *Stated objectives*

To assess the capacity of the CSO and its compatibility with UNDP principles and goals, prior to selection as an implementing partner of UNDP programmes

### *Methodology*

The tool contains two parts with 16 components in total. It assesses an organization's mandate, policies and governance; ability to build collaborative relationships with its constituency, external actors including government, donors and other CSOs; technical capacity in the field of expertise; and organizational capacity.

### *Data collection*

Field visit and verifications by UNDP. The tool provides a list of indicators (applicable documents) that can be used to verify the CSO's responses.

### *Reporting format*

Qualitative results and the assessment teams' reflections are included in the final report. Depending on how the tool is adapted, a score can be assigned to each component, and average scores can be calculated.

### *Ease of implementation*

Level of resources: medium (field visit)

Documentation provided: high (tool easily accessible and can be adapted to fit specific needs)

<i>Strengths</i>	<i>Weaknesses</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• tool can be adapted and additional questions and components can be added to meet the specific assessment needs, including poverty and gender focus of an organization</li> <li>• intended to be used by UNDP country offices to select appropriate implementing partners but can be used for CSO self-assessment</li> <li>• potential opportunity to use the results as a baseline; results of any future capacity assessment of an organization can be compared with the baseline to see how the organization has evolved or improved</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• donor-led external assessment</li> <li>• results of the assessment may not be communicated back to the organization</li> <li>• tool looks at the ability of the organization to implement a project and does not give explicit attention to how it incorporates poverty and gender focus</li> </ul>

*Contact details*

[www.undp.org/partners/civil\\_society/publications/CSO\\_Toolkit\\_linked.pdf](http://www.undp.org/partners/civil_society/publications/CSO_Toolkit_linked.pdf)

**Democracy Assessment Framework**

International IDEA

<i>Year developed</i>	<i>Applicability</i>	<i>Category of assessment</i>	<i>Dimensions</i>
first developed in 2000, latest version 2008	political systems worldwide: pilots in all regions in developed and developing countries	civil society sector	engagement environment

*Stated objectives*

To assess the quality of citizens' democracy and define priority areas for policy and democratic reform

*Methodology*

One of the four pillars is civil society and popular participation, encompassing three relevant questions: civil society's extent and independence; citizen participation in civil society; and government cooperation with civil society.

*Data collection*

Flexible implementation by government, donors or CSOs, often using a team of experts that responds based on personal experience/observation

*Reporting format*

Qualitative and optional quantitative results: report format plus ratings

*Ease of implementation*

Level of resources: high (very comprehensive, requires broad experience)

Documentation provided: high (extensive documentation)

<i>Strengths</i>	<i>Weaknesses</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• first major governance assessment to emphasize national ownership</li> <li>• detailed method facilitates implementation</li> <li>• flexible design can incorporate a variety of data-gathering methods and resource levels</li> <li>• places CSO performance within the broader governance context</li> <li>• data gathered through a participatory process</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• lack of a systematized method limits comparability across countries</li> <li>• no consideration of gender or poverty in civil society</li> </ul>

*Contact details*

[www.idea.int/sod/framework/index.cfm](http://www.idea.int/sod/framework/index.cfm)

**Evaluation of Citizens' Voice and Accountability**

Overseas Development Institute

<i>Year developed</i>	<i>Applicability</i>	<i>Category of assessment</i>	<i>Dimensions</i>
2006	voice and accountability systems worldwide; piloted in Benin and Nicaragua	civil society sector	capacity environment impact

*Stated objectives*

To map and document approaches and strategies of development partners for enhancing voice and accountability in a variety of developing country contexts, and to learn lessons on which approaches have worked best, where and why; and to assess effects of a range of donor voice and accountability interventions on governance and aid effectiveness, and whether these effects are sustainable

*Methodology*

The evaluation framework has five components: opportunities, constraints and entry points; institutional, organization and individual capacities; voice and accountability channels: actors and mechanisms; changes in policy, practice, behavior and power relations; broader development outcomes.

*Data collection*

Donor-implemented, based on field research

*Reporting format*

Qualitative results in report format

*Ease of implementation*

Level of resources: high (users have reported implementation as complicated)

Documentation provided: medium (some documentation)

<i>Strengths</i>	<i>Weaknesses</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>flexible method can be adapted to different contexts</li><li>outcome-focused approach facilitates action</li><li>methodological focus on poverty reduction</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>donor-driven for aid purposes; not a CSO-led process</li><li>complex method can be difficult to implement</li><li>lack of a quantitative output limits comparability across time and countries</li><li>no formal participatory process for method design</li><li>method does not give explicit attention to gender</li></ul>

*Contact details*

[www.odi.org.uk/projects/details.asp?id=120&title=evaluation-citizens-voice-accountability](http://www.odi.org.uk/projects/details.asp?id=120&title=evaluation-citizens-voice-accountability)

## Framework for CSO Mapping

UNDP

<i>Year developed</i>	<i>Applicability</i>	<i>Category of assessment</i>	<i>Dimensions</i>
2006	CSO sector in any given country	CSO sector assessment	capacity engagement environment governance impact

### *Stated objectives*

To get an overview of the range of CSOs operating in any country context, a general idea of their capacities, objectives, strengths and limitations, how they operate and engage with their constituents and targeted beneficiaries. The mapping exercise was a means to identify and build potential partnerships with appropriate organizations.

### *Methodology*

A mix of qualitative and quantitative assessment, including tailored questionnaires targeting CSOs on organizational management and programming, focuses on (in)formal discussions and interviews with community leaders and local leaders to understand the impact of CSOs from the perspective of targeted beneficiaries.

### *Data collection*

Field research carried out by the survey team (UNDP, Consultants, CSOs etc.)

### *Reporting format*

CSO database is created with quantitative and qualitative results, including a brief on individual CSOs mapped during the exercise. The brief usually includes the vision, mission, focus and level of expertise of a particular organization. A final analysis report is produced based on the findings of the mapping.

### *Ease of implementation*

Level of resources: High (field research)

Documentation provided: medium (framework needs to be adapted for specific contexts)

<i>Strengths</i>	<i>Weaknesses</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>designed to get an overview of CSOs operating in a given context</li> <li>can be adapted to suit different contexts and can be conducted at different levels with varying scopes and in specific focus areas</li> <li>makes provision for a participatory process and could be adapted to involve multiple stakeholders</li> <li>poverty and gender dimensions can be added</li> <li>mapping can be conducted at varying levels with a range of scopes</li> <li>designed for repeated implementation, and results are maintained in a CSO database which can be easily updated</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>mapping is an extensive exercise and requires human, technical and financial resources</li> <li>donor-led external assessment</li> <li>the framework provides broad methodology, and questionnaires for qualitative and quantitative assessments need be developed</li> <li>method does not give explicit attention to poverty and gender</li> </ul>

### *Contact details*

[www.undp.org/partners/civil\\_society/publications/CSO\\_Toolkit\\_linked.pdf](http://www.undp.org/partners/civil_society/publications/CSO_Toolkit_linked.pdf)

### **Guide Synergie Qualité (Synergy Quality Guide)**

Coordination Solidarité Urgence Développement

<i>Year developed</i>	<i>Applicability</i>	<i>Category of assessment</i>	<i>Dimensions</i>
2005	individual NGOs; region not specified, but global examples are included	CSO self-assessment	capacity

#### *Stated objectives*

To help in implementing procedures of quality within NGOs

#### *Methodology*

The guide is made up of five chapters that can be read independently from one another: humanitarian ethics; governance within the agency; human resources management; project cycle; role of the affected populations.

#### *Data collection*

Based on personal experience/observation

#### *Reporting format*

Qualitative results in Q&A format

#### *Ease of implementation*

Level of resources: average (long method, but can be done with desk research)

Documentation provided: high (extensive documentation)

<i>Strengths</i>	<i>Weaknesses</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• focus on risk prevention in humanitarian action</li><li>• modular method can be implemented in parts</li><li>• method designed by NGO consortium</li><li>• attention paid to participation</li><li>• some methodological mention of gender and poverty</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• lack of a quantitative output limits comparability across time and countries</li><li>• full guide available in French only</li></ul>

#### *Contact details*

[www.coordinationsud.org/spip.php?article447&var\\_recherche=synergie%20qualite](http://www.coordinationsud.org/spip.php?article447&var_recherche=synergie%20qualite)

### **Guidebook on the Basics of NGO Governance**

Philippine Council for NGO Certification (PCNC)

<i>Year developed</i>	<i>Applicability</i>	<i>Category of assessment</i>	<i>Dimensions</i>
2008	individual NGOs in the Philippines	CSO self-assessment	capacity

#### *Stated objectives*

To support NGOs learning how to become better governed and managed organizations

#### *Methodology*

Five performance areas for NGOs: vision, mission and goals; governance; financial management and administration; programme operations; partnering and networking

*Data collection*

Implemented by NGO executives based on personal experience/observation

*Reporting format*

Qualitative results in checklist and Q&A format

*Ease of implementation*

Level of resources: low (desk research)

Documentation provided: high (step-by-step guide)

<i>Strengths</i>	<i>Weaknesses</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• one of the most prominent assessment tools developed at the local level</li> <li>• specially geared for small, local, and newly formed NGOs</li> <li>• basic format including many definitions is well suited to first-time assessments</li> <li>• tied to an optional certification process</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• lack of a quantitative output limits comparability across time and countries</li> <li>• no formal participatory process for method design</li> <li>• method does not give explicit attention to gender or poverty</li> <li>• method designed for the Philippines; could require adaptation</li> </ul>

*Contact details*

www.pcnc.com.ph/

**Handbook on Non-Profit Institutions in the System of National Accounts**

United Nations Statistics Division and Johns Hopkins Center for Civil Society Studies

<i>Year developed</i>	<i>Applicability</i>	<i>Category of assessment</i>	<i>Dimensions</i>
2003	civil society sector worldwide: tested in 11 countries at varying levels of development	civil society sector	capacity engagement

*Stated objectives*

To improve the treatment of non-profit or civil society organizations in national economic statistics

*Methodology*

Key variables are organized into four types: core monetary variables; additional monetary variables; core social and economic indicators; and additional quantitative and qualitative measures.

*Data collection*

Based on personal experience/observation, surveys, interviews etc. depending on resources and available data

*Reporting format*

Quantitative and qualitative results in form plus optional report format

*Ease of implementation*

Level of resources: high (technical knowledge of statistics required)

Documentation provided: high (extensive documentation)

<i>Strengths</i>	<i>Weaknesses</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• specific focus on international guidelines for setting up economic accounts and statistical reporting on CSOs</li> <li>• extensive documentation of how to conduct such an assessment</li> <li>• phased method allows for more or less implementation depending on resources</li> <li>• a regular source of official information on the sector that can be updated over time</li> <li>• method gives some consideration to gender and poverty</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• narrow focus not appropriate for most contexts</li> <li>• technical content requires specific expertise</li> <li>• no formal participatory process for method design</li> </ul>

*Contact details*

[www.ccss.jhu.edu/index.php?section=content&view=9&sub=11&tri=18](http://www.ccss.jhu.edu/index.php?section=content&view=9&sub=11&tri=18)

***Herramienta de Autoevaluación para Organizaciones de la Sociedad Civil (Self-Evaluation Tool for Civil Society Organizations)***

HelpArgentina

<i>Year developed</i>	<i>Applicability</i>	<i>Category of assessment</i>	<i>Dimensions</i>
not available	individual CSOs in Argentina	CSO self-assessment	capacity

*Stated objectives*

To enable social organizations to self-evaluate in several areas, including internal management and development of external links, in order to make improvements

*Methodology*

The toolkit is based on principles concerning two aspects of the organization's governance, each containing a series of indicators: the organization and its context (addressing diagnosis, planning and evaluation; and the organization's external links); and the organization and its management (addressing decision-making; finance, budget and legal status; and human relations and internal communications).

*Data collection*

Based on personal experience/observation

*Reporting format*

Qualitative results in a form: ratings and descriptive

*Ease of implementation*

Level of resources: low (desk research)

Documentation provided: low (minimal explanations)

<i>Strengths</i>	<i>Weaknesses</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• assessment tool developed at the local level</li> <li>• method developed through a participatory process</li> <li>• online format facilitates comparison with other organizations</li> <li>• method gives some consideration to gender</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• method designed for Argentina; could require adaptation</li> <li>• requires free registration</li> <li>• method does not give explicit attention to poverty</li> <li>• available in Spanish only</li> </ul>

*Contact details*

[www.helpargentina.org/es/bestpractices](http://www.helpargentina.org/es/bestpractices)

**Kenyan CSO Standards**

Poverty Eradication Network

<i>Year developed</i>	<i>Applicability</i>	<i>Category of assessment</i>	<i>Dimensions</i>
2008	individual CSOs in Kenya	CSO self-assessment	capacity governance

*Stated objectives*

To give the CSO industry visible positive attributes to serve both as a catalyst and a benchmark for positive national and societal change in the quest for excellence

*Methodology*

The standards fall under eight categories/clusters: legal and statutory requirements; identity; governance; work programming and planning; management systems and policies; resource mobilization and utilization; partnerships and external relations; and organizational culture and leadership.

*Data collection*

Based on personal experience/observation

*Reporting format*

Qualitative results in report format

*Ease of implementation*

Level of resources: low (desk research)

Documentation provided: low (minimal explanations)

<i>Strengths</i>	<i>Weaknesses</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• method developed for and by CSOs</li><li>• tied to a certification process</li><li>• designed to improve CSO accountability and thus CSOs' position in society</li><li>• method gives some consideration to gender</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• lack of a quantitative output limits comparability across time and countries</li><li>• method not readily available for non-members</li><li>• standards designed for Kenya might not be relevant in other contexts</li><li>• method does not give explicit attention to poverty</li></ul>

*Contact details*

[www.penkenya.org/pages/Cso\\_Standards-\\_VIWANGO.vrt](http://www.penkenya.org/pages/Cso_Standards-_VIWANGO.vrt)

**NGO Accreditation Criteria Table (Full)**

AusAID

<i>Year developed</i>	<i>Applicability</i>	<i>Category of assessment</i>	<i>Dimensions</i>
2008	individual development NGOs based in Australia	CSO self-assessment	capacity engagement governance

### *Stated objectives*

To provide AusAID, and the Australian public, with confidence that the Australian Government is funding professional, well-managed, community-based organizations that are capable of delivering quality development outcomes

### *Methodology*

Criteria in five categories: agency identity and structure; development philosophies and management practices; approaches to partnership and development collaboration; linkages with the Australian community; financial systems and risk management; plus specific questions for NGOs involved in reproductive health

### *Data collection*

Based on personal experience/observation

### *Reporting format*

Qualitative results in report format

### *Ease of implementation*

Level of resources: average (many steps, but not especially challenging)

Documentation provided: medium (some documentation)

<i>Strengths</i>	<i>Weaknesses</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• unique method for donor NGO accreditation</li><li>• base and full method allows for differing levels of commitment</li><li>• method gives some consideration to gender and poverty</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• although method is for self-assessment, it is part of a broader donor-led programme</li><li>• no formal participatory process for method design</li><li>• lack of a quantitative output limits comparability across time and countries</li><li>• method designed for Australia; will require adaptation</li></ul>

### *Contact details*

[www.ausaid.gov.au/ngos/accreditation.cfm](http://www.ausaid.gov.au/ngos/accreditation.cfm)

## **NGO Capacity Profile**

Peace Corps

<i>Year developed</i>	<i>Applicability</i>	<i>Category of assessment</i>	<i>Dimensions</i>
2003	individual NGOs in Peace Corps target countries (throughout the global South)	CSO self-assessment	capacity engagement impact

### *Stated objectives*

To assist NGOs in assessing their capacity and formulating strategies for strengthening their organizations

### *Methodology*

The organizational tool provides questions concerning six functional systems of an NGO: programmes; governance; management; human resources; financial resources; and external relations.

### *Data collection*

Implemented by US Peace Corps volunteers based on contact with local NGOs and community

*Reporting format*

Qualitative results in a form as well as informal recording

*Ease of implementation*

Level of resources: average (many steps, but not especially challenging)

Documentation provided: high (extensive documentation)

<i>Strengths</i>	<i>Weaknesses</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• designed to promote experiential learning</li><li>• intended for Peace Corps volunteers but designed for adaptation including for self-assessment</li><li>• some methodological mention of gender and poverty</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• lack of a quantitative output limits comparability across time and countries</li><li>• although participation is emphasized throughout, no formal participatory process for method design</li></ul>

*Contact details*

[www.peacecorps.gov/index.cfm?shell=library.comdev](http://www.peacecorps.gov/index.cfm?shell=library.comdev) (see NGO Training Handbook)

**NPO Certification Model**

Pakistan Centre for Philanthropy (PCP)

<i>Year developed</i>	<i>Applicability</i>	<i>Category of assessment</i>	<i>Dimensions</i>
2002	individual CSOs in Pakistan	external civil society assessment	capacity engagement governance

*Stated objectives*

To obtain certification from the PCP, which enhances credibility and allows for tax benefits

*Methodology*

Eighty standards in three categories: internal governance; financial management; and programme delivery

*Data collection*

Desk research (provided by the CSO) and field research conducted by PCP

*Reporting format*

Qualitative and quantitative results in report format: scores are assigned to each standard, and category scores are calculated.

*Ease of implementation*

Level of resources: average (many steps, but not especially challenging)

Documentation provided: medium (some documentation)

<i>Strengths</i>	<i>Weaknesses</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• designed to improve CSO credibility</li><li>• tied to a certification process</li><li>• method designed through a participatory process</li><li>• method gives some consideration to gender</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• method designed for Pakistan; could require adaptation</li><li>• method does not give explicit attention to poverty</li></ul>

*Contact details*

[www.pcp.org.pk/index.html](http://www.pcp.org.pk/index.html)

## **The Octagon**

SIDA

<i>Year developed</i>	<i>Applicability</i>	<i>Category of assessment</i>	<i>Dimensions</i>
2002	individual NGOs worldwide, including both Swedish NGOs and their international partners; piloted in South America and Asia	external civil society assessment	capacity engagement governance impact

### *Stated objectives*

To assess strengths and weaknesses in NGOs to be used by both the Swedish organizations and their partners in cooperation

### *Methodology*

The Octagon contains eight variables: identity; structure; implementation; relevance; qualifications and experience; systems; target groups; and the working environment.

### *Data collection*

Implemented by between three and seven diverse representatives of the organization, led by a moderator from a donor or other partner; can also be conducted as a self-assessment

### *Reporting format*

Quantitative results automatically displayed as an octagon; qualitative notes encouraged as supplementary information

### *Ease of implementation*

Level of resources: low (desk research during a one-day workshop)

Documentation provided: medium (some documentation, plus Excel document for generating octagon)

<i>Strengths</i>	<i>Weaknesses</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• foundational tool for many later organizational assessments</li><li>• designed for repeated implementation over time</li><li>• designed to be used in conjunction with other, more detailed assessment methods</li><li>• can be conducted as a self-assessment</li><li>• method developed through a participatory process</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• not updated since 2002; does not take account of most recent assessment theory</li><li>• method does not give explicit attention to gender or poverty</li></ul>

### *Contact details*

[www.sida.se/Svenska/Om-oss/Publikationer/Visa-publikation/?iframesrc=www2.sida.se/sida/jsp/sida.jsp%3Fd=118%26a=2745&language=en\\_US](http://www.sida.se/Svenska/Om-oss/Publikationer/Visa-publikation/?iframesrc=www2.sida.se/sida/jsp/sida.jsp%3Fd=118%26a=2745&language=en_US)

## **Organisational Assessment Tool**

NGO Manager

<i>Year developed</i>	<i>Applicability</i>	<i>Category of assessment</i>	<i>Dimensions</i>
2004	individual NGOs worldwide: developed by an NGO based in Switzerland that supports NGOs in the global North and South	CSO self-assessment	capacity engagement impact

*Stated objectives*

To help organizations to improve their performance

*Methodology*

The questions menu is divided into six management subjects: governing structure; management processes; human resources; financial resources and administration; relationships; and results.

*Data collection*

Implemented internally or externally based on interviews, team-based discussions etc.

*Reporting format*

Qualitative results in a form: ratings and descriptive

*Ease of implementation*

Level of resources: average (short form, plus SWOT analysis)

Documentation provided: low (brief introduction only)

<i>Strengths</i>	<i>Weaknesses</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• easy to use worksheet format</li> <li>• designed to promote process orientation through SWOT analysis tied to each issue covered</li> <li>• includes detailed results section</li> <li>• designed for adaptation</li> <li>• method gives some consideration to gender</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• lack of a quantitative output limits comparability across time and countries</li> <li>• no formal participatory process for method design</li> <li>• method does not give explicit attention to poverty</li> </ul>

*Contact details*

[www.ngomanager.org/tools.htm](http://www.ngomanager.org/tools.htm)

**Organizational Assessment Guide**

CIDA

<i>Year developed</i>	<i>Applicability</i>	<i>Category of assessment</i>	<i>Dimensions</i>
2006	individual CIDA partner organizations worldwide	external civil society assessment	capacity environment impact

*Stated objectives*

To identify an organization’s capacities, its ‘track record’ in demonstrating performance, its ability to function effectively within its external environment, congruence with CIDA’s strategic interests, and the level of risk associated with the partnership

*Methodology*

Suggested key elements for consideration are: understanding the external environment; measuring organizational performance; identifying organizational motivation; and determining organizational capacity.

*Data collection*

Implemented by CIDA staff or external consultant based on desk research, consultations, and possible site observations and focus groups

*Reporting format*

Qualitative results in report format

### *Ease of implementation*

Level of resources: average (many steps, but not especially challenging)

Documentation provided: high (extensive documentation)

<i>Strengths</i>	<i>Weaknesses</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• focus on how to use assessment to achieve results</li><li>• systematizes entire process, from hiring of consultants to implementing change</li><li>• method designed and data gathered through participatory processes</li><li>• some methodological mention of gender and poverty reduction</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• designed specifically to advance development cooperation</li><li>• lack of a quantitative output limits comparability across time and countries</li><li>• not a CSO-led process</li></ul>

### *Contact details*

[www.acdi-cida.gc.ca/acdi-cida/acdi-cida.nsf/eng/NAT-8811161-KWK](http://www.acdi-cida.gc.ca/acdi-cida/acdi-cida.nsf/eng/NAT-8811161-KWK)

### **Participatory Capacity Assessment Tool**

CARE International (Basic Education Fellowship)

<i>Year developed</i>	<i>Applicability</i>	<i>Category of assessment</i>	<i>Dimensions</i>
2000	individual CSO	CSO self-assessment, participatory external assessment	capacity engagement governance impact

### *Stated objectives*

The tool is developed for capacity assessment of local NGOs and CBOs. It can also be used by local, national and international NGOs to evaluate their organizational performance. It can be used to gather and analyse data for the purpose of setting a baseline on an organization's effectiveness against which progress can be monitored.

### *Methodology*

The categories used by the tools to assess organizational capacity are: governance; management practice; financial management; programme development and service delivery; external relations and networks; and sustainability

### *Data collection*

The PCA tool is designed to gather important information. A 'tool-box' of methods is provided in the tool to be used by organizations or external facilitators to gather information on organizational performance. The methods range from structured one-on-one interviews to semi-structured group discussions involving a cross-section of staff from the organization.

### *Reporting format*

A rating sheet is used by participating staff to rank an organization's performance in each category. After the ranking, the facilitators and the organization's staff determine the level of the organizational capacity of the organization using the ranking guide included in the tool.

### *Ease of implementation*

Level of resources: average (skilled facilitator required)

Documentation provided: high (extensive documentation)

<i>Strengths</i>	<i>Weaknesses</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• is designed for capacity assessment of local NGOs and CBOs and can be easily adapted for CSO self-assessment</li> <li>• participatory assessment tool that allows staff and stakeholders to evaluate organization performance</li> <li>• initial assessment can be used as a baseline against which progress can be monitored</li> <li>• useful for diagnosing problems and for developing appropriate interventions (including training) to improve effectiveness</li> <li>• method pays explicit attention to gender equity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• requires skilled facilitators to ensure frank and open discussions about the organization's capacity</li> <li>• does not pay specific attention to poverty but includes a number of questions related to equity</li> </ul>

#### *Contact details*

[www.careinternational.org.uk/4041/community-organisation/care-basic-education-fellowship-participatory-capacity-assessment-tools.html](http://www.careinternational.org.uk/4041/community-organisation/care-basic-education-fellowship-participatory-capacity-assessment-tools.html)

**NOTE:** Two other methodologies very similar to CARE International's Participatory Capacity Assessment Tool were not described under separate entries in this source guide but are nonetheless worth noting. The 'Capacity Assessment Grid' developed by McKinsey and Company for Venture Philanthropy Partners and published in 'Effective Capacity Building in Nonprofit Organizations' (2001)<sup>19</sup> and the 'Organizational Capacity Assessment Tool' by Marguerite Casey Foundation<sup>20</sup> also use four-level ranking mechanisms to evaluate organizational capacity. For both tools, all dimensions assessed are divided into four levels of organizational development and each level is allocated a score (usually 1 to 4). The tools provide a descriptive text for each component against the four levels. Staff are asked to select the text that best describes the organization's current capacity for each dimension. The organization is ranked accordingly, and the aggregate score is used to determine the overall level of the organizational capacity. A third capacity self-assessment tool that uses a similar ranking methodology is the 'Organizational Capacity Assessment Tool' developed by the Academy for Educational Development (AED) and CroNGO, Croatia.

#### ***Participatory Organizational Evaluation Tool (POET)***

Education Development Center and Pact with UNDP

<i>Year developed</i>	<i>Applicability</i>	<i>Category of assessment</i>	<i>Dimensions</i>
1998	A group ("cohort") of CSOs or an individual CSO worldwide	CSO self-assessment	capacity engagement impact

#### *Stated objectives*

To build capacity by bringing staff together in cross-functional, cross-hierarchical groups for open exchange; to identify divergent viewpoints to foster growth; to create consensus around future organizational capacity development activities; and, to select, implement and track organizational change and development strategies

<sup>19</sup> See [www.vppartners.org/learning/reports/capacity/capacity.html](http://www.vppartners.org/learning/reports/capacity/capacity.html)

<sup>20</sup> See [www.caseygrants.org/pages/resources/resources\\_downloadassessment.asp](http://www.caseygrants.org/pages/resources/resources_downloadassessment.asp)

### Methodology

The seven capacity areas measured by POET are: human resource management; financial resource management; equitable participation; sustainability of programme benefits; partnering; organizational learning; and strategic management/governance.

### Data collection

Implemented by a cross-functional, cross-hierarchical internal team based on personal experience/observation

### Reporting format

Quantitative and qualitative results: ratings based on worksheets and optional report

### Ease of implementation

Level of resources: high (statistical analysis required)

Documentation provided: medium (strong level of documentation, but given the complexity one might require more, and qualitative portions are minimally documented)

<i>Strengths</i>	<i>Weaknesses</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• focus on the process of implementation and using that to develop strategies for change</li><li>• designed specifically for southern CSOs and their partners</li><li>• designed for ease of implementation, including to generate statistically sound scores</li><li>• evaluates consensus as well as divergent viewpoints</li><li>• method designed through a participatory process</li><li>• method gives some consideration to gender and poverty</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• developed in 1998; does not take account of most recent assessment theory</li></ul>

### Contact details

Available at

[www.ngomanager.org/dcd/2\\_Organizational\\_Development/Organizational\\_Assessment/](http://www.ngomanager.org/dcd/2_Organizational_Development/Organizational_Assessment/)

### **Social Audit: A Toolkit**

Centre for Good Governance

<i>Year developed</i>	<i>Applicability</i>	<i>Category of assessment</i>	<i>Dimensions</i>
2005	individual CSOs in India	external civil society assessment	engagement governance impact

### Stated objectives

To identify, measure, assess and report on the social performance of an organization

### Methodology

Guidance is given for tailoring the method to the organization: no specific indicators are suggested.

### Data collection

Desk research, field observations, interviews, questionnaires, focus groups with stakeholders

#### Reporting format

Quantitative and qualitative results: survey data and report format

#### Ease of implementation

Level of resources: high (conducting surveys requires expertise)

Documentation provided: high (extensive documentation)

<i>Strengths</i>	<i>Weaknesses</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• comprehensive background and instructions for social audit</li><li>• designed for implementation by non-specialists</li><li>• method designed through a participatory process</li><li>• can take account of gender, though not explicit</li><li>• focus on service delivery addresses poverty issues</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• general social audit not tailored to civil society assessment</li><li>• method designed for India; could require adaptation</li></ul>

#### Contact details

[unpan1.un.org/intradoc/groups/public/documents/cgg/unpan023752.pdf](http://unpan1.un.org/intradoc/groups/public/documents/cgg/unpan023752.pdf)

### **Sustainability Reporting Framework**

Global Reporting Initiative

<i>Year developed</i>	<i>Applicability</i>	<i>Category of assessment</i>	<i>Dimensions</i>
latest version 2006; NGO supplement 2009	individual NGOs worldwide	CSO self-assessment	capacity engagement governance impact

#### Stated objectives

To facilitate transparency and accountability by organizations and provide stakeholders with a universally applicable, comparable framework from which to understand disclosed information

#### Methodology

Self-assessment method includes six sets of indicators: economic; environment; human rights; labour; product responsibility; and society. A special supplement is available for the NGO sector.

#### Data collection

Based on personal experience/observation

#### Reporting format

Qualitative results in report format

#### Ease of implementation

Level of resources: low (desk research)

Documentation provided: low (minimal explanations, although some background information provided)

<i>Strengths</i>	<i>Weaknesses</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• established and respected standard widely used across all sectors</li> <li>• special supplement adapts standard reporting guidelines to NGO sector</li> <li>• method designed through a participatory process</li> <li>• method gives some consideration to gender and poverty</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• international method may not be well suited to certain contexts</li> <li>• lack of a quantitative output limits comparability across time and countries</li> </ul>

*Contact details*

[www.globalreporting.org/ReportingFramework/SectorSupplements/NGO/](http://www.globalreporting.org/ReportingFramework/SectorSupplements/NGO/)

***La Transparencia y la Rendicion de Cuentas en el Tercer Sector  
(Transparency and Accountability in the Third Sector)***

Observatorio del Tercer Sector

<i>Year developed</i>	<i>Applicability</i>	<i>Category of assessment</i>	<i>Dimensions</i>
2008	individual CSOs in Spain	CSO self-assessment	governance

*Stated objectives*

To enable organizations to incorporate transparency into their organizational culture

*Methodology*

Four self-assessment cards (*fichas*) cover: culture of transparency; web page; reporting; and other transparency tools.

*Data collection*

Based on personal experience/observation

*Reporting format*

Qualitative and quantitative results in a form: ratings and some short-answer questions

*Ease of implementation*

Level of resources: low (desk research)

Documentation provided: high (extensive explanation, especially given simple method)

<i>Strengths</i>	<i>Weaknesses</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• detailed method and step-by-step instructions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• available in Spanish only</li> <li>• no formal participatory process for method design</li> <li>• method does not give explicit attention to gender or poverty</li> </ul>

*Contact details*

[www.tercersector.net/php/general.php?seccio=sc\\_pubs\\_amp&idioma=Cs&id=135](http://www.tercersector.net/php/general.php?seccio=sc_pubs_amp&idioma=Cs&id=135)

## Information sources

### Information sources format

<i>Date released</i>	<i>Coverage</i>	<i>Category of assessment</i>	<i>Dimensions</i>
the year the method was first released as well as information on subsequent releases	the regions or countries the method has covered, as well as what the method assesses: the civil society sector or individual CSOs, or some subset thereof (NGOs etc.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• civil society sector (aggregated for all CSOs)</li> <li>• external civil society assessment (individual CSOs evaluated by an external organization such as a donor, another CSO, or academic)</li> <li>• CSO self-assessment (CSO evaluation of itself)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• capacity (human and financial resources, networking)</li> <li>• engagement (both socially based and political)</li> <li>• environment (economic, political, and cultural context in which civil society operates)</li> <li>• governance (commitment to democratic decision-making, fair labour practices, transparency, democratic governance, environmental standards)</li> <li>• impact (on social and policy outcomes)</li> </ul>

#### *Stated objectives*

The objectives of the tool as stated by the producing organization

#### *Methodology*

Highlights from the methodology such as topics evaluated and number of indicators

#### *Data collection*

Method of data collection, sources and types of data

#### *Reporting format*

Reporting format: kind of information generated (narrative report, survey, etc.), including any quantitative component

#### *Stakeholders involved*

The stakeholders who are involved in the assessment process

#### *Strengths and weaknesses*

The positive and negative characteristics of the tool related to data collection, resources required, uses and applicability, gender sensitivity, pro-poor indicators, participation etc.

#### *Contact details*

Homepage and/or other web resources

### **Afrobarometer**

#### *Afrobarometer*

<i>Year developed</i>	<i>Applicability</i>	<i>Category of assessment</i>	<i>Dimensions</i>
4 iterations since 1999; latest released 2009	civil society sector in 20 African countries (latest survey)	civil society sector	engagement environment

#### *Stated objectives*

To produce scientifically reliable data on public opinion in sub-Saharan Africa; to strengthen institutional capacity for survey research in Africa; to broadly disseminate and apply survey results

### Methodology

Of 100 questions, four are relevant: agreement with statements on government banning organizations and joining of organizations, question on influence of NGOs on the government, and two questions on participation in groups and activities.

### Data collection

Household survey of representative sample

### Reporting format

Quantitative: percentages reported for all questions

### Stakeholders involved

General public

<i>Strengths</i>	<i>Weaknesses</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• presents views of average citizens</li><li>• shows trends over time</li><li>• allows for cross-country comparison</li><li>• participatory data collection (public opinion survey)</li><li>• all results disaggregated by gender and urban/rural populations</li><li>• questions related to gender and poverty</li><li>• CSO-led process</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• no analysis of reasons behind opinions</li><li>• socio-economic information collected but results not disaggregated by most marginalized groups</li><li>• some testing and adaptation of questionnaire but no formal participatory process for method design</li></ul>

### Contact details

[www.afrobarometer.org/](http://www.afrobarometer.org/)

## **ARVIN Assessment Framework**

World Bank

<i>Year developed</i>	<i>Applicability</i>	<i>Category of assessment</i>	<i>Dimensions</i>
developed in 2003	civil society sector in more than 10 poor countries worldwide	civil society sector	capacity engagement environment

### Stated objectives

To facilitate a comprehensive assessment of the legal and regulatory, political and governmental, socio-cultural and economic factors affecting civic engagement

### Methodology

The analytical framework identifies five critical dimensions that are 'enabling elements' of civic engagement: association; resources; voice; information; and negotiation.

### Data collection

World Bank staff conduct individual interviews, focus group discussions, workshops, questionnaires, and desk research.

### Reporting format

Quantitative ratings and qualitative report with recommendations

### Stakeholders involved

CSOs, government, and donors

<i>Strengths</i>	<i>Weaknesses</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>World Bank's unique relationship with governments puts ARVIN in a privileged position to influence outcomes</li> <li>participatory data collection includes CSOs, government and donors</li> <li>while baseline method was not designed in a participatory manner, an introductory workshop including stakeholders reviews the design</li> <li>method varies by country, but generally some mention of gender and poverty</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>full method is not publicly available</li> <li>not a CSO-led process</li> </ul>

*Contact details*

go.worldbank.org/378AB9OH00

**Assessment of the Operating Environment for CSO/NGOs in Ethiopia**

*Christian Relief & Development Association (CRDA)*

<i>Year developed</i>	<i>Applicability</i>	<i>Category of assessment</i>	<i>Dimensions</i>
2006	civil society sector in Ethiopia	civil society sector	environment

*Stated objectives*

To review the post-elections operating environment in which civil society, particularly NGOs, finds itself in Ethiopia

*Methodology*

Questionnaire covers legal environment; CSO activities, events, initiatives; and political context.

*Data collection*

CRDA commissioned international organization to design and implement stakeholder survey and conduct interviews.

*Reporting format*

Qualitative results in report format

*Stakeholders involved*

Representatives from government, local and international organizations, and other informed individuals

<i>Strengths</i>	<i>Weaknesses</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>part of a series of assessments since 1998, providing results over time</li> <li>assessment was the initiative of a local CSO, through cooperation with international partners</li> <li>strong focus on gender perspective</li> <li>method gives some consideration to poverty</li> <li>data gathered through participatory process</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>not all regions could be covered due to resource constraints</li> <li>full method is not publicly available</li> <li>methodological focus on Ethiopia; could require adaptation in other countries</li> <li>no formal participatory process for method design</li> </ul>

Contact details

[www.crdaethiopia.org/index.php](http://www.crdaethiopia.org/index.php)

**Auditoria Ciudadana sobre la Calidad de la Democracia**

Estado de la Nacion

Year developed	Applicability	Category of assessment	Dimensions
implemented in 2001	civil society sector in Costa Rica	civil society sector	engagement environment governance impact

Stated objectives

To strengthen democratic practices in Costa Rican political life

Methodology

Field work was done through 40 separate research works. In particular, a 50-question household survey asked about whether CSOs hold officials to account, whether they improve community life, whether they are transparent; focus groups were held with CSOs to discuss their internal accountability; ethnographic observations of CSOs were recorded.

Data collection

CSO staff conducted field observations, focus groups, surveys, desk research, and interviews.

Reporting format

Qualitative report format with some quantitative figures

Stakeholders involved

CSO representatives, general public

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>in-depth methodology includes multiple data-collection methods for more complete evaluation</li> <li>publicly available method could be adapted to other contexts</li> <li>places CSO performance within the broader governance context</li> <li>method designed and data gathered through participatory processes</li> <li>CSO-led process</li> <li>method gives some consideration to gender</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>detailed and broad method not appropriate for contexts that lack time or resources</li> <li>method does not give explicit attention to poverty</li> <li>available in Spanish only</li> </ul>

Contact details

[www.estadonacion.or.cr/Calidad02/calidad.html](http://www.estadonacion.or.cr/Calidad02/calidad.html)

**Capacity Assessment and Strategy for Developing Capacity of CSOs in the Pacific**

UNDP Pacific Centre

Year developed	Applicability	Category of assessment	Dimensions
expected release 2010	individual CSOs in Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Solomon Islands, Tonga and Tuvalu	civil society sector	capacity engagement environment governance

#### *Stated objectives*

As a systematic region-wide effort to map out and examine the capacity development needs of CSOs operating in the Pacific

#### *Methodology*

Five axes of capacity: organizational development; sustainability and resourcing; information sharing, cooperation and advocacy; stakeholder relations; and legal and regulatory environment

#### *Data collection*

UNDP Pacific commissioned international organization to design and implement assessment through interviews with CSOs.

#### *Reporting format*

Quantitative ratings and qualitative report

#### *Stakeholders involved*

Civil society representatives, donors

<i>Strengths</i>	<i>Weaknesses</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• focus on using assessment as a step in capacity development</li><li>• specific link to the MDGs</li><li>• method designed and data gathered through participatory processes</li><li>• method gives some consideration to gender and poverty</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• not a CSO-led process</li><li>• methodological focus on Pacific islands; could require adaptation in other regions</li></ul>

#### *Contact details*

To be posted at [www.undppc.org.fj/](http://www.undppc.org.fj/)

### **Civil Society Index**

*CIVICUS*

<i>Year developed</i>	<i>Applicability</i>	<i>Category of assessment</i>	<i>Dimensions</i>
2 iterations since 2002; next release 2010	civil society sector in 56 countries worldwide (latest phase)	civil society sector	capacity engagement environment governance impact

#### *Stated objectives*

To enhance the strength and sustainability of civil society, and to strengthen civil society's contribution to positive social change

#### *Methodology*

The methodology measures five core dimensions: civic engagement; level of organization; practice of values; perceived impact; and external environment.

#### *Data collection*

National team conducts stakeholder analysis, surveys of CSOs and public, and focus groups.

#### *Reporting format*

Qualitative report with quantitative ratings

### Stakeholders involved

CSO representatives

<i>Strengths</i>	<i>Weaknesses</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• leading civil society assessment method, supported by major consortium</li><li>• comprehensive consideration of all aspects of CSOs</li><li>• method designed and data gathered through participatory processes</li><li>• created by and for CSOs</li><li>• shows trends over time</li><li>• allows for comparison among countries</li><li>• CSO-led process</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• detailed and broad method not appropriate for contexts that lack time or resources</li><li>• not always apparent how to ensure that findings are translated into action</li><li>• method does not give explicit attention to gender or poverty</li></ul>

### Contact details

civicus.org/csi/csi-phase-two08/csi-methodology-phase2

### Comparative Nonprofit Sector Project

Johns Hopkins Center for Civil Society Studies

<i>Year developed</i>	<i>Applicability</i>	<i>Category of assessment</i>	<i>Dimensions</i>
implemented on a rolling basis since 1990	civil society sector in 46 countries worldwide	civil society sector	capacity

### Stated objectives

To analyse the scope, structure, financing, and role of the private non-profit sector in a cross-section of countries around the world in order to improve our knowledge and enrich our theoretical understanding of this sector, and to provide a sounder basis for both public and private action towards it

### Methodology

Four key variables are analysed: expenditures; employment; volunteers; and revenues.

### Data collection

National and international partners implement based on desk research.

### Reporting format

Qualitative report format with some quantitative figures

### Stakeholders involved

Local researchers

<i>Strengths</i>	<i>Weaknesses</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• unique focus on non-profit organizations, in particular those that incorporate volunteer work</li><li>• focus on varying development of the non-profit sector across countries</li><li>• countries selected for their diversity and scope, presenting a full global picture</li><li>• allows for some comparison among countries</li><li>• method developed through a participatory process</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• not a CSO-led process</li><li>• implementation requires substantial time and resources</li><li>• full method is not publicly available</li><li>• method does not give explicit attention to gender or poverty</li></ul>

*Contact details*

[www.ccss.jhu.edu/index.php?section=content&view=9&sub=3&tri=7](http://www.ccss.jhu.edu/index.php?section=content&view=9&sub=3&tri=7)

**Egypt's Social Contract: The Role of Civil Society (National Human Development Report)**

UNDP Egypt

<i>Year developed</i>	<i>Applicability</i>	<i>Category of assessment</i>	<i>Dimensions</i>
implemented in 2008	120 CSOs in Egypt	civil society sector	values

*Stated objectives*

To monitor and analyse the features of good internal governance in civil society organizations using a small sample group

*Methodology*

Forty-item questionnaire for CSOs covers: rule of law; practice of democracy; transparency and accountability; partnership with other actors; the extent of performance evaluation; and other dimensions of democratic governance.

*Data collection*

Arab Network for NGOs conducted CSO survey and focus groups.

*Reporting format*

Qualitative report format with some quantitative figures

*Stakeholders involved*

CSO representatives

<i>Strengths</i>	<i>Weaknesses</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• good example of using civil society assessment to supplement UNDP human development report</li><li>• combination of survey and focus groups provides multifaceted data</li><li>• data gathered through a participatory process</li><li>• method gives some consideration to gender</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• not a CSO-led process</li><li>• no formal participatory process for method design</li><li>• full method and results not publicly available</li><li>• results not disaggregated by most marginalized groups</li><li>• method does not give explicit attention to poverty</li></ul>

*Contact details*

[www.undp.org.eg/Default.aspx?tabid=227](http://www.undp.org.eg/Default.aspx?tabid=227)

**Global Accountability Report**

One World Trust

<i>Year developed</i>	<i>Applicability</i>	<i>Category of assessment</i>	<i>Dimensions</i>
iterations in 2006, 2007, 2008	individual international organizations worldwide	external civil society assessment	capacity engagement values

*Stated objectives*

To provide a common frame of reference on accountability and extend the basic principles of democracy to the global level

### *Methodology*

The report analyses organizations according to four dimensions: transparency; participation; evaluation; and complaint and response mechanisms.

### *Data collection*

One World Trust staff implemented based on desk research and interviews with target organizations.

### *Reporting format*

Qualitative report with quantitative ratings

### *Stakeholders involved*

Target organizations (CSO representatives)

<i>Strengths</i>	<i>Weaknesses</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• unique comparison of global organizations in both corporate and non-governmental sectors</li><li>• principle-based approach allows for cultural and other variations</li><li>• target organizations are invited to share information during data-collection process</li><li>• CSO-led process</li><li>• participatory design of method</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• does not measure change over time (different organizations considered in each round)</li><li>• method does not give explicit attention to gender or poverty</li></ul>

### *Contact details*

[www.oneworldtrust.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=73&Itemid=60](http://www.oneworldtrust.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=73&Itemid=60)

## **Global Civil Society Yearbook**

*London School of Economics*

<i>Year developed</i>	<i>Applicability</i>	<i>Category of assessment</i>	<i>Dimensions</i>
annually since 2001	civil society sector at the global level	civil society sector	environment

### *Stated objectives*

To give substance to the concept of global civil society through empirical mapping of global civil society

### *Methodology*

Datasets in 13 records in 2008: economic globalization; people movement; media and communications; governance and accountability; rule of law; social and economic rights; peacekeeping; environment; international actors; international aid, relief and philanthropy; global values, attitudes and social capital; democracy and freedom; conflict and violence

### *Data collection*

LSE gathers existing datasets and generates some data through observation and global contacts.

### *Reporting format*

Quantitative results in charts and graphs

### *Stakeholders involved*

Academics

<i>Strengths</i>	<i>Weaknesses</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• academic examination of civil society environment is much broader than other assessments</li> <li>• supplemented with case studies of civil society</li> <li>• regular implementation allows for comparison over time</li> <li>• focus on gender and poverty</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• global perspective not useful for more nuanced examination</li> <li>• not a CSO-led process</li> <li>• no formal participatory process for method design or data collection</li> </ul>

*Contact details*

[www.lse.ac.uk/Depts/global/researchgcspub.html](http://www.lse.ac.uk/Depts/global/researchgcspub.html)

**Integrity Indicators**

*Global Integrity*

<i>Year developed</i>	<i>Applicability</i>	<i>Category of assessment</i>	<i>Dimensions</i>
iterations in 2004 and annually since 2006	civil society sector in 104 countries worldwide	civil society sector	environment

*Stated objectives*

To assess the existence, effectiveness, and citizen access to key national-level anti-corruption mechanisms across a diverse range of countries

*Methodology*

One of six main governance categories is civil society, with four subcategories: legal protection; free operation; safety when working on anti-corruption; and trade union organization.

*Data collection*

In-country researchers implement based on desk and field research.

*Reporting format*

Qualitative report with quantitative ratings

*Stakeholders involved*

Local researchers

<i>Strengths</i>	<i>Weaknesses</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• places CSO performance within the broader anti-corruption context</li> <li>• shows trends over time</li> <li>• allows for comparison among countries</li> <li>• emphasis on country ownership</li> <li>• full method available</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• civil society assessment very limited in scope</li> <li>• while assessment is led by a CSO, the CSOs under evaluation are not explicitly involved</li> <li>• no formal participatory process for method design</li> <li>• no consideration of gender or poverty in civil society</li> </ul>

*Contact details*

[report.globalintegrity.org/](http://report.globalintegrity.org/)

## **Mapping Palestinian Non-Governmental Organizations in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip**

*Palestine Economic Policy Research Institute*

<i>Year developed</i>	<i>Applicability</i>	<i>Category of assessment</i>	<i>Dimensions</i>
implemented in 2007	nearly 1,900 NGOs in West Bank and Gaza Strip	civil society sector	capacity engagement environment impact

### *Stated objectives*

To provide the basis for studying the role and efficiency of Palestinian NGOs, in addition to providing guidance on what can be done to move the sector forward

### *Methodology*

The questionnaire for NGOs includes: general objectives and domain of operation; programmes, and local and international relationships; an evaluation of work, programmes, performance, and obstacles; administrative conditions; financial situation; role in society and the benefit presented to its target group.

### *Data collection*

Palestinian bureau of statistics conducted survey of NGOs.

### *Reporting format*

Qualitative report format with some quantitative figures

### *Stakeholders involved*

NGO staff

<i>Strengths</i>	<i>Weaknesses</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• very well-developed method for assessment in a context of considerable obstacles</li> <li>• part of a series of studies that presents a complete picture of the NGO landscape</li> <li>• shows trends over time</li> <li>• participatory data collection (NGO survey)</li> <li>• CSO-led process</li> <li>• method gives some consideration to gender and poverty</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• no formal participatory process for method design</li> <li>• although method might be adaptable to other contexts, full method is not published in English</li> </ul>

### *Contact details*

[www.pal-econ.org/](http://www.pal-econ.org/)

## **NGO Sustainability Index**

*USAID*

<i>Year developed</i>	<i>Applicability</i>	<i>Category of assessment</i>	<i>Dimensions</i>
annually since 1998	NGO sector in 29 countries in Eastern and Central Europe	civil society sector	capacity engagement environment impact

*Stated objectives*

To gauge the strength and continued viability of the region's NGO sectors

*Methodology*

The index analyses seven dimensions of the NGO sector: legal environment; organizational capacity; financial viability; advocacy; public image; service provision; and NGO infrastructure.

*Data collection*

NGO practitioners and experts implement based on desk and field research.

*Reporting format*

Qualitative report with quantitative ratings

*Stakeholders involved*

NGO staff

<i>Strengths</i>	<i>Weaknesses</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• implementation is led by local NGOs, although programme is led by a donor</li> <li>• shows trends over time</li> <li>• allows for comparison among countries</li> <li>• some limited consideration of gender</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• no formal participatory process for method design</li> <li>• full method is not publicly available</li> <li>• method does not give explicit attention to poverty</li> </ul>

*Contact details*

[www.usaid.gov/locations/europe\\_eurasia/dem\\_gov/ngoindex/](http://www.usaid.gov/locations/europe_eurasia/dem_gov/ngoindex/)

***The Ties that Bind: Social Capital in Bosnia-Herzegovina  
(National Human Development Report)***

*UNDP Bosnia-Herzegovina*

<i>Year developed</i>	<i>Applicability</i>	<i>Category of assessment</i>	<i>Dimensions</i>
implemented in 2009	civil society sector in Bosnia-Herzegovina	civil society sector	engagement environment

*Stated objectives*

To provide a much greater understanding of the ties that bind members of society together in Bosnia-Herzegovina – informal familial and local neighbourhood relations as well as formal associations, clubs and organizations

*Methodology*

Twenty-seven questions for public opinion survey on social capital, plus focus groups

*Data collection*

UNDP conducted survey and focus groups with CSOs.

*Reporting format*

Qualitative report format with some quantitative figures

*Stakeholders involved*

CSO staff

<i>Strengths</i>	<i>Weaknesses</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• good example of using civil society to supplement UNDP human development report</li> <li>• participatory data collection, including triangulated data between public opinion survey and CSO focus groups</li> <li>• results disaggregated by gender</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• socio-economic information collected but results not disaggregated by most marginalized groups</li> <li>• no formal participatory process for method design</li> <li>• method does not give explicit attention to poverty</li> <li>• not a CSO-led process</li> </ul>

*Contact details*

[www.undp.ba/index.aspx?PID=36&RID=90](http://www.undp.ba/index.aspx?PID=36&RID=90)

**World Governance Assessment**

*Overseas Development Institute*

<i>Year developed</i>	<i>Applicability</i>	<i>Category of assessment</i>	<i>Dimensions</i>
implemented in 2002 and 2007	civil society sector in 26 countries worldwide	civil society sector	environment

*Stated objectives*

To improve the assessment and analysis of governance

*Methodology*

The questionnaire comprises seven parts, the first of which covers civil society with six questions.

*Data collection*

Survey of government, business, NGOs, parliament, legal professions, international organizations, the civil service, academia, religious organizations, and the media

*Reporting format*

Qualitative report with quantitative ratings

*Stakeholders involved*

Government, business, NGOs, parliament, legal professions, international organizations, the civil service, academia, religious organizations, and the media

<i>Strengths</i>	<i>Weaknesses</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• places CSO performance within the broader governance context</li> <li>• method designed and data gathered through participatory processes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• civil society very limited in scope</li> <li>• no consideration of gender or poverty in civil society</li> </ul>

*Contact details*

[www.odi.org.uk/projects/00-07-world-governance-assessment/](http://www.odi.org.uk/projects/00-07-world-governance-assessment/)

## Other sources

The following sources did not meet all of the criteria for full inclusion in the source guide but may be of interest:

### **Accountability Self-Assessment**

Minnesota Council on Foundations and Forum of Regional Associations of Grantmakers  
[www.mcf.org/publictrust/selfassessment.html](http://www.mcf.org/publictrust/selfassessment.html)

### **Asian Barometer Survey**

National Taiwan University and Academia Sinica  
[www.asianbarometer.org/](http://www.asianbarometer.org/)

### **Bertelsmann Transformation Index**

Bertelsmann Foundation  
[www.bertelsmann-transformation-index.de/en/bti/](http://www.bertelsmann-transformation-index.de/en/bti/)

### **Capacity Assessment Tool**

Marguerite Casey Foundation  
[www.caseygrants.org/pages/resources/resources\\_downloadassessment.asp](http://www.caseygrants.org/pages/resources/resources_downloadassessment.asp)

### **Civil Society Assessment Tool**

World Bank  
[go.worldbank.org/I1BHVIWOK0](http://go.worldbank.org/I1BHVIWOK0)

### **Countries at the Crossroads**

Freedom House  
[www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=139&edition=8](http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=139&edition=8)

### **Effective Capacity Building in Nonprofit Organizations**

Venture Philanthropy Partners  
[www.vpppartners.org/learning/reports/capacity/capacity.html](http://www.vpppartners.org/learning/reports/capacity/capacity.html)

### **Evaluation Framework**

Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland  
[formin.finland.fi/public/default.aspx?contentid=161405&nodeid=15454&contentlan=2&culture=en-US](http://formin.finland.fi/public/default.aspx?contentid=161405&nodeid=15454&contentlan=2&culture=en-US)

### **Evaluation of Norwegian Development Cooperation through Norwegian Non-Governmental Organizations in Northern Uganda (2003–2007)**

Norad  
[www.norad.no/en/Tools+and+publications/Publications/Publication+Page?key=127555](http://www.norad.no/en/Tools+and+publications/Publications/Publication+Page?key=127555)

### **Handbook of NGO Good Governance**

European Center for Non-Profit Law  
[www.ecnl.org.hu/index.php?part=13publications&pubid=18](http://www.ecnl.org.hu/index.php?part=13publications&pubid=18)

### **Handbook on Social Audit in NGOs**

Financial Management Service Foundation  
[www.fmsfindia.org/BookDetails.aspx?id=4](http://www.fmsfindia.org/BookDetails.aspx?id=4)

**The Influence of Civil Society on the Human Development Process in Kyrgyzstan  
(National Human Development Report)**

UNDP Kyrgyzstan  
[www.undp.kg/en/home](http://www.undp.kg/en/home)

**Manual on Measurement of Volunteer Work**

International Labour Organization  
[www.norad.no/en/Tools+and+publications/Publications/Publication+page?key=109504](http://www.norad.no/en/Tools+and+publications/Publications/Publication+page?key=109504)

**Mapping and Capacity Assessment of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) in Darfur**

UNDP Sudan  
[www.sd.undp.org/index.html](http://www.sd.undp.org/index.html)

**Nations in Transit**

Freedom House  
[www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=17&year=2008](http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=17&year=2008)

**Nonprofit Organizational Assessment Tool**

University of Wisconsin Extension  
[www.uwex.edu/ces/cced/nonprofits/management/assessment.cfm](http://www.uwex.edu/ces/cced/nonprofits/management/assessment.cfm)

**Norms**

Credibility Alliance  
[www.credall.org.in/norms/norms.htm](http://www.credall.org.in/norms/norms.htm)

**Organizational Assessment Tool**

Australian Council for International Development  
[www.acfid.asn.au/what-we-do/ngo-effectiveness](http://www.acfid.asn.au/what-we-do/ngo-effectiveness)

**Organizational Capacity Self-Assessment Tool**

Academy for Educational Development  
[www.aed-ccsg.org/resources/tools.html](http://www.aed-ccsg.org/resources/tools.html)

**Practical Quality Assurance System for Small Organizations (PQASSO) Quality Mark**

Charities Evaluation Services  
[www.pqassoqualitymark.org.uk/](http://www.pqassoqualitymark.org.uk/)

**Standards for Excellence**

Standards for Excellence Institute  
[www.standardsforexcellenceinstitute.org/public/html/explore\\_a.html](http://www.standardsforexcellenceinstitute.org/public/html/explore_a.html)

**Thematic Evaluation of Support by Danish NGOs to Civil Society in Ghana and Ethiopia**

Danida  
[www.um.dk/en/menu/DevelopmentPolicy/Evaluations/Publications/ReportsByYear/2009/200907ThematicEvaluationofSupportbyDanishNGOstoCivilSocietyinGhanaandEthiopia.html](http://www.um.dk/en/menu/DevelopmentPolicy/Evaluations/Publications/ReportsByYear/2009/200907ThematicEvaluationofSupportbyDanishNGOstoCivilSocietyinGhanaandEthiopia.html)

**Worldwide Governance Indicators**

World Bank  
[info.worldbank.org/governance/wgi/index.asp](http://info.worldbank.org/governance/wgi/index.asp)



