

Mapping and Participatory Needs Assessment of Civil Society in Libya

English Summary

Introduction:

This report is a need assessment study of Libyan Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) carried out between May and July 2012, for the Foundation for the Future (FFF).

This mapping study aims at researching and analyzing the state of the Libyan CSOs, offering suggestions, and recommendations in order to strengthen and support the Libyan civil society organizations (CSO). It will also pave the way for more specialized and in depth studies, to draw a more comprehensive picture of the Libyan civil society.

The research team made an effort to coordinate and cooperate with different stakeholders, such as the Culture and Civil Society Ministry, the Civil Society Organizations Support Center, the Ministry of Social Affairs and the representative of Libyan and international CSOs. The research team took into consideration geographical and sectoral diversity.

The research methodology rested on several components: running in-depth interviews with more than 40 CSOs representatives, and distributing a comprehensive questionnaire. This questionnaire was pre-tested in order to ascertain its adherence to the highest standards of objectivity, precision, and neutrality. The questionnaire was then filled by the participants, and a large number of local stockholders. Finally, the data was compiled using the SPSS software. Afterwards, the team organized in-depth interviews with the leaders and representatives of civil society organizations, political groups, academics, tribal, governmental, and international organizations. In addition, the consultancy team held several workshops to assess the findings of this study. The team also researched and categorized the currently active CSOs based on geographical and sectorial distribution. Additionally, it overviewed civil society's current legal and historical background. The final recommendations were based on the result of the field survey and interviews.

Field study findings:

The findings show that most Libyan CSOs have been recently established, after the revolution, with a very small number established prior to 2011. This positively affected the median age of its managers. However, women hold only 20% of the top managerial posts. The study also showed that most CSOs have a wide geographical presence, encompassing both rural and the main urban areas in Libya.

According to the results of the study, Libyan CSOs also face several problems, such as the absence of dedicated full-time employees. Less than 10% of the CSOs had employees, as most of them relied on volunteers and short-term employees. Additionally, there is a lack of information about official registration, and CSOs expressed their doubts on the supposed developmental role they should play in their societies. Only a third of the interviewees believed that their institutions played an efficient role in development and achieving the goals of national citizenship, equality, and social justice.

Despite the fact that most of CSOs' charters and mission statements highlight the important developmental role of these CSOs, the respondents downplayed the role they play in the economy in general and specifically in alleviating poverty and fighting unemployment. Meanwhile, only a few of them considered that their CSOs have an important role to play in education, fighting poverty, and providing social services and care to special-needs citizens. Few responded that their organizations play a major role in achieving equality and empowering women, or play a part in resolving conflicts, arbitration, building civil consensus, and providing emergency relief. While half of the interviewees said that the CSOs play a secondary role, and 43% said that they play no role whatsoever.

The research pointed out a need to develop and rebuild the governance framework of Libyan CSOs on a proper scientific and methodological basis that reinforces the values of equality and justice. Additionally, the CSOs need to pay attention to the managerial and organizational aspects of their organizations, in order to reinforce their professionalism which would positively affect their status in society and their credibility, transparency, and achieving their role. The study uncovered a need to build a democratic framework in these organizations, in order to reinforce representation and accountability. Currently, most posts are filled by appointment (more than 94% of all managerial positions, and only 56% of these CSOs elect their own boards.) However, most CSOs have public assemblies and boards of directors, which enjoy an acceptable level of gender equality. Most CSOs have internal documents on their bylaws, human resources, and code of conducts. However, most of them do not publish these documents and only half of these CSOs have executive plans and periodical reports which could indicate a lack of organization and the absence of an organizational framework that could help its development. Additionally, these publications and reports are rarely published. Also, the study found out that there is a need to reinforce information sharing and ease of access as most of these CSOs issue periodical reports and bylaws, but they are not published and cannot be accessed by the public. Most CSOs have an electronic presence, whether a blog or an official website, which can be attributed to the low age median of their managers.

The research team discovered a significant scarcity in governmental and international funds for Libyan CSOs, as a majority of them stated that the major part of their funding comes from members and local donations. Additionally, the CSOs suffer from an absence of published yearly budgets and a failure of following international governance guidelines, and a lack of financial organization.

The above mentioned problems harm the non-governmental sector in Libya, its development, efficiency and professionalism. These problems affect negatively the cooperation between this sector and society at large. Most of the interview described the cooperation and coordination level between CSOs, the government and International NGOs as average and sometimes as weak. A significant portion of the interviewee highlighted the importance of government actions on the CSOs in term of legal, political, economic, and communitarian aspect.

Finally, the leaders of the CSO underlined the importance of developing the managerial skills placing it at the top of these priorities in order to advance the capabilities of the CSOs which in turn will increase their development, experience and cooperation with the public. However, most of the interviewee did not place a significant importance on the political role of the CSOs.

Recommendations:

1- Recommendations for Libyan Governments and Public Institutions

- Laws and Governmental Oversight:

Laws and regulations governing civil society in Libya are minimal and too broad. Therefore, there is an urgent need to draft a modern law specific to civil society organizations. This law would enshrine their independence and strengthen their role in modernizing and developing society. Besides, it would encourage Libyan CSOs to play a more important role in their respective communities, while defining their rights and duties.

Not all CSOs are registered. It seems that there is a prevalent confusion on which governmental agency is tasked with the registration process. Therefore, it would be beneficial to unify the CSO registration process and encourage all active CSOs to register.

Meanwhile, a new governmental agency should be formed based on the already existing decree concerning the formation of the National Civil Society Support Center. The Center would be the main registration body, playing a role of support and guidance to all CSOs, regulating their work and providing them with training and capacity building.

2- Recommendations to the CSOs

- Governance and Internal Organization:

Currently, most CSOs are small in scale, led by few individuals lacking any elected governing body, governance standards, or even an experienced staff. Therefore, CSOs should be encouraged to evolve from communal organizations to fully fleshed national institutions with governing bodies, based on international governance standards.

CSOs should also embrace internal democratic governance procedures, in filling their governing bodies and board members. Moreover, it would be beneficial to organize several conferences and workshops to forge a common code of ethics among all CSOs that would be followed throughout the country.

- Local and Communal Relations:

The interaction between CSOs and the local communities should increase to reinforce the CSOs role in meeting the needs and the priorities of the communities they serve. Additionally, transparency and accountability play an important role in strengthening the credibility of these organizations, therefore CSOs should increase their information sharing, communication, and openness to public at large.

Civil society's role in framing public policies and plans should be strengthened. CSOs should be encouraged to play a role of lobbying and advocacy on behalf of the community they represent.

- Human Resources:

Almost all Libyan CSOs are staffed with volunteers, this negatively affect their efficiency, professionalism and sustainability. CSOs should be given the financial means and managerial capabilities to employ competent and professional staff members. Such a development would greatly increase the CSOs professionalism and effectiveness, further improving their impact on society.

On the other hand, extensive workshops, conferences, and training sessions should be held to attract and prepare future employees who wish to join this field.

- Women Status:

Women fill less than 20% of managerial positions, in Libyan CSOs. This issue should be addressed with a two-step approach. The first step is to reward CSOs that employ an adequate quota of women in their workforce and upper management positions with significant incentive, financial or otherwise. Then, specialized training and informative seminars should be held to introduce women to this new field and prepare them to join it.

- Access to Information:

Many Libyan CSOs fail to publish their internal periodical, financial, and managerial reports. Almost 70% of Libyan CSOs have failed to publish any internal information.

This issue should be addressed in order to increase transparency, accountability, and public participation in this field. A series of conferences, workshops, and training sessions dealing with the access to information issue could help deal with this issue.

3- Recommendations for International and Regional Organizations

- **Funding:**

Currently, most Libyan CSOs are self-funded (by their members). In order to improve their performance and increase their impact and reach, a standardized funding scheme should be put in place, which could meet the needs of the local NGOs and expand their scope. International and Regional organization should also increase their direct funding to local CSOs.

- **Regional and International Cooperation:**

The main communication and cooperation channels of Libyan CSOs are internal. They should be encouraged to broaden their network of coordination in order to benefit from the knowhow, experience, and capabilities of regional and international organizations. Consequently, these new channels could greatly help local CSOs improve and modernize.

- **Training and Capacity-Building:**

The Libyan COSs would greatly benefit from several overreaching training programs for their managers, and employees in the proper governance rules, codes and ethics, and internationally enforced regulations, in most fields (like financial, managerial, communications, and public relations).

