



# Report on Surveying Public Opinion of Civil Society Actors

## **Organizers:**

Gulf Centre for Human Rights (GCHR,) and Innovation for Change (I4C) Middle East and North Africa Hub

October- November 2020

Middle East and North Africa- MENA



**Civil society** has played a central role in addressing some of the greatest injustices and in building societies in the MENA region, it has also played a prominent role in critiquing, establishing and strengthening discourses. We cannot speak of mobilization successes in the region without highlighting the role played by CSOs and activists.

The Gulf Centre for Human Rights (GCHR) and the Innovation for Change MENA Hub (I4C MENA) commissioned this research to analyse the perception of the MENA public on civil society actors in the region. The research was carried out during October-November 2020 under the WeActTogether campaign project, managed by the Gulf Centre for Human Rights (GCHR) in partnership with the Innovation for Change Middle East and North Africa Hub (I4C MENA). The work is being managed in the framework of the civil society campaign project, under the MENA Hub objective to act as an advocate for the MENA region's civic space and human rights issues and develop adapted evidence-based resources and tools for effective campaigning and advocacy.

The project began in June 2020 and runs until 2022. Under this project, GCHR and I4C MENA and a number of partners are managing the WeActTogether Campaign, of a key message that 'civil society makes a huge contribution to our societies, and that human rights are an essential right'. The project will shed light on contributions where civil society has excelled in advocating for rights and freedoms while highlighting both the value of civil society as a means for people to express their views and demands.

As part of the campaign, there was a need to identify and research the MENA public's perception of civil society. This research was carried out and written by consultant Dr. Khouloud Al-Khatib, Researcher and Report Writer.

We would like to extend our thanks to all those who responded to the survey and took part in this research, and all who contributed to and supported the finalization of this work.

*The organisers*

*Due to rounding purposes, numbers presented throughout this report may not add up precisely to the totals provided and percentages may not precisely reflect the absolute figures. Also, for some questions, respondents had the option to choose multiple answers so the total percentages might add up to more than 100%.*



## Table of Contents

<b>List of Acronyms</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>About the Organisers</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Section 1: GENERAL INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>1.1 Introduction</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>1.2 Executive Summary</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>1.3 Objectives of the Report</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>1.4 Report Approach</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>1.5 Conceptual framework</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>1.6 Methodology</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>1.6.1 Phase 1: Desk review</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>1.6.2 Phase 2: Development of data collection tools</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>1.6.3 Phase 3: Data Analysis</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>1.6.4 Phase 4: Final Report</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Section 2: SURVEY RESPONDENTS PUBLIC PROFILE</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>2.1 Demographic features</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>2.1.1 The Nationality of the Survey respondents</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>2.1.2 The Country of Residency of the Surveyors</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>2.1.3 The Gender of the Survey respondents</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>2.1.4 The Age of the Survey respondents</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>2.2 Survey respondents relation to CSOs</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>2.2.1 Survey respondents' involvement</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>2.2.2 Survey respondents' type of involvement or participation</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>2.2.3 Survey respondents' Area of participation in CSOs</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Section 3: PROFILING CIVIL SOCIETY ACTORS</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>3.1 Assessment of survey respondents' understanding for CSOs</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>3.1.1 Understanding of Civil Society Organizations -CSOs</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>3.1.2 Understanding Members of the Civil society.</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>3.2 Activities Performed by CSOs.</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>Section 4: MAPPING CSO Environment</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>4.1 Government perceiving CSOs</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>4.2 Perception on the relation between CSOs and state/government</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>4.3 Relation between CSOs and other sectors</b>	<b>21</b>



4.3.1 Civil society and the Government	21
4.3.2 Civil society and Parliament	22
4.3.3 Civil society and Private sector	22
4.3.4 Civil Society and CSOs with the same cause	23
4.3.5 Civil Society and CSOs with the different cause	23
4.3.6 CSOs and International NGOs	24
4.3.7 CSOs and the Public	24
4.3.8 CSOs and the Media	25
4.3.9 CSOs and the Universities	25
4.3.10 Overall Findings (Relationship between CSOs and Other sectors)	25
<b>Section 5: CSOs' VALUES</b>	28
5.1 Accessibility	28
5.2 Honesty	28
5.3 Transparency in work policies and objectives	29
5.4 Financially Transparent	29
5.5 Equality in serving persons and communities	30
5.6 Actively working with the Grassroots	30
5.7 Actively working with "Elites"	31
5.8 Availability	31
5.9 Meeting People's Needs	32
5.10 Working on their own self interest	32
5.11 Working according to the donors' agenda	33
5.13 Competent and professional in performing their tasks	33
5.14 Accountability	34
5.15 Sharing information with the media and/or public	34
5.16 Overall Findings for the Values of CSOs	34
<b>Section 6: THE IMPACT OF CSOs' ACTIVITIES</b>	37
6.1 Survey respondents' Benefits from CSOs	37
6.2 CSOs make a difference	37
6.3 CSOs Effectiveness	38
6.4 The Most effective means of CSOs	40
6.5 Influential type of Information used by CSOs	41
6.6 Survey respondents' vision for CSO impact	41



<b>Section 7: CHALLENGES POINTED OUT BY SURVEY RESPONDENTS</b>	<b>43</b>
<b>Section 8: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION</b>	<b>44</b>
<b>List of Figures</b>	<b>47</b>



## **List of Acronyms**

CS:	Civil Society
CSA:	Civil Society Actors
CSO:	Civil Society Organizations
HRDs:	Human Rights Defenders
I4C:	Innovation for Change
GCHR:	Gulf Centre for Human Rights
MENA:	Middle East and North Africa
SDGs:	Sustainable Development Goals



## About the Organisers

The **Innovation for Change (I4C) Middle East and North Africa Hub**, is a regional network of people and organizations who connect, partner and learn together to find positive approaches to overcome barriers to closing civic space and restrictions to our basic freedoms of assembly, association and speech, GCHR joined the MENA hub in 2018 as one of the partners of the I4C program in the MENA region. Working closely with an expanded group of supporters and experts including social entrepreneurs and movements, the MENA Hub has developed its vision to create a free and secured civic space, and a mission to build a collaborative, innovative network of activists and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) to facilitate the exchange and development of expertise and resources to face the shrinking of civic space. For more information about the network, visit the website: [www.innovationforchange.net](http://www.innovationforchange.net)

The **Gulf Centre for Human Rights (GCHR)** is an independent, non-profit and non-governmental organisation that provides support and protection to human rights defenders in the Gulf region and neighbouring countries in order to promote human rights, including but not limited to freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly. GCHR is based in Lebanon and documents the environment for HRDs in the Gulf region and neighbouring countries, specifically Bahrain, Kuwait, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, the United Arab Emirates and Yemen. GCHR was founded in 2011. For more info see: [www.gc4hr.org](http://www.gc4hr.org).



## **Section 1: GENERAL INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Introduction**

This report is written as part of the project “Mapping of Civil Society Organizations in the MENA region conducted by Gulf Centre for Human Rights (GCHR) and Innovation for Change Middle East and North Africa Hub (I4C MENA). The analysis of the survey presents a comprehensive review covering the type of activities, environment, values and impact of CS Actors in MENA.

The report is based on an online survey comprising 21 questions that were distributed, hosted on Google form, and completed by 520 respondents.

This document presents the outcomes of the survey “Surveying Public Opinion of Civil Society Actors” broadcasted in October 2020. The researcher collected and synthesized the data and information on CSOs from the analysis of the survey and came up with indicators that provide a comprehensive assessment of the state of CSOs.

In assessing CSOs, the report examines the following sectors:

**Section 1: Introduction**, Brief about the Project’s organizations, **Executive Summary** that includes **Objectives** of the Report, and **Methodology**.

**Section 2: Survey respondents’ public profile:** (Demographic features: nationality, county of residence, age, and gender), their level and type of Involvement in CSOs.

**Section 3: Profiling Civil Society Actors:** Assessment of survey respondents’ understanding for CSOs and main activities practiced in their country of nationality).

**Section 4: Enabling Environment** (relationship between civil society and the state, as well as other sectors).

**Section 5: CSOs values** that are practiced and promoted within Civil society (such as transparency, accessibility, accountability, etc...)

**Section 6: The impact of activities** pursued by civil society actors (impact on individuals, benefits, effectiveness, effective means influential types).

**Section 7: Challenges**

**Section 8: Conclusions and Recommendations**



## **1.2 Executive Summary**

This report represents the final report of the consultancy for “**Surveying Public Opinion of Civil Society Actors in the MENA region**” as part of the project “Mapping Civil Society Organizations in the MENA region” implemented by the Gulf Centre for Human Rights (GCHR) and Innovation for Change (I4C) Middle East and North Africa Hub. In this report, an elaboration of the data analysis will be presented along with its objectives, and methodology.

## **1.3 Objectives of the Report**

The purpose of this report is to assess the perception of the MENA public on civil society organizations, hereinafter CSOs, as part of the project “Mapping Civil Society Organizations in the MENA region” implemented by GCHR and I4C MENA Hub.

This report is based on an online survey “Surveying Public Opinion of Civil Society Actors” conducted on google forms in October 2020, covering the MENA region.

Specifically, the consultant was tasked to assess the perception of the MENA public on civil society - including the role of human rights defenders, civil society organizations (CSOs), journalists and activists in working for change in society and how they excelled in advocating for rights and freedoms. The findings will help GCHR and the I4C MENA Hub, in seeking to achieve “the balance of negative vs positive public opinions about CSOs, HRDs, and civil society activists. The study also aims to highlight the achievements of civil society in countering negative narratives that attempt to demonize the sector. The findings will be added to a collection of a range of successful stories about organizations and activists that will be used during an advocacy campaign.

## **1.4 Report Approach**

In order to assess the status of CSOs in the MENA, the researcher examines four key dimensions of civil society actors: Profile, environment, values and impact. Each dimension comprises a number of sub-dimensions, which in turn include a number of indicators. The indicators represent the basis for data collection. The data is collected through an online survey which identifies the specific strengths and weaknesses of Civil Society Actors and provides recommendations for key actions aimed at strengthening civil society Actors.

## **1.5 Conceptual framework**

- In profiling CSOs, the report seeks to assess both the positive and the negative manifestations of civil society. This concept consequently includes a variety of organizations working on different themes.
- In selecting certain indicators and scaling them from ‘most negative’ to ‘most positive’, the report seeks to make normative judgments of the defining features of civil society, functions it should serve, and values it should embrace.
- The report covers the MENA region.
- Data analysis: Research methods are designed through an in-depth analysis of the survey to ensure varied perceptions and observations about CSOs.



## 1.6 Methodology

This evaluation consultancy took place over 8 weeks. The methodology was quantitative and qualitative in nature and was performed in accordance with the below phases:

### 1.6.1 Phase 1: Desk review

Acquire proper understanding of the report scope, collecting relevant documents, and refining needed information in order to optimize the approach of the evaluation.

### 1.6.2 Phase 2: Development of data collection tools

According to the collected information from Phase 1, an online survey was composed on Google form, with 21 questions that fit with project needs, and call for input from the public on civil society- including the role of HRDs, CSOs, journalists and activists across the MENA. The questionnaire initially was developed in English and then translated into Arabic.

### 1.6.3 Phase 3: Data Analysis

The online survey used a random representative sample that was filled by 520 full responses. The analysis was based on the followings:

- **Data analysis plan:** Organize and analyze the survey data that can help answer the research questions, understand the answers, and segment survey respondents to compare the opinions of different demographic, age and sex groups.
- **Graphical analysis:** Display data in a variety of visual formats.
- **Frequency table:** Show tables of the total number of respondents for each question, and the percentages of respondents for each part in the question.
- **Cross Tabulation or cross tabs:** Develop the analysis plan into what subgroups respond then analyze and compare by means of cross tabulation.
- **Modeling Data:** Filter and narrow the focus to one particular subgroup (when needed).

### 1.6.4 Phase 4: Final Report

Upon completion of data collection and analysis, a soft copy of the final deliverables was drafted in this Final Report ensuring alignment with the key findings. The report will be issued including the final deliverables and key findings with the objective of the survey and project at large, by incorporating needed recommendations for future direction and lessons learned.

Due to rounding purposes, numbers presented throughout this report may not add up precisely to the totals provided and percentages may not precisely reflect the absolute figures. Also, for some questions, respondents had the option to choose multiple answers so the total percentages might add up to more than 100%.



## Section 2: SURVEY RESPONDENTS PUBLIC PROFILE

Respondents to the online survey were from different countries in the MENA region. The online survey was filled randomly by 520 survey respondents across 22 states. The responses were categorized according to respondents' nationality/ current citizenship and country of residency/ place of residency.

### 2.1 Demographic features

#### 2.1.1 The Nationality of the Survey respondents

According to the nationality indicator, the highest percentage among the survey respondents were Lebanese who constituted 42.7%, then the Iraqis who constituted 39.2 %. Other respondents varied among different nationalities as shown in the below figure (Nationality).

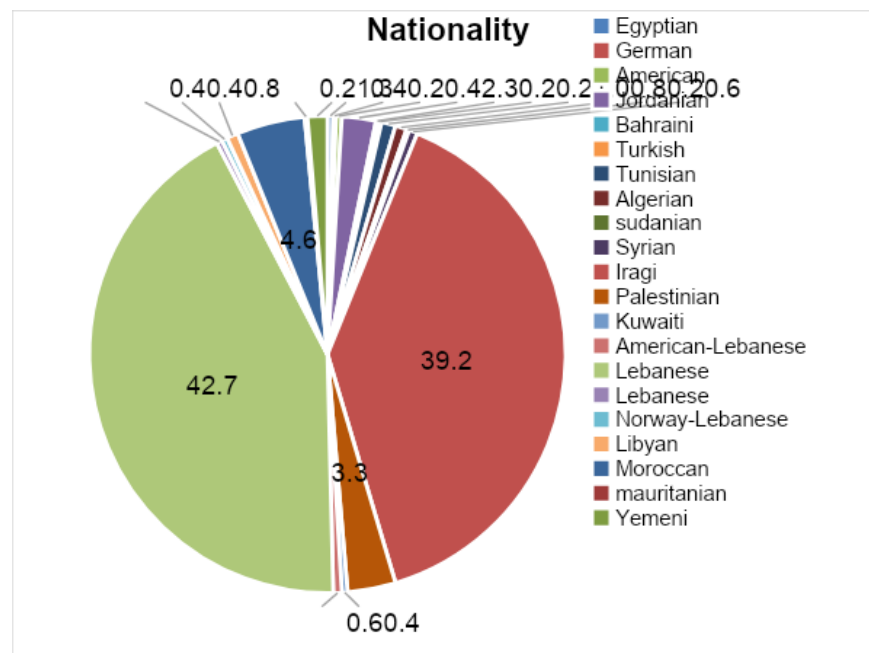


Figure 1: Country of Nationality

#### 2.1.2 The Country of Residency of the Surveyors

According to the country of residency indicator, the highest percentage among the surveyors was Lebanon (46.3%), then Iraq (39.2%). Other respondents varied among different countries of residence as shown in the figure 2 (Country of Residency).



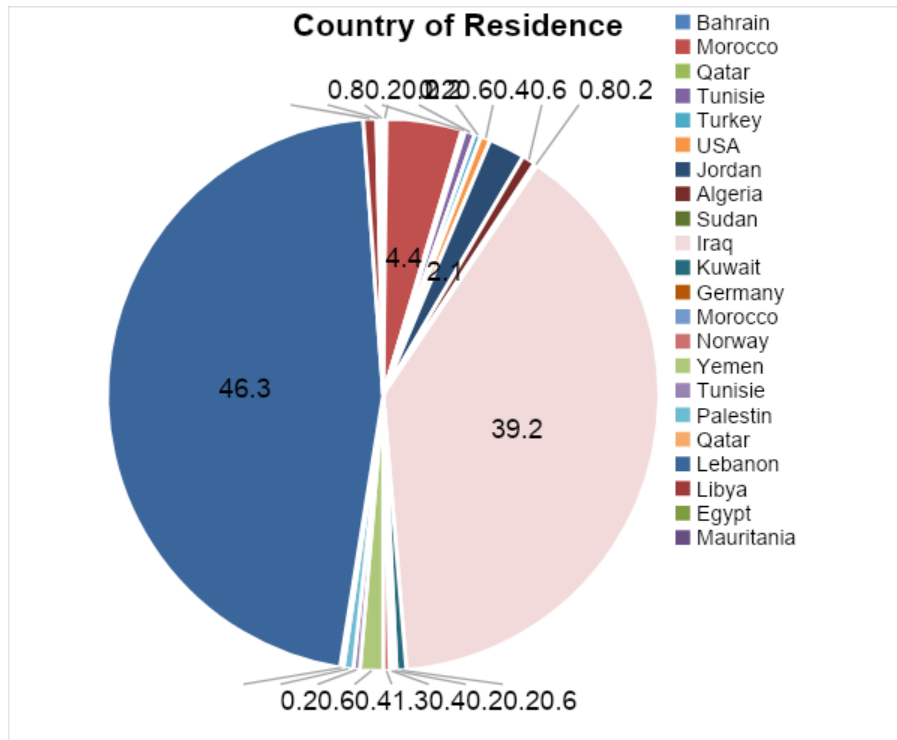


Figure 2: Country of Residence

### 2.1.3 The Gender of the Survey respondents

51.0% of the respondents to the online survey were males, while 48.6% were females. Others marked 0.4%. The distribution of the survey respondents' gender is determined in the following figure.

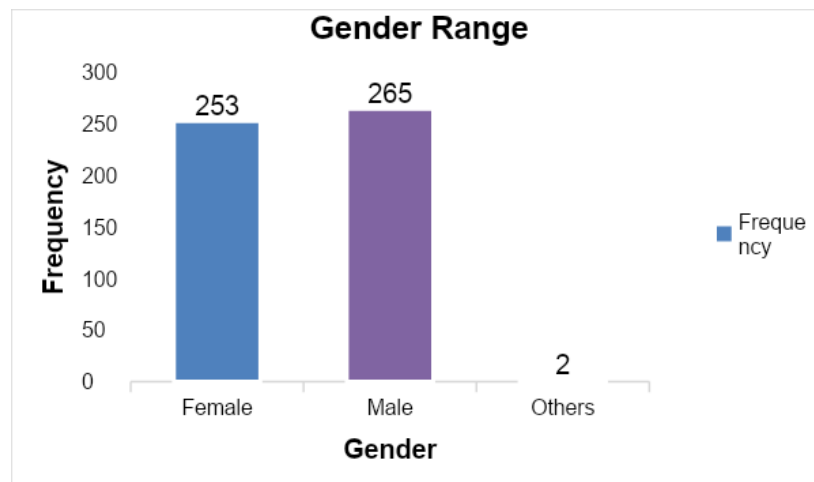


Figure 3: Gender Range



### 2.1.4 The Age of the Survey respondents

The following table indicates the age of the respondents.

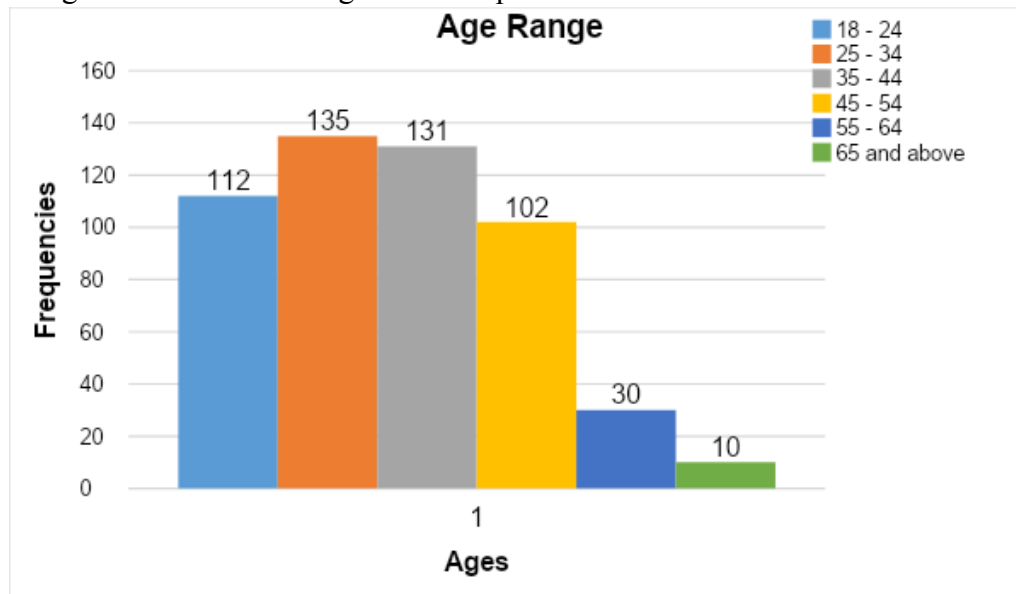


Figure 4: Age Range

The researcher used age categories to avoid overlapping. Age group is an important factor to understand respondents' perspectives. Results indicated that seniors (65+) had the lowest return rates, while the age category that ranged between 25 and 34 years old, marked the highest (26%). Despite this variety, in response rates, we noted different age groups represented. Age category between 35-44 constituted 25.2%, while the age range category between 18 and 24 scored 21.5%. In addition, 19.6% of respondents were between 45 and 54, while 5.8% were between 55 and 65.

## 2.2 Survey respondents relation to CSOs

### 2.2.1 Survey respondents' involvement

A question was added to understand if the survey respondents are personally involved in any civil society organizations or groups?

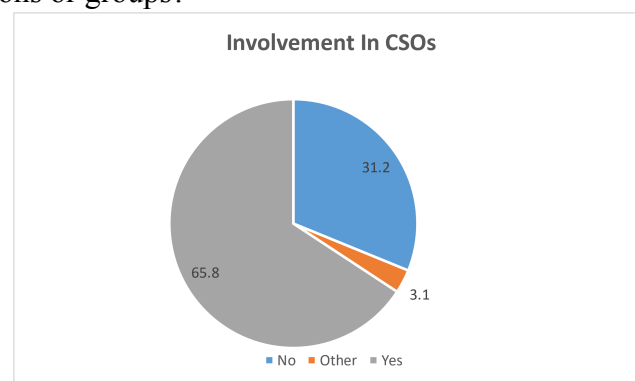


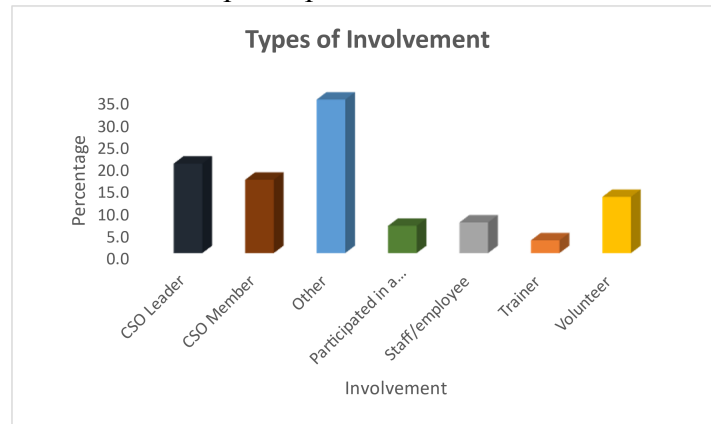
Figure 5: Survey respondents' Involvement in CSOs



Results came as follows: 65.8% of the respondents are involved and 31.2% are not, while 3.1% chose others.

### 2.2.2 Survey respondents' type of involvement or participation

Respondents' type of involvement or participation was as follows:



*Figure 6: Survey respondents' Type of Involvement*

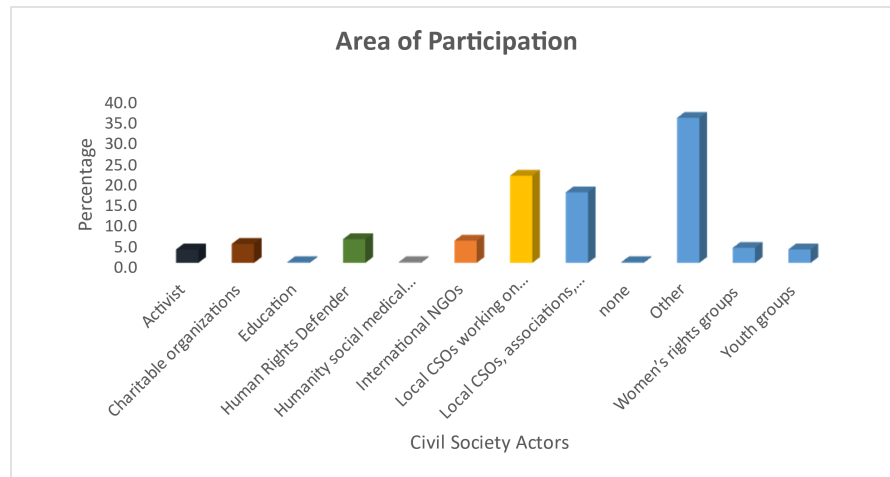
20.2% are CSO leaders, 16.5 % are members, 6.2% participated in the training, 6.9% are staff or employees, 2.9% are trainers, and 12.7% are volunteers. 34.6% chose others.

### 2.2.3 Survey respondents' Area of participation in CSOs

The survey then asked participants about their membership status in the following areas. The respondents who are involved are as follows (some are involved in more than one way so multiple selections were possible):

3.3% out of them are activists, 4.6% are involved in charitable organizations, 5.8% are Human Right Defenders, 5.4% belong to International Organizations, 21.2% work Local CSOs working on human rights, social justice, Rule of Law and advocacy issues, 3.7% belong to women groups, and 3.3% work with youth. Around 35% do not belong to any civil society actor.





*Figure 7: Survey respondents' Area of Participation*

It would be interesting to rely on the results of the survey to assess different aspects of membership in CSOs: Public's participation in CSOs was the highest in Human rights defending organizations (21.2%). This is an indicator of the increase of civic participation for youth, and implies that more individuals are choosing to join CSOs than other types of groups.



## Section 3: PROFILING CIVIL SOCIETY ACTORS

### 3.1 Assessment of survey respondents' understanding for CSOs

(Perception of what does Civil society mean to the Public)

#### 3.1.1 Understanding of Civil Society Organizations -CSOs

A question was added to the survey to get a better sense of the public's understanding of civil society Organizations. *Which ones would you consider as Civil Society Organizations -CSOs?* The survey indicated a list of 15 different institutions and groups of people. The survey respondents were asked to identify which fall into their understanding of what CSOs are among the following.

Answers are summarized in the Figure below.

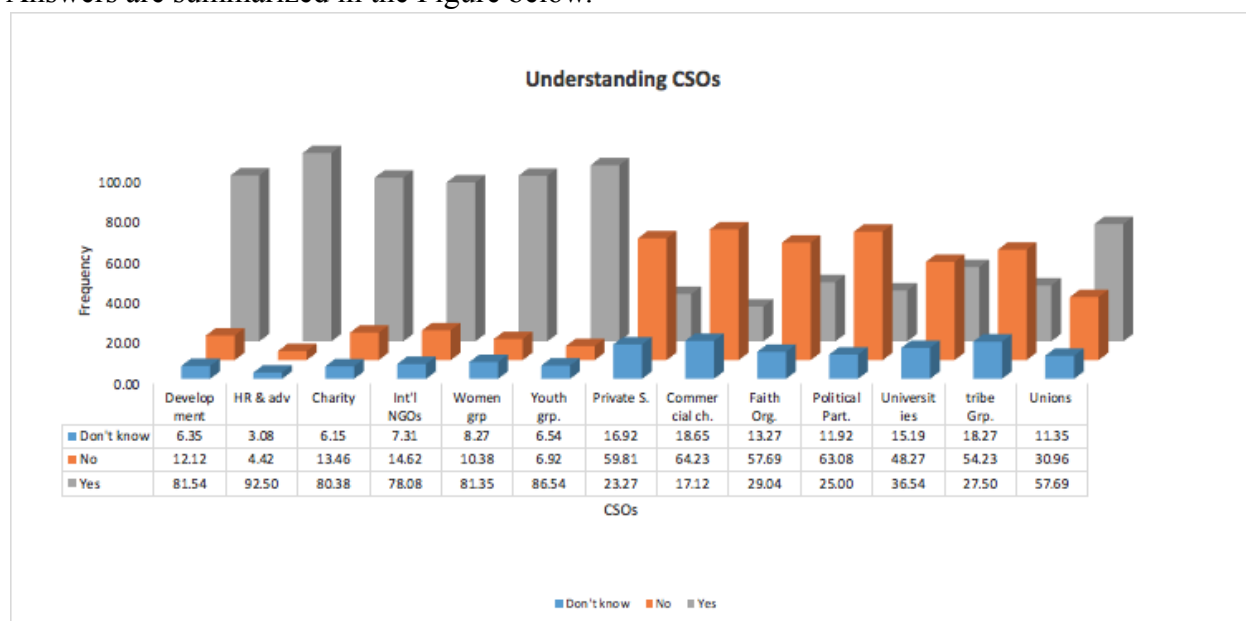


Figure 8: Survey respondents' Understanding for CSOs

The answers varied as follows:

81.5% believe that **“Local associations or community groups working on development and basic services”** are part of civil society, but 12.1% think they are not, while 6.3% don't know. 92.5% of the respondents believe that **“Local associations working on human rights, social justice, Rule of Law and Advocacy issues”** are part of civil society, while 4.4% believe they are not, and 3.1% don't know. 80.4% believed that **Charitable organizations** are part of CSOs, 13.5% believe they are not, while 6.2% don't know. 78.1% believe that International Organizations are part of CSOs, while 7.3% don't know, and 14.6% said no. 81.3% of the respondents believe that **women's groups** are part of civil society while 10.4% believe they are not and 8.3% don't know. 86.5 % of the respondents believe that **youth groups** are part of civil society, 6.9% believe they are not, and 6.5% don't know. 23.3% believe that **private sector organizations** are part of civil society, but 59.8% think they are not, while 16.9% don't know. 17.1% believe that **Commercial Chambers** are part of civil society, but 64.2% think they are



not, while 18.7 % don't know. 29% believe that **Faith Based Organizations** are part of civil society, and 57.7% think they are not, while 13.3% don't know. 25% believe that **Political Parties** are part of civil society, but 63.1% think they are not, while 11.9% don't know. 36.5% believe that **universities** are part of civil society, while 48.3% think they are not, and 15.2% don't know. 27.5% believe that **Tribal groups** are part of civil society, while 54.2% think they are not, while 18.3% don't know. 57.7% of the respondents believe that **Unions, syndicates and professional associations** are part of civil society, while 31% think they are not, and 11.3% don't know.

The results indicate a lack of clarity among the public about what constitutes civil society, and what organization falls into civil society actors and why. Since many of these groups tend to work in collaboration with one another to serve the public, it might indicate that all these sectors belong to civil society. Civil society as a *private action in service of the public good* is opposed to public action for public good (which is government), or private action for private good (which is business); it covers a wide spectrum of sectors, ranging from human rights, women's issues, good governance, to environmental issues etc.

Despite this lack of clarity, overall responses to the survey questions are trending in a positive direction. There is a high percentage of people answering "yes" to civil society's actors mainly (groups working on development and basic services, associations working on human rights, social justice, Rule of Law and Advocacy, Charity, Women and Youth group, and International Organizations). At the same time a high percentage of negative responses on (private sectors, commercial chambers, faith organizations, political parties, Universities, and tribal groups). However, these sectors mark confusion among survey respondents since between 10% and 20% of those surveyed answered that they "don't know" whether these sectors are civil society actors or not.

### 3.1.2 Understanding Members of the Civil society.

When survey respondents were asked about their understanding for members of the Civil society. The results came as follows:

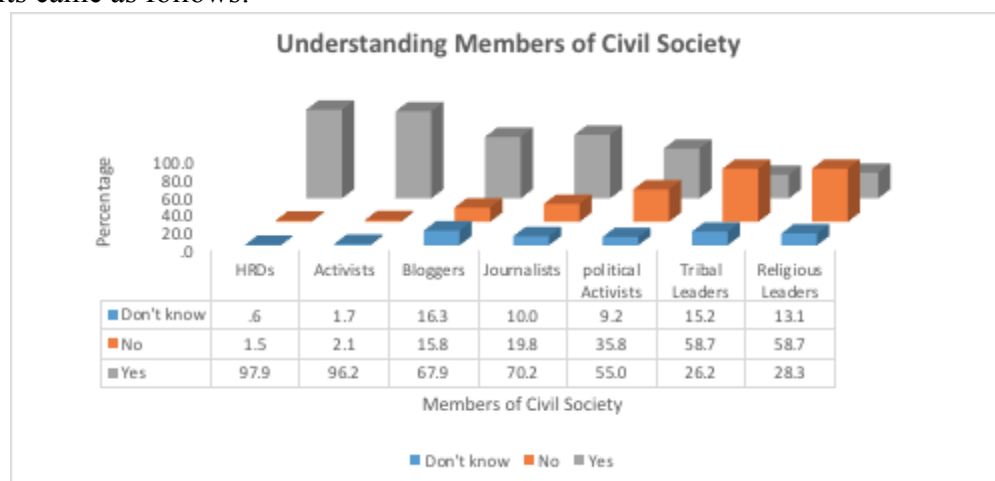


Figure 9: Survey respondents' Understanding Members of Civil society



97.9% of the respondents believe that **Human Rights Defenders** are members of civil society, 1.5% believe they are not, and 0.6% don't know.

96.2% of the respondents believe that **activists** are members, 2.1% believe they are not, and 1.7% don't know.

67.9% of the respondents believe that **bloggers** are members, 15.8% believe they are not, and 16.3% don't know.

70.2% of the respondents believe that **journalists** are members, 19.8% believe they are not, and 10% don't know.

55% of the respondents believe that **political activists** are members, 35.8 % believe they are not, and 9.2% don't know.

26.2% of the respondents believe that **Tribal Leaders** are members, 58.7 % believe they are not, and 15.2% don't know.

28.3% of the respondents believe that **Religious Leaders** are members, 58.7 % believe they are not, and 13.1% don't know.

These survey questions also marked a positive direction, in identifying the members of civil society mainly the HRDS and activists (more than 96% know that they are CS members). Less ambiguity is reflected with respect to bloggers and journalists. However, the percentages indicate confusion with respect to political activists, tribal leader, and religious leader.

### 3.2 Activities Performed by CSOs.

The survey attempts to gain a better understanding of opinions about the kind of activities conducted by CSOs in their respective countries. Survey respondents were introduced to a list of 15 activities and asked whether or not each activity indicated the activities that are usually performed or could possibly be performed by CSOs in their country of nationality.

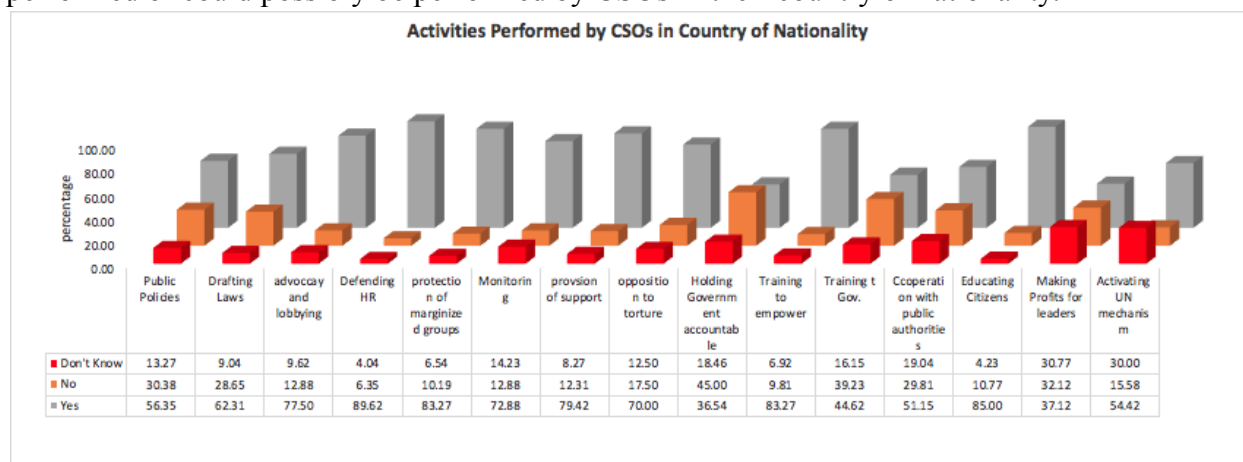


Figure 10: Activities Performed by CSOs in Country of survey respondents' nationality

Respondents' answers varied as follows:

- **Advocacy and lobbying for creating new public policies and legislations** (56.3% said yes, 3.4% said no, and 13.3% don't know)
- **Drafting new laws and legislations** (62.3% said yes, 28.7% said no, and 9% don't



know)

- **Advocacy and lobbying** (77.5% said yes, 12.9% said no, and 9.6% don't know)
- **Defending human rights and fundamental freedoms** (89.6% said yes, 6.3% said no, and 4% don't know)
- **Protection of marginalized and vulnerable groups and citizens** (83.3% said yes, 10.2% said no, and 6.5% don't know)
- **Monitoring and observation** (72.9% said yes, 12.9% said no, and 14.2% don't know)
- **Provision of support** (79.4% said yes, 12.3% said no, and 8.3% don't know)
- **Opposition to torture and unlawful detention** (70% said yes, 17.5% said no, and 12.5% don't know)
- **Holding the government accountable** (36.5% said yes, 45% said no, and 18.5% don't know)
- **Training and capacity building to empower individuals** (83.3% said yes, 9.8% said no, and 6.9% don't know)
- **Training and capacity building for government officials** (44.6% said yes, 39.2% said no, and 16.2% don't know)
- **Cooperating with public authorities to implement specific plans of action** (51.2% said yes, 29.8% said no, and 19% don't know)
- **Informing and educating citizens on public issues** (85% said yes, 10.8% said no, and 4.2% don't know)
- **Making profit for its leaders** (37.1% said yes, 32.1% said no, and 30.8% don't know)
- **Activating United Nations Mechanisms** (54.4% said yes, 15.6% said no, and 30 % don't know)

Because no definition of civil society was provided in the survey, interpretation of questions about the public's understanding for civil society, and its activities is subjective and personal. It is unclear whether, or to what extent, listing the types first has influenced subsequent answers related to the questions about the role that civil society or the key activities in which CSOs are engaged in. This makes a challengeable comparison between public's understanding of civil society and their corresponding activities across the survey.

Data analysis indicated that the public reflection on CSOs' influence in areas of human rights was high; it is assumed that the political situation, security, foreign pressures and international standards are the main stimuli for this indicator. There was a positive reflection in the percentage of people answering "yes" to civil society's role in all other categories. "Defending Human Rights" was the activity that marked the highest percentage (89.6%) of respondents, and Informing and educating citizens on public issues marked 85%. Respondents reflected that civil society in their countries are engaged in public policies (56.3%), drafting laws (62.3%), advocacy (77%), Protecting marginalized groups (83.3%), monitoring (72%), training to empower citizens (83.3%), while training to government groups (44.6%), and cooperation with public authorities (51.2%). The least activity in which CSOs are engaged was "holding the government accountable", 45% of the respondents believe that CSOs do not, and 18.5% don't know.

Given the very restrictive environment in the MENA for independent civil society work in general and human rights organizations in particular, as well as the persistent governmental



restrictive policies on a CSO, which should only focus on development activities rather than rights advocacy, it is encouraging to see that citizens believe that CSOs have a role to play in promoting human rights and democracy. In examining civil society's impact, it becomes apparent that CSOs are quite effective in meeting societal needs and empowering citizens. The percentages of public opinion respondents who believe that CSOs are more helpful in providing services is quite strong.

On the other hand, 37.1% feel that civil society's role is to "make a profit for its leaders, while 30.8% don't know. It is vital for CSOs to shape their financial sustainability in an approach away from being reflected as profit seeker.

The total sum of respondents who are not aware of the activities performed by CSOs constitute a remarkable note.



## Section 4: MAPPING CSO Environment

### (Relationship between CSOs and the state, as well as other sectors).

A question was added on How do you think the government perceives CSOs?

#### 4.1 Government perceiving CSOs

40.4% of the respondents believed that states consider civil society actors as adversaries, while 16% believe they are serious adversaries to the states, and 36% believe the state perceives civil society actors as allies, and 7.7% as key allies.

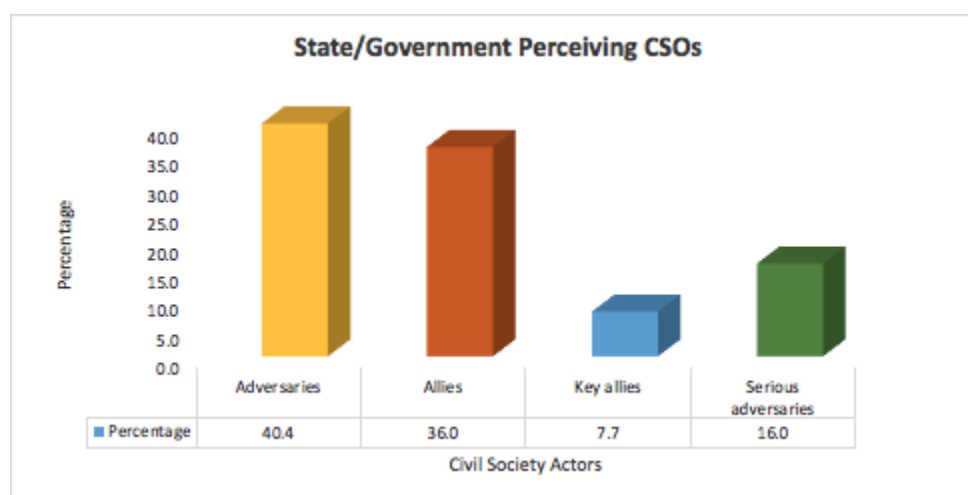


Figure 11: State/ Government perceiving CSOs

Respondents' reflection for the Government's perception towards civil society might be interpreted due to the hostile practice that portrays civil society as agents of foreign powers; due to this perception, citizens seem to think that the government perceives civil society as adversaries. In this regard, more than 55% of respondents specify it as a negative relation compared to 43% who think of it positively.

In this regard, it is important for CSOs to launch campaigns to effectively counter the government's rhetoric and promote themselves in an alternative narrative, to reflect their positive impact.

#### 4.2 Perception on the relation between CSOs and state/government

Respondents reflected their perception about the relations between CSOs and the state/government in their country of nationality. 31% believe that the state/government controls/restrains civil society, while 24% believe that CSOs are subject to frequent unwarranted interference in their operations. On the other hand, 28.8% believe that the state/government accepts the existence of an independent civil society but impose occasional legitimate supervision on CSOs for public interest. Only 16.2% of the respondents believed that CSOs



operate freely.

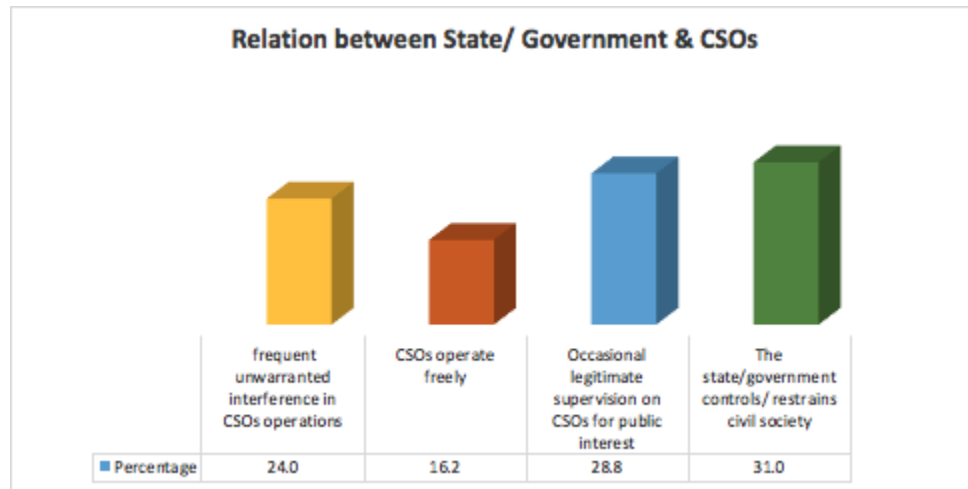


Figure 12: Relation Between State and CSOs

### 4.3 Relation between CSOs and other sectors

To better understand public perspectives regarding the relationships between civil society and other key sectors, the survey respondents reflected on 9 sectors presented in the figures below.

#### 4.3.1 Civil society and the Government

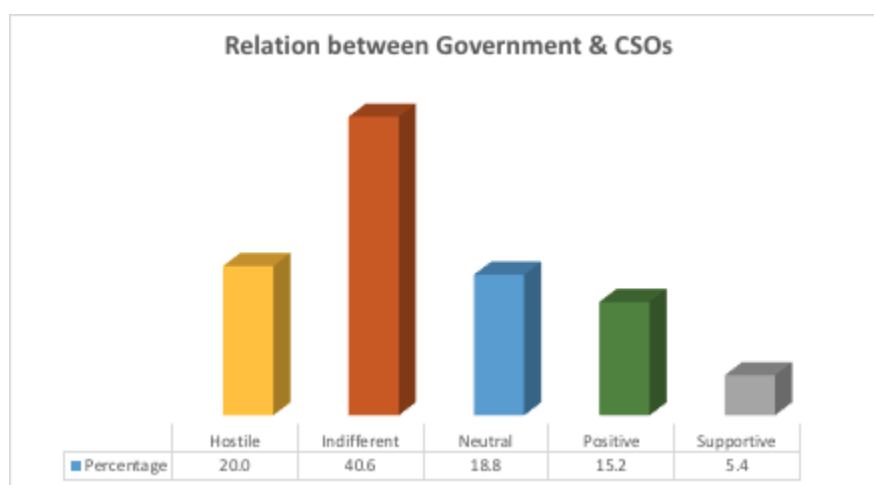


Figure 13: Civil Society and Government

In the relationship between CSOs and the **government**, respondents' answers varied as follows: 20% believe it is hostile, 40% indifferent, 18.8% neutral, 15.2% believe it is a positive relation, and only 5.4 % believe it is supportive.



### 4.3.2 Civil society and Parliament

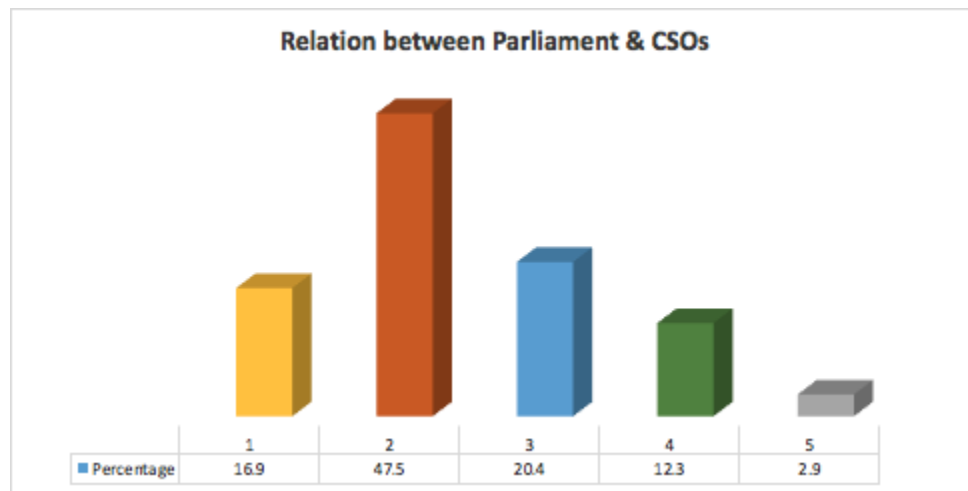


Figure 14: Civil society and the Parliament

In the relationship between CSOs and **Parliament**, respondents' reflection was as follow: 16.9% believe it is hostile, 47.5% indifferent, 20.4% neutral, 12.3% believe it is a positive relation, and only 2.9 % believe it is supportive.

### 4.3.3 Civil society and Private sector

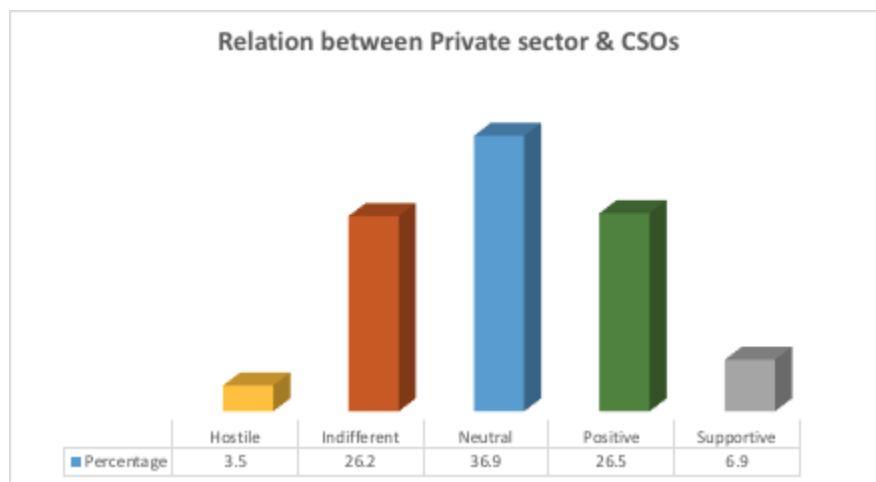


Figure 15: Civil society and Private Sector

In the relation with the **Private sector**, respondents' reflection was as follows: 3.5% believe it is hostile, 26.2% indifferent, 36.9% neutral, 26.5% believe it is a positive relation, and only 6.9 % believe it is supportive.



#### 4.3.4 Civil Society and CSOs with the same cause

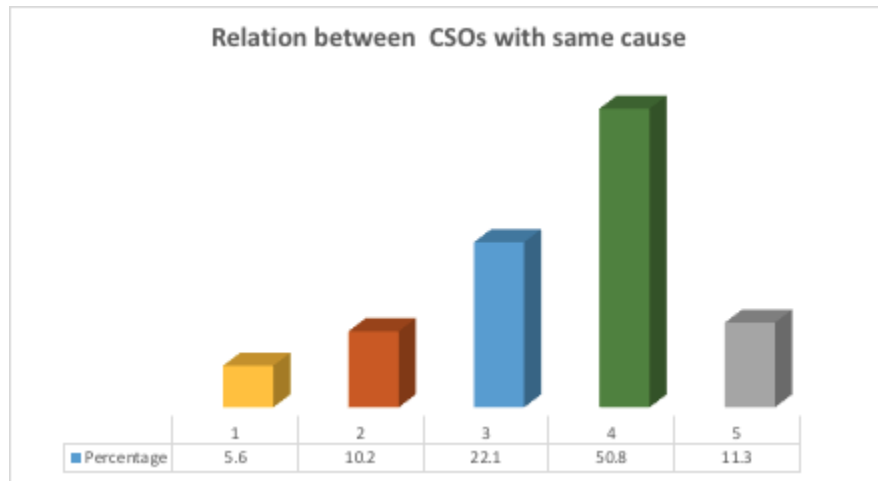


Figure 16: Civil society and CSOs with Same cause

In the relationship with other **CSOs with the same cause**, respondents' reflection was as follows: 5.6% believe it is hostile, 10.2% indifferent, 22.1% neutral, 50.8% believe it is a positive relationship, and only 11.3 % believe it is supportive.

#### 4.3.5 Civil Society and CSOs with the different cause

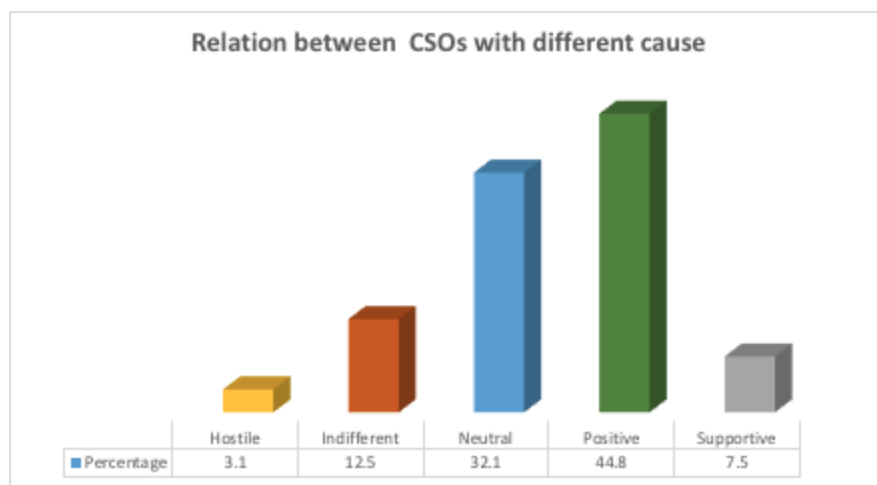


Figure 17: Civil society and CSOs with Different Cause

The relationship with other **CSOs with a different cause**, respondents' reflection was as follows: 3.1% believe it is hostile, 12.5% indifferent, 32.1% neutral, 44.8% believe it is a positive relationship, and only 7.5 % believe it is supportive.



#### 4.3.6 CSOs and International NGOs

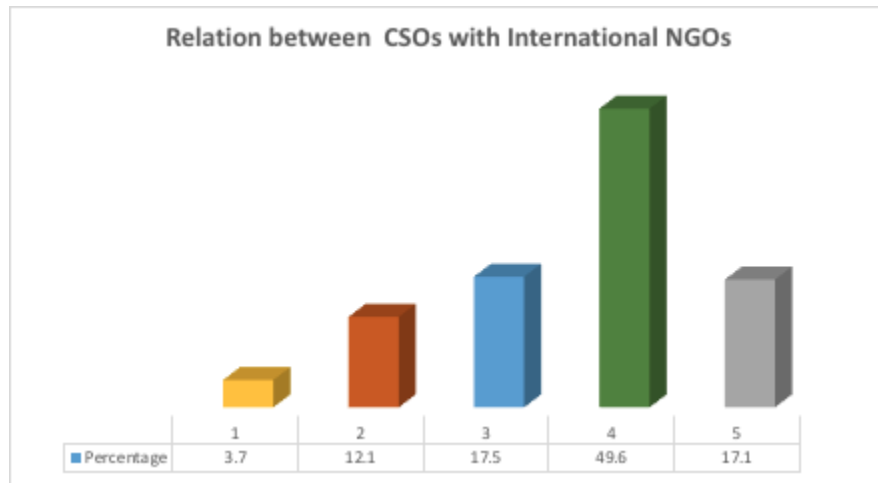


Figure 18: Civil society and International Organizations

In the relationship with **International NGOs**, respondents' reflection was as follows: 3.7% believe it is hostile, 12.1% indifferent, 17.5% neutral, 49.6% believe it is a positive relationship, and 17.1 % believe it is supportive.

#### 4.3.7 CSOs and the Public

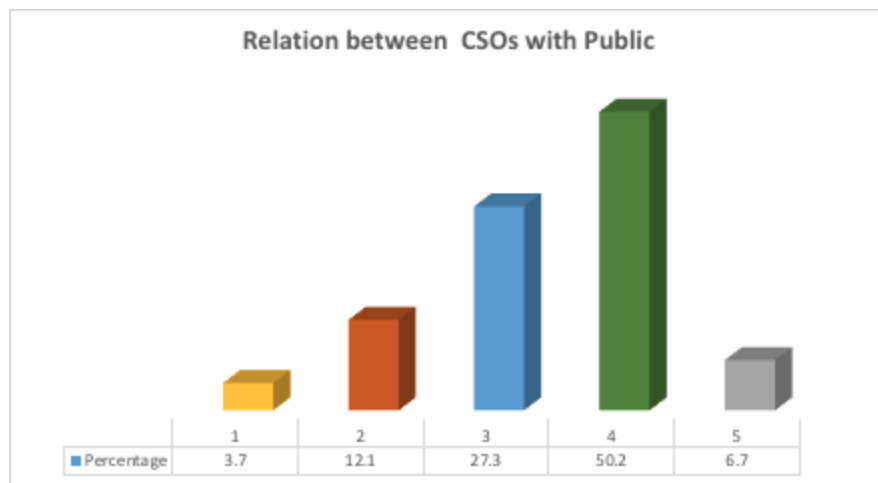


Figure 19: Civil society and Public

In the relationship between CSO and **the Public**, respondents' reflection was as follows: 3.7% believe it is hostile, 12.1% indifferent, 27.3% neutral, 50.2% believe it is a positive relationship, and 6.7 % believe it is supportive.



#### 4.3.8 CSOs and the Media

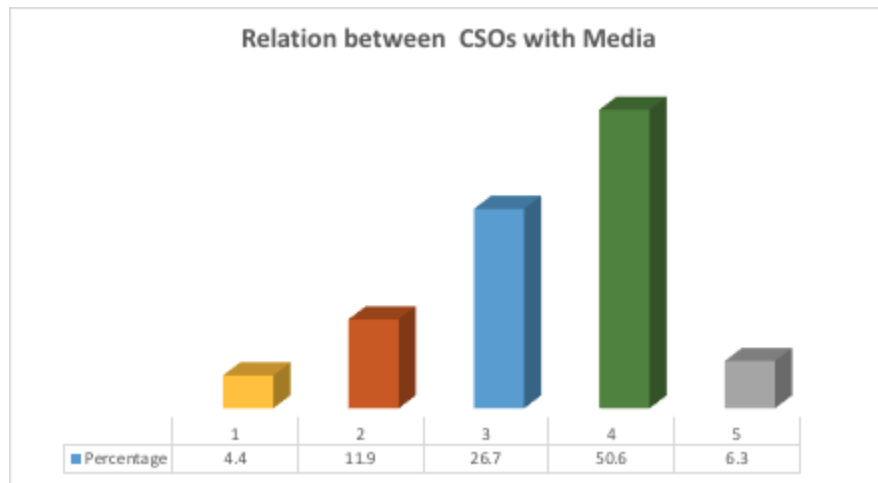


Figure 20: Civil society and Media

In the relationship between CSOs and **the Media**, respondents' reflection was as follows: 4.4% believe it is hostile, 11.9% indifferent, 26.7% neutral, 50.6% believe it is a positive relationship, and 6.3 % believe it is supportive.

#### 4.3.9 CSOs and the Universities

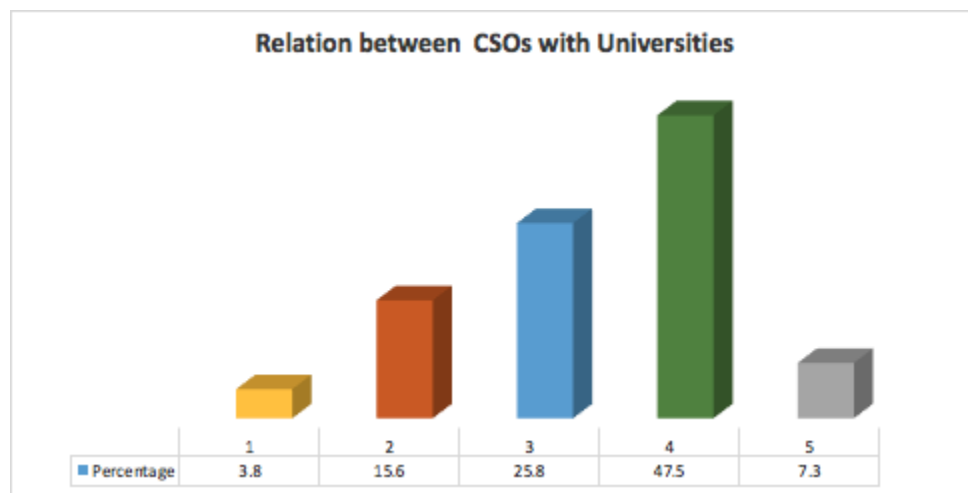


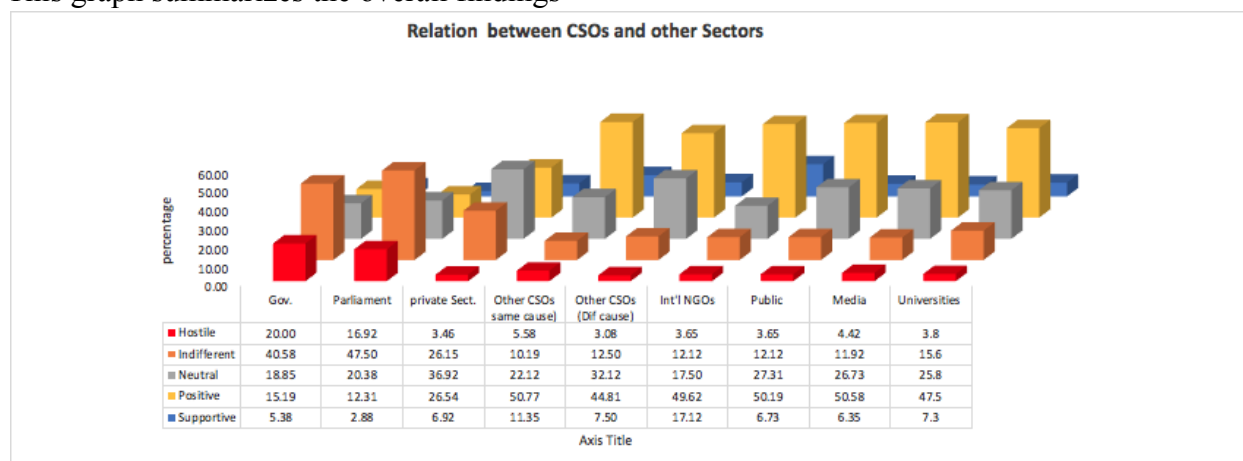
Figure 21: Civil society and Universities

In the relationship between CSOs and Universities, respondents' reflection was as follows: 3.8% believe it is hostile, 15.6% indifferent, 25.8% neutral, 47.7% believe it is a positive relationship, and 7.3 % believe it is supportive.



#### 4.3.10 Overall Findings (Relationship between CSOs and Other sectors)

This graph summarizes the overall findings



*Figure 22: Civil society and other sectors*

The greatest positive relationship marked was CSOs with other CSOs with the same cause (50.8%), the least were the public bodies (government 15.2 % and parliament 12.3%). Hostility was reflected by the public for the relationship with the government (20%) and the parliament (16.9%). The level of indifference and neutrality towards the relations marks high the respondents.

The relationship between CSOs and different stakeholders affects the impact and mobilizes varied resources, access, and support. It is worth saying that better outcomes stem from better policy and practice, and better evidence leads to better programs, which in turn leads to greater impact for CSOs or CSOs engaged in direct service delivery. The reason is that evidence enhances CSOs' legitimacy which matters for policy influence.

The relationship with the government is quite critical. An institutionalized interaction between organized civil society and government would create the conditions for a more open policy-making process. However, governments could threaten the autonomy, the monitoring, and observatory role of CSOs, and reflect them as elitist organizations, foreign agents and money-seekers rather than citizens' advocates, or autonomous civic actors. Governments should open the path for CSOs to participate in policy decision-making at the national, regional, and international levels; the governments need to consult CSOs in the development of these policies according to the "[Paris Principles](#)". In this sense there should be concrete ways to be found and the government should abide by this.

In some cases, governance assessments may be challenging, especially in countries with strong authoritarian structures.

CSOs should strengthen dialogue and interaction with the private sector. The business-civil society interaction is particularly underdeveloped and it deserves particular attention. However, it



must be kept in mind that the private sector's agenda and the disparity of resources between the two sectors could endanger the public mission of CSOs. In this regard, it would be advisable for CSOs to establish appropriate and effective common codes of conduct in terms of transparency and accountability, to prevent the risk of being perceived as agents of private corporations. Civil society must engage in various partnerships including with the private sector and improve partnerships within the sectors of media and universities.

Civil society must work together with common objectives across local, national, and international levels. Civil society must also increasingly work with the private sector, which plays an important role in Sustainable Development Goals. (SDGs).

Media ownership varies between countries of the MENA region (state-owned, political parties, private sector, etc.). Out of these, private media can be a strong source of influence and a vital element of democracy; the media reflects the society, conveys the public opinion regarding many issues, and provides information about different activities and different actors including CSOs. It can participate and support CSOs in defending and promoting public values. It can highlight the performance of civil society and strengthens the effect on the public. The media can be fully utilized by CSOs to promote their work and achievements. It is Recommended for CSOs to strengthen media campaigns to inform the public and advocate for them.

CSOs can benefit from deficiencies of the public sector and target marginalized groups.

CSOs would benefit from coordination with researchers working at universities. This would help them save resources by utilizing research capacity that adds credibility to CSOs' proposals and attract media attention.

It is encouraged for CSOs to utilize their resources, enhance their internal policies and strengthen coordination and cooperation with different stakeholders



## Section 5: CSOs' VALUES

This section examines not only the extent to which CSOs promote democratic practices, but also the level of public trust in CSOs' flow of work. These values included accessibility, honesty, transparency, financial transparency, serving communities, working with grassroots, working with elites, availability, problem-solving, self-interest, working according to donors' agenda, accountability and competency in performing tasks.

Respondents reflected their perception on CSOs.

### 5.1 Accessibility

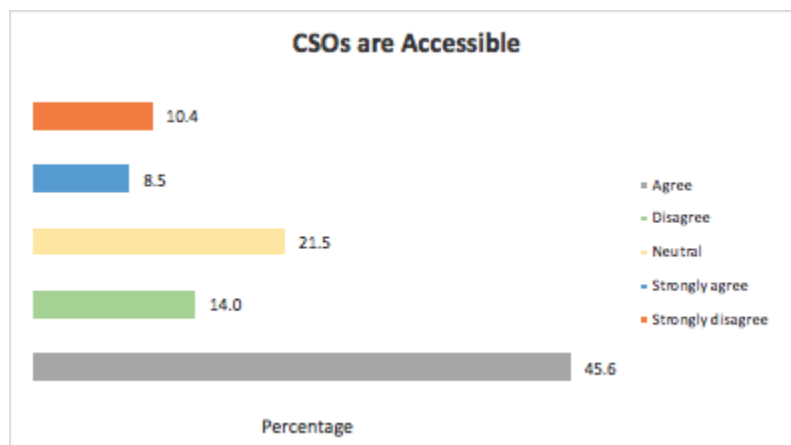


Figure 23: Accessibility

CSOs are accessible: 10.4% Strongly disagree, and 14% Disagree, 21.5% are neutral, while 45.6% agree, and 8.5% strongly agree.

### 5.2 Honesty

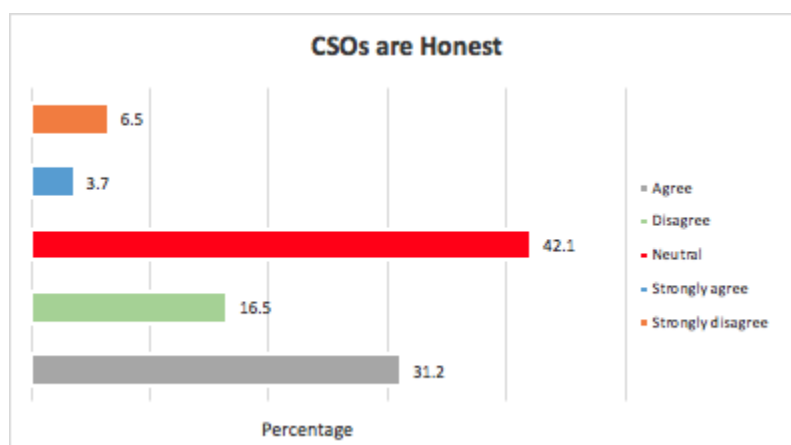


Figure 24: Honesty



CSOs are honest: 6.5% strongly disagree, 16.5% disagree, 42.1% are neutral, while 31.2 % agree, and 3.7 % strongly agree.

### 5.3 Transparency in work policies and objectives

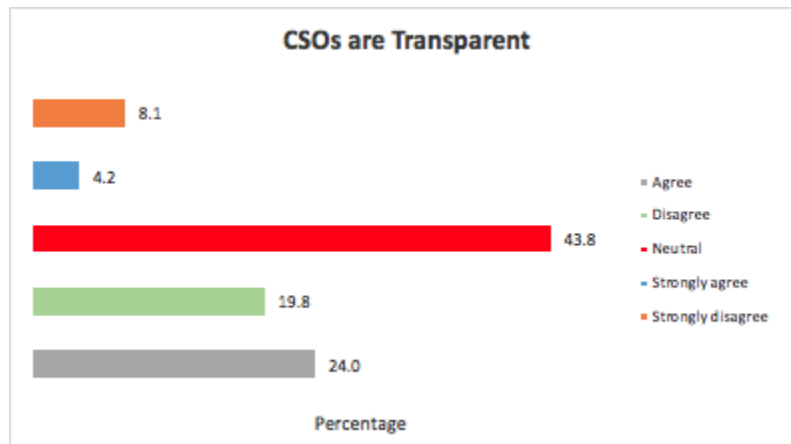


Figure 25: Transparency

CSOs are transparent: 8.1% strongly disagree, 19.8 % disagree, 43.8% are neutral, while 24 % agree, and 4.2 % strongly agree.

### 5.4 Financially Transparent

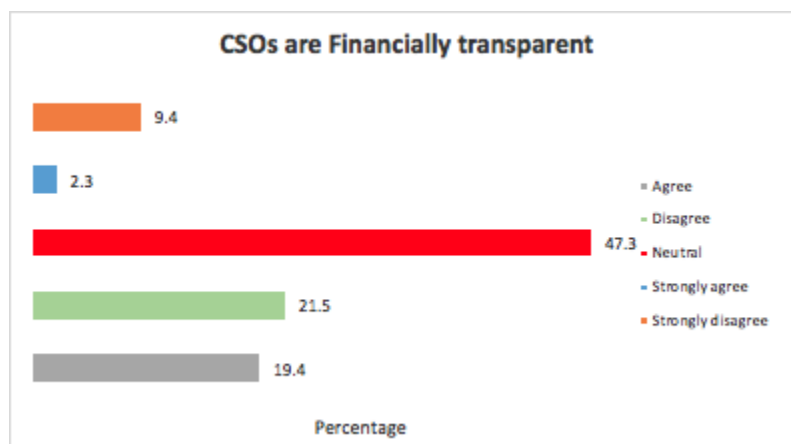


Figure 26: Financial Transparency

CSOs are financially transparent: 9.4 % strongly disagree, 21.5 % disagree, 47.3% are neutral, while 19.4 % agree, and 2.3 % strongly agree.



## 5.5 Equality in serving persons and communities

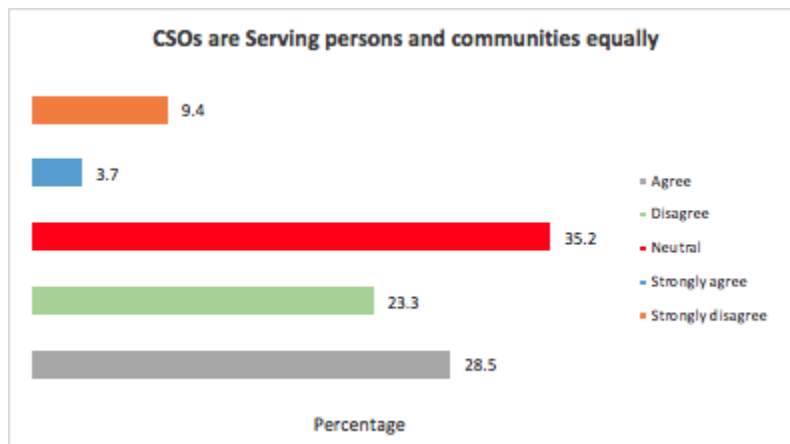


Figure 27: Equality in serving persons and communities

**CSOs serve persons and communities equally:** 9.4 % strongly disagree, 23.3 % disagree, 35.2% are neutral, while 28.5 % agree, and 3.7 % strongly agree.

## 5.6 Actively working with the Grassroots

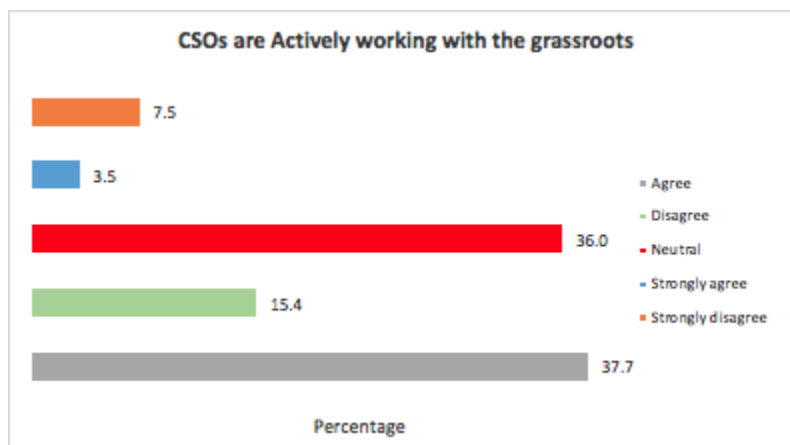


Figure 28: CSOs working with Grass Roots

**CSOs work actively with the grassroots** 7.5 % Strongly disagree, and 15.4 % Disagree, 36% are neutral, while 37.3 % agree, and 3.5 % strongly agree.



## 5.7 Actively working with “Elites”

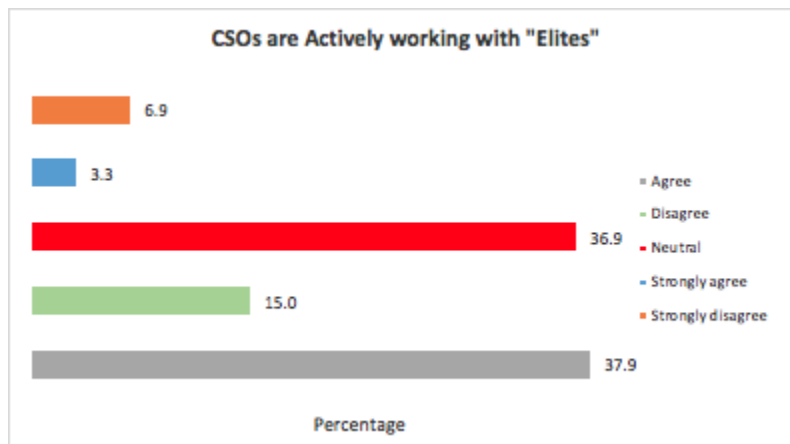


Figure 29: CSOs working with Elites

CSOs work **actively with the Elites**: 6.9 % strongly disagree, 15 % disagree, 36.9% are neutral, while 37.9 % agree, and 3.3 % strongly agree.

## 5.8 Availability

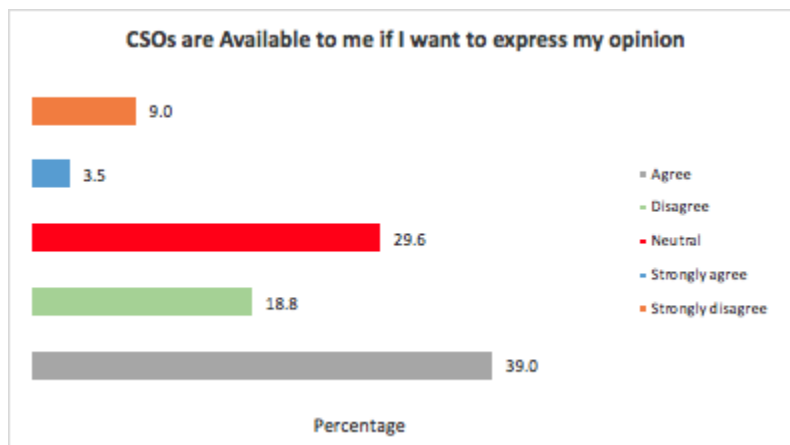


Figure 30: Availability

CSOs are available to those who want to express an opinion: 9.0 % strongly disagree, 18.8 % disagree, 29.6 % are neutral, while 39 % agree, and 3.5 % strongly agree.



## 5.9 Meeting People's Needs

		Frequency	Percent
Answers	Agree	160	30.8
	Disagree	95	18.3
	Neutral	202	38.8
	Strongly agree	13	2.5
	Strongly disagree	50	9.6
	Total	520	100.0

Figure 31: Meeting People's needs

**Actively working to solve problems and CSOs meet the needs of people like me:** 9.6 % strongly disagree, 18.3 % disagree, 38.8 % are neutral, while 30.8 % agree, and 2.5 % strongly agree.

## 5.10 Working on their own self interest

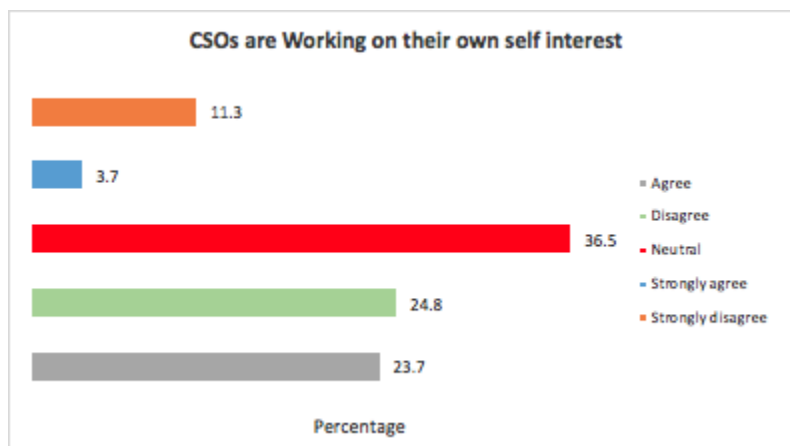


Figure 32: CSOs work on their own self interest

**CSOs work for their Self-interest:** 11.3 % strongly disagree, and 24.8 % disagree, 36.5 % are neutral, while 23.7% agree, and 3.7 % strongly agree.



### 5.11 Working according to the donors' agenda

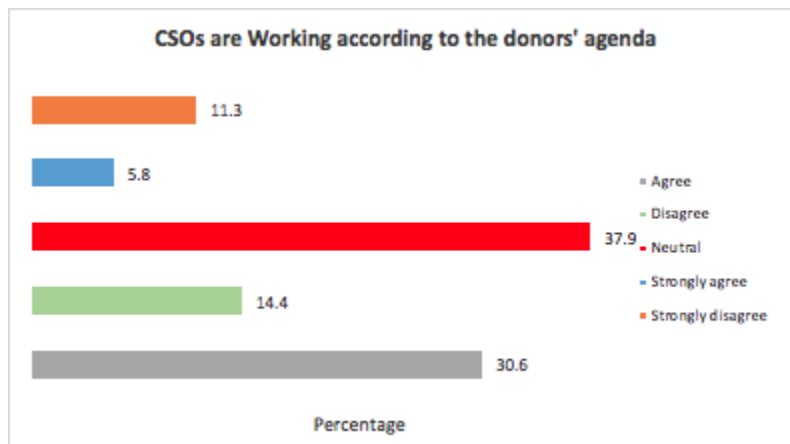


Figure 33: CSOs work according to the donor's agenda

**CSOs work for the donors' agenda:** 11.3 % strongly disagree, 14.4 % disagree, 37.9 % are neutral, while 30.6 % agree, and 5.8% strongly agree.

### 5.13 Competent and professional in performing their tasks

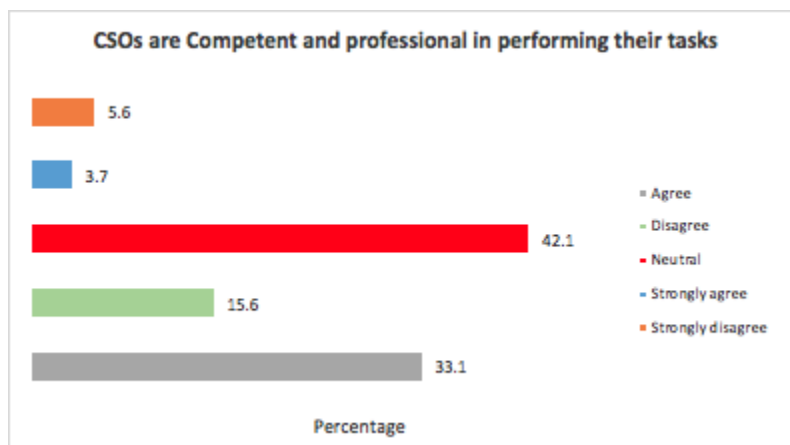


Figure 34: CSOs are competent and professional in their tasks

**CSOs are Competent and professional in performing their tasks:** 5.6 % strongly disagree, 15.6 % disagree, 42.1% are neutral, while 33.1% agree, and 3.7% strongly agree.



## 5.14 Accountability

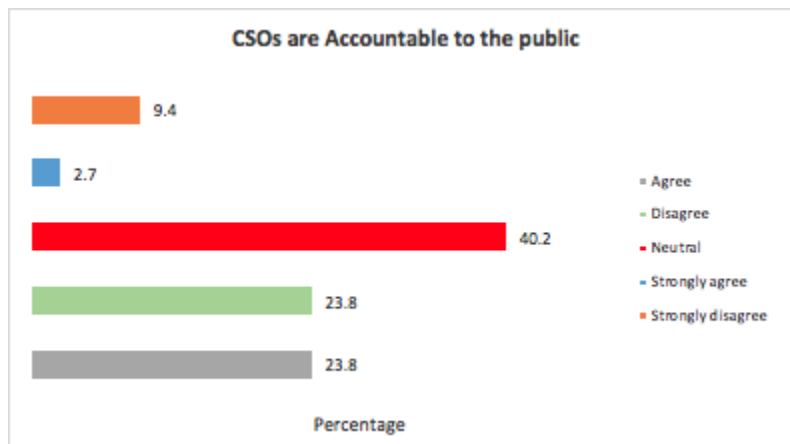


Figure 35: Accountability

**CSOs are accountable to the public on the quality of their job performance and the decisions they make:** 9.4 % strongly disagree, and 23.8% disagree, 40.2% are neutral, while 23.8 % agree, and 2.7% strongly agree.

## 5.15 Sharing information with the media and/or public

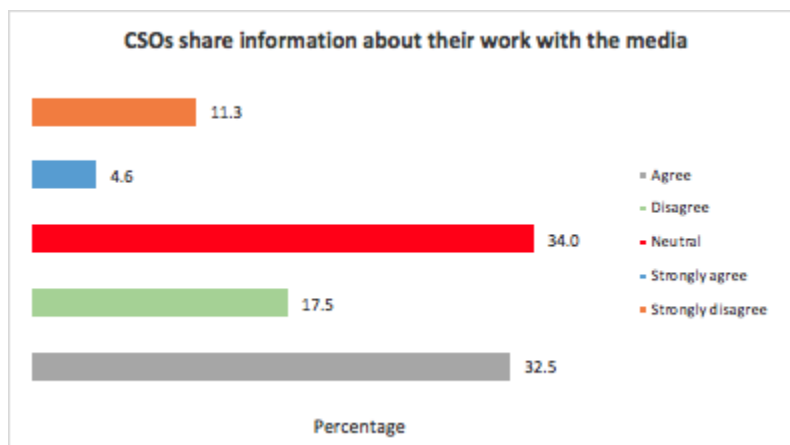


Figure 36: Sharing Information with Media

**CSOs are willing to share information about their work with the media and/or public:** 11.3 % strongly disagree, 17.5% disagree, 34% are neutral, while 32.5% agree, and 4.6% strongly agree.

## 5.16 Overall Findings for the Values of CSOs

Public trust is an asset to CSOs. These findings help us better understand public perception, which is critical to CSOs' sustainability and impact. The graph below summarizes the overall perception of the Public towards CSOs.



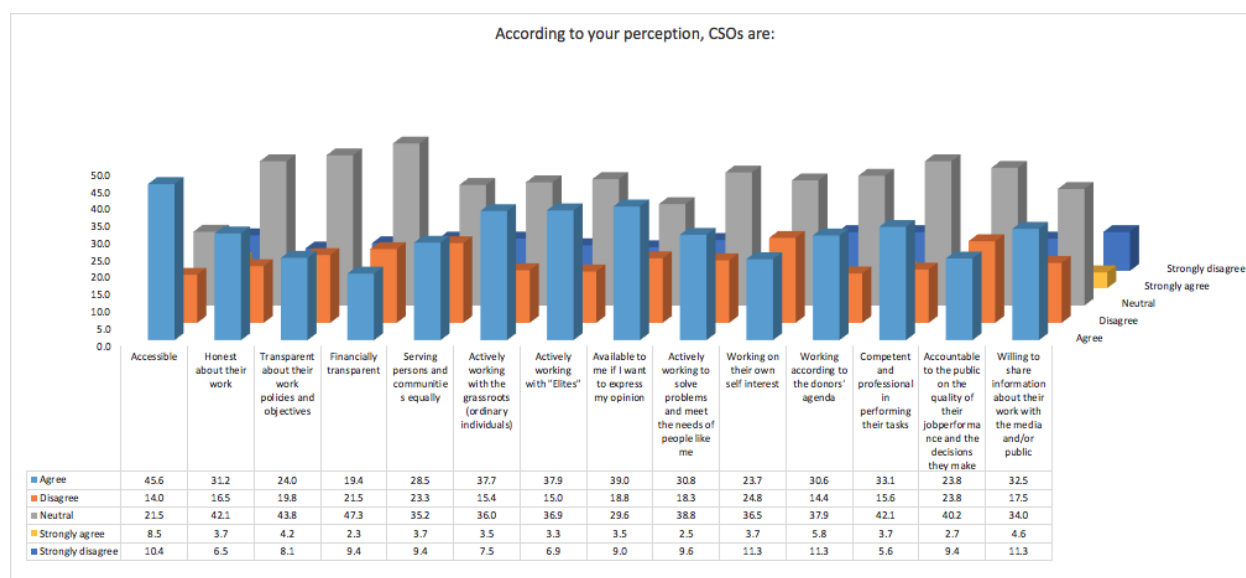


Figure 37: Values of CSOs

Transparency on the policies and financial issues marks the lowest among the responses (24% and 19.4% respectively); in addition, neutrality on this matter marks (43.8% and 47.3%) respectively. A sizable percentage of the respondents are neutral (which might also indicate that survey respondents “don’t know” or do not have a clear position about CSOs. These results mark the structural weakness in the CSOs, and should be a matter of serious concern when the CSOs sector looks into its credibility and legitimacy among the public. In most categories, respondents have a “somewhat positive” outlook to most of the insights, except when it comes to working to donor’s agenda 30.6% agree, and 37.9% are neutral), and working to their own self-interest marked positive to 23.7% reflected positive feedback, and 36.5% are neutral. This gap highlights a need for CSOs to work vigorously to make their operational methods and impact known and understood by the public. They need to generate and share useful and relevant knowledge to the public to increase its trust, and need to increase the commitment of stakeholders to get its support.

Lack of transparency affects citizens’ trust in CSOs; it jeopardizes their capacity to attract public support. CSOs should fully embrace the importance of financial transparency. It is crucially important that CSOs distinguish themselves as transparent and honest actors. The same applies to notions such as accountability and legitimacy. It is important that civil society as a whole recognizes these challenges and responds to them.

Better organizational accountability, internal governance, and legitimacy improves public perception. Scrutiny is important to support CSOs in their genuine contribution to policies, individuals, and society. If a targeting campaign is launched against any CSO on the basis that it does not maintain its own internal governance structure, its entire existence could be challenged. These perceptions of CSOs may be threatened by scandals or misperceptions that could be avoided by revealing internal processes. This process itself can make civil society stronger. Implementing these assessments often strengthens CSO capacity for outreach, and can enhance connections between CSOs and other sectors, promoting cooperation and mutual support. Overall, what is most important is that CSOs can prove that they (individually and collectively) take their legitimacy and accountability extremely seriously. Potentially, transparent and



accountable organizations would be considered more favorably by the media as voice of the people’.

In this sense, CSOs need to shed the light on its strength and sustainability, and strengthen its contribution to positive social change.

In this sense, CSOs need to generate and share useful and relevant knowledge to the public to increase its trust, and need to increase the commitment of stakeholders to get its support.

CSOs need a proactive strategy that addresses pressing social concerns, rather than attracting funds.



## Section 6: THE IMPACT OF CSOs' ACTIVITIES

To get a better sense of the role civil society plays in the MENA, the survey questions also explored perspectives about the key activities conducted by civil society and their impact.

### 6.1 Survey respondents' Benefits from CSOs

When survey respondents were asked whether they personally benefited from the performance of CSOs, the answers came as follows:

67.7% of the respondents benefited from building their capacities, 31% did not, and 2% don't know)

26% of the respondents benefited from legal support, 72.1% did not, and 1.9% don't know)

21.3 %of the respondents benefited from financial support, 76.5% did not, and 2.1% don't know)

23.5 %of the respondents benefited from job, 74.8% did not, and 1.7% don't know)

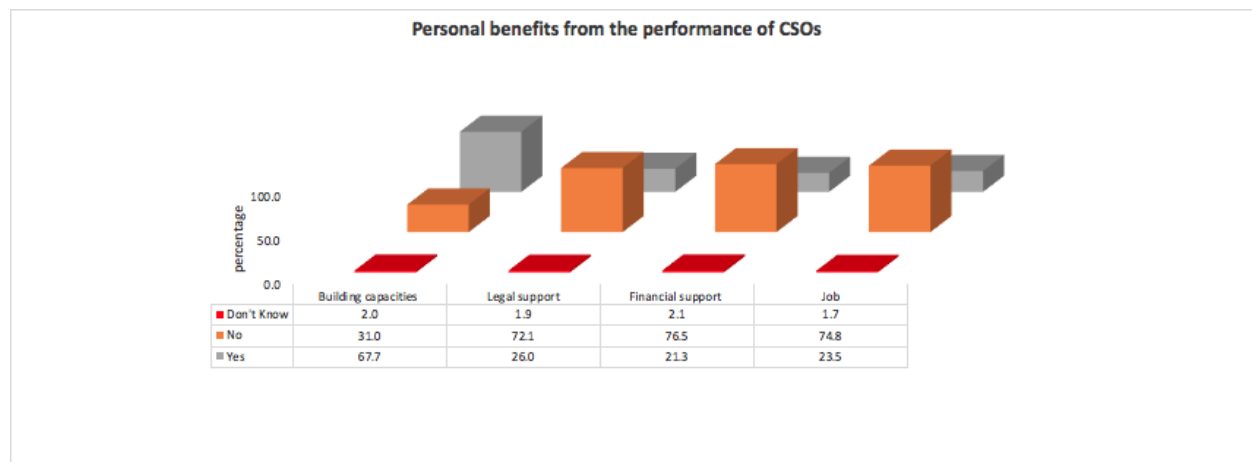


Figure 38: Personal Benefits from the Performance of CSOs

### 6.2 CSOs make a difference

The survey involved a question whether civil society does or does not make a difference in their lives. 66% believe that it does, and 12.3% do not, and 21.2% are neutral.



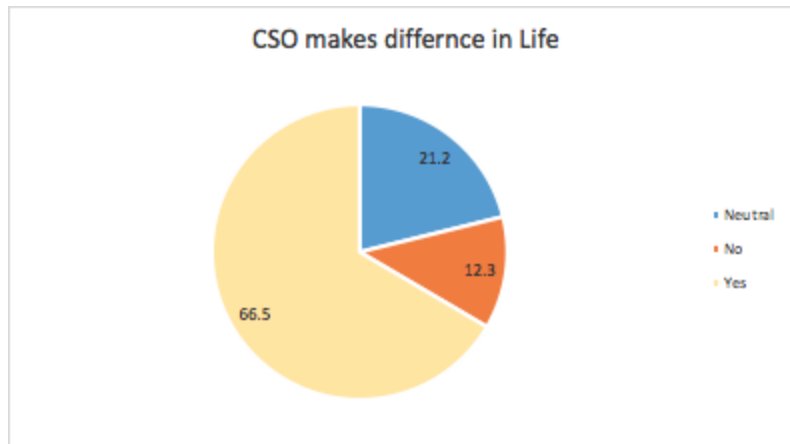


Figure 39: CSOs impact on life

This response indicates a positive influence.

### 6.3 CSOs Effectiveness

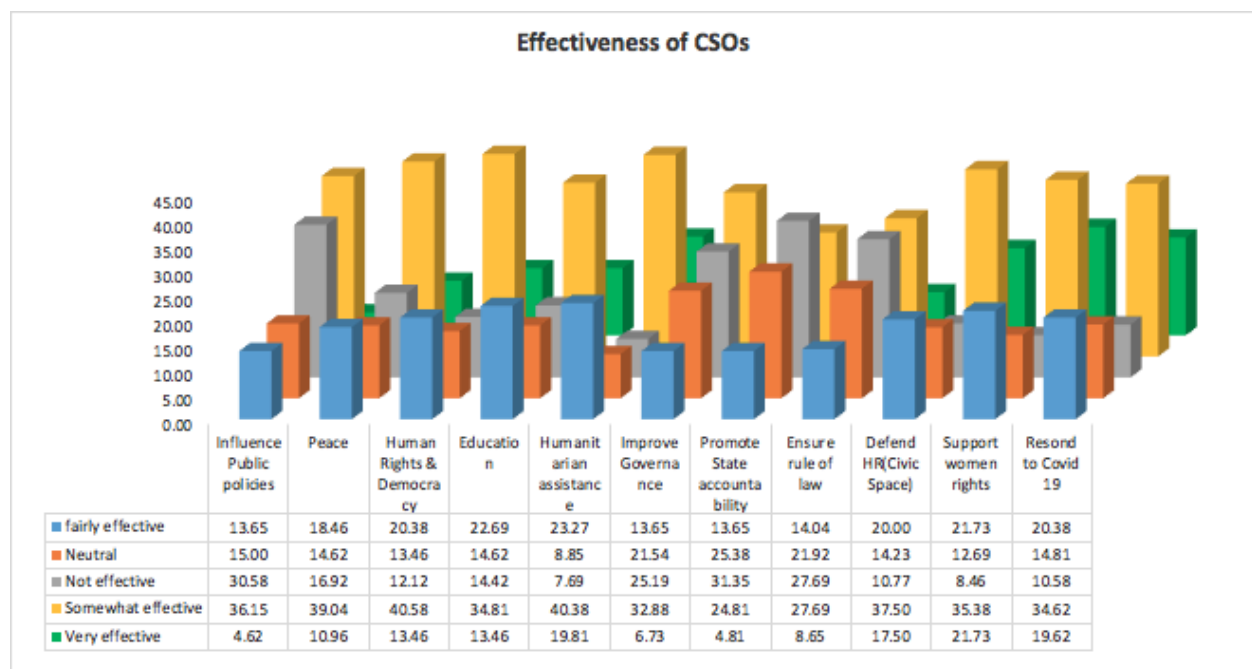


Figure 40: CSO effectiveness

With regards to perception of civil society's work, the most influential area according to the survey respondents reflected the following:

**Influence Public policies:** 30.6 % of the respondents consider it not effective, 36.2% somewhat effective, 15% Neutral, 13.7% fairly effective, and 4.6% very effective.



**Promoting Peace:** 16.9% of the respondents consider it not effective, 39.0% somewhat effective, 14.6% Neutral, 18.5% fairly effective, and 11% very effective.

**Promoting human rights and Democracy:** 12.1% of the respondents consider it not effective, 40.6% somewhat effective, 13.5% Neutral, 20.4% fairly effective, and 13.5% very effective.

**Providing education and health services.** 14.4% of the respondents consider it not effective, 34.8% somewhat effective, 14.6% Neutral, 22.7% fairly effective, and 13.5% very effective.

**Providing humanitarian assistance:** 7.7% of the respondents consider it not effective, 40.7% Somewhat effective, 8.8% Neutral, 23.3% fairly effective, and 19.8% very effective.

**Improving governance:** 25.2% of the respondents consider it not effective, 32.9% Somewhat effective, 21.5% Neutral, 13.7% fairly effective, and 6.7% very effective.

**Promoting state accountability:** 31.3% of the respondents consider it not effective, 24.8% Somewhat effective, 25.4% Neutral, 13.7% fairly effective, and 4.8% very effective.

**Ensuring Rule of Law/Justice:** 27.7% of the respondents consider it not effective, 27.7% Somewhat effective, 21.9% Neutral, 14% fairly effective, and 8.7% very effective.

**Defending Human Rights mainly freedom of expressions and civic space:** 10.8% of the respondents consider it not effective, 37.5% Somewhat effective, 14.2% Neutral, 20% fairly effective, and 17.5% very effective.

**Supporting Women Rights/ Gender equality:** 8.5% of the respondents consider it not effective, 35.4% Somewhat effective, 12.7% Neutral, 21.7% fairly effective, and 21.7% very effective.

**Responding to Covid-19 pandemic:** 10.6% of the respondents consider it not effective, 34.6% Somewhat effective, 14.8% Neutral, 20.4% fairly effective, and 19.6% very effective.

Despite the dynamism of the MENA region, reflected in the vibrant civil Society that works on a wide range of different issues, the public seems to consider that the overall influence of governance and policy-making is limited. The involvement of CSOs in community level social mobilization and advocacy is quietly reflected by survey respondents. Statistics indicate that the public consider the most areas of effectiveness for the CSO are in the humanitarian aid work and development.

Humanitarian assistance and supporting women rights were selected as the most effective means, while improving governance and rule of law were detected as the least effective

The Range percentage of the respondents indicated that CSOs complement the government role in terms of service provisions such as education, humanitarian assistance, peace, human rights and democracy, defending Civic space, and responding to covid-19, rather than holding the government accountable. These percentages indicate that the CSO plays much of their efforts on filling the gap in the government services.



## 6.4 The Most effective means of CSOs

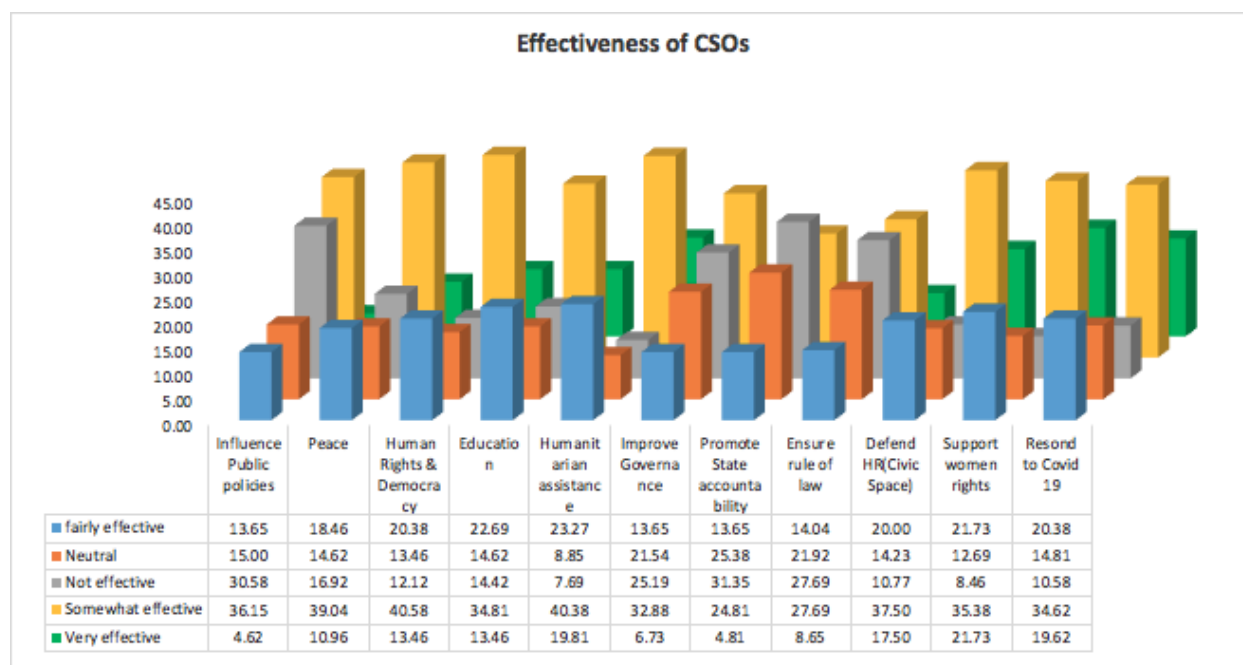


Figure 41: CSOs most effective means

Advocacy: 14.4 % of the respondents consider it not effective, 29.6 % somewhat effective, 3.1 % neutral, 50.6% fairly effective, and 2.3 % very effective.

Petitions: 23.6% of the respondents consider it not effective, 28.7 % somewhat effective, 3.8 % neutral, 41.9% fairly effective, and 1.7 % very effective.

Press Articles: 11.2% of the respondents consider it not effective, 33.1 % somewhat effective, 2.1 % neutral, 51.2% fairly effective, and 2.5 % very effective.

Public Assembly: 10.4% of the respondents consider it not effective, 28.7 % somewhat effective, 1.7% neutral, 57.1% fairly effective, and 2.1 % very effective.

Networking: 15.2% of the respondents consider it not effective, 26.9 % somewhat effective, 5% neutral, 49.2% fairly effective, and 3.7 % very effective.

Visuals 8.7% of the respondents consider it not effective, 26.3 % somewhat effective, 5.4% neutral, 56.3% fairly effective, and 3.1 % very effective.

Awareness: 6.9% of the respondents consider it not effective, 24.43 % somewhat effective, 4.2% neutral, 61.9% fairly effective, and 2.5 % very effective.

Consultations: 7.7% of the respondents consider it not effective, 28.5 % somewhat effective, 3.8% neutral, 57.3% fairly effective, and 2.7 % very effective.

Conferences: 7.9% of the respondents consider it not effective, 24.2 % somewhat effective, 5.2% neutral, 59.4% fairly effective, and 3.3 % very effective.

CSOs' advocacy is somewhat limited. This limitation might create convictions among citizens that only public authorities have the responsibilities to address social injustices. It is important



for CSOs to be aware that a stronger role in advocacy would benefit the long-term sustainability of CSOs, and reshape the public image of many CSOs>

## 6.5 Influential type of Information used by CSOs

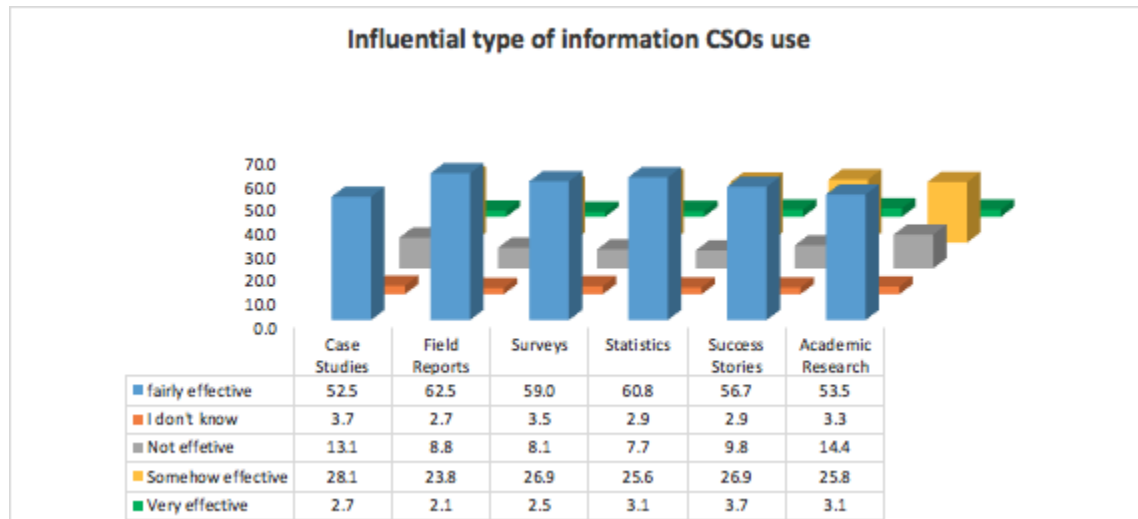


Figure 42: Influential Types of Information used by CSOs

**Case Studies:** 13.1% of the respondents consider it not effective, 28.1% Somewhat effective, 3.7% Neutral, 52.5% fairly effective, and 2.7 % very effective.

**Field reports:** 8.8 % of the respondents consider it not effective, 23.8% Somewhat effective, 2.7% Neutral, 62.5% fairly effective, and 2.1 % very effective.

**Surveys:** 8.1 % of the respondents consider it not effective, 26.9% Somewhat effective, 3.5% neutral, 59% fairly effective, and 2.5% very effective

**Statistics:** 7.7 % of the respondents consider it not effective, 25.6 % somewhat effective, 2.9% neutral, 60.8% fairly effective, and 3.1 % very effective

**Success Stories:** 9.8 % of the respondents consider it not effective, 26.9% somewhat effective, 2.9% neutral, 56.7% fairly effective, and 3. % very effective

**Academic Research:** 14.4% of the respondents consider it not effective, 25.8% somewhat effective, 14.4% neutral, 53.5% fairly effective, and 3.1 % very effective



## 6.6 Survey respondents' vision for CSO impact

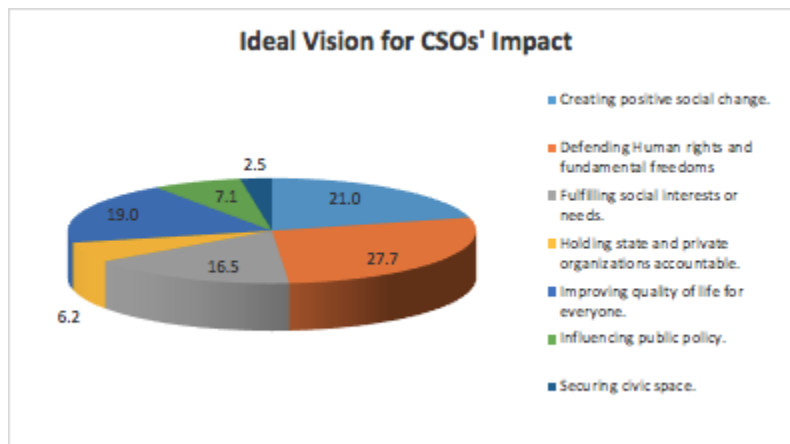


Figure 43: Survey respondents' vision for CSO Impact

Improving quality of life for everyone 19%  
Defending Human rights and fundamental freedoms 27.7%  
Securing civic space 2.1%  
Creating positive social change. 21%  
Fulfilling social interests or needs. 16.5%  
Influencing public policy. 7.1%  
Holding state and private organizations accountable. 6.2%



## **Section 7: CHALLENGES POINTED OUT BY SURVEY RESPONDENTS**

A question was added to highlight the main challenges Civil Society Actors face. A long list of challenges was presented. They are summarized as follows:

- National security and repressing public safety hinder the workflow of CSOs.
- Complex legal procedures limit the democratic space within which a healthy civil society could survive and operate.
- Bureaucratic registration procedures.
- Governmental control over international partnerships, and operational freedom.
- Security restrictions and security agencies.
- Ruling parties or influential people put pressure on CSOs to recruit and appoint non-qualified persons.
- Reluctance of some local governments to cooperate with the organizations.
- Political party influence and restriction of power.
- Dominant parties in decision-making exert pressures on CSOs.
- Tribal customs and traditions affect the workflow of CSOs.
- Shortage of financial resources that are compatible with needs of rural areas.
- Governmental interference in CSOs work affects their autonomy.
- Corruption and hiring incompetent individuals.
- Militias control and the absence of a deterrent authority.
- Politicization of civil work to serve political and partisan interests.
- Outputs of CSOs are do not equal its input.
- Lack of experience in modern technologies.
- Shrinking space for Civil Society and deteriorating situation for freedoms, lack of accountability on all levels, and the absence of policies on the state level.
- Lack of sustainable initiatives. 90% start small ad hoc campaigns for the purpose of providing photo evidence to their donors. Those don't even have a team and rely mostly on interns and volunteers
- Political affiliation and the creation of GO-NGOs (Governmental Non-Governmental organizations).
- Not focusing on objectives needed by community
- Scarce of funding opportunities.
- Restrictions on Civic space and threat on Right of freedom and expression.
- Interference of political parties in the humanitarian work and the service provided by the CSOs.
- CSOs work for their self-interest rather than public interest.
- CSOs are donor oriented.
- Unawareness of the UN mechanisms.
- Ineffective campaign and advocacy policies.
- Absence of the Rule of Law.
- CSOs do not focus on law making and policy changes.
- Assassination of activists.
- Influx in the number of CSOs who do not coordinate
- Absence of CSOs' statistical data.
- Centralization of CSOs' work in cities not in rural areas.
- The lack of financial resources.



## **Section 8: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION**

The findings were expressed in numerical indicators that can express the flow of the public's perception. The inclusion of a quantitative component followed by some narrative might give a holistic approach of public opinion.

The numbers indicate some deficiencies, including structural problems (donor-driven activities), scarce in important values in society (transparency, and working for public interest) and a limited capacity to influence policymaking. These problems are likely to affect the sustainability of CSOs and their contribution to social development.

Assessing Public opinion is important for CSOs to determine the areas that need improvement, enhance their quality of performance, demonstrate results and impact that can maintain civil society as an effective force.

CSOs assessment should not be done in isolation, it needs to be in line with the security and the political analysis that affect their performance and potentials. Practically, capacity, engagement, internal governance, and impact of a CSOs are all affected by external governance aspects such security, conflict, violence, absence of democracy and exclusive political systems, restricted civic space, and lack for the rule of law. The state of independent civil society is a reflection of this overall constrained space and strict policies that affect the degree of CSOs to organize, inform, and influence. It is worth saying that a healthy and stable political environment is key to a powerful and influential civil society.

Survey respondents reflected that CSOs' projects are often designed to meet donors' priorities, but also address citizens' needs. CSOs need a proactive strategy that addresses pressing social concerns, rather than attracting funds.

Survey findings point to the critical need for CSOs to reorient their approach in a way that makes it relevant to the public. Large pool of respondents believe that civil society is highly involved in human rights and democracy work, however some of them are not aware of the significant challenges that CSOs face. This demonstrates a situation in which civil society does not have the space or capacity to reach out to the public and advocate for their cause. If the public supports civil society engagement in human rights and democracy promotion, but is not aware of the challenges and risks civil society faces for engaging in these activities, then it might not be an important support or ally. It is recommended for CSOs to mobilize public support through capacity building, advocacy, and resource mobilization, and enable them to advocate for their work and mobilize citizen support.

Findings indicated a lack of transparency in policy, objectives, and in financial CSOs work. This lack of transparency affects the public's trust in CSOs; it jeopardizes their capacity to attract public support. CSOs should fully embrace the importance of financial transparency. It is crucially important that CSOs distinguish themselves as transparent and honest actors. The same applies to notions such as accountability and legitimacy. CSOs need to respect good governance and fight corruption in order to make a difference. It is important that civil society as a whole recognizes these challenges and responds to them. Building public understanding requires a



proactive move from CSOs in order to reshape public perception. CSOs need to establish a plan to reinforce its public image. Good governance should be fostered internally. CSOs should strengthen trust and coordination. CSOs need to shed the light on its strength and sustainability, and strengthen its contribution to positive social change. CSOs need to generate and share useful and relevant knowledge to the public to increase its trust, and need to increase the commitment of stakeholders to get its support. CSOs should take their legitimacy and accountability extremely seriously, and consider that transparent and accountable organizations are reflected as 'voice of the people'.

It is encouraged for CSOs to utilize their resources, enhance their internal policies and strengthen coordination and cooperation with different stakeholders. CSOs must commit to the Istanbul Principles. CSOs need to be more accessible, participatory and accountable to the public to increase its ability to mobilize allies effectively.

CSOs need to be creative in designing a new mechanism of outreach and interaction with the communities and citizens, especially youth using a participatory approach. CSOs can enhance citizens' abilities to organize and participate in matters that affect their daily lives.

CSOs should identify opportunities to broaden its investments in strengthening policy analysis, and advocacy competencies. CSOs can create opportunities for public participation in policy making. CSOs can benefit from deficiencies of the public sector and target marginalized groups especially in rural areas. CSOs should strive to broaden the public's membership, reverse the negative perception and attract support from the grassroots. They need to generate and share useful and relevant knowledge to the public to increase its trust, and need to increase the commitment of stakeholders to get its support.

According to the public, CSOs' advocacy impact is somewhat limited. This limitation might create conviction among the public that only public authorities have the responsibilities and capacities to address social injustices. It is important for CSOs to be aware that a stronger role in advocacy would benefit the long-term sustainability of CSOs, and reshape the public image. In this context, international donors could play a significant role by investing in programs aimed at building the capacity of CSOs in advocacy and campaigning.

In relation of CSOs with its surroundings, relationships between CSOs and rights-holders must be improved. Networks of CSOs must be established at the national, regional and international level, exchange platforms for civil society to share knowledge and exchange success stories. Learning from success stories and good experiences is important in order to support other civil society related work.

CSOs must work together with common objectives across the local, national, regional, and international levels. Civil society must engage in various partnerships including the private sector and improve partnership with the sectors of media and universities. CSOs should develop specific skills to attract the attention of the media, which could be an important ally in supporting advocacy campaigns. Working with the private sector might play an important role in the



sustainable Development Goals. The business-civil society interaction is particularly underdeveloped and it deserves particular attention. However, it would be advisable for CSOs to reflect transparency and accountability, to prevent the risk of being perceived as agents of private corporations. CSOs would benefit coordination researchers working at universities. This would help them save resources by utilizing research capacity that adds credibility to CSOs. It is recommended that CSOs can serve combined public support and research capacity.

Finally, despite the MENA region's long-standing challenges and constraints in the restrictive political environment, complexity of the socio-cultural and economic context, conflict, and lack of civic space, civil society operates despite these conditions. Challenges are enormous, but also civil society actors are more numerous and more diverse than ever before. By emphasizing the values that bound them together, and by adopting the newer values of shared power with different stakeholders, they can restore the public's trust that allows civil society to flourish.



## **List of Figures**

<b>List of Acronyms</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>About the Organisers</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Section 1: GENERAL INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>1.1 Introduction</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>1.2 Executive Summary</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>1.3 Objectives of the Report</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>1.4 Report Approach</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>1.5 Conceptual framework</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>1.6 Methodology</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>1.6.1 Phase 1: Desk review</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>1.6.2 Phase 2: Development of data collection tools</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>1.6.3 Phase 3: Data Analysis</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>1.6.4 Phase 4: Final Report</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Section 2: SURVEY RESPONDENTS PUBLIC PROFILE</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>2.1 Demographic features</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>2.1.1 The Nationality of the Survey respondents</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>2.1.2 The Country of Residency of the Surveyors</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>2.1.3 The Gender of the Survey respondents</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>2.1.4 The Age of the Survey respondents</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>2.2 Survey respondents relation to CSOs</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>2.2.1 Survey respondents' involvement</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>2.2.2 Survey respondents' type of involvement or participation</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>2.2.3 Survey respondents' Area of participation in CSOs</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Section 3: PROFILING CIVIL SOCIETY ACTORS</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>3.1 Assessment of survey respondents' understanding for CSOs</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>3.1.1 Understanding of Civil Society Organizations -CSOs</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>3.1.2 Understanding Members of the Civil society.</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>3.2 Activities Performed by CSOs.</b>	<b>17</b>
	<b>47</b>



<b>Section 4: MAPPING CSO Environment</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>4.1 Government perceiving CSOs</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>4.2 Perception on the relation between CSOs and state/government</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>4.3 Relation between CSOs and other sectors</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>4.3.1 Civil society and the Government</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>4.3.2 Civil society and Parliament</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>4.3.3 Civil society and Private sector</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>4.3.4 Civil Society and CSOs with the same cause</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>4.3.5 Civil Society and CSOs with the different cause</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>4.3.6 CSOs and International NGOs</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>4.3.7 CSOs and the Public</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>4.3.8 CSOs and the Media</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>4.3.9 CSOs and the Universities</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>4.3.10 Overall Findings (Relationship between CSOs and Other sectors)</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>Section 5: CSOs' VALUES</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>5.1 Accessibility</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>5.2 Honesty</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>5.3 Transparency in work policies and objectives</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>5.4 Financially Transparent</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>5.5 Equality in serving persons and communities</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>5.6 Actively working with the Grassroots</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>5.7 Actively working with "Elites"</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>5.8 Availability</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>5.9 Meeting People's Needs</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>5.10 Working on their own self interest</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>5.11 Working according to the donors' agenda</b>	<b>33</b>
<b>5.13 Competent and professional in performing their tasks</b>	<b>33</b>
<b>5.14 Accountability</b>	<b>34</b>
<b>5.15 Sharing information with the media and/or public</b>	<b>34</b>
<b>5.16 Overall Findings for the Values of CSOs</b>	<b>34</b>
<b>Section 6: THE IMPACT OF CSOs' ACTIVITIES</b>	<b>37</b>
<b>6.1 Survey respondents' Benefits from CSOs</b>	<b>37</b>
<b>6.2 CSOs make a difference</b>	<b>37</b>



<b>6.3 CSOs Effectiveness</b>	<b>38</b>
<b>6.4 The Most effective means of CSOs</b>	<b>40</b>
<b>6.5 Influential type of Information used by CSOs</b>	<b>41</b>
<b>6.6 Survey respondents' vision for CSO impact</b>	<b>41</b>
<b>Section 7: CHALLENGES POINTED OUT BY SURVEY RESPONDENTS</b>	<b>43</b>
<b>Section 8: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION</b>	<b>44</b>
<b>List of Figures</b>	<b>47</b>