**Dimensions and Sub-dimensions**

With regard to the quantitative component of the CSI, all indicators are grouped into 24 sub-dimensions and four dimensions, with ‘Environment’, composed of three sub-dimensions, placed as an external dimension circumscribing the state of civil society.  Each dimension and sub-dimension is described below.  Please note that individual indicators are described and explained in Annex I.1 of the toolkit.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Box I.4: Dimensions and Sub-dimensions** | | | | |
| *Civic Engagement* | *Level of Organisation* | *Practice of Values* | *Perception of Impact* | |
| * Extent of socially-based engagement * Depth of socially-based engagement * Diversity of socially-based engagement * Extent of political engagement * Depth of political engagement * Diversity of socially-based engagement | * Internal governance * Infrastructure * Sectoral communication * Human resources * Financial and technological resources * International linkages | * Democratic decision-making governance * Labour regulations * Code of conduct and transparency * Environmental standards * Perception of values in civil society as a whole | * Responsiveness (internal perception) * Social impact (internal perception) * Policy impact (internal perception) * Responsiveness (external perception) * Social impact (external perception) * Policy impact (external perception) * Impact of CS on attitudes | |
| *Environment:* | | | |  |
| Socio-economic context/ Socio-political context/ Socio-cultural context | | | |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |

The CSI is designed to assess and score the following four dimensions:

**Dimension 1: Civic Engagement**

Civic engagement is one of the core components of the CSI’s definition of civil society as it describes the formal and informal activities undertaken by individuals to advance shared interests at different levels, from recreation to social and political interests (see Box I.3 and below). The ‘active citizenship’ element[[1]](#footnote-1)[1] is therefore a crucial defining factor of civil society. Participation within civil society is multi-faceted. It is therefore useful to distinguish between socially-based engagement and political engagement.

* **Socially-based engagement** refers to those activities of citizens that include exchange within the public sphere to advance shared interests of a generally *social* or *recreational* nature. Examples range from participating in food kitchens to running sport clubs or cultural centres. These activities are extremely important not only because they promote mutual care and offer ways of spending one’s spare time, but also because they build social capital.
* **Political engagement**refers to those activities through which individuals try to advance shared interests of some *political* nature. These activities might include participation in demonstrations or boycotts, signing petitions, etc. and are often dependent on the country’s context. As a defining factor, these activities aim at impacting policies and/or bringing about social change at the macro-level.

Within each of these two areas, three specific sub-dimensions are measured:

* **Extent of engagement** of individuals both as members and/or volunteers of organisations and associations.
* **Depth of engagement**,which assesses how frequently/extensively people engage in civil society activities.
* **Diversity or inclusiveness of civil society**, given the fact that the CSI regards civil society as an arena where conflicting interests and power relations are played out. In this context, the presence of different social groups (especially traditionally marginalised groups) should not be taken for granted but rather seen as an important empirical element to assess. Therefore, this sub-dimension examines the distributions of gender, age, socio-economic background, ethnicity, and geographical region of those participating in civil society by comparing the levels within civil society with those in society at large.

To the extent possible, a common set of indicators for all six sub-dimensions was sought to guarantee a high level of comparability between them.

**Dimension 2: Level of Organisation**

The Level of Organisation dimension looks at the organisational development of civil society as a whole. In order to do so, it assesses the level of complexity and sophistication in a carefully selected sample of civil society organisations.

The sub-dimensions examined in this case are:

* **Internal governance**, assessed by the percentage of CSOs that have a formal governance and management system (e.g. a Board of Directors or Trustees or a Steering Committee, and the categories of groups included in the Board if it exists) with clearly defined roles and a clear system for their selection.
* **Infrastructure**, i.e. the level of support within the sector, measured by the percentage of CSOs that belong to a federation or an umbrella body of related organisations, considering that as a general rule the level of networking and connections among civil society organisations is a sign of strength. This might not be true for all country contexts, considering that the existence or high level of registration under umbrella groups can be seen as a common trait within some non-democratic political environments. In this case it would fall under the Advisory Committee’s remit to adapt the indicator.
* **Sectoral communication**, exploring examples of information-sharing and alliance-building to assess the extent of linkages and productive relations among civil society actors.
* **Human resources**, which assesses the sustainability of civil society’s human resources by measuring the ratio of volunteers to paid employees within the organisation.
* **Financial and technological resources**, including both the various sources of funding (e.g. membership, service fees, grants and donations) and the regular access to or availability of telephones, fax, internet or email and computers.
* **International linkages**, encompassing membership in international networks and participation in global events.

**Dimension 3: Practice of Values**

An assessment of the state of civil society cannot avoid considering the internal practice of values within the civil society arena. Since the CSI does not assume that civil society is *by definition* made up of progressive groups, nor does it take for granted that civil society is able to practice what it preaches, it is paramount for this project to treat the practice of values as an empirical question that must be tested.

In order to do so, CIVICUS identified some key values that are deemed crucial to gauge not only the endorsement of certain progressive values, but also the extent to which civil society’s practices are coherent with their ideals. As a consequence, the following sub-dimensions are considered:

* **Democratic decision-making governance**, i.e. how and by whom decisions are taken within CSOs.
* **Labour regulations** includes the existence of policies regarding equal opportunities, staff membership in labour unions, training in labour rights for new staff, and a publicly available statement on labour standards.
* **Code of conduct and transparency**, i.e. whether a code of conduct exists and is available publicly and whether the CSO’s financial information is available to the public.
* **Environmental standards,** i.e. to what extent do CSOs adopt policies upholding environmental standards of operation.
* **Perception of values within civil society**, i.e. how do CSOs perceive the practice of values such as non-violence, democracy, trustworthiness and tolerance in the civil society within which they operate.

This dimension, therefore, focuses both on the internal, measurable praxis of values as well as the values that civil society, within its diversity, portrays and represents as a whole towards society at large.

**Dimension 4: Perception of Impact**

The level of impact that civil society has on policy and social issues as well as on attitudes within society as a whole is analysed from the perspective of *perceived* impact, as recounted by both observers within civil society (internal perception) as well as external stakeholders belonging to the state, private sector, media, academia, international governmental organisations, or donor organisations (external perception).  This perceived impact is assessed along the following sub-dimensions:

* **Responsiveness (internal and external)**, i.e. civil society’s impact on the most important social concerns within the country.
* **Social impact (internal and external)**, i.e. civil society’s impact on society in general.
* **Policy impact (internal and external)** covers civil society’s impact on policy in general, the policy activism of CSOs, and the impact of CSO activism on selected policy issues.
* **Impact on attitudes** includes trust, public spiritedness and tolerance, among society as a whole, as well as the level of public trust in civil society.

**Context Dimension: External Environment**

In assessing the state of civil society it is crucial to give consideration to the social, political and economic environment in which it exists.  Some features of this environment may enable the growth of civil society – for example, the prevalence of social values such as trust and tolerance among the general population may foster associational activity.  Conversely, some features of the environment hamper the development of civil society – for example, restrictions on freedom of association, legal framework, but also socio-economic factors such as an economic depression might impact civil society negatively.

Three elements of the external environment are to be captured:

* **Socio-economic context** is depicted by Social Watch’s basic capabilities index, which is a simple indicator of a country’s level of social development, combining information on infant mortality, health care resources, and access to basic education. Measures of corruption, inequality, and macro-economic health complement the basic capabilities index to portray the socio-economic context that can have marked consequences for civil society, and perhaps most significantly at the lower levels of social development.
* **Socio-political context** is represented by five indicators. Three of these are adapted from the Freedom House indices of political and civil rights and freedoms, including political rights and freedoms, personal rights and freedoms within the law and associational and organisational rights and freedoms.  Information about CSO experience with the country’s legal framework and state effectiveness round out the picture of the socio-political context.
* **Socio-cultural context** utilises interpersonal trust – the level of trust that ordinary people feel for other ordinary people – as a broad measure of the social psychological climate for association and cooperation.  Even though everyone experiences relationships of varying trust and distrust with different people, this measure provides a simple indication of the prevalence of a world-outlook that can support and strengthen civil society.  Similarly, the extent of tolerance and public spiritedness also offers clues regarding the context in which civil society unfolds.

|  |
| --- |
| **Recap Box :**   * The CSI balances comparability with context specificity and adopts a general and flexible approach to the definition of civil society within a normative context. * The research is intended to be coupled with, and generate action for, the strengthening of civil society. * Civil society is seen as an arena (as opposed to an actor) that is actively created through citizen and organisational engagement, that is, including organised and non-organised civic engagement. * The chosen dimensions, sub-dimensions and indicators allow for the formulation of a policy agenda. * The Civil Society Diamond is characterized by *civic engagement*, *level of organisation, practice of values* and *perceived impact* and is encapsulated within the *external environment* in which civil society functions. * The calculation of the Diamond uses quantitative indicators; in addition, a qualitative study forms an integral part of the CSI’s implementation and will be described in greater detail later in this toolkit. |

1. [1] Taskforce on Active Citizenship (2007): The Concept of Active Citizenship. Available from <http://www.activecitizen.ie/UPLOADEDFILES/Mar07/Concept%20of%20Active%20Citizenship%20paper%20(Mar%2007).pdf>, consulted on 16 April 2008. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)