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Afghanistan Institute for Civil Society

THE STATE OF THE ENABLING ENVIRONMENT FOR CSOs IN AFGHANISTAN

2017

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ABBREVIATIONS

ACA	Anti-Corruption Agency
ACBAR	Agency Coordinating Body for Afghan Relief
AFN	Afghani (currency)
AICS	Afghanistan Institute for Civil Society
AKF	Aga Khan Foundation
AKF-AFG	Aga Khan Foundation Afghanistan
AKF-USA	Aga Khan Foundation USU
ANA	Afghan National Army
ARD	Afghanistan Revenue Department
AWN	Afghan Women's Network
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
CA	Christian Aid
CDC	Community Development Council
CSO	Civil Society Organization
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
DCC	District Community Council
DDA	District Development Assembly
ELA	Enhancement of Literacy in Afghanistan
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GoIRA	Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan
HEC	High Evaluation Commission
IDP	Internally Displaced People
I-PACS	Initiative to Promote Afghan Civil Society
ISIS	Islamic State of Iraq and Syria
IWA	Integrity Watch Afghanistan
KII	Key Informant Interview

MCC	Millennium Challenge Corporation
MoIC	Ministry of Information and Culture
MoE	Ministry of Economy
MoHIA	Ministry of Haj and Islamic Affairs
MoJ	Ministry of Justice
MoLSAMD	Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs, Martyrs & Disabled
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
MoWA	Ministry of Women's Affairs
MRRD	Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NSP	National Solidarity Program
OCAI	Oversight Committee on Access to Information
PDC	Provincial Development Committee
PNC	Purchaman National Council
RTA	Radio Television Afghanistan
SEECA	State of Enabling Environment for Civil Society in Afghanistan
UAE	United Arab Emirates
UN	United Nations
UNAMA	United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan
UNHCR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USIP	United States Institute of Peace
VOA	Voice of America
WASSA	Women Activities and Social Services Association

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Civil society organizations (CSOs) are key actors in development, whose efforts complement those of the government, private sector, and donors.[1] CSOs play an important role in country development by bringing attention to issues such as human rights, democratic governance, equitable development, inclusive growth, participatory democracy, social and environmental justice, sustainability, gender equality, citizen engagement, and by providing essential services. However, the ability of CSOs to operate effectively and to their full potential depends upon the social, economic and political context in which they function.

Recognizing the central role of the enabling environment in promoting or obstructing the effectiveness of civil society, the Afghanistan Institute for Civil Society (AICS) initiated its annual flagship research on the State of the Enabling Environment for CSOs in Afghanistan (SEECA) in 2016. Like the 2016 study, the 2017 study examines the legal framework, governance, socio-cultural environment, financial and security environment in which CSOs operate.

The CSO enabling environment cannot be enhanced by a single actor; it is, rather, the joint responsibility of all actors, including the government, private sector, CSOs, international community, and donors. The paper presents recommendations for all stakeholders that emerged from the research findings, either directly suggested by respondents or corresponding to findings in the research about challenges CSOs in Afghanistan are facing. The recommendations suggest ways that each stakeholder group can work to improve the legal framework, financial and non-financial resources, organizational capacities, governance environment, and security as they relate to CSOs. The paper presents the recommendations as a basis for discussion and action planning among stakeholders committed to creating an environment in which Afghan CSOs can operate effectively and to their full potential.

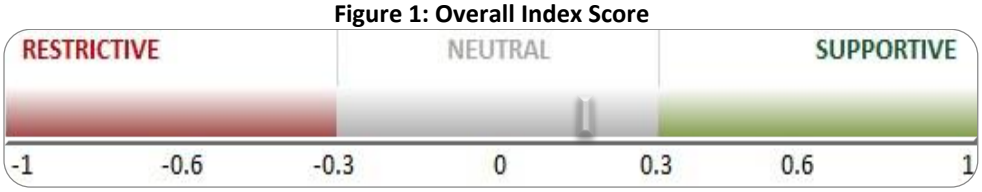
A quantitative survey constituted the main source of data for the study. Survey results generated scores for the SEECA Index. The survey questionnaires were administered with 706 CSO members and 90 CSO beneficiaries. Qualitative methods used to triangulate and add depth to survey results included open-ended interviews with 62 CSO members, 32 CSO beneficiaries; and 22 government officials. Further, 14 focus group discussions (2 per province) were held with CSO members; 4 key informant interviews were held with civil society activities and experts; and a series of case studies were compiled. Research was conducted in Badakhshan, Bamyan, Herat, Kabul, Kandahar, Nangarhar, and Samangan provinces. Site selection aimed to ensure geographic representation and inclusivity, and areas that have varying levels of CSO concentration.

The research concludes that the environment for CSOs in Afghanistan is neither fully supportive nor entirely restrictive. On the one hand, CSOs have enabling written laws and regulations, strong community acceptance and support, coordination and collaboration between CSOs, and strong advocacy influence. On the other hand, the environment is restrictive in that there are deficiencies in the rule of law, strained relationships with the government, lack of coordination with and facilitation from the government, lack of transparency, and high levels of corruption. The overall 2017 SEECA score was 0.17 (see figure 1 below). Comparative analysis shows that the state of the enabling environment deteriorated since 2016. Of the five main indicators, governance received the lowest score (-0.15) followed by financial viability (-0.12) and security (0.15) whereas socio-cultural environment had the highest score (0.53), followed by legal

[1] Development Assistance Committee (DAC), n.d., How DAC members work with CSOs in development co-operation, https://www.oecd.org/dac/peer-reviews/48784967.pdf

framework (0.46). Except for legal framework, scores of almost all the main indicators declined since 2016.

Figure 1: Overall Index Score



Notable observations about the enabling environment in 2017 include:

- CSO registration overall is straightforward, although many consider the registration process to be lengthy, and, at times CSOs are forced to pay bribes to accelerate the process.
- The Afghan public appears to support the work of CSOs when CSOs proactively work to gain such support.
- CSOs overall are successful in representing the communities they aim to serve, despite challenges in doing so on issues related to marginalized groups or due to government interference.
- While CSOs' overall have access to communications resources and basic infrastructure, these resources are often financed by funds tied to specific projects.
- Coordination between CSOs and other sectors exists, but currently depends largely upon political patronage or is limited to processes managed by CSO peak bodies and donors.
- Government's facilitation and promotion of the work of CSOs depends on location and on a given CSO's role and relationships.
- Lack of transparency and the negative effects of corruption contribute to a restrictive governance environment for the work of CSOs.
- Many CSOs do not have sufficient funds to operate beyond one year, as they rely on single income sources and are not involved in generating income.
- CSOs are experiencing diminishing access to and availability of funding. A decline in donor funding has made accessing funding increasingly competitive and difficult, particularly for grass-roots level CSOs.
- CSOs found access to funding difficult due to lack of technical capacity, information and transparency and due to corruption.
- CSOs are often able to safely implement their programs and projects. However, CSOs are restricted from accessing certain locations which impedes them entirely from implementing programming in those places.
- Non-state actors are the greatest source of threat for CSOs, but the level of threat depends on the general security situation of the provinces and districts in which CSOs operate.
- Regardless of location, female staff are particularly vulnerable to threats to their personal security. Women face various threats in form of harassment, intimidation, and even murder.

INTRODUCTION

CSOs are key actors in development, whose efforts complement those of the government, private sector, and donors.[2] CSOs play an important role in country development by highlighting issues such as human rights, democratic governance, equitable development, inclusive growth, participatory democracy, social and environmental justice, sustainability, gender equality, citizen engagement, and by providing essential services. The ability of CSOs to operate effectively and to their full potential depends upon the social, economic and political context in which they function. This 'enabling environment' is described as "a set of conditions that impact on the capacity of citizens (whether individually or in an organized fashion) to participate and engage in the civil society arena in a sustained and voluntary manner."[3] The Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness (2005), the Accra Agenda for Action (2008), the Istanbul Principles for CSO Development Effectiveness (2010), the International Framework for CSO Development Effectiveness (2011), and the Busan Partnership for Effective Partnership (2011) are a few examples of agreements between donors, CSOs and governments (particularly from developing countries) to work together to provide an enabling environment and maximize CSOs' contributions to development.

While globally, some progress has been made towards the building of an enabling environment for CSOs, the gains have been uneven and are far from guaranteed. Indeed, there is a growing body of evidence that suggests an increasingly restrictive and less enabling environment for CSOs, with a narrowing of democratic, legal and financial support and a shrinking political space for CSOs, to various degrees, in both developing and donor countries.[4,5] For instance, CSOs in Ethiopia face restrictions from government on receiving funding from donors,[6] while in Cambodia, they face pressure from government control of activities.[7] In Europe, CSOs in Europe note a reduction in dialogue opportunities.[8] Studies by CIVICUS and other sources, including other CSOs, governments and UN human rights bodies, attest to this challenging environment. For instance, a 2010 global survey of CSOs, commissioned by the Commission for Social Development found a worsening financial situation for CSOs worldwide, particularly at a time when demands for services are increasing.[9]

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[2] Development Assistance Committee (DAC), n.d., How DAC members work with CSOs in development co-operation, https://www.oecd.org/dac/peer-reviews/48784967.pdf

[3] Fioramonti, L., n.d, Methodological Note on the CIVICUS' Civil Society Enabling Environment Index, CIVICUS, http://www.civicus.org/downloads/Methodological%20note%20on%20the%20CIVICUS%20Civil%20Society%20Enabling%20Environment%20Index.pdf

[4] Sida, 2011, The Task Team on CSO Development Effectiveness and Enabling Environment, CSO Development Effectiveness and Enabling Environment: A Review of the Evidence 2011, https://taskteamcso.files.wordpress.com/2014/02/evidence-of-progress-on-aaa-en_d1813.pdf

[5] CIVICUS, 30 April 2013, Submission on an Enabling Environment for Civil Society, (13 April 2013), http://www.post2015hlp.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/CSI-Submission-to-HLP_Enabling-Environment-for-Civil-Society.pdf

[6] Hailegebriel, D., 2011, Restrictions on Foreign Funding of Civil Society, https://chilot.files.wordpress.com/2011/08/restrictions-on-foreign-funding-of-civil-society.pdf/

[7] Cooperation Committee for Cambodia (CCC), (December 2013), Assessment of the Enabling Environment for Civil Society, https://www.ccc-cambodia.org/downloads/publications/EENA_report_FINAL-CCC-CIVICUS_EN.pdf/

[8] CONCORD, EU Delegations Report, 2017, Towards a More Effective Partnership with Civil Society, https://concordeurope.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/CONCORD_EUDelegations_Report2017_EN.pdf?1855fc/

[9] Hanfstaengl, E., 2010, Impact of the global economic crises on civil society organizations, http://www.un.org/esa/desa/papers/2010/wp97_2010.pdf

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

Civil society organizations have a centuries-old, evolving history in Afghanistan. Though both modern and traditional civil society institutions eroded during the war, CSOs remained active under the Taliban regime and played an active role in the 2001 Bonn Conference and the subsequent Loya Jirga, which led to a transitional democratic government in 2002. Since then, the operating environment for civil society has changed substantially to promote participation. Civil society actors have been consulted on all major conferences and events including the second Bonn Conference in 2011, the Chicago NATO Summit in 2012, and the Tokyo Conference in July 2012. Such conferences have also promoted continued discussion around how best to enhance the role of civil society in the country's democratic process. Today, despite various ongoing difficulties, civil society in the country remains active.

After security responsibilities were transitioned to the Afghan government in 2014, the country entered yet another phase of development dubbed the 'transformation decade.'[10] In the communiqué of the 2014 London Conference on Afghanistan, both the National Unity Government of Afghanistan and the international community recognized CSOs' important role in the development of Afghanistan.[11] More recently, the Brussels Conference on Afghanistan in 2016 not only recognized the important role that civil society plays in the development of Afghanistan, but also saw stakeholder commit to further strengthening the role of civil society in Afghanistan.[12] However, the further development of civil society's potential depends on the state of the enabling environment in which CSOs operate. Guided by this recognition, Afghan civil society presented a position paper at the Brussels Conference, calling upon the government and donors to provide an enabling environment for civil society, specifically by: a) safeguarding the civic space, b) ensuring protection for civil society actors, c) enforcing the law of access to information, d) ensuring financial support, and e) ensuring a systematic flow of information and expertise between government and CSOs.[13]

Within this context, in 2016, AICS initiated its annual flagship research on the state of the enabling environment for CSOs in Afghanistan. The report intends to assess the factors that influence the development and activities of civil society in Afghanistan in order to inform actions to create a more supportive environment for CSOs by government, donors, and CSOs themselves. Launched in September 2016, the report has been widely referenced by stakeholders in Afghanistan. The report was referenced in the CSO position paper presented at the Brussels Conference on Afghanistan, and its findings were formally presented at a civil society side event. The study has also informed advocacy efforts of CSOs and other actors with regards to creating an enabling environment for CSOs in Afghanistan. To continue its work towards an improved enabling environment for CSOs, AICS conducted its second annual study (2017) on the state of the enabling environment for CSOs in Afghanistan. Building on the previous study, this

[10] Counterpart International, January 2014, 2013 Afghanistan Civil Society Assessment: Counterpart International's Initiative to Promote Afghan Civil Society (I-PACS II), Langer Research Associates, http://www.langerresearch.com/wp-content/uploads/I-PACS_II_Report_Web_Final.pdf

[11] Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, 4 December 2014, Afghanistan and International Community: Commitments to Reforms and Renewed Partnerships, report prepared for the London Conference on Afghanistan 2014, December 2014, https://www.afghanembassy.us/news/afghanistan-and-international-community-commitments-to-reforms-and-renewed-partnership/

[12] Civil Society input into the Brussels Conference on Afghanistan, Summary Report, prepared by BAAG available at http://www.acbar.org/upload/1481106669662.pdf

[13] Civil Society of Afghanistan, 2016, Collaborating for Transformation, Position Paper for the Brussels Conference on Afghanistan, 4-5 October 2016, http://anafae.af/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/Afghan-CSO-position-paper-in-the-BCA-27Sep16-endorsed.pdf

research examines the legal framework, governance, socio-cultural environment, financial and security environment in which CSOs operate, and updates the index created for the first report in 2016. This 2017 research aims to measure the health of the enabling environment for CSOs in Afghanistan over the last year, and to identify critical challenges, needs and opportunities for moving forward.

DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

The terms 'civil society' and 'enabling environment' are conceptually complex, with a wide range of accepted definitions and "multiple interpretations depending on predilections."[14] Literature on civil society in Afghanistan recognizes this complexity and notes that while the terms are used regularly by various politicians, civil society activists, donors and scholars, there is no agreement between them regarding these definitions.[15] One of the reasons is that civil society consists of a diverse and constantly shifting assortment of individuals, citizens, organizations, institutions, and associations, with different agendas, strategies and tactics. Nonetheless, it is useful to have working definitions for both terms, for operationalizing a framework for this study. The following section defines both 'civil society' and 'enabling environment' for the purpose of the 'State of the Enabling Environment for CSOs in Afghanistan Index.'

Civil Society

In Dari, civil society can be referred to using various phrases: jame-a madani (literally: civil society), sozman ghair dawlati (non-governmental organization) or sozman-e ijtimaei (literally: social organization).[16] Most of the existing definitions of civil society delineate (1) a group of individuals (2) with mutual and public interests that (3) operates outside of but in dialogue with both the public and private sectors.[17]

Given the cultural and political structure of Afghan society, the applicability of this definition in Afghanistan is limited, as organizational structures tend to deviate from the tripartite division of society into the public and private sectors, and civil society. For example, Community Development Councils (CDCs) are set up by the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development's (MRRD) National Solidarity Program (NSP) in order to direct development funding to local communities. Despite being government-funded bodies, CDCs are commonly understood as being part of Afghan civil society, with a mandate in some ways similar to roles traditionally played by civil society. This highlights the definitional challenges that arise when there is tension between the purpose and activities of any one organization and its formal and financial status.

In response to these challenges, this study uses the definition of civil society proposed during the Enabling Environment Conference (2007) in Kabul.[18] It stated that civil society is,

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[14] Glasius, M., Lewis, D. and Seckinelgin, H. (eds.), 2004, Exploring Civil Society: Political and Cultural Contexts, London: Routledge

[15] Winter, E., 2010, Civil Society Development in Afghanistan, http://www.lse.ac.uk/internationalDevelopment/research/NGPA/publications/winter_afghanistan_report_final.pdf

[16] Enabling Environment Conference, June 2017, Overview Paper, Effective Private Sector Contribution to Development in Afghanistan, http://www.akdn.org/sites/akdn/files/media/documents/enabling_environment/2007_eec_overview_paper_eng.pdf

[17] van den Boogaard, V., 2011, Building Afghan Civil Society "from the outside": The Role of Global Civil Society Actors and the Impacts on Perceived Local Legitimacy, International Affairs Review XX:2, 31

[18] The Enabling Environment Conference in Kabul held on 4th and 5th of June, (2007 was convened by the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and the Aga Khan Development Network, in partnership with The World Bank, the United

committed to the public good and powered by private voluntary energies to provide services on charitable or non-commercial (but fee-paying) basis or work towards the fulfillment of human rights. It embraces professional, commercial, labor, ethnic and arts organizations, and others devoted to religion, communication (including media), the environment, and the community (e.g. village organizations).[19]

The variety of organizations and structures that fall within the scope of this definition can be clustered into four broad categories: (1) formally registered NGOs, (2) formally registered Media, (3) formally registered associations, and (4) traditional CSOs such as Shuras, Village-based committees and or religious organizations that are often unregistered.[20] The following section briefly discusses the main characteristics of each category.

Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs)

Salamon and Anheier (1992) propose five characteristics that constitutes an NGO. These are:

1. Being formal, i.e. having regular meetings, office bearers and some organizational permanence
2. Being private, i.e. institutionally separate from government, though may receive some support from government
3. Being nonprofit, i.e. if a financial surplus is generated it does not accrue to owners or directors
4. Being self-governing and therefore able to control and manage its own affairs
5. Being voluntary, i.e. even if it does not use volunteer staff as such, there is at least some degree of voluntary participation in the conduct or management of the organization, such as in the form of a voluntary board of directors.[21]

Vakil (1997) sums up these characteristics by stating that NGOs are "self-governing, private, not-for-profit organizations that are geared to improving the quality of life for disadvantaged people."[22] These characteristics distinguish NGOs from other types of "civil society" actors such as trade unions, media, organizations concerned with arts or sports, and professional associations.

Independent Media

Media is typically considered part of civil society because it not only attempts to inform citizens but it also operates outside of the government. It often seeks to guard against state encroachment and promote the

Nations Development Programme and the Asian Development Bank to foster significantly greater private sector – defined as both for-profit business and not-for-profit civil society – participation in Afghanistan's development.

[19] Enabling Environment Conference, June 2017, Overview Paper, Effective Private Sector Contribution to Development in Afghanistan, http://www.akdn.org/sites/akdn/files/media/documents/enabling_environment/2007_eec_overview_paper_eng.pdf

[20] Counterpart International, January 2014, 2013 Afghanistan Civil Society Assessment: Counterpart International's Initiative to Promote Afghan Civil Society (I-PACS II), Langer Research Associates, http://www.langerresearch.com/wp-content/uploads/I-PACS_II_Report_Web_Final.pdf

[21] Salamon, L., & Anheier, H., 1992, In search of the Non-profit Sector: In Search of Definitions, Voluntas, 13:2, 125–52.

[22] Vakil, A. C., 1997, Confronting the Classification Problem: Toward a Taxonomy of NGOs. World Development 25(12), 2057-2070.

interests of other civil associations using available political space and its unique characteristics[23]. However, assuming that media will always promote the interests of civil society is misleading, as some media actors may empower or otherwise protect the interests of the state at the expense of civil society.

Associations

Generally referred to as voluntary entities, associations are groups of individuals who enter into an agreement to pursue or accomplish a specific purpose. The Law on Associations in Afghanistan defines associations as "communities, unions, councils, assemblies and organizations which are voluntarily established by a group of real or legal persons as non-profit, non-political entities."[24] Examples of associations in Afghanistan include the Afghanistan Development Association, Afghan's Adult's Association for Education, Voluntary Association for Rehabilitation of Afghanistan, Youth Unity Education Cultural and Social Association, Association of Afghan Blind, Handicraft Women Development Association, Logar Teacher Association and Afghan Volunteer Doctors Association.

Traditional Civil Society

Traditional civil society ranges from small informal units to highly structured organizations. Compared to modern civil society organizations, traditional civil society organizations are less specialized and less formal. In Afghanistan, traditional civil society includes, but is not limited to, religious groups and institutions that gather at purpose-built khanqahs, mosques, madrassas, and takiakhanas (places of Shi'ite worship), as well as water management committees, local community councils of elders called shuras and jirgas, tribes (qawm), and cultural and literature organizations such as reading groups. These organizations are often informal and are not registered.

Enabling Environment

Defining what constitutes an enabling environment for civil society is complex as the term 'environment' could relate to the economic, social, cultural, political environment or just to the legal and regulatory framework for civil society in any given context or country. The Enabling Environment Conference for Afghanistan (2007) defined the enabling environment as encompassing,

> political stability; confidence in the future; mutual trust, understanding, dialogue, and collaboration amongst stakeholders; rule of law; protection of the rights of citizens; a diversity of stable, democratic institutions; and a streamlined legal, fiscal regulatory, and administrative framework governing all spheres of private initiative, which is predictably, consistently and impartially applied.[25]

This definition follows a much broader and generic perspective, involving the three spheres of government, private sector and civil society. Its broad nature, however, makes it difficult to operationalize an analytical framework for assessing the enabling environment for CSOs. Thus, for methodological and

[23] Wanyande, P. M., 1996, The media as civil society and its role in democratic transition in Kenya, http://pdfproc.lib.msu.edu/file=/DMC/African%20Journals/pdfs/africa%20media%20review/vol10no3/jamr010003002.pdf
[24] International Center for Not-For-Profit Law, June 2016, NGO Law Monitor: Afghanistan
[25] Enabling Environment Conference, June 2017, Overview Paper, Effective Private Sector Contribution to Development in Afghanistan, http://www.akdn.org/sites/akdn/files/media/documents/enabling_environment/2007_eec_overview_paper_eng.pdf

analytical purpose, this study uses the definition forwarded by Thindwa (2001), describing an enabling environment as "a set of interrelated conditions – such as legal, organizational, fiscal, informational, political, and cultural – that impact on the capacity of development actors such as CSOs to engage in development processes in a sustained and effective manner."[26] The study differentiates between five categories within the enabling environment:

1. Legal framework
2. Governance
3. Socio-cultural environment
4. Financial viability
5. Security situation.

CSO TYPOLOGY

While the diversity and scope that is encompassed by the definition of civil society does not readily lend itself to the formation of a typology of CSOs, it is possible for the purposes of this study to map some broad distinctions between different types of structures and their areas of operation. This study delineates eight types of CSOs, outlined in table 1 below. It should be noted, however, that there may be significant overlap between the activities undertaken by different CSOs. For example, media organizations frequently engage in issues relating to anti-corruption, while service delivery organizations focused on education often incorporate messages of human rights into their programs.

Table 1: Types of CSOs

	CSO Type	Brief Description
1.	**Traditional Shuras**	*Shura* is derived from the Arabic word for 'consultation' and refers to a traditional community council or decision-making body comprised of elders that helps resolve conflicts, decides on local issues, educates community members and responds to community needs. In certain provinces *mullahs*, or religious leaders, make up a large proportion of these councils but this is not the case throughout Afghanistan.[27]
2.	**Local Councils**	Quasi-traditional councils that operate under the auspices of the government and the international donor community. They implement development grants from the MRRD at the village level, and are utilized by a number of other government agencies and international programs for a wide variety of local-level activities. For example, CDCs receive requests for development projects from the local community and present these to the government, thus carrying the voice of the former to their elected representatives. DDAs were established to coordinate the work of CDCs at the district level.[28]

[26] Thindwa, J., 2001, Enabling environment for Civil Society in CDD Projects, Washington, DC: World Bank, Social Development Family, CDD Learning Module, http://www.worldbank.org/participation/enablingenvironment/EnablingenvironmentCECDD.pdf/

[27] Counterpart International, January 2014, 2013 Afghanistan Civil Society Assessment: Counterpart International's Initiative to Promote Afghan Civil Society (I-PACS II), Langer Research Associates, http://www.langerresearch.com/wp-content/uploads/I-PACS_II_Report_Web_Final.pdf

[28] Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development of Afghanistan, National Solidarity Program, http://mrrd.gov.af/en/page/69

3.	**Cultural and Artistic Organizations**	Music groups, reading groups, artist consortiums, traditional craft associations, local museums, and heritage foundations. These may be either formal or informal organizations.
4.	**Public Service Delivery Organizations**	Organizations outside of the government that focus on providing services, predominantly in the fields of health and education. These are typically NGOs formally registered with the MoE. According to a UNAMA 2014 civil society mapping exercise, service delivery (especially in the fields of education and agriculture) remains the main focus of CSOs in Afghanistan.[29]
5.	**Advocacy Organizations**	Organizations that focus on raising issues, increasing dialogue and influencing public policy at the local, regional, and national levels of government. These may be NGOs formally registered with the MoE, but may also be informal organizations.
6.	**Professional Organizations**	Labor unions, research organizations and trade associations. Associations are formally registered with the MoJ.
7.	**Media Organizations**	Organizations covering print and online media, including social media, typically registered with the MoIC. Media organizations can be delineated into five groups: the national governmental radio and television; wholly commercial national media; radio and television outlets attached to political parties; radio and television linked by tribal affiliations; and independent media created by civil society activists. The latter is most relevant to this report.[30]
8.	**Religious Organization**	This refers to organizations with a religious purpose such as Madrassas (registered and non-registered), Darul Hefaz, Khanaqas, Darul Olom (religious education centers) Mosque and Imam Bargah (Shiites Religious Center). Typically, they are registered with the Ministry of Haj and Islamic Affairs. However, studying the Afghan religious organization within the SEECA theoretical frame, seems to be controversial, as there have been antagonisms with democratic values such as freedom of speech and freedom of expressions from within some religious organizations, following a particular type of interpretation of the Sharia.[31]

[29] Internews, November 2012, Signposting Success: Civil Society in Afghanistan, https://internews.org/resource/signposting-success-civil-society-afghanistan

[30] Broadcasting Board of Governors, January 2015, Annual Report 2015, Media in Afghanistan, https://www.bbg.gov/wp-content/media/2011/12/BBG_AnnualReport_2015.pdf

[31] US Department of State, 2007, International Religious Freedom Report 2007, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, https://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/2007/90225.htm

METHODOLOGY

The research methodology for this study built upon the methodology of SEECA 2016, with some significant changes to address limitations identified from the 2016 study. This section provides an overview of the SEECA methodology used to produce this year's report. Additional detail on all aspects of the study's methodology can be found by the interested reader in Annex A.

ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

Five major domains make up the enabling environment for civil society and form the analytical framework of this research: the legal framework, the socio-cultural environment, governance, financial viability and the security environment. The framework remains consistent with the first SEECA report with the exception of security, an element added to the analytical framework this year. These five domains form the basis for index indicators, each of which is further divided into sub-categories and associated sub-indicators. Table 2 below presents the five areas of analysis described above, with their associated main and sub-indicators.

Table 2: Index Indicators

Indicators	Definition
Indicator 1	**The extent to which the prevailing formal legal framework supports the work of CSOs**
Sub-indicator 1.1	**Personal Freedoms and Civil Rights:**
	The extent to which legal rights and freedoms are supportive of the work of CSOs
Sub-indicator 1.2	**Registration:**
	The extent to which the process of registration is straightforward and registration benefits CSOs
Sub-indicator 1.3	**Tax:**
	The extent to which the tax system for CSOs is fair, efficient, and transparent
Indicator 2	**The extent to which the socio-cultural environment supports the work of CSOs**
Sub-indicator 2.1	**Access to resources (non-financial):**
	The extent to which access to communications resources and basic infrastructure facilitates the work of CSOs
Sub-indicator 2.2	**Community Support:**
	The extent to which the public supports the work of CSOs
Sub-indicator 2.3	**Representation:**
	The extent to which CSOs successfully represent communities

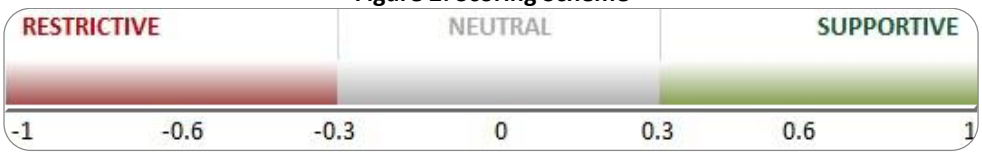
Sub-indicator 2.4	**Professionalism:**
	The extent to which CSOs are independent and professional organizations
Sub-indicator 2.5	**Advocacy:**
	The extent to which CSOs successfully influence the government at national and local levels
Indicator 3	**The extent to which the governance environment (the application of law and use of authority) is conducive to the work of CSOs**
Sub-indicator 3.1	**Service provision:**
	The extent to which the environment is supportive for CSO involvement in service provision
Sub-indicator 3.2	**Coordination:**
	The extent to which CSOs collaborate with the government in order to achieve their mission
Sub-indicator 3.3	**Corruption (real/perceived):**
	The extent to which CSOs are able to work without being negatively affected by corruption
Sub-indicator 3.4	**Transparency:**
	The extent to which the government is transparent in its dealings with CSOs
Sub-indicator 3.5	**Facilitation:**
	The extent to which the state facilitates and promotes the work of CSOs
Indicator 4	**The extent to which the funding environment allows CSOs to shape their activities according to their mission.**
Sub-indicator 4.1	**Funding process:**
	The extent to which CSOs are able to access funding
Sub-indicator 4.2	**Financial independence:**
	The extent to which CSOs are financially independent
Indicator 5	**The extent to which the operational environment is secure for the CSOs to carry out their work**
Sub-indicator 5.1	**Access:**
	The degree to which the security situation affects CSOs' access to their constituencies or jurisdiction
Sub-indicator 5.2	**Program Implementation:**
	The degree to which security affects the CSO's ability to implement their programs and projects
Sub-indicator 5.3	**Security Threats:**

	The degree to which CSOs feel of threatened by non-state and state actors
Sub-indicator 5.4	**Personal Safety of Staff:**
	The degree to which the security situation affects the personal safety and security of CSO staff

Scoring Scheme

Based on original data collected for the research, each sub-indicator and indicator is assigned a score between -1 and 1, with a score of -1 being restrictive, 0 being neutral (neither supportive nor restrictive to the enabling environment for CSOs, and +1 being supportive. Figure 2 with the key below elaborates upon this scoring scheme.

Figure 2: Scoring Scheme



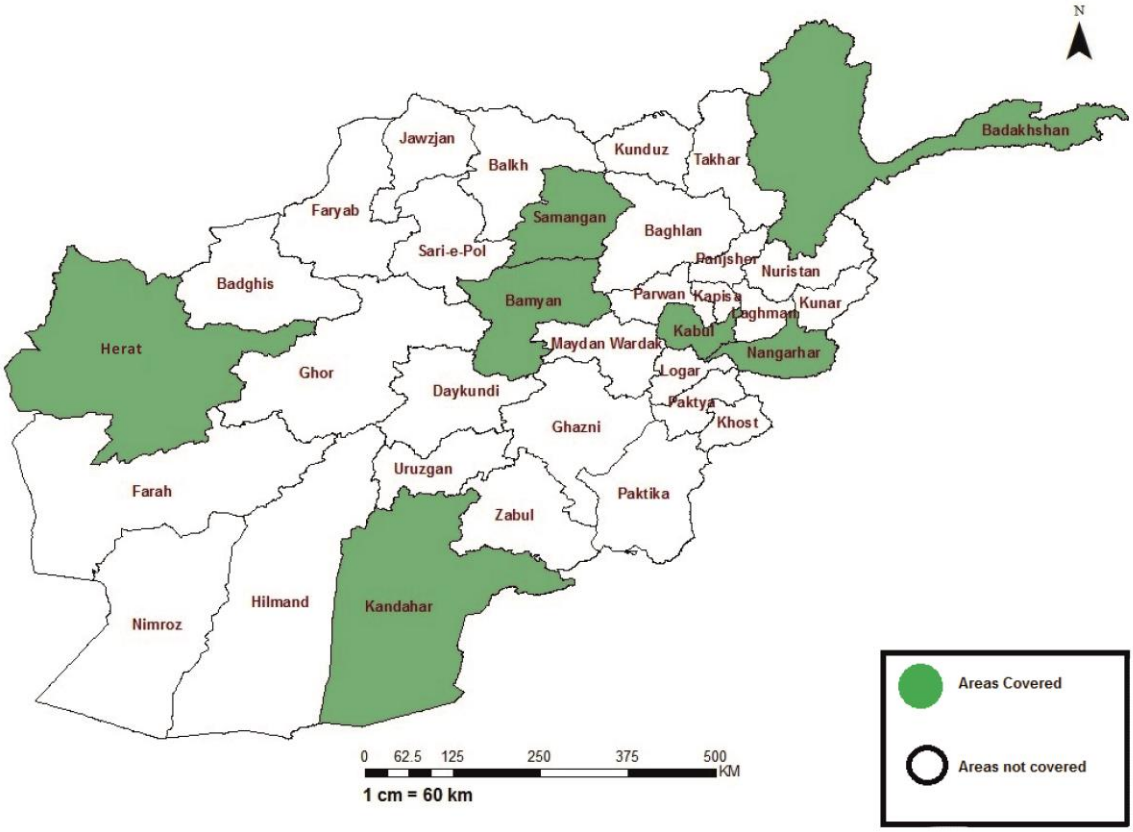
KEY

Score	Value
-1	Totally restrictive of the enabling environment for CSOs
-0.5	Somewhat unsupportive of the enabling environment for CSOs
0	Neither supportive nor restrictive of the enabling environment for CSOs
0.5	Somewhat supportive of the enabling environment for CSOs
1	Totally supportive of the enabling environment for CSOs

Research Design and Implementation

Research was conducted in Badakhshan, Bamyan, Herat, Kabul, Kandahar, Nangarhar, and Samangan provinces (Figure 3). Site selection aimed to ensure geographic representation and inclusivity, and areas that have varying levels of CSO concentration.

Figure 3: SEECA's Geographical Coverage



The research design for SEECA 2017 used qualitative and quantitative methods, including a desk review; survey questionnaires with CSO member, and CSO beneficiaries; open-ended interviews with CSO members, CSO beneficiaries, and government officials; focus group discussions (FGDs) with CSO members; and key informant interviews with civil society actors and experts. In addition, several case stories were developed to further illustrate the characteristics of the enabling environment for CSOs in Afghanistan. The surveys constituted the main source of data. However, the diverse collection of qualitative, quantitative and mixed-methods tools enabled the investigators to collect information from triangulated sources and add depth to the research.

CSOs and respondent groups were selected by AICS researchers from a list provided by Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Haj and Islamic Affairs, and the Ministry of Economy. The numbers of open-ended interviews and focus group discussions were selected to achieve an equal distribution across the seven provinces, and interviewees for the open-ended interviews were randomly selected using the lottery method (discussed in more detail below). The selection of focus group discussants was purposive, targeting civil society activists in their respective provinces, and others with intensive experience working with CSOs. Respondent selection for the closed-ended surveys was based on a representative sampling method, with representation based on the total number of CSOs found within each province, a confidence level of 95%, and margin of error of +/- 5%. In total, 706 CSO representatives, 90 beneficiaries, 22 government officials and four key informants were surveyed or interviewed, throughout the selected provinces.

Questionnaires and surveys were imported into KoBo Toolbox, a free open-source tool for mobile data collection, which allowed researchers to collect data in the field using mobile devices such as mobile phones or tablets.[32] Audio recorders were used for the open-ended questions (after seeking consent), or captured on paper and later transcribed into KoBo. FGDs were recorded on audio recorders, which the researcher later transcribed and translated into English. Statistical methods were applied to calculate index scores based on data captured in KoBo. Qualitative data from the FGDs, open-ended questionnaires and key informant interviews used to substantiate findings from the quantitative data as well to provide contextual information and add more insight to the index scores.

LIMITATIONS

Over the course of the fieldwork and data analysis, the following limitations were encountered by the research team. These should be kept in mind when reading the report's findings.

- **Analytical Framework:** The analytical framework developed for this study is more contextual than analytical, and, for future studies, it needs to be revised in light of the theoretical advancements that have been made in measuring enabling environments. Likewise, it could be more comprehensive, as it has left important elements such as gender relations, ethno-religious and cultural factors, issues related to literacy, social status, political affiliations, and rural and urban differences.

- **Generalizability:** This research's findings may not necessarily be generalizable to all the Afghan CSOs because: (1) the study covered only 7 provinces out of 34, (2) data was collected only from CSOs from the provincial and district centers, and excluding those located more remotely, and (3) the emphasis has been more on the formal, registered type of CSO rather than on the non-formal ones.

- **Subjectivity:** The methodology that measures the index indicators is based on self-evaluations and perceptions from CSO members. While findings from the closed-ended survey have been triangulated with secondary research as well as qualitative research, the actual values of the index rely largely on the self-evaluation of respondents. Care should be exercised when reviewing the extent to which this approach has allowed for the index to capture a comprehensive set of aspects in regard to the enabling environment given the risk of self-reporting bias.

[32] http://www.kobotoolbox.org/

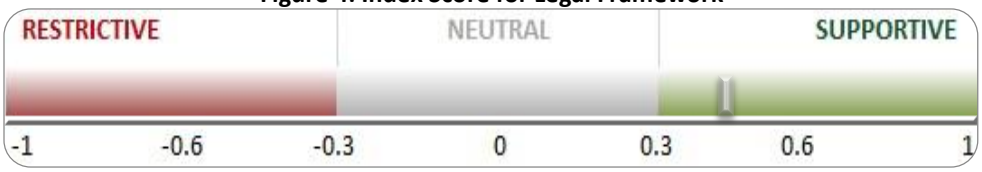
FINDINGS

LEGAL FRAMEWORK

CSOs are significantly influenced by the legal environment in which they operate. Formal laws and policies, including the international treaties to which Afghanistan is signatory, as well as domestic laws and policies, govern the degree to which civil society activities are recognized and protected. This includes the protection of rights and freedoms necessary for a thriving civil society, including freedom of expression, freedom of assembly, freedom of religion, and access to information. CSOs are also affected by more specific laws and policies designed to monitor and regulate the civil society sphere. These include regulations around the registration of organizations, (e.g. the necessity, benefits, drawbacks and process of registration), as well as taxation. Accordingly, to assess the way in which the legal framework in Afghanistan contributes to the enabling environment for CSOs, the following three sub-categories were considered: (1) registration, (2) personal freedoms and civil rights, and (3) taxation.

The prevailing legal framework in Afghanistan generally supports the work of CSOs, reflected in the legal framework index score of 0.46 (Figure 4). Overall, legal rights and freedoms are supportive of the work of CSOs and the process of registration is straightforward and registration benefits CSOs. The index scores for personal freedoms and civil rights and for CSO registration of 0.55 and 0.56 respectively reflects this. The tax system for CSOs is somewhat fair, efficient, and transparent, with an index score of 0.29 showing it as a neutral - neither supportive nor restrictive - part of the enabling environment.

Figure 4: Index Score for Legal Framework



The supportiveness of Afghanistan's legal framework for civil society improved between 2016 and 2017. The comparative analysis shows an overall improvement in all three sub-indicators (0.15), with a positive change of 0.24 points for personal freedoms and civil rights, 0.19 for tax, and 0.04 for registration (Table 3).

Table 3: Scores on Legal Framework and Related Sub-indicators (2016 & 2017)

Main Indicator 1	Legal Framework	2016 0.31	2017 0.46
Sub-indicator 1.1	**Personal Freedoms and Civil Rights** The extent to which legal rights and freedoms are supportive of the work of CSOs	0.31	0.55
Sub-indicator 1.2	**Registration** The extent to which the process of registration is straightforward and registration benefits CSOs	0.52	0.56
Sub-indicator 1.3	**Tax** The extent to which the tax system for CSOs is fair, efficient, and transparent	0.10	0.29

The improvement in personal freedoms and civil rights echoes the Freedom of the Press 2017 report findings that highlighted the creation of a mechanism to adjudicate complaints about the media without resorting to prosecution, and decrees to improve protection for journalists and access to information.[33] The status change also reflects long-term growth in the diversity of private media in Afghanistan, though the deteriorating security environment further restricted journalists' ability to operate safely throughout the country in 2016[34].

The sections below discuss the sub-categories of the legal framework in more detail.

Personal Freedoms and Civil Rights

Sub-indicator 1.1	Personal Freedom and Civil Rights	0.55
	The extent to which legal rights and freedoms are supportive of the work of CSOs	

Data suggests the existence of a conducive environment for personal freedoms and civil rights. The question which asked if CSOs members could speak freely and publicly about their work, the large majority of CSO representatives (87%) responded stated that they were able to. This supports article 34 of the Afghan Constitution that grants freedom of speech to every citizen,

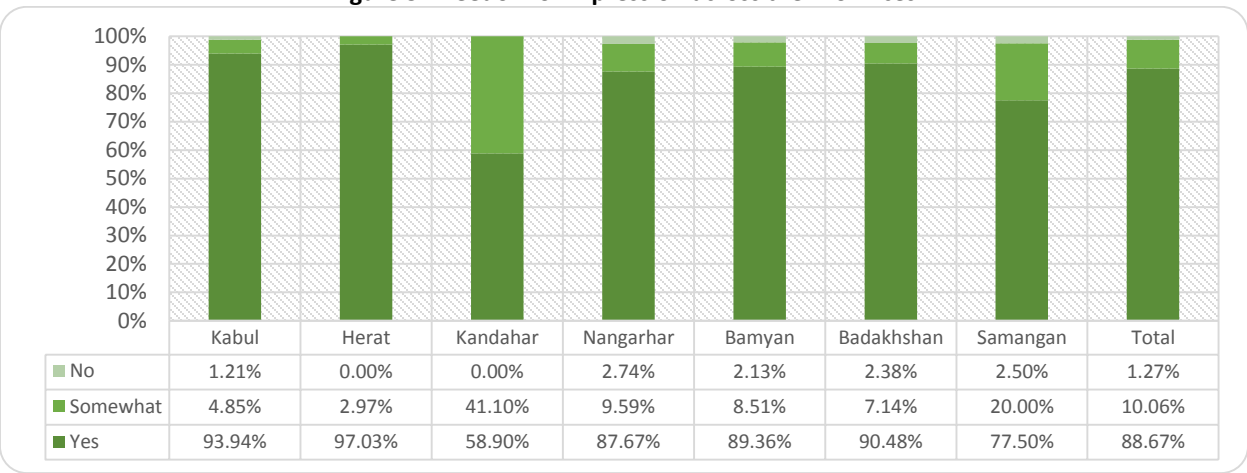
> freedom of expression shall be inviolable. Every Afghan shall have the right to express thoughts through speech, writing, illustrations as well as other means in accordance with provisions of this constitution. Every Afghan shall have the right, according to provisions of law, to print and publish on subjects without prior submission to state authorities.[35]

Figure 5 illustrates that the sense of freedom of expression was high in Herat (97%), followed by Kabul (94%), Bamyan (89%), Nangarhar (88%), Badakhshan (90%) and Samangan (77%). Respondents from Kandahar expressed the lowest level of freedom as 59%, with 41% stating that they felt only 'somewhat' able to express themselves. A note on Kabul's score. Last year, Kabul had the highest number of respondents with the sense of expression but this year it has the second highest. This is because, over the past one year, Kabul faced more security threats and sanctions. For instance, the Enlightenment Movement civil demonstration in Kabul was targeted by suicide bombers that resulted in the death of more than 80 people.[36] Similarly, the government is trying to use sanctions to stop civil demonstrations. Examples include, police killing two protestors, wounding 20 and arresting 11 during the uprising movement for change.[37] Furthermore, as the Freedom House 2017 report states, "although private discussion in government-held areas is largely free and unrestrained, discussion of a political nature is more dangerous for Afghans living in contested or Taliban-controlled areas. The government is not known

[33] Freedom of the Press- 2017, Afghanistan profile, https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-press/2017/afghanistan
[34] Ibid.
[35] Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, 26 January 2004, The Constitution of Afghanistan, Article 34, http://www.afghanembassy.com.pl/afg/images/pliki/TheConstitution.pdf
[36] https://www.voanews.com/a/deadly-bombing-in-kabul/3431627.html
[37] http://8am.af/1396/03/31/protesters-demolish-campaign-2-dead-more-than-20-wounded-and-11-others-arrested/

to illegally restrict or monitor the internet."[38] Finally, the low level of freedom in Kandahar could be explained by the view that this province is considered more conservative than the other six provinces.

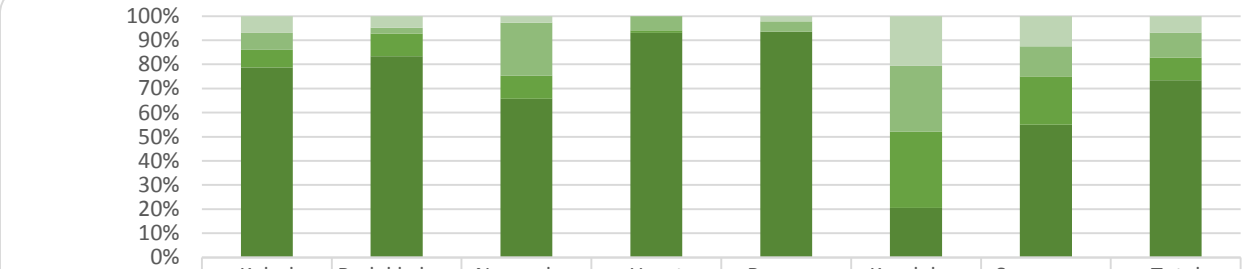
Figure 5: Freedom of Expression across the Provinces



	Kabul	Herat	Kandahar	Nangarhar	Bamyan	Badakhshan	Samangan	Total
No	1.21%	0.00%	0.00%	2.74%	2.13%	2.38%	2.50%	1.27%
Somewhat	4.85%	2.97%	41.10%	9.59%	8.51%	7.14%	20.00%	10.06%
Yes	93.94%	97.03%	58.90%	87.67%	89.36%	90.48%	77.50%	88.67%

When looking at women's freedom of expression, the total for the provinces (88.6%) is higher than it is for women (73%). Figure 6 shows that women in Bamyan (94%), Herat (93%), Badakhshan (83%), Kabul (79%), and Nangarhar (67%) stated that they had freedom of expression. The high scores in Bamyan and Herat could be from the impact of migration. For instance, the majority of the population in Bamyan and Herat have lived in Iran (during the Taliban era), where women going to work, pursuing education, and participating in social activities is the norm than the exception. The two lowest scores were found in Samangan (55%) and Kandahar (20%). The low scores in Samangan and Kandahar may be attributed to the low literacy rate in those two provinces, and also to some cultural and religious factors that tend to be more conservative than those in Bamyan and Herat.

Figure 6: Freedom of Expression for Women across the Seven Provinces



	Kabul	Badakhshan	Nangarhar	Herat	Bamyan	Kandahar	Samangan	Total
I don't know	6.97%	4.76%	2.74%	0.00%	2.13%	20.55%	12.50%	6.80%
No	6.97%	2.38%	21.92%	5.94%	4.26%	27.40%	12.50%	10.34%
Somewhat	7.27%	9.52%	9.59%	0.99%	0.00%	31.51%	20.00%	9.49%
Yes	78.79%	83.33%	65.75%	93.07%	93.62%	20.55%	55.00%	73.37%

[38] Freedom House, 2017, Freedom of the Press 2017, Afghanistan Profile, https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-press/2017/afghanistan/

FGD findings were mixed. Some CSO representatives corroborated the survey findings whereas other respondents disagreed. For instance, one of the FGD participants in Herat stated, "I think we have enough freedom of speech and everyone can express their own thought and criticize the work of a president, and security organizations never show any reaction against such kind of expressions."[39] Another participant disagreed in saying, "I agree but from my point of view is that we can raise our voice and can make the demonstration, but the local government does not listen to our voice, they never take any action for the solution of an issue."[40] Another participant from Kandahar supported this by arguing that, "there is freedom of speech but the governmental authorities do not take any action. Moreover, if you criticize an office or officer they will cut relations with you and never call you for meetings, etc."[41]

The data highlights discrepancies between the law on freedom of speech and its enactment. For example, a CSO member from Kabul shared, "according to the law, there is no barrier for the freedom of speech but there are problems in its practicality."[42] Another FGD participant from Nangarhar elaborated,

> I will share a real example of freedom of speech. When President Ghani came to Nangarhar province, we had prepared a speech about the local government and mafias, but we were not allowed to express our thought in front of him. The local government warned us, if you mention anything about the local government or other powerful people, it will create a lot of problems for you, and so we couldn't deliver the speech.[43]

Another participant from Kandahar reinforced this view,

> if it is not against one particular person in the government then yes, I can raise my voice but if you raise up your voice against someone or some illegal action, you will be punished indirectly, or may be killed. Some of the community elders have been mysteriously killed. The corrupt people try their best to silent civil activists and these threats exist for both men and women equally.[44]

The findings revealed that certain groups such as women and the media face more challenges when it comes to freedom of expression. Respondents reported that the media faces censorship from the government and powerful parties. For example, a respondent from Herat mentioned that, "media is censored by government and other powerful people and are not allowed to broadcast the issues which harm the personal benefits of the powerful people or the governmental authorities."[45] Another participant from Nangarhar shared,

> I have given hundreds of interviews to different TV and radio stations such as Azadi, BBC, VOA, Shamshad, RTA but they only broadcast the interviews in which I told something in adherence to the provincial governor or the local government but they didn't broadcast my interview in which I condemn the government or authorities.[46]

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[39] Focus Group Discussion 1, Herat, June 6, 2017
[40] Ibid.
[41] Focus Group Discussion 1, Kandahar, June 1, 2017
[42] Focus Group Discussion 2, Kabul June 21, 2017
[43] Focus Group Discussion 1, Nangarhar June 10, 2017
[44] Focus Group Discussion 2, Kandahar, June 1, 2017
[45] Focus Group Discussion 2, Herat, June 6, 2017
[46] Focus Group Discussion 2, Nangarhar, June 10, 2017

Female respondents reported that they have much more limited freedom than their male counterparts. A female participant from Samangan noted,

> Women cannot express their own thoughts because of security and cultural problems. I personally cannot speak the truth, I have been a representative of the people in Samangan for a while, and I have a lot of experience of work in governmental and nongovernmental organizations. We are not allowed to be active in the community, if I tell you the truth, I will be punished. Here in Samangan, both sides, governmental and anti-governmental elements oppose women. There is no freedom of speech, as women cannot even cook food for their families without consulting male members of the family.[47]

Another participant from Kandahar stated, "in Kandahar there are only a few active women. They raise their voices in some cases but not in all matters. Their freedom of speech is very limited."[48] A participant from Kabul shared that, "women have a lot of limitations in freedom of speech. They are harmed in different ways, like sexual abuse, harassment, blackmailing, and different interpretation of religion and culture."[49]

A draft law on demonstrations will be presented to parliament around the time of preparation of this report in August 2017 about which civil activists are concerned, claiming that it will place civil rights and freedom at risk.[50] In particular, activists are concerned about an article that authorizes the police to stop demonstrations when required, depending on the security and other contextual circumstances. CSO members believe that the enactment of such laws contradicts the freedom and civil rights provided in the constitution.[51]

Registration

	Registration	
Sub-indicator 1.2	The extent to which the process of registration is straightforward and registration benefits CSOs	**0.56**

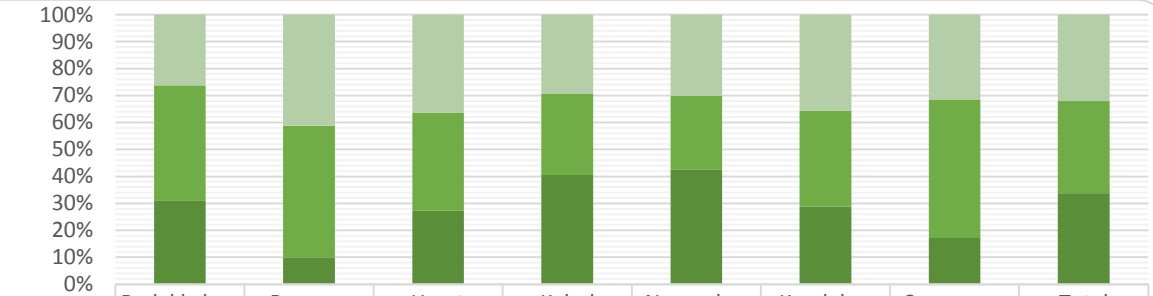
The registration index score of 0.56, suggests that the process of registration is straightforward and benefits CSOs. The qualitative data supported this finding, as CSOs consider the registration process across the ministries and regions as being fairly clear and easy. A FGD participant from Kandahar stated, "we are registered with the Ministry of Economy and as whole we are happy with the registration process, and the relevant departments in Kandahar help us with our registration and other formal issues."[52] A participant from Nangarhar noted that, "the registration process with the Ministry of Justice was easy and

[47] Focus Group Discussion 2, Samangan May 20, 2017
[48] Focus Group Discussion 2, Kandahar, June 1, 2017
[49] Focus Group Discussion 1, Kabul, June 19, 2017
[50] On June 19, 2017, a meeting was held by the Ministry of Justice who finalized the draft of the law, which has 6 chapters and 33 articles. According to CSO activists, 7 out of 33 are against the constitution and conventions that Afghanistan has signed restricting personal freedom and freedom of assembly.
[51] BBC, 2017, http://www.bbc.com/persian/40575660
[52] Focus Group Discussion 1, Kandahar, June 1, 2017

we were able to receive our license within one month."[53] A participant from Herat shared, "the registration process is easy here in Herat. We can finish everything in few days, but it takes more time to process it in Kabul."[54]

However, the survey responses to this question were mixed. Overall, 32% of the respondents found the process difficult, 34% were neutral, and 34% found it easy (Figure 7). The reason for this spread could be that most of the CSOs were registered during their establishment, and the members interviewed were either not aware of the process or were reporting based on what they heard from their colleagues from the time of registration. In Nangarhar, the registration process was perceived to be easiest (42%) while only 10% of respondents in Bamyan found it easy. Although the process of registration, as written, is identical across the provinces, factors such as corruption, political patronage, transparency and the capacity of the relevant staff determines the effectiveness and or ineffectiveness of the process.

Figure 7: Difficulty of the Registration Process



	Badakhshan	Bamyan	Herat	Kabul	Nangarhar	Kandahar	Samangan	Total
Difficult	26.19%	41.18%	36.36%	29.46%	30.14%	35.58%	31.43%	31.97%
Neutral	42.86%	49.02%	36.36%	30.00%	27.40%	35.58%	51.43%	34.27%
Easy	30.95%	9.80%	27.27%	40.54%	42.47%	28.85%	17.14%	33.76%

Almost all the participants stated that the registration process was time-consuming. This was particularly evident in provinces such as Bamyan, Badakhshan, Samangan and Herat, where there were reports of having to pay additional charges other than the registration fee to expedite the process. Participants expressed that they would like the central government to authorize the provincial departments to issue registration. Participants felt that this would save both time and resources, particularly for provincially-based CSOs with no offices in Kabul. Respondents noted that the extension in the validity period for association registration had resulted in positive process effects. CSO representatives registered with Ministry of Justice shared that previously they used to renew their registration annually, however that law has changed. As one of the participants from Nangarhar stated, "there is a positive change that the registration or license for the civil societies are given for three years. In the past it was only for one year and required to be updated every year, which was complicated and time consuming."[55]

Participants, particularly from Kabul, shared that apart from registration, when CSOs receive projects, they are required to obtain a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) from the relevant ministry which is far more unclear and time-consuming than registration. A participant from Kabul noted,

[53] Focus Group Discussion 2, Nangarhar, June 11, 2017
[54] Focus Group Discussion 2, Herat, June 7, 2017
[55] Focus group Discussion 1, Nangarhar, June 10, 2017

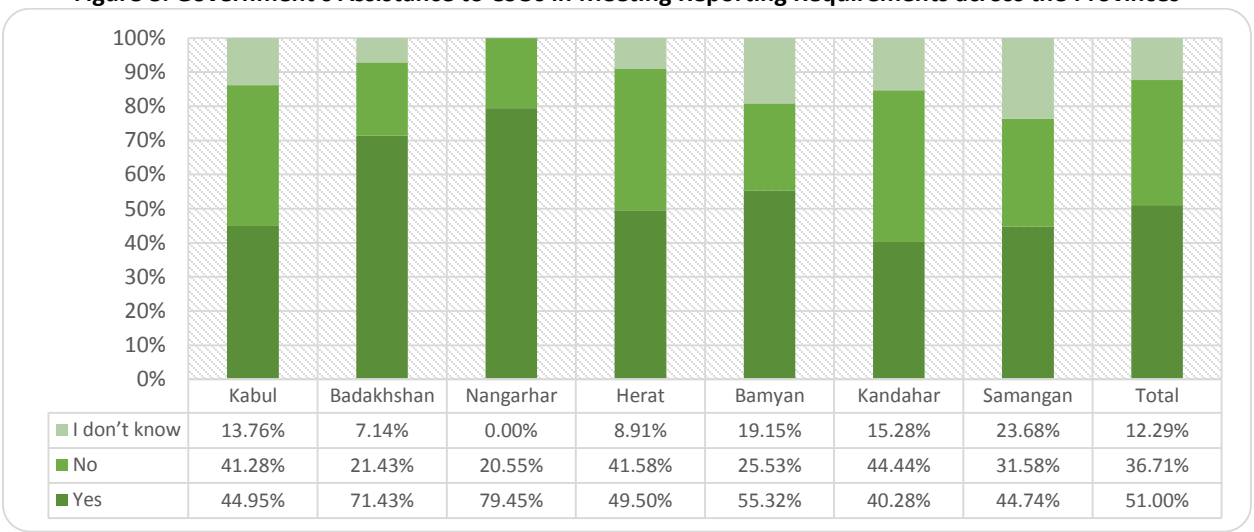
> it is easy to register an NGO but getting an MOU is a very complicated process and takes ages. For example, we want to sign the MOU with the Ministry of Social Affairs, yet they have delayed the process of signing the agreement and pointed out a different issue in the document every week. Finally, we completed all the documents and it was ready to be signed, and then they said that the chairperson is abroad, and that we have to wait until he returns and can sign. Then, he said the quality of the photos were not good, so we had to reprint the photos and wait until the commission meets and approved the documents. Until now we haven't been able to sign the MOU and the project is already completed.[56]

Adding to this, another participant suggested,

> the MOU process takes six months or more with huge consequences for the CSOs. Therefore, my suggestion is that the registering entity of the CSOs should issue a letter to other ministries and their relevant provincial departments to give the permission to the civil societies to implement their projects. [57]

In terms of the government reporting requirements, the majority of the CSOs think them to be fair. Respondents commented that the government's support to CSOs in meeting the reporting requirements is of concern. Figure 8 indicates that although the majority of the CSOs (51%) across the provinces do receive support from the government in meeting the reporting requirements, 37% do not get any assistance in this regard. Government support in meeting the reporting requirement is highest in Nangarhar (79%), followed by Badakhshan (71%) and Bamyan (55%), and the lowest in Kandahar (44%) followed by Herat (42%) and Kabul (41%). A more detailed study would be required to examine why government support is better in some provinces than the others.

Figure 8: Government's Assistance to CSOs in Meeting Reporting Requirements across the Provinces



	Kabul	Badakhshan	Nangarhar	Herat	Bamyan	Kandahar	Samangan	Total
I don't know	13.76%	7.14%	0.00%	8.91%	19.15%	15.28%	23.68%	12.29%
No	41.28%	21.43%	20.55%	41.58%	25.53%	44.44%	31.58%	36.71%
Yes	44.95%	71.43%	79.45%	49.50%	55.32%	40.28%	44.74%	51.00%

[56] Focus Group Discussion 2, Kabul, June 21, 2017
[57] Ibid.

Taxation

	Tax	
Sub-indicator 1.3	The extent to which the tax system for CSOs is fair, efficient, and transparent	**0.29**

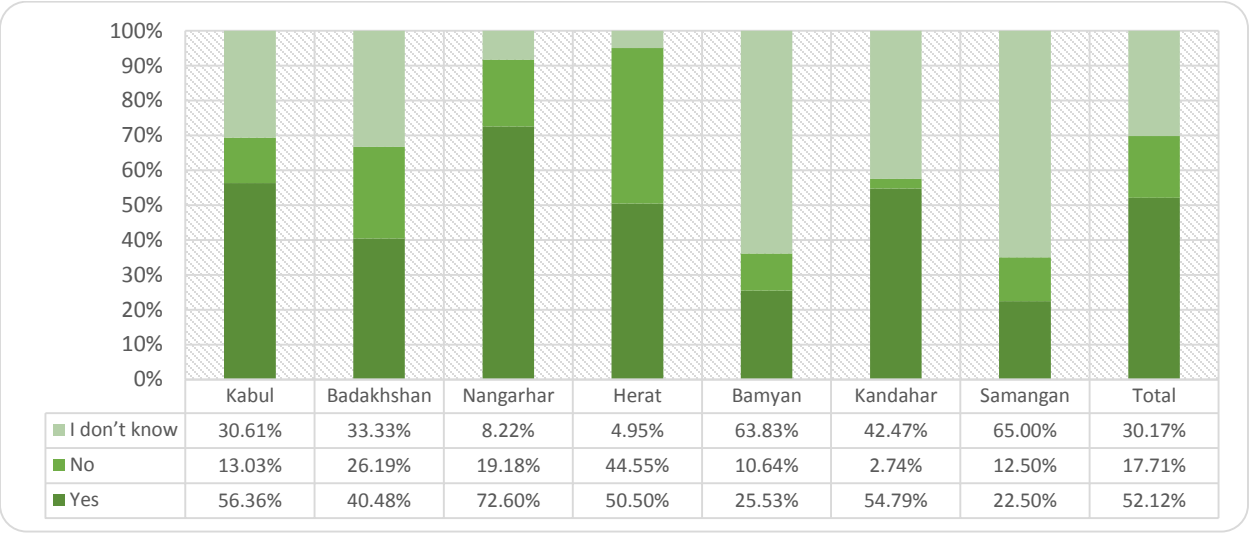
The tax system is neither supportive nor restrictive for CSOs. There are positive laws in place but they are not universally implemented in a fair, efficient or transparent manner. Its neutral index score of 0.29 is the lowest score amongst the three sub-indicators under the legal framework. This score was triangulated with the qualitative data, which highlights problems with the tax laws. According to the Afghan NGO laws, CSOs are tax exempt, except for withholding tax on salaries and rental services. However, respondents noted that tax exemption is not automatically given, and CSOs have to apply for tax exemption, which is a lengthy and complicated process. For instance, a respondent from Herat noted that, "receiving this letter from ARD [Afghanistan Revenue Department] is not something easy because there are lots of steps to follow and documents to process, and it takes a lot of time."[58] Participants also highlighted corruption, political patronage, and nepotism as issues that further complicated the process of acquiring a tax exemption certificate. As one participant from Kandahar shared, "during every step someone requests extra money to process the application further."[59] A participant from Kabul stated that, "you can get the exemption certificate easily if you know people in the department, if not, then you will be called again and again; sometimes for this documentation; sometimes for that documentation. They also ask you to pay bribes."[60]

The findings also indicate that CSOs face similar challenges of corruption and bribes with the paying of withholding tax. For instance, a CSO member from Kandahar shared, "there are lots of problems in the taxation system. The employees of the revenue office take money as bribes and reduced taxes."[61] Another CSO representative from Samangan noted, "an official asked our finance to pay him 10,000 Afs. bribe to show that we had paid tax. Since we had no project and had not paid our staff salaries, we could not pay the tax."[62]

Over half of the respondents (52%) stated that the tax exemption status of CSOs is respected, with the highest score in Nangarhar (73%) and lowest in Samangan (23%) (Figure 9). The belief that CSO tax exemption status is not respected is highest in Herat (45%) and lowest in Kandahar (3%). 30% of respondents did not know if their tax exemption status is respected.

[58] Focus Group Discussion 2, Herat, June 7, 2017
[59] Focus Group Discussion 2, Kandahar June 1, 2017
[60] Focus Group Discussion 1, Kabul, June 19, 2017
[61] Focus Group Discussion 1, Kandahar, June 1, 2017
[62] Focus Group Discussion 1, Samangan, May 20, 2017

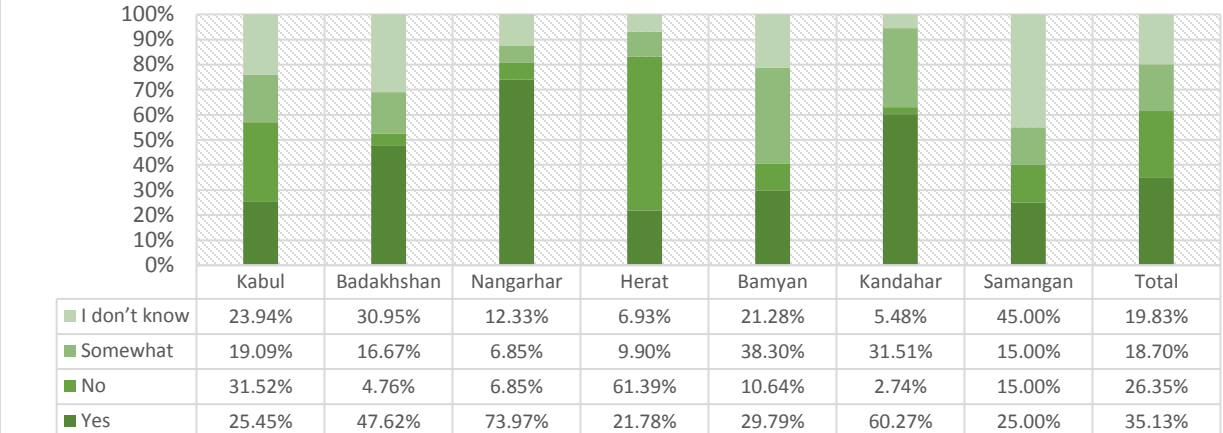
Figure 9: Tax Exemption Status Respected



	Kabul	Badakhshan	Nangarhar	Herat	Bamyan	Kandahar	Samangan	Total
I don't know	30.61%	33.33%	8.22%	4.95%	63.83%	42.47%	65.00%	30.17%
No	13.03%	26.19%	19.18%	44.55%	10.64%	2.74%	12.50%	17.71%
Yes	56.36%	40.48%	72.60%	50.50%	25.53%	54.79%	22.50%	52.12%

When asked if the tax system is implemented impartially, 35% of the survey respondents stated that this is the case (Figure 10). Respondents from Nangarhar (74%) and Kandahar (60%) scored the highest in considering the system to be impartial. Herat (61%) had the highest score in stating that the system was partial.

Figure 10: Impartial Implementation of Tax System



	Kabul	Badakhshan	Nangarhar	Herat	Bamyan	Kandahar	Samangan	Total
I don't know	23.94%	30.95%	12.33%	6.93%	21.28%	5.48%	45.00%	19.83%
Somewhat	19.09%	16.67%	6.85%	9.90%	38.30%	31.51%	15.00%	18.70%
No	31.52%	4.76%	6.85%	61.39%	10.64%	2.74%	15.00%	26.35%
Yes	25.45%	47.62%	73.97%	21.78%	29.79%	60.27%	25.00%	35.13%

In the qualitative data, respondents stated that even when they do not have active grants and projects and were unable to pay staff salaries, the MoF presses the CSO to pay tax. For example, a respondent from Kabul shared, "they always asked to pay the tax of the salaries of the employee, when we haven't paid the salaries. How can we pay the tax? In the meanwhile, there is no money to pay the salaries because the project is over and we are waiting for the extension."[63] A participant from Badakhshan reported, "we had not paid the salaries of our staff and rent for six months because the donor delayed the money for six

[63] Focus Group Discussion 1, Kabul, June 19, 2017

months. After the money came, we paid the tax for six months at once, but they charged a 1,500,000 Afg. penalty and said this is our problem with the donor."[64]

Case Study: Problematic Tax Payment

Organization X is established and registered with the Ministry of Economy. It is a large organization with vast experience of more than 69 projects. It works with returnees in several parts of Afghanistan with partners like MRRD, IDLG, Child War, Women Skill Trainings and Child Brain-Based Classes.

The organization wanted to clear the balance sheet at the small tax payer's office and transfer it from Kabul to Kandahar (the location of their main office) as it had to be paid there. The small tax payer's office had processed the documents but was waiting for the director's signature. Eventually, it was rejected and the organization was told that transferring the balance sheet from Kabul to Kandahar was impossible, as it had to be cleared in Kabul. Then, a staff member from the small tax payer's office asked the organization to pay $1500 in order to secure the director's signature. "We were really fed up but we paid him," said a member of the organization.[65]

Two weeks prior to the interview for this study, organization X noticed that the man who had asked for and received the money had left the country. "We hope he didn't receive money from others too," said a member of the organization. This is a common story for many organizations. They agree that tax should be paid but they highlight the problems associated with the process, particularly, the issue of tax clearance. Government officials usually ask for money or a gift at the time of clearing the taxes and processing the payment. "They produce hundreds of reasons to make you pay them an amount and get rid of a complex process".[66] The documentation was processed but the organization is still unsure when they will receive the necessary documents.

SOCIO-CULTURAL ENVIRONMENT

Many CSOs are dependent upon a strong connection with the communities in which they operate if they are to achieve their advocacy and operational goals. CSOs' missions and programming should, therefore reflect the needs and priorities of at least a segment of the public they are meant to serve. They must also be able to take a strong lead in programming and managing their operations, to ensure that they have a real impact on the communities in which they work. Five sub-categories make up the socio-cultural environment for CSOs in the country: (1) access to resources (non-financial), (2) community support, (3) representation, (4) professionalism, and (5) advocacy.

The socio-cultural environment for CSOs in Afghanistan supports their work, according to the index score of 0.53 (Figure 11). Moreover, each of the five sub-categories that make up the socio-cultural environment for CSOs in the country contributes to a supportive environment. Of the five sub-categories, community support with the score of 0.85 was the highest, with access to resources (non-financial) with the score of 0.31 the lowest.

[64] Focus Group Discussion 1, Badakhshan, May 28, 2017
[65] CSO Member, Kabul, June 12, 2017
[66] CSO Member, Kabul, June 16, 2017

Figure 11: Index Score for Socio-Cultural Environment

Table 4: Scores on Socio-cultural Environment (2016 and 2017)

Indicator	Description	2016 Score	2017 Score
Indicator 2	**The extent to which the socio-cultural environment supports the work of CSOs**	**0.65**	**0.53**
Sub-indicator 2.1	**Access to resources (non-financial)**	**0.49**	**0.31**
	The extent to which access to communications resources and basic infrastructure facilitates the work of CSOs		
Sub-indicator 2.2	**Community support**	**0.79**	**0.85**
	The extent to which the public supports the work of CSOs		
Sub-indicator 2.3	**Representation**	**0.77**	**0.53**
	The extent to which CSOs successfully represent communities		
Sub-indicator 2.4	**Professionalization**	**0.36**	**0.36**
	The extent to which CSOs are independent and professional organizations		
Sub-indicator 2.5	**Advocacy**	**0.81**	**0.63**
	The extent to which CSOs successfully influence the government at national and local levels		

The comparative analysis across 2016 and 2017 shows that the overall score for socio-cultural environment has decreased from 0.65 to 0.53 (Table 4). The scores for three sub-indicators: access to resources (non-financial), representation and level of advocacy decreased from (0.49 to 0.31), (0.77 to 0.53), (0.81 to 0.63) respectively. The score for community support increased (0.79 to 0.85) and the score for professionalization remained the same (0.36).

The sections below discuss the sub-categories of the socio-cultural environment in more detail.

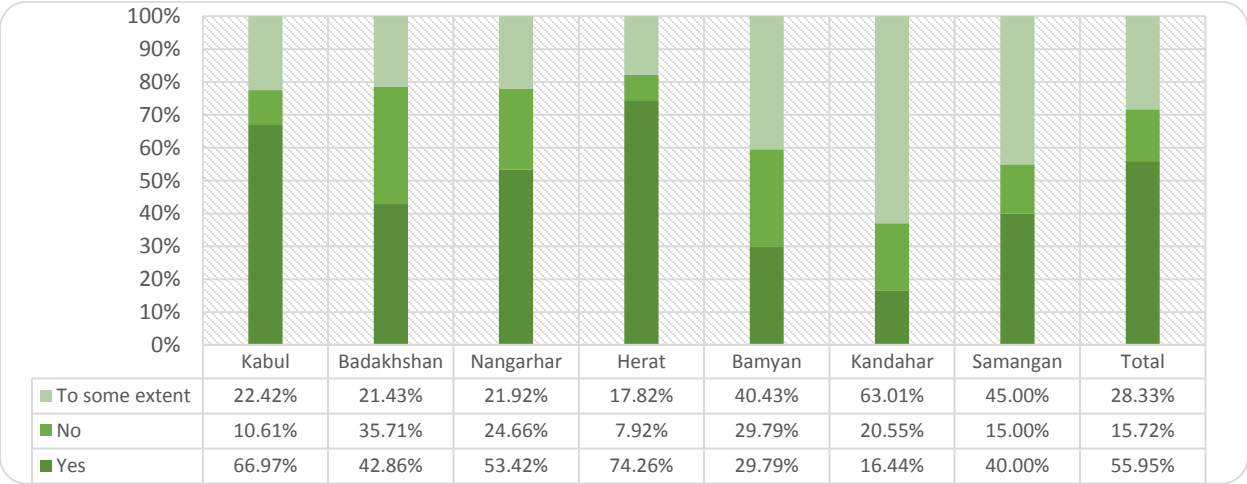
Access to Resources

Sub-indicator 2.1	**Access to resources (non-financial):** The extent to which access to communications resources and basic infrastructure facilitates the work of CSOs	**0.31**

CSOs' access to communications resources and basic infrastructure is supportive of their work, reflected in a mildly supportive index score of 0.31 for access to non-financial resources. This is the lowest score of the five sub-indicators within the socio-cultural environment index. Data from the FGDs and KIIs suggests that the non-financial resources for CSOs differs across CSO types. CSOs who consider themselves local NGOs and are registered with the MoE have comparatively better access to non-financial resources, for example, offices, electricity, and internet, in comparison with associations or village Shuras. For instance, a respondent from Kabul shared, "most of the CSOs that are like NGOs have all the related equipment whereas association and councils do not have formal offices and office equipment and they usually operate from their own private houses."[67] A respondent from Nangarhar confirmed this, "we use one of our own rooms in the home as the office of the council. If we had an office especially in the Jalalabad city, it would have been really helpful."[68] He continued by saying, "but there are some CSOs that are directly supported by donors and they have all the necessary equipment."[69] A FGD participant from Samangan shared, "we have access to all this equipment, but it is difficult for associations particularly when people come from districts and there is no proper place to hold the meeting."[70]

56% of the survey respondents stated that there is adequate physical infrastructure. The majority of CSOs in Herat (74%), Kabul (67%) and Nangarhar (53%) have access to physical infrastructure, whereas CSOs in Kandahar (63%), Samangan (45%), and Bamyan 40% stated that there is some access to physical infrastructure (Figure 12).

Figure 12: Access to Physical Infrastructure across the Provinces



	Kabul	Badakhshan	Nangarhar	Herat	Bamyan	Kandahar	Samangan	Total
To some extent	22.42%	21.43%	21.92%	17.82%	40.43%	63.01%	45.00%	28.33%
No	10.61%	35.71%	24.66%	7.92%	29.79%	20.55%	15.00%	15.72%
Yes	66.97%	42.86%	53.42%	74.26%	29.79%	16.44%	40.00%	55.95%

In the FGDs, participants stated that while many CSOs have offices and other necessary equipment, they do not own these resources. As a respondent from Herat shared, "we have access but all belongs to the donor. Unfortunately, most of the NGO work is project-based. Currently we have all the necessary equipment, office, cars and internet facilities, but we rent them; they are not our own. 80% of the NGOs have this problem. If there is no donor, we may have nothing and will have to stop working."[71] A

[67] Focus Group Discussion 1, Kabul, June 19, 2017
[68] Focus Group Discussion 2, Nangarhar, June 11, 2017
[69] Ibid.
[70] Focus Group Discussion 2, Samangan, May 20, 2017
[71] Focus Group Discussion 2, Herat, June 6, 2017

respondent from Bamyan mentioned, "we have enough offices, electricity, internet and telecommunication etc., but all of these are rental and paid from project funds."[72]

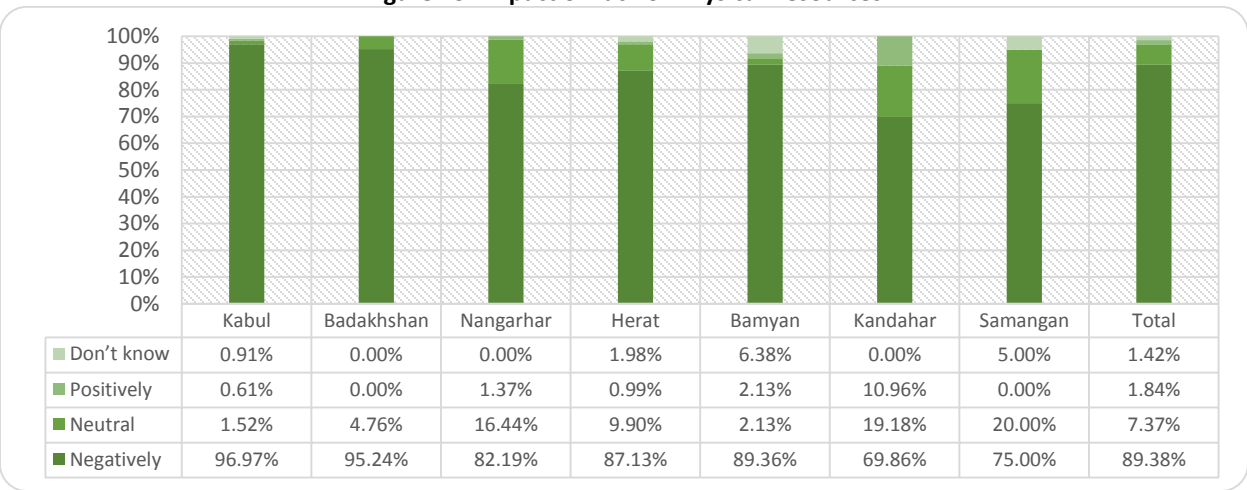
In looking at how conducive the physical environment is for female staff and members, the majority of CSOs across the provinces considered the physical environment to be very conducive for women, with the exception of Nangarhar. The existing discrimination against and harassment of women in the workplace is still a concern, and there remain some major obstacles in the inclusion and participation of women in Afghanistan's development.[73]

When asked whether the work of CSOs is impacted by the lack of physical resources, participants in all seven provinces overwhelmingly responded (89%) in the affirmative (Figure 13). The qualitative data provides insight into this issue. For example, a respondent from Badakhshan shared, "without these infrastructures we cannot do anything. These resources give us credibility, and are the source of our identification as they give us an address for beneficiaries and the government."[74] A participant from Nangarhar stated,

> non-availability of infrastructure has a direct impact on our work because CSOs are not considered active when they do not have office. The governor will never invite CSOs who have no office and infrastructure. Donors never accept a proposal when you do not have a proper office and equipment. Therefore, the physical infrastructure is very important.[75]

A CSO member from Bamyan shared, "if we do not have an office, how could the donor and beneficiary trust us that we are working?"[76]

Figure 13: Impact of Lack of Physical Resources



	Kabul	Badakhshan	Nangarhar	Herat	Bamyan	Kandahar	Samangan	Total
Don't know	0.91%	0.00%	0.00%	1.98%	6.38%	0.00%	5.00%	1.42%
Positively	0.61%	0.00%	1.37%	0.99%	2.13%	10.96%	0.00%	1.84%
Neutral	1.52%	4.76%	16.44%	9.90%	2.13%	19.18%	20.00%	7.37%
Negatively	96.97%	95.24%	82.19%	87.13%	89.36%	69.86%	75.00%	89.38%

[72] Focus Group Discussion 1, Bamyan, May 23, 2017
[73] Civil Society of Afghanistan, 2016, Collaborating for Transformation, Position Paper for the Brussels Conference on Afghanistan, 4-5 October 2016, http://anafae.af/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/Afghan-CSO-position-paper-in-the-BCA-27Sep16-endorsed.pdf
[74] Focus Group Discussion 2, Badakhshan, May 29, 2017
[75] Focus Group discussion 2, Nangarhar, June 11, 2017
[76] Focus Group Discussion 2, Bamyan, May 24, 2017

Community Support

Sub-indicator 2.2	Community Support: The extent to which the public supports the work of CSOs	0.85

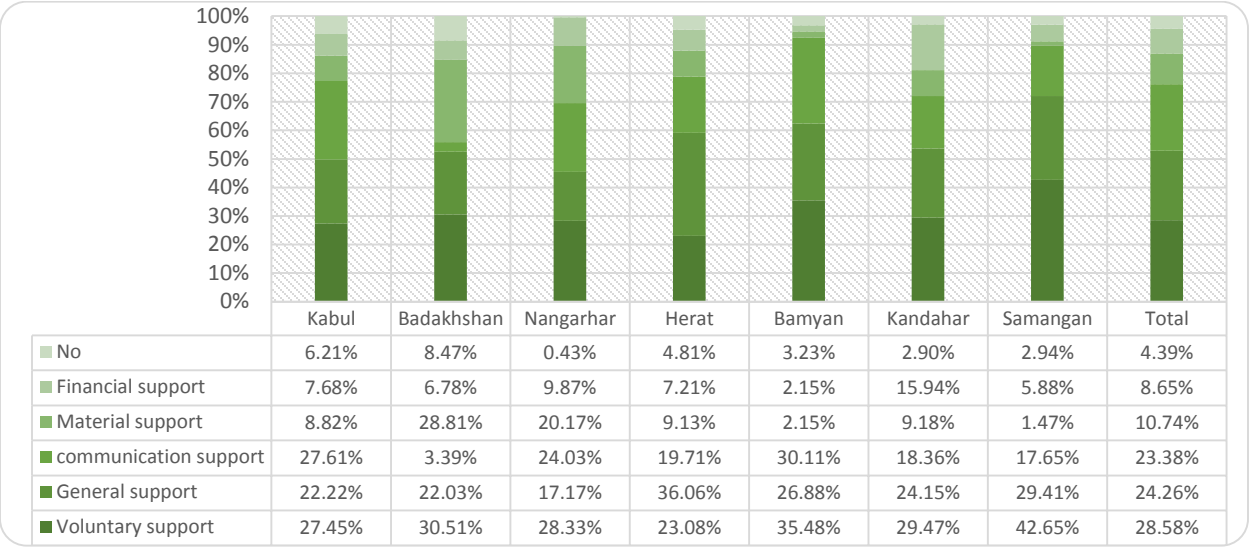
The Afghan public appears to be highly supportive of the work of CSOs, particularly when CSOs proactively work to gain such support. The score 0.85 for the community support indicator is the highest score out of all the indicators in 2017 as it was in 2016. While this score draws principally from CSO self-report, data from beneficiaries also supports this finding. A calculation of data from beneficiaries provided an index score of 0.89 for community support. Qualitative data from both groups also back this up.

A CSO beneficiary from Nangarhar explained, "CSOs are working to help people and they are supported by people for their work. For example, in a program for blind people we helped organization X in translating the sign language. We helped them to raise awareness among people about the rights of people with disabilities in the colleges as well as in the villages."[77] A CSO member from Badakhshan shared, "all our activities are directly or indirectly supported by the people, and without the help of people we cannot implement our projects in the field."[78] Another participant from Kandahar mentioned, "People support our council and they refer to us the difficult issues, and we have enough religious and legal experts to help them."[79] A CSO member from Samangan noted, "we have strong support from the people. They come to our office for help. We share our decisions with them and ask for their opinions as well."[80] A CSO representative from Bamyan shared, "we have strong support of our people and because of them we were able to implement big projects in insecure areas. We involve people in our projects and they feel that these are their own projects and protect them forever."[81]

The forms of community support include: voluntary work, financial support, material support, information sharing, communication, and general appreciation (Figure 14). Of these, voluntary work is the most prevalent (29%), followed by general support (24%) and communication support (23%). This data supports the view that voluntarism has a strong religious and historical base in Afghanistan.[82] Financial support received the lowest score (9%). This could be attributed to poverty as community members are willing but unable to make financial contributions.

[77] Open-ended interview, CSO beneficiary, Nangarhar, May 15, 2017.
[78] Focus Group Discussion 2, Badakhshan, May 29, 2017
[79] Focus Group Discussion 1, Kandahar, June 1, 2017
[80] Focus Group Discussion 1, Samangan, May 20, 2017
[81] Focus Group Discussion 1, Bamyan, May 23, 2017
[82] EU Country roadmap for Engagement with Civil Society in Afghanistan (2015-2017), http://www.iwaweb.org/_docs/reports/research/prt_research_report_final. pdf

Figure 14: Different Form of Community Support to CSOs across the Seven Provinces



	Kabul	Badakhshan	Nangarhar	Herat	Bamyan	Kandahar	Samangan	Total
No	6.21%	8.47%	0.43%	4.81%	3.23%	2.90%	2.94%	4.39%
Financial support	7.68%	6.78%	9.87%	7.21%	2.15%	15.94%	5.88%	8.65%
Material support	8.82%	28.81%	20.17%	9.13%	2.15%	9.18%	1.47%	10.74%
communication support	27.61%	3.39%	24.03%	19.71%	30.11%	18.36%	17.65%	23.38%
General support	22.22%	22.03%	17.17%	36.06%	26.88%	24.15%	29.41%	24.26%
Voluntary support	27.45%	30.51%	28.33%	23.08%	35.48%	29.47%	42.65%	28.58%

The qualitative data shows that not all CSOs have community support, and that support is gained through systematic and continuous CSO efforts. A CSO representative from Nangarhar shared,

> we were conducting surveys and the community was resistant to answering our questions. They wanted to know why we were collecting information and drawing up maps of their villages. They thought we were spies. It took us around six months of constant negotiations and dialogue to make the people understand that we were not involved in spy activities and working for them.[83]

Another participant from Kabul recalled,

> In gaining community support, you have to be very careful and sensitive. For instance, once we had a project in Ghor about capacity building and we started working with youth who were graduates from the Faculty of Law, but this method was not accepted by the people. Therefore, we changed the method and started working with religious scholars and trained them to transfer our message through Friday prayers, wedding and funeral ceremonies and we had wider acceptance.[84]

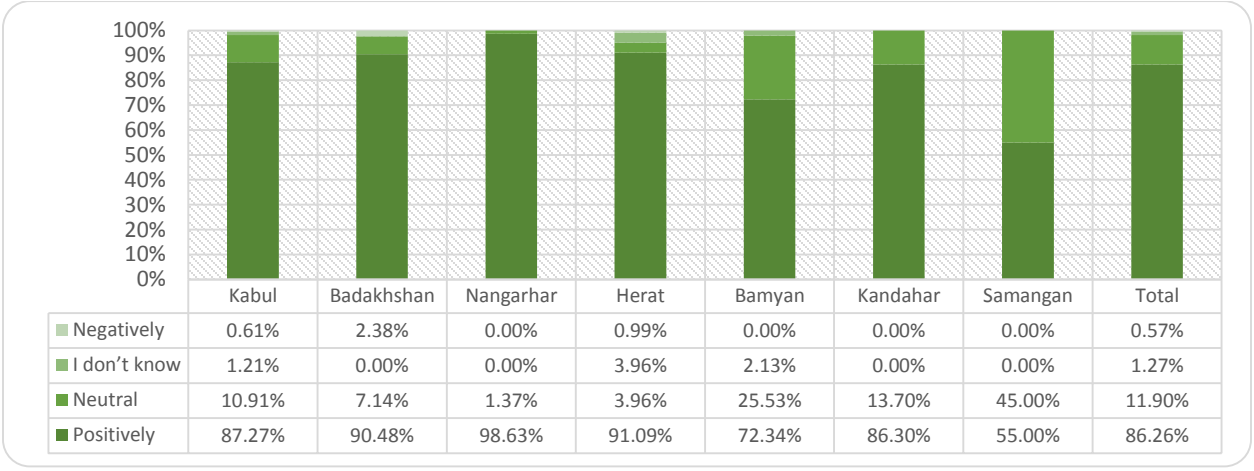
A participant from Herat shared, "when CSOs constantly work with communities on awareness, their minds change and they want to improve. For example, in the past people in Zendajan and Korokh never let their daughters attend school but now they are asking us to build a university for their daughters."[85] A member from Kandahar shared, "if you want strong community support you have to have strong coordination with community leaders. Whenever we want to conduct a project, we contact the community leaders to help us gather and coordinate people. Then, people support us."[86]

[83] Focus Group Discussion 1, Nangarhar, June 10, 2017
[84] Focus Group Discussion 1, Kabul, June 21, 2017
[85] Focus Group Discussion 2, Herat, June 7, 2017
[86] Focus Group Discussion 1, Kandahar, June 1, 2017

Findings from the FGDs show that community support for CSOs differs according to CSO types. This finding is somewhat contrary to the CSOSI study that found, "provincial and district-based CSOs, such as Community Development Councils (CDCs), continue to enjoy more community support than organizations based in Kabul."[87] It was reported that CSOs involved in service delivery activities, providing tangible benefits to communities, get more support than CSOs involved in advocacy and rights-based campaigns or activities. A CSO representative from Herat shared, "if there is any financial benefit people support and participate, otherwise it is very difficult to gain their support."[88] A participant from Samangan noted, "everything is based on the project. If they directly benefit from the project they will support it. In the cases related to the human rights, they always blame and accuse us of being American agents."[89] A CSO member from Nangarhar stated, "people do not support us because we do not have anything particular to provide for them. We have the support of people based on the project. If there is a project we have strong support of our people, if there is no such project, there are no people to support us on women rights, etc."[90]

In general, the majority of CSOs (86%) across the seven provinces perceive that people have positive views about their work (Figure 15). This perception is highest in Nangarhar (99%), Herat (91%), and Badakhshan (90%); and lowest in Samangan (55%).

Figure 15: Community Views of CSO Activities



	Kabul	Badakhshan	Nangarhar	Herat	Bamyan	Kandahar	Samangan	Total
Negatively	0.61%	2.38%	0.00%	0.99%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.57%
I don't know	1.21%	0.00%	0.00%	3.96%	2.13%	0.00%	0.00%	1.27%
Neutral	10.91%	7.14%	1.37%	3.96%	25.53%	13.70%	45.00%	11.90%
Positively	87.27%	90.48%	98.63%	91.09%	72.34%	86.30%	55.00%	86.26%

Data from the FGDs supports the above findings. This perception was reinforced by CSO beneficiaries who shared that CSOs activities are not only well received and supported by the public but also that people go to CSOs, particularly NGOs, to share their issues and seek help. A CSO beneficiary from Badakhshan shared, "Our villagers approached XX organization to help ultra-poor families, X organization opened a sewing center for the female members. Those women are now sewing clothes and getting money."[91] Respondents noted that despite the public's positive regard for CSOs, there are problems in gaining community trust and support. For instance, a participant from Kabul shared, "people have less trust in

[87] 2015 CSO Sustainability Index, Afghanistan https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1866/2015-CSOSI-report-Afghanistan%2009-16-2016--DEC.pdf
[88] Focus Group Discussion 2, Herat, June 7, 2017
[89] Focus Group Discussion 2, Samangan, May 20, 2017
[90] Focus Group Discussion 1, Kandahar, June 1, 2017
[91] Open-ended interview, Beneficiary, Badakhshan, May 17, 2017

CSOs because they are unable to fulfill the needs of people that they have promised, but they did nothing."[92]A participant from Nangarhar stated, "ordinary people have a negative view about CSOs, and they think CSOs are the spies of International Community or foreign embassies."[93] A participant from Samangan shared, "there are sensitivities among the people here about CSOs because they think we represent the agenda of the USA or other countries."[94] Respondents also noted that in some cases communities do not support CSOs because of the threats to their own security or due to opposition from religious groups. A participant from Nangarhar shared, "in some cases, people cannot support us because of their personal safety. There was an issue that occurred in the Khiwa district, where one person forcefully married two sisters. We called for public support against this injustice but no one responded because they did not want to clash with those powerful people." A participant from Kandahar observed, "in some parts the Mullah of the mosque and religious groups oppose our work. For example, they make the people feel ashamed of sending women to hospital for treatment, and therefore people didn't support us." These findings support the research conducted in 2016 that found that there is negative impression held about NGOs who represent Afghan civil society as they are sometimes perceived as actors influenced by foreign cultures, which may explain the resistance of other actors such as traditional and religious leaders to CSOs.[95]

Case Study: When the Community Stands Together

The Purchaman are people from the Farah province, now living in Kandahar. In 2013, they established an organization called the Purchaman National Council (PNC), which is registered with both the Ministry of Frontiers, Nations and Tribal Affairs and the Ministry of Justice.

PNC focuses on education, public awareness, providing public services like ambulances, buying land for graveyards, and engaging in community conflict resolution. They have gained a good social reputation in Kandahar, as people prefer the traditional ways of handling disputes instead of referring problems to the courts and attorneys.

A Human Rights Office employee informed PNC that a girl had fled her home and was asking for assistance. The girl was taken to the PNC, who ascertained that she was being beaten daily by her father. The girl said that she wanted to leave her father's home and settle in another area.

PNC invited the girl's parents and representatives from different tribes to a meeting. After the meeting, it was agreed that the girl return to her father's home but on the condition that he changes his behavior. If he persisted beating her, PNC told him that they would support the girl in filing a case of domestic violence in court.

PNC members accompanied the girl back to her father's house, and they mobilized the local community to monitor and report on the situation. The girl did not believe that her father would change his behavior. The physical violence did stop due to the strong community support of the girl, her family, and the PNC.

There have been several such positive outcomes where the PNC has had strong community support in resolving disputes. The above case illustrates the PNC's positive efforts in a situation that could have had a disastrous outcome.

[92] Focus Group Discussion 2, Kabul, June 21, 2017
[93] Focus Group Discussion 1, Nangarhar, June 11, 2017
[94] Focus Group Discussion 1, Samangan, May 20, 2017
[95] Nemat, O., & Werner, K., 2016, The Role of Civil Society in Promoting Good Governance in Afghanistan, AREU, https://areu.org.af/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/1613-The-Role-of-Civil-Society-in-Promoting-Good-Governance-in-Afghanistan.pdf

Representation

Sub-indicator 2.3	**Representation:** The extent to which CSOs successfully represent communities	**0.53**

CSOs in Afghanistan are overall successful in representing the communities they aim to serve, despite challenges in doing so on issues related to marginalized groups or due to government interference. The index score of 0.53, based on data from CSO self-report, is corroborated by a similar calculation of data from beneficiaries in which the score was 0.66. The qualitative data confirm that CSOs make efforts to represent and involve communities in their decision-making in order to identify and respond to community needs. An FGD participant from Kabul shared, "we try our best to involve the entire community where we want to implement our project. For example, when we go to the rural areas, we approach people from the entire community, young as well old."[96] A beneficiary from Badakhshan said,

> CSOs are the representative of people and they advocate around important issues and attract the government's attention to resolve these issues. For instance, the city bridge was constructed with the help of CSOs and it was based on the needs of every member in the community, and now everyone is benefiting from it. [97]

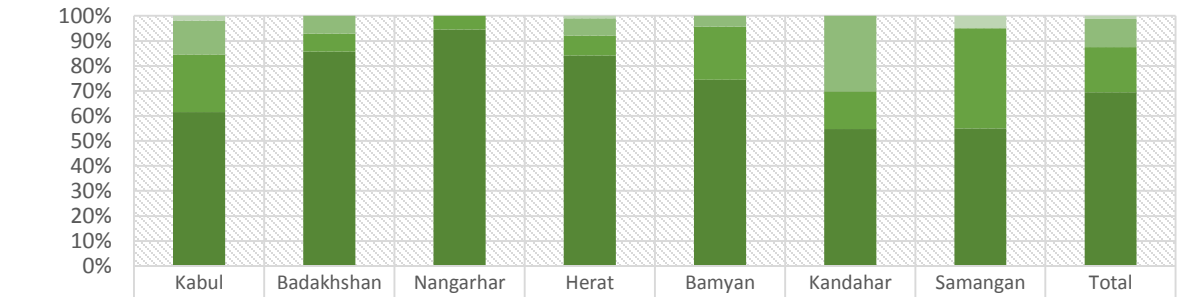
A CSO representative from Bamyan explained,

> in general, we can say that both males and females are our beneficiaries. We sit with people and help identify their problems and to find solutions. We talk to women and take their issues to the Women Affairs Department, or police headquarters. We act as their representative. When we take decisions, we invite the representatives of the people, the head of religious councils and ask for their thoughts about the entire issue.[98]

74% of the CSO beneficiaries stated that CSOs represent their priorities and the needs of their communities. 69% of respondents said that CSOs involve the community in their decision-making processes, with 63% agreeing when it came to women's involvement in decision making.

[96] Focus Group Discussion 1, Kabul, June 19, 2017
[97] Open-ended Interview, CSO beneficiary, Badakhshan, May 29, 2017
[98] Focus Group Discussion 1, Bamyan May 23, 2017

Figure 16: Community Involvement in the Decision-making Process of CSOs across the Provinces



	Kabul	Badakhshan	Nangarhar	Herat	Bamyan	Kandahar	Samangan	Total
Don't know	1.82%	0.00%	0.00%	0.99%	0.00%	0.00%	5.00%	1.27%
No	13.64%	7.14%	0.00%	6.93%	4.26%	30.14%	0.00%	11.19%
Sometimes	23.03%	7.14%	5.48%	7.92%	21.28%	15.07%	40.00%	18.13%
Yes	61.52%	85.71%	94.52%	84.16%	74.47%	54.79%	55.00%	69.41%

The majority of CSOs across the seven provinces involve the community in their decision-making processes (Figure 16). The highest scores are seen in Nangarhar (95%), Badakhshan (86%), and Herat (84%). This finding was corroborated by the CSOs beneficiaries, 59% of whom confirmed their involvement in CSO decision-making processes.

The qualitative data corroborates these findings but at the same time highlights issues such as cultural taboos, political interloping, and donor driven priorities hindering CSOs from being representative. For instance, a CSO participant from Kandahar shared, "here in Kandahar people do not like their female members of the family to be involved in any activity. Even though we have projects for women in agriculture, we work only with males."[99] A participant from Nangarhar said, "though CSOs are created to represent people, in practice there are many that work for some powerful authorities and provide legitimacy to their activities. So, calling them representative is not right."[100] A participant from Kabul noted,

> CSOs are weak because they work on areas donors have prioritized and cannot consider the needs of people. For example, we were working in Balkh province trying to support women in taking decision at the family level. We created groups for women but realized that women first needed education in order to stand on their own feet economically. Then they would be able to participate in the decision-making process at the family, village and district level. But, we had to go with what the donor had given us money for and not the priorities of the people.[101]

These issues are also echoed in a research conducted in 2016, which found that the misuse of civil society positions for personal or group interests and gains, "government-owned" CSOs, donor-oriented objectives, dependency on external funding and the associated competition are several factors that contribute to the lack of legitimacy of civil society organizations affecting their representativeness.[102]

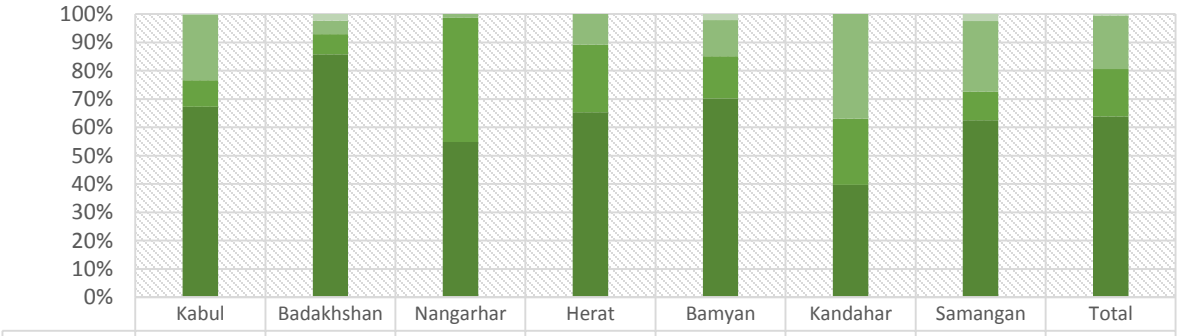
[99] Focus Group Discussion 1, Kandahar, June 1, 2017
[100] Focus Group Discussion 1, Nangarhar, June 10, 2017
[101] Focus Group Discussion 2, Kabul, June 21, 2017
[102] Nemat, O., & Werner, K., 2016, The Role of Civil Society in Promoting Good Governance in Afghanistan, AREU, p. 25, https://areu.org.af/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/1613-The-Role-of-Civil-Society-in-Promoting-Good-Governance-in-Afghanistan.pdf

Professionalization

Sub-indicator 2.4	Professionalization of the sector: The extent to which CSOs are independent and professional organizations	0.36

The independence and professionalism of CSOs is overall supportive of the work of the sector. However, the index score for professionalization of 0.36 placed it just inside the supportive block and studies confirm that CSOs in Afghanistan are confronted with vast capacity gaps,[103] lack of technical expertise,[104] and a wide-spread lack of professionalism.[105] Sixty-four percent of the CSOs in Afghanistan require external technical support to complete their regular tasks (Figure 17). The provinces most requiring external technical support are Badakhshan (85%), Bamyan (70%), and Kabul (67%). The lowest score was in Kandahar (40%).

Figure 17: CSOs Require Technical Assistance from Outside to Complete Regular Tasks



	Kabul	Badakhshan	Nangarhar	Herat	Bamyan	Kandahar	Samangan	Total
Don't know	0.30%	2.38%	0.00%	0.00%	2.13%	0.00%	2.50%	0.57%
Sometimes	23.03%	4.76%	1.37%	10.89%	12.77%	36.99%	25.00%	18.84%
No	9.39%	7.14%	43.84%	23.76%	14.89%	23.29%	10.00%	16.71%
Yes	67.27%	85.71%	54.79%	65.35%	70.21%	39.73%	62.50%	63.88%

Findings from the FGDs suggest that CSOs have a number of capacity gaps in the areas of human resources, financial management, systems development, resource mobilization, and monitoring and evaluation. The EU roadmap for civil society engagement in Afghanistan also highlights that CSOs identify these areas to be their capacity priorities[106]. According to participants, some of the factors contributing to these capacity gaps include: formal civil society organization as a relatively new phenomenon, lack of institutional systems, high staff turn-over, nepotism, no core funding for staff capacity, and ever-changing disciplinary knowledge. A CSO representative from Badakhshan shared, "having formal civil society organizations is a new concept in Afghanistan. Previously CSOs used to work traditionally and voluntarily without any proper

[103] Counterpart International, Afghanistan Civic Engagement Program, http://counterpart-afg.org/About/Ourwork.aspx
[104] Civil Society input into the Brussels Conference on Afghanistan, http://www.acbar.org/upload/1481106669662.pdf
[105] Panorama of Civil Society Organizations in Afghanistan, http://www.acbar.org/upload/1471243125467.pdf
[106] EU roadmap for EU Country roadmap for Engagement with Civil Society in Afghanistan (2015-2017), http://www.iwaweb.org/_docs/reports/research/prt_research_report_final. pdf

offices, employees etc. They need more time to be professional and have systems in place."[107] A participant from Samangan noted, "CSOs with steering bodies, proper office, staff, strategy etc. are new concepts. Though we have improved we are still struggling with these things and we will take perhaps two to three more years to become professional."[108]

A key informant noted that the professionalism of CSOs in Afghanistan depends on individual rather than institutional systems. She explained, "when CSOs have able and active executives they flourish, but the moment the person leaves the organization, the organization either collapses or becomes a stagnant entity."[109] This view was confirmed by many CSO representative participating in the FGDs. A CSO member from Kabul mentioned, "there are many examples of CSOs collapsing after the individuals who were running them left. When the leader leaves the CSO collapses."[110] These issues place much responsibility on the leaders, as well as other stakeholders, to put institutional systems and strategies in place so that the organization has a better chance of remaining stable and able to grow once a senior manager leaves the organization.

In discussion about high staff turnover and its effect on CSO capacity and professionalism, a CSO representative from Herat observed, "when the CSOs train their employees and they become professional, they move to international NGOs on higher salaries. CSOs cannot pay the high salaries because their budget is less. They keep only a few employees and each of them is doing several tasks. That is why we cannot keep the professional staff."[111] A participant from Kandahar shared, "CSOs lose their staff almost every day. Staff come work, gain experience and then go to another organization who pays them a higher salary."[112] According to participants, high staff turnover in CSOs affects project planning and implementation, and limits the CSO's ability achieve their deliverables.

FGD findings revealed that nepotism also contributes to a lack of professionalism. Several examples were shared where the executive or senior management favor relatives and friends in staff recruitment. A CSO representative in Herat shared, "in organization X, when Y became the manager, he hired all his relatives and friends in positions. These people are not qualified and they are unable to do the job, therefore the entire organization is suffering from less professionalism."[113] It was also noted that donors and government authorities also pressurize CSOs to hire people they have identified, which again contributes to the lack of organizational professionalism. A CSO representative from Nangarhar shared, "government authorities introduce their relatives to us, and we are obligated to hire them, or they will not let our work proceed. But these people are always unprofessional."[114] The dominance of patronage-based political relations among civil society, who rely on people who are not recruited on the basis of their qualifications or local knowledge for implementation of their projects and programmes is a major challenge not only in terms of professionalism but also in terms of accountability.[115]

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[107] Focus Group Discussion 1, Badakhshan, May 28, 2017
[108] Focus Group Discussion 2, Samangan, May 20, 2017
[109] Key Informant Interview 1, July 6, 2017
[110] Focus Group Discussion 1, Kabul, June 19, 2017
[111] Focus Group Discussion 2, Herat, June 7, 2017
[112] Focus Group Discussion 2, Kandahar, June 1, 2017
[113] Focus Group Discussion 1, Herat, June 6, 2017
[114] Focus Group Discussion 1, Nangarhar, June 10, 2017
[115] Nemat, O., & Werner, K., 2016, The Role of Civil Society in Promoting Good Governance in Afghanistan, AREU, p.25, https://areu.org.af/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/1613-The-Role-of-Civil-Society-in-Promoting-Good-Governance-in-Afghanistan.pdf

Findings showed that one of the reasons for the lack of CSO professionalism is the absence of a strategic focus. Participants said that CSOs follow ever-changing donor strategies and requirements, which is a constraint on becoming an independent and professional entity. A respondent from Herat shared, "CSO work is based on projects, and if there is a project on health, they start that and then if there is another project on agriculture, they start that, and so on. They are not able to do quality work. They need to have a strategic focus and work accordingly."[116] A CSO activist from Bamyan shared, "I have one suggestion for CSOs, if they want to work more professionally, they should select only one field. For instance, if they want to work in education, they should focus only on education."[117] Participants also noted that due to the absence of a strategic focus, CSOs cannot establish core funding, which hampers their staff capacity building. A CSO representative from Kabul shared, "national NGOs do not have core funds to improve the capacity of their staff, as they are working on the basis of the projects than their own programmatic areas. Thus, they can neither invest in their staff capacity nor retain them."[118]

CSO representatives from all the seven provinces acknowledged that they and their staff have received training, which has resulted in personal and organizational improvements. However, participants stated that there is a need for more training, particularly in the areas of financial systems, resource mobilization, proposal writing, policy development, and monitoring and evaluation. They stated that these training needs were intensified by high staff turnover, and the constant advancement in knowledge. A CSO representative from Herat shared, "most of them have received enough training, but as the systems have been updated, they also need to upgrade their systems and need the training of new and updated issues."[119] A CSO representative from Kabul stated, "when the CSOs train their employees they move to international NGOs on higher salaries and we hire new staff and need training for them again."[120]

Advocacy

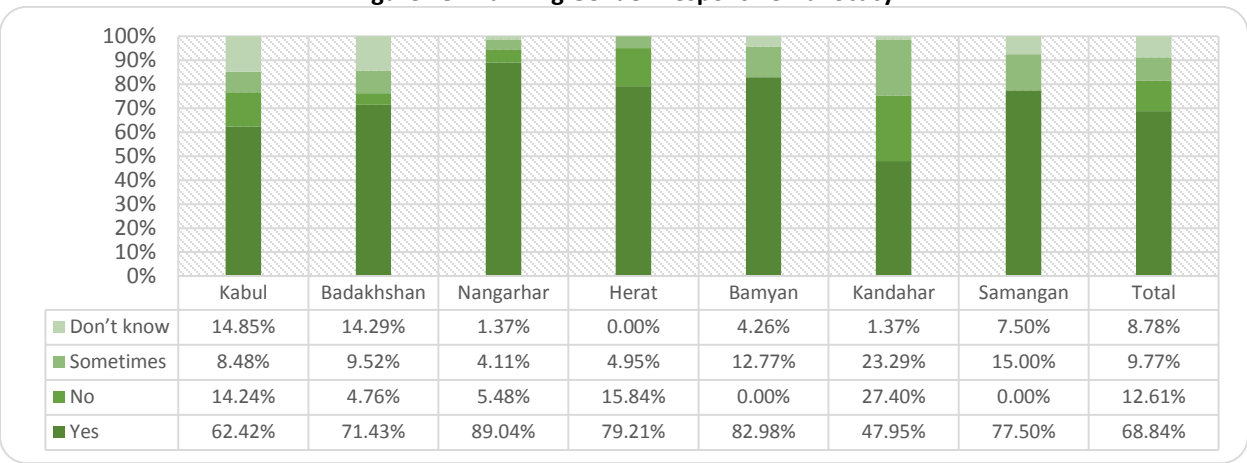
Sub-indicator 2.5	**Level of advocacy:** The extent to which CSOs successfully influence the government at national and local levels	**0.63**

The index score for advocacy is 0.63, indicating that CSOs are successful in influencing the government at the national and local levels. This score highlights the importance of advocacy for CSOs. A CSO representative from Nangarhar shared, "the real definition of the civil societies is that they are working as a bridge between government and people; they have been established for advocacy and this is their main duty."[121] Quantitative data suggests that the majority of CSOs (76%) play an active role in setting the agenda to deal with significant issues. Similarly, data shows that majority (77%) of CSOs dedicate sufficient time for advocacy activities. In looking at the planning of gender responsive advocacy, the overall score is 69% (Figure 18). The highest scores are Nangarhar (89%), Bamyan (83%), Herat (79%), and Samangan (78%). The lowest score was Kandahar (48%). In looking at who was not aware of planning for gender

[116] Focus Group Discussion 2, Herat, June 7, 2017
[117] Focus Group Discussion 2, Bamyan, May 24, 2017
[118] Focus Group Discussion 1, Kabul, June 19, 2017
[119] Focus Group Discussion 1, Herat, June 6, 2017
[120] Focus Group Discussion 1, Kabul, June 19, 2017
[121] Focus Group Discussion 1, Nangarhar, June 10, 2017

sensitive advocacy, the provinces where most respondents were unaware are Kabul (15%) and Badakhshan (14%). The provinces most aware are Herat (0%), and Kandahar and Nangarhar (both 1%).

Figure 18: Planning Gender Responsive Advocacy

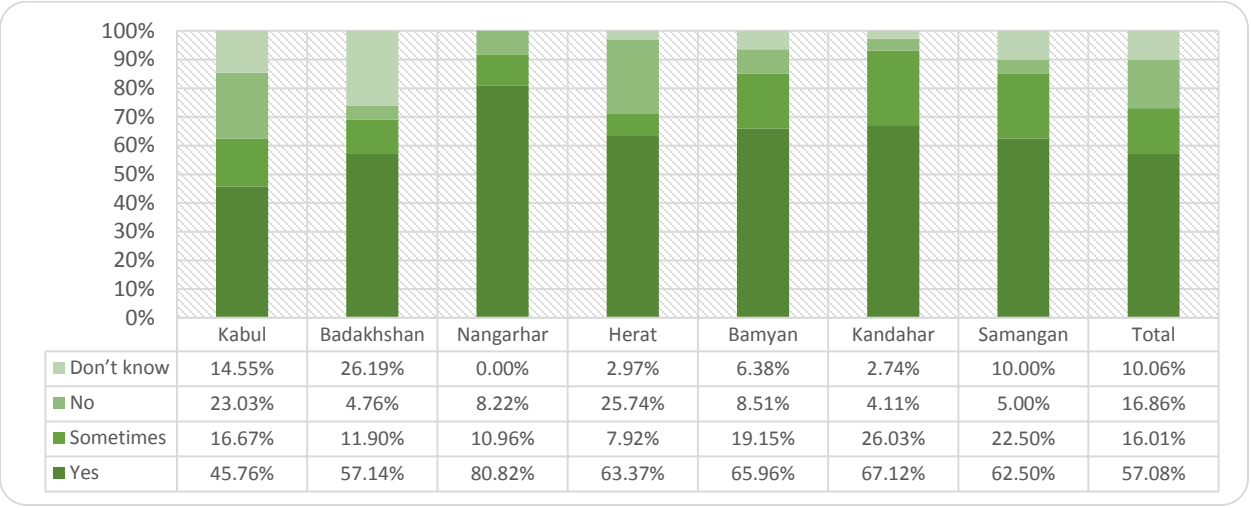


	Kabul	Badakhshan	Nangarhar	Herat	Bamyan	Kandahar	Samangan	Total
Don't know	14.85%	14.29%	1.37%	0.00%	4.26%	1.37%	7.50%	8.78%
Sometimes	8.48%	9.52%	4.11%	4.95%	12.77%	23.29%	15.00%	9.77%
No	14.24%	4.76%	5.48%	15.84%	0.00%	27.40%	0.00%	12.61%
Yes	62.42%	71.43%	89.04%	79.21%	82.98%	47.95%	77.50%	68.84%

The qualitative data highlighted the wide spectrum of CSO advocacy issues, which include: human rights, violence against women, a drugs free society, peace for all, corruption, rights to information, child rights, health and hygiene, political reform, unemployment, rehabilitation of returnees, and forced marriages. Advocacy results vary, and respondents provided more examples of success than failure. For instance, a group of CSOs in Herat advocated for integration of internally displaced people (IDPs), and were able to influence the government and donors to establish a school and a clinic in the Maslakh camp for IDPs. Similarly, CSOs in the Dand district in Kandahar advocated for the release of people who had been wrongly imprisoned. These actions resulted in the dismissal of the prison director, and several prisoners were found innocent in court and subsequently released from prison. A CSO in Bamyan advocated for basic facilities in the Shiber valley, and a link road and a health clinic were constructed. Some examples of failures shared were the following. CSOs in Samangan advocated for the construction of ditches inside Aibak city, but, because of an inappropriate tendering process, the ditches were not properly built. In Badakhshan, CSOs advocated for all orphan children to have access to the orphan house supported by Ministry of Social Affairs, but there has been little progress as the orphan house admits only those children introduced by a parliamentarian.

The overall score for the dissemination of advocacy results is 57% (Figure 19). Nangarhar had the highest score (81%), while Kabul had the lowest score (23%). In assessing who did not know if there had been dissemination of advocacy results, Nangarhar also scored highest (0%), followed by Herat and Kandahar (both 3%). Badakhshan had the lowest score of 26%.

Figure 19: Dissemination of Advocacy Results



	Kabul	Badakhshan	Nangarhar	Herat	Bamyan	Kandahar	Samangan	Total
Don't know	14.55%	26.19%	0.00%	2.97%	6.38%	2.74%	10.00%	10.06%
No	23.03%	4.76%	8.22%	25.74%	8.51%	4.11%	5.00%	16.86%
Sometimes	16.67%	11.90%	10.96%	7.92%	19.15%	26.03%	22.50%	16.01%
Yes	45.76%	57.14%	80.82%	63.37%	65.96%	67.12%	62.50%	57.08%

The qualitative data highlighted some of the issues that CSOs face when involved in advocacy activities. Some of these issues include: lack of support from the government, reactive advocacy rather than proactive advocacy, and the lack of adequate advocacy budgets. In discussing government's support for advocacy, a CSO member from Nangarhar shared, "we are working for peace and to give more credibility to our advocacy we offered honorary membership to a representative in the Peace Higher Commission but our offer was refused."[122] A CSO representative from Badakhshan stated, "we contacted the Ministry of Anti-narcotics and briefed him about our advocacy activities on the rehabilitation of drug addicts. We asked them to help us in this regard, but he immediately, said: we cannot do anything to help."[123] A CSO representative from Kabul noted, "we conducted research on sexual harassment in education institutions but government and security organizations did not allow us to publish that report."[124]

Findings show that most CSO advocacy activities are reactive rather than proactive. For instance, a respondent stated, "advocacy in Afghanistan is reactive rather than well thought through."[125] He went on to explain, "CSOs wait for an issue to occur and then they advocate to resolve that issue and once that issue is resolved there is no follow-up per se. A more sustained approach that would help CSOs in their advocacy work could be that they advocate to prevent a problem before it occurs." A CSO representative from Bamyan commented,

> the problem is that our advocacies are event focused. For instance, when a school refused to admit a disabled child we gathered. We were successful in getting this child back to school but then this did not change the admission policy. The best way would have been setting a clear vision, studying the ground realities and then lobbying for changing the education policy.[126]

The issue of reactive modes of advocacy is also highlighted by a research conducted in 2016, which suggests that, "CSO advocacy needs to move beyond the reactive mode with its condemnation or protest

[122] Focus Group Discussion 2, Nangarhar, June 10, 2017
[123] Focus Group Discussion 1, Badakhshan, May 28, 2017
[124] Focus Group Discussion 1, Kabul, June 19, 2017
[125] Key informant interview 3, July 12, 2017
[126] Focus Group Discussion 2, Bamyan, May 24, 2017

of any event or case of human rights violation. The strategy of civil society advocacy should be updated, while timely and strong emphasis must be added to the follow-up part of what is decided in a meeting, public gathering, or speech by a senior government official."[127]

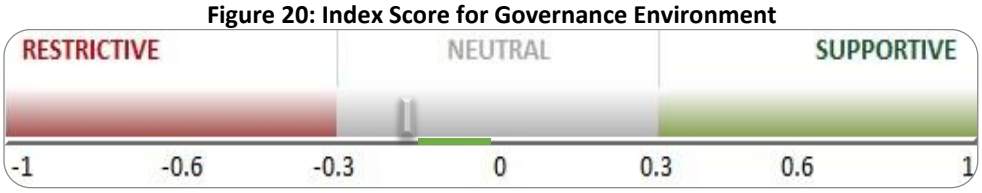
Data suggests that CSOs face financial constraints for advocacy activities. A CSO representative from Herat shared, "as much as we want to advocate we cannot because we do not have funds for advocacy and donors do not give funds for advocacy."[128] A CSO member from Kabul said, "it is related to the financial situation of a CSO. If you have enough of a budget to gather people, feed them, provide transportation, etc., they will participate, but otherwise it is very difficult to gather people for advocacy."[129]

GOVERNANCE ENVIRONMENT

The enabling environment for CSOs is affected by the relationship of CSOs with the government (including local authorities), the donor community, and other CSOs. Their work can be challenged by issues such as corruption, a lack of transparency, and a lack of government facilitation. Their work is also shaped by service delivery shortcomings and needs. Existing relationships and coordination activities between and amongst other CSOs may also have an impact. The five sub-categories that fall within this area are: (1) service provision, (2) coordination, (3) corruption, (4) transparency, and (5) facilitation.

The governance environment for CSOs is neutral but tending towards restrictive, suggesting that the governance environment in Afghanistan is not conducive to the work of CSOs. The overall index score for the governance environment is -0.15 (Figure 20). Two of the five governance sub-categories contribute to a restrictive environment for CSOs: lack of government transparency in its dealings with CSOs earned "transparency" an index score of -0.4 and the negative effect of corruption on CSOs' ability to work merited a -0.39 index score for "corruption." The environment for CSO involvement in service provision is neutral, tending towards restrictive as is the state's facilitation and promotion of CSOs' work. This is reflected in scores for service delivery of -0.22 and facilitation of -0.09. The coordinate and collaboration of CSOs with government was a supportive bright spot of the governance environment, with an index score for coordination of 0.33.

Figure 20: Index Score for Governance Environment



As in 2016, governance is the least supportive component of the environment for CSOs in Afghanistan out of the five components considered. In fact in 2017, the governance environment has worsened somewhat compared to 2016, with an overall .32 drop in index score from 0.17 in 2016 (Table 5). This is evident by apparent drops in supportiveness within all governance sub-categories. Facilitation went from being a supportive component of the environment in 2016 to a neutral one, dropping 0.6 points in its index score.

[127] Nemat, O., & Werner, K., 2016, The Role of Civil Society in Promoting Good Governance in Afghanistan, AREU, p.25, https://areu.org.af/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/1613-The-Role-of-Civil-Society-in-Promoting-Good-Governance-in-Afghanistan.pdf
[128] Focus Group Discussion 2, Herat, June 7, 2017
[129] Focus Group Discussion 1, Kabul, June 19, 2017

Coordination was a highly supportive component of the environment in 2016 and is only slightly supportive in 2017, dropping 0.4 in its index score, transparency (0.3), corruption (0.27), and service delivery (0.1).

Table 5: Scores on Governance Environment (2016 and 2017)

Indicator 3	**The extent to which the governance environment (the application of law and use of authority) is conducive to the work of CSOs**	**2016 0.17**	**2017 -0.15**
Sub-indicator 3.1	**Service provision:** The extent to which the environment is supportive for CSO involvement in service provision	- 0.12	**-0.22**
Sub-indicator 3.2	**Coordination:** The extent to which CSOs collaborate with the government in order to achieve their mission	0.73	**0.33**
Sub-indicator 3.3	**Corruption (real/perceived):** The extent to which CSOs are able to work without being negatively affected by corruption	- 0.12	**-0.39**
Sub-indicator 3.4	**Transparency:** The extent to which the government is transparent in its dealings with CSOs	- 0.1	**-0.4**
Sub-indicator 3.5	**Facilitation:** The extent to which the state facilitates and promotes the work of CSOs	0.51	**-0.09**

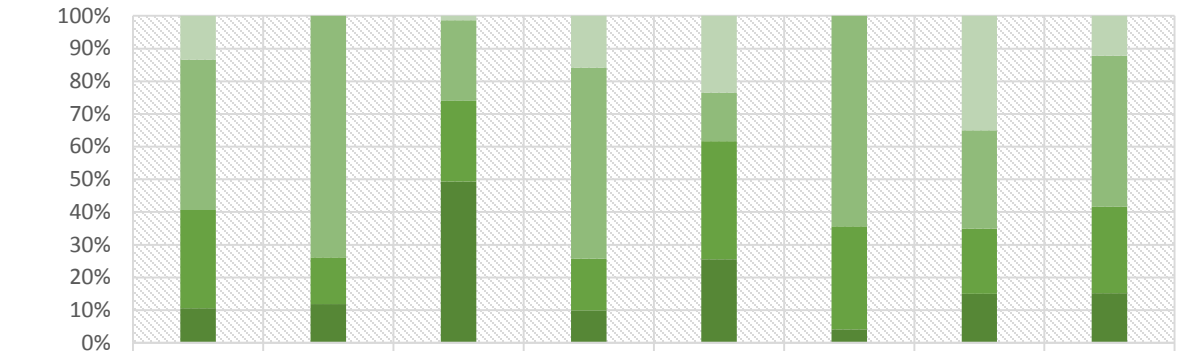
The sections below discuss the sub-categories of the governance environment in more detail.

Service Provision

Sub-indicator 3.1	**Service provision:** The extent to which the environment is supportive for CSO involvement in service provision	**- 0.22**

While the Afghan environment does not entirely restrict CSO involvement in service provision, it does not support it either. The index score of -0.22 is neutral but tending towards restrictive. When asked whether government outsources their service delivery projects to CSOs, only 15% of the respondents agreed, 27 % said sometimes, and 46% said no (Figure 21). If that 15% is further broken down, it is noted that Nagarhar scored 49% and Bamyan 26%, with the remaining six provinces scoring significantly lower between the range of 1% (Kandahar) and 15% (Samangan). Of the 46% who said no, the three highest scores were in Badakhshan (74%), Kandahar (64%) and Herat (58%). Just over one third of respondents (35%) in Samangan did not know if government outsourced service delivery projects to CSOs.

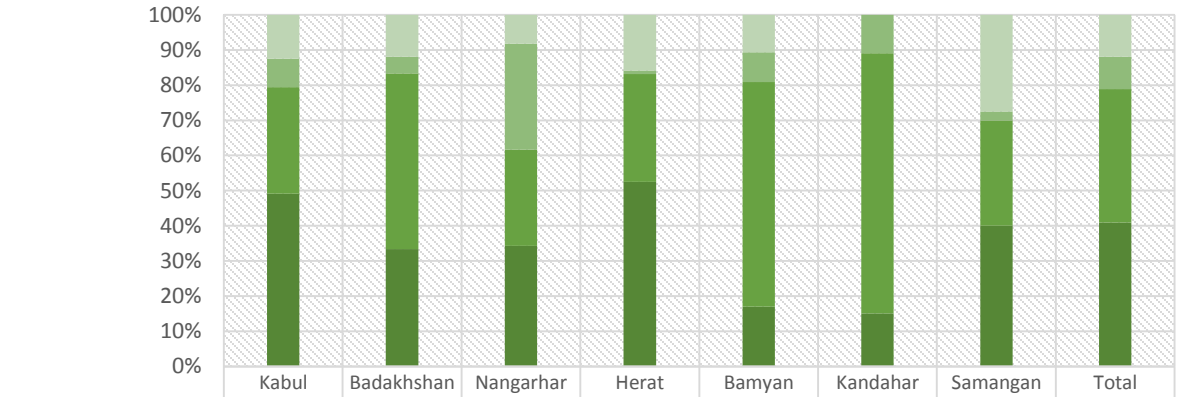
Figure 21: Government Outsourcing Service Delivery Projects to CSOs



	Kabul	Badakhshan	Nangarhar	Herat	Bamyan	Kandahar	Samangan	Total
Don't know	13.33%	0.00%	1.37%	15.84%	23.40%	0.00%	35.00%	12.18%
No	46.06%	73.81%	24.66%	58.42%	14.89%	64.38%	30.00%	46.18%
Sometimes	30.00%	14.29%	24.66%	15.84%	36.17%	31.51%	20.00%	26.49%
Yes	10.61%	11.90%	49.32%	9.90%	25.53%	4.11%	15.00%	15.16%

A small number of the survey respondents (9%) stated that the national and local governments are very transparent (Figure 22). The highest score for transparency was Nangarhar (30%). The highest scores for answering 'not transparent at all' were Herat (53%), Kabul (49%) and Samangan (40%).

Figure 22: Government Transparency in Contracting CSOs for Service Delivery Projects



	Kabul	Badakhshan	Nangarhar	Herat	Bamyan	Kandahar	Samangan	Total
Don't know	12.42%	11.90%	8.22%	15.84%	10.64%	0.00%	27.50%	11.90%
Very Transparent	8.18%	4.76%	30.14%	0.99%	8.51%	10.96%	2.50%	9.21%
Less transparent	30.30%	50.00%	27.40%	30.69%	63.83%	73.97%	30.00%	37.96%
Not transparent at all	49.09%	33.33%	34.25%	52.48%	17.02%	15.07%	40.00%	40.93%

Findings from the FGDs suggests that CSOs in Afghanistan play a major part in the provision of service delivery in areas like health, education, livelihood, water and sanitation, and capacity building. This is in line with UNAMA's Civil Society mapping that revealed that service delivery especially in education and agriculture sectors seems to be the main focus areas of civil society organizations.[130] FGD participants stated that involvement in service provision stems from the lack of government legitimacy and capacity

[130] Affairs Unit, Mapping of the Afghan Civil Society Partners, September 2014.

to deliver basic services. A CSO representative from Bamyan explained, "it is the primary responsibility of the state to provide basic services to its people but since the government fails to do so because of a lot of issues like capacity, sincerity, and different political interests, CSOs have to step in and deliver services."[131] The civil society input into the Brussels conference on Afghanistan insists that CSOs, "have have played an essential role in service delivery and should be resourced to continue doing so until the government is able to fully take over these responsibilities."[132]

CSOs noted that even though they provide service delivery, they are faced with numerous challenges, especially in terms of capacity and quality. A CSO representative from Kabul shared, "CSOs do not get contracts that often because they do not have the capacity to fulfil the needs of the government and the donors."[133] Another participant from Badakhshan stated, "CSOs can only do service provision when there is a small-scale project but when there is large scale project CSOs do not have the capacity."[134] Another observation was that CSOs who get into a particular sector only because of funding often provide services of a lower quality. A key informant mentioned, "when you work in areas in which you do not have the expertise and experience, but you do it only because there is funding available, then you will not be able to do quality work."[135] A CSO member from Nangarhar noted, "we were working in the health sector but currently we started working in education. This is new and we are trying to maintain good quality but you know when you have no experienced people it becomes difficult. But this is what our donors demand."[136] These issues portray the interplay between different factors such as professionalism (indicator 2.4), financial dependence (indicator 4.2) that affects CSOs in effectively performing their roles.

Coordination

Sub-indicator 3.2	Coordination	
	The extent to which CSOs collaborate with CSOs and the government in order to achieve their mission	0.33

The coordination index score of 0.33, the highest amongst all the five sub-indicators within governance, suggests that, to some extent, CSOs do collaborate with other CSOs and the government to achieve their mission. The qualitative data indicated that while there is some coordination between CSOs, it is generally weak and imposed by coordinating bodies and donors. A CSO member from Kabul shared, "coordination among the CSOs is not so easy, as there are different clusters and coordination bodies to bring CSOs together. But the clusters are made by the donors, and if the donor leaves this process, the CSOs will not continue such a process, and it means there is still somehow problems in coordination among the CSOs."[137] Many respondents stated that CSOs are divided, dispersed, and prefer to work separately. A CSO representative from Herat shared,

> the main problem is that CSOs do not want to see eye to eye with each other. It may be because CSOs are established by different people with different objectives; some of them follow political

[131] Focus Group Discussion 2, Bamyan, May 24, 2017
[132] Civil Society input into the Brussels Conference on Afghanistan, http://www.acbar.org/upload/1481106669662.pdf
[133] Focus Group Discussion 1, Kabul, June 19, 2017
[134] Focus Group Discussion 2, Badakhshan, May 29, 2017
[135] Key Informant Interview 1, Kabul, July 5, 2017
[136] Focus Group Discussion 1, Nangarhar, June 10, 2017
[137] Focus Group Discussion 2, Kabul, June 21, 2017

> issues and work in politics; others work for the benefit of rich and influential people and are supported by such kind of people; others are only established to get funding. The thing is that they do not want to work together.[138]

CSO activists remarked that this, "diminishes the impact of their work on social change and development."[139]

The qualitative data highlighted the coordinating body and donor efforts to strengthen coordination between CSOs. A CSO member from Kabul shared, "donors have established lots of clusters and shelters for different areas such as education, healthcare and agriculture, and they have monthly meetings and gatherings among the CSOs."[140] A participant from Nangarhar said, "there are three main organizations which hold the CBC meeting once a month: ACBAR, PDC and the Department of Economics."[141] A participant from Bamyan noted, "UNAMA, ACBAR, AWN and others make bridges between their member CSOs and conduct meetings once a month to discuss related issues, monitor the work and policies of all the member organizations, and take decisions for the future."[142] These efforts, according to CSO representatives, are helpful in bringing CSOs together to discuss existing issues, share experiences and lessons, as well as to capitalize on the existing capacities within these organizations. A CSO representative from Samangan shared, "we meet and discuss important issues which regularly appear in the community and across the organizations."[143] A representative from Kandahar said, "these are opportunities to learn from each other's experiences."[144] A participant from Kabul shared,

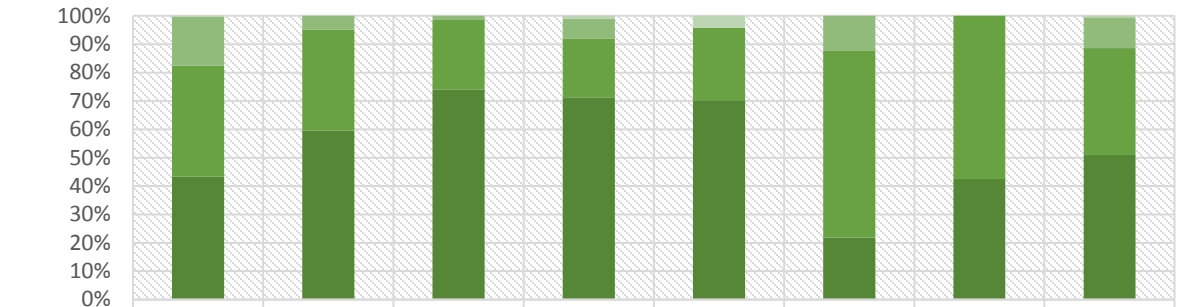
> having clusters and shelters is very useful. For example, in Daykundi province, whenever, we are faced with a problem, for example, not having a construction item, we borrow the item from another CSO and repay them. If we need technical assistance, we ask an engineer from another CSO to advise and lead us.[145]

These views echo the observations presented in the EU roadmap for engagement with CSOs in Afghanistan sating that structures like networks and joint mechanisms have helped CSOs to work together and given them a stronger role in terms of advocacy, lobby and monitoring.[146]

In looking at the coordination between CSOs and government, CSOs were asked if they engage in dialogue with government authorities. 51% of the respondents stated that they 'always' engage in dialogue with government authorities, 38% said 'sometimes,' and 11% said 'not at all' (Figure 23).) Engagement was highest in Nangarhar (74%), Herat (71%) and Bamyan (70%), and lowest in Kandahar (22%).

[138] Focus Group Discussion 2, Herat, June 7, 2017
[139] Key Informant Interview 3, July 10, 2017
[140] Focus Group Discussion 1, Kabul, June 19, 2017
[141] Focus Group Discussion 1, Nangarhar June 10, 2017
[142] Focus Group Discussion 2, Bamyan, May 24, 2017.
[143] Focus Group Discussion 1, Samangan May 20, 2017
[144] Focus Group Discussion 2, Kandahar, June 1, 2017
[145] Focus Group Discussion 1 Kabul, June 19, 2017.
[146] Afghanistan EU Country Roadmap on Engagement of Civil Society-2015-2017, https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/eeas/files/2015-9-6_-_eu_roadmap_for_engagement_with_civil_society_in_afghanistan_-_final.pdf

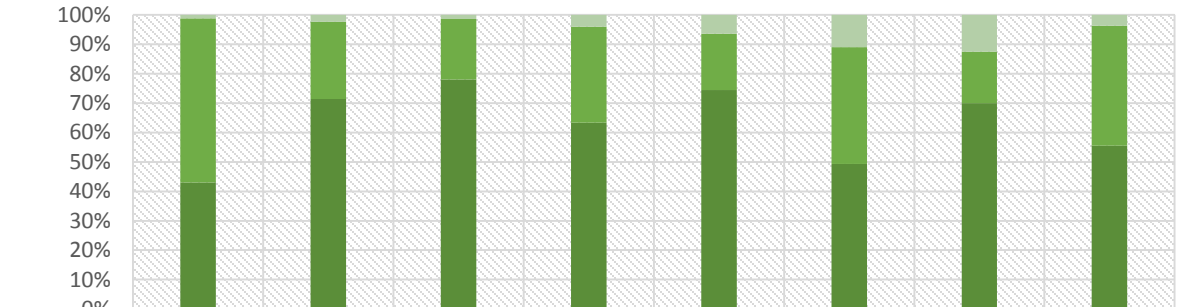
Figure 23: CSO Engagement in Dialogue with Government Authorities



	Kabul	Badakhshan	Nangarhar	Herat	Bamyan	Kandahar	Samangan	Total
Don't know	0.30%	0.00%	0.00%	0.99%	4.26%	0.00%	0.00%	0.57%
Not at all	17.27%	4.76%	1.37%	6.93%	0.00%	12.33%	0.00%	10.76%
sometimes	39.09%	35.71%	24.66%	20.79%	25.53%	65.75%	57.50%	37.68%
Yes, always	43.33%	59.52%	73.97%	71.29%	70.21%	21.92%	42.50%	50.99%

When asked if they are satisfied with the relationship they have with the government, 56% of the respondents said 'yes,' and 41% said 'no' (Figure 24). CSO satisfaction is highest in Nangarhar (78%), Bamyan (74%), Badakhshan (71%) and Samangan (70%), and lowest in Kabul (56%).

Figure 24: Satisfaction Level regarding CSOs Relationship with Government



	Kabul	Badakhshan	Nangarhar	Herat	Bamyan	Kandahar	Samangan	Total
Don't know	1.21%	2.38%	1.37%	3.96%	6.38%	10.96%	12.50%	3.68%
No	55.76%	26.19%	20.55%	32.67%	19.15%	39.73%	17.50%	40.79%
Yes	43.03%	71.43%	78.08%	63.37%	74.47%	49.32%	70.00%	55.52%

The qualitative data revealed that there is some level of coordination between CSOs and the government authorities across the seven provinces. For instance, a CSO representative from Herat stated, "we have relationships with local government, as we are working in three different fields, capacity building, peace building and solving disputes, which is mostly related to the provincial government and district level government."[147] Data also indicates that the nature of coordination at the district levels and provincial centers differs. For instance, a participant from Bamyan shared,

> our coordination with government at the district level such as Shibar and Yakowlang is formal. We send them letters through the provincial government, but here in the provincial center, we meet

[147] Focus Group Discussion 1, Herat, June 6, 2017

> them in person, like we meet the police, the Justice Department, Women Affairs, Public Health, Social Affair, Education, etc.[148]

Reasons cited for this include structural hierarchies and the different bureaucratic authorities delegated to provincial and district centers.

FGD data highlighted the difficulties and challenges that CSOs face regarding coordination with government authorities. These challenges include having strong reference points in government, and government-supported CSOs. A CSOs from Herat shared, "if we have a relationship with authorities, we can easily meet them and coordinate, but if you know no-one in the government, coordination will not happen."[149] A participant from Kandahar agreed, "we do not have problems in coordination with government because our chair has very good relations with authorities."[150] Some respondents pointed out that the CSOs created by government have a much stronger coordinating relationship with government compared with other CSOs. A participant from Kabul shared,

> there are two different CSOs, those who are established by parliament members who have a good relationship with the government because they are 'government owned' CSOs. Then there are the rest of the CSOs who do not have any links with government and parliament members, and for them the relationship with government is not easy."[151]

Another respondent agreed,

> there are two networks in the provinces; one is the actual civil society network and the other is a pseudo civil society network, which are pro-government. These networks are supported by the central government at the expense of the actual civil society organizations who are the real representatives of the community.[152]

These findings indicated the lack of a proper mechanism to create a positive coordination or relationship between CSOs and the government. Coordination between CSOs and government seems to be symbolic and ad hoc, rather than meaningful and systematic.[153] Coordination with government is not only determined by political patronage, as identified above, but the lengthy processes, interference in projects (particularly the budget), bureaucracy, corruption and traditional and cultural differences as shown by the civil society organization sustainability index.[154]

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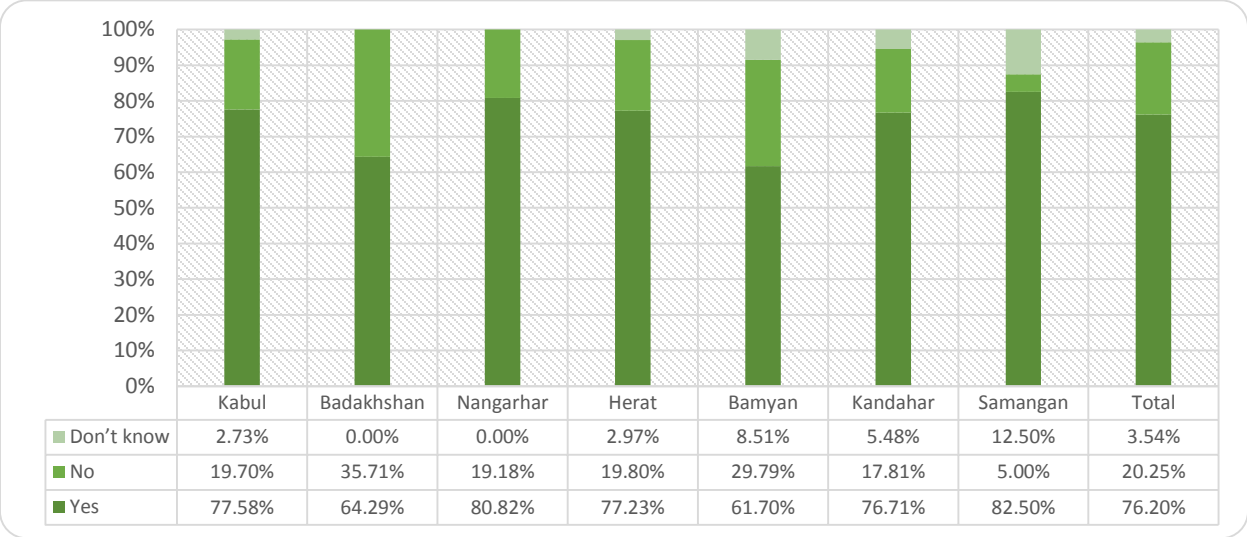
[148] Focus Group Discussion 2, Bamyan, May 24, 2017
[149] Focus Group Discussion 1, Herat, June 6, 2017
[150] Focus Group Discussion 2, Kandahar, June 1, 2017
[151] Focus Group Discussion 1, Kabul, June 19, 2017
[152] Key Informant Interview, 3, July 12, 2017
[153] Afghanistan EU Country Roadmap on Engagement of Civil Society-2015-201, https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/eeas/files/2015-9-6_-_eu_roadmap_for_engagement_with_civil_society_in_afghanistan_-_final.pdf
[154] United States Agency for International Development (USAID), 2012 CSO Sustainability Index for Afghanistan, https://www.usaid.gov/afghanistan/civil-society-sustainability/2012

Corruption

Sub-indicator 3.3	Corruption (real/perceived): The extent to which CSOs are able to work without being negatively affected by corruption	- 0.39

Corruption in Afghanistan has a negative effect on CSOs' work. The corruption index score of -0.39 is the second lowest sub-indicator score under governance. This score places it in the restrictive block. The majority of the respondents (76%) stated that government corruption had affected their work (Figure 25). The highest scores were found in Samangan (83%), Nangarhar (81%), Kabul (78%) and Herat (77%). Even the lowest score in Bamyan (62%) is significantly high.

Figure 25: Effects of Corruption on the Work of CSOs



	Kabul	Badakhshan	Nangarhar	Herat	Bamyan	Kandahar	Samangan	Total
Don't know	2.73%	0.00%	0.00%	2.97%	8.51%	5.48%	12.50%	3.54%
No	19.70%	35.71%	19.18%	19.80%	29.79%	17.81%	5.00%	20.25%
Yes	77.58%	64.29%	80.82%	77.23%	61.70%	76.71%	82.50%	76.20%

The qualitative data highlighted the high prevalence of corruption in the form of paying bribes, nepotism and the abuse of discretion. A CSO representative from Nangarhar shared,

> there are dozens of examples of corruption, especially while we are conducting a project in the field. For example, when you inform the relevant government authority that you are implementing a new project, first of all, the district governor or other high-ranking person asks you to pay them a certain percentage of the budget or directly asks for money; and second, they introduce you to their relatives to recruit in the project.[155]

A CSO representative from Badakhshan said, "I had gone to Kabul to update the license and they asked me if I have gifts for them from Badakhshan. This is something common in the governmental organization. You ask to update your license, they ask for money, otherwise they reject it and postpone your work for months and months."[156] A CSO representative from Kandahar shared,

[155] Focus Group Discussion 2, Nangarhar, June 11, 2017
[156] Focus Group Discussion 1, Badakhshan, May 28, 2017

> we had an election for selecting the general head of the council for 15 districts of Kandahar and two individuals got nominated. One of them was the people's candidate and the second one was the municipality candidate. The mayor came to the session and threatened the people to vote for the second one and finally the candidate of the mayor got elected as head of the general council for the 15 districts of Kandahar.[157]

A female participant from Kabul said,

> I was a candidate for a position in the Ministry of Interior, and they told me that I would get the position without any exam and interview, but that I first had to pay 50,000 Afs. One of my colleagues was a candidate for a receptionist's position in parliament and she was told to pay 20,000 Afs. and a sheep in order to be appointed to the position without any exam and interview.[158]

In examining how government corruption affects the work of the CSOs, KII and FGD data highlighted the following issues, including: the strained relationship between CSOs and the government; delays in implementation and completion of projects; financial burdens; and the hiring of unqualified staff who then deliver low quality services. An expert on civil society observed,

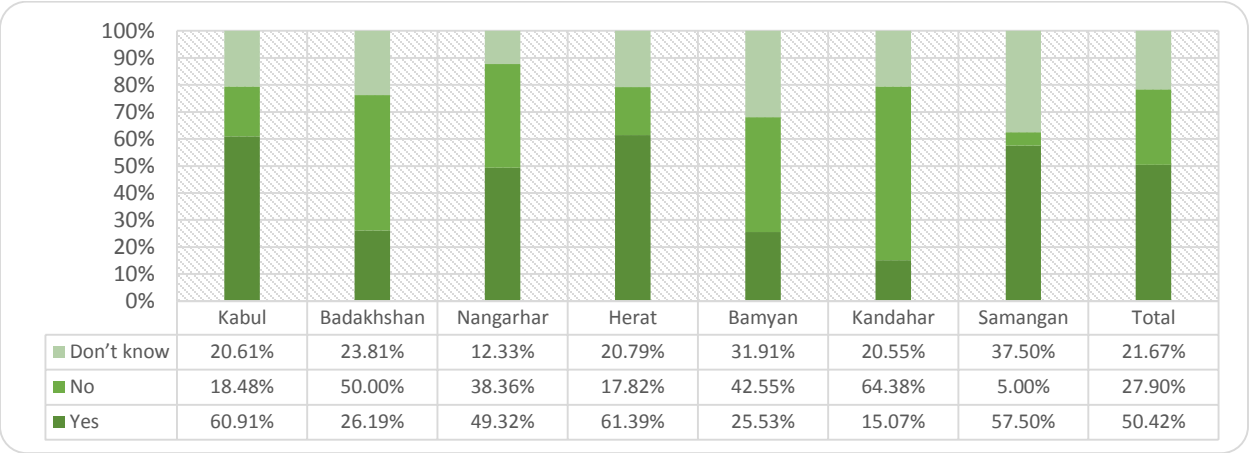
> corruption affects the internal affairs and standards of CSOs in a big way. For instance, CSOs, when they are reporting to the Ministry of Economy, have to get verification from the line ministries. When they go to the line ministries, they ask for bribes or a portion of the budget, or they ask to hire the five people that they know for their projects.

He explained that if CSOs report this corruption, their relationship with the ministries gets soured; if they do not pay the bribe their work gets delayed, and if they pay the bribe it become an extra expense and financial burden. They are unable to cover these extra expenses from the project budget. If they hire the suggested family or friend, they get staff without any technical capacity, which then affects the project's quality. These findings are in line with the findings of CIVICUS on Civil society organizations in situations of conflict that found that high levels of corruption have the most significant, negative long-term effect on civil society in situations of conflicts.[159]

Corruption is not only a problem in government and the private sector, it is also a problem in the CSO sector. Half of the survey respondents (50%) stated that CSOs are corrupt (Figure 26). The highest scores were in Herat (61%), Kabul (61%), Samangan (58%), and Nangarhar (49%). The highest scores for respondents who stated that CSOs are not corrupt were in Kandahar (64%) and Badakhshan (50%).

[157] Focus Group Discussion 1, Kandahar, June 1, 2017
[158] Focus Group Discussion 1, Kabul, June 19, 2017
[159] Civil Society Organizations in situations of conflict, http://www.civicus.org/view/media/cso_conflict_complete_report.pdf

Figure 26: Corruption in CSOs



	Kabul	Badakhshan	Nangarhar	Herat	Bamyan	Kandahar	Samangan	Total
Don't know	20.61%	23.81%	12.33%	20.79%	31.91%	20.55%	37.50%	21.67%
No	18.48%	50.00%	38.36%	17.82%	42.55%	64.38%	5.00%	27.90%
Yes	60.91%	26.19%	49.32%	61.39%	25.53%	15.07%	57.50%	50.42%

The qualitative data outlined some of the reasons for CSO corruption, including the role that government plays in normalizing corruption through their own corrupt actions. A CSO participant from Samangan stated, "if CSOs are corrupt it is because of donors and government, because they require them to pay money and hire their people."[160] A key informant shared,

> one of the line ministers in the province asked a very popular CSO – a CSO with very good governance system – to pay for the fuel of their two vehicles for two years or they will not let the implementation start. What I am trying to say is that even NGOs with good governance pay bribes to these people.[161]

A research report on the role of civil society in promoting good governance in Afghanistan in 2016 highlighted the lack of transparency and persistent corruption within NGOs, contractors, and government institutions. Government and CSOs continue to blame each other for the high levels of corruption and nepotism.[162]

Transparency

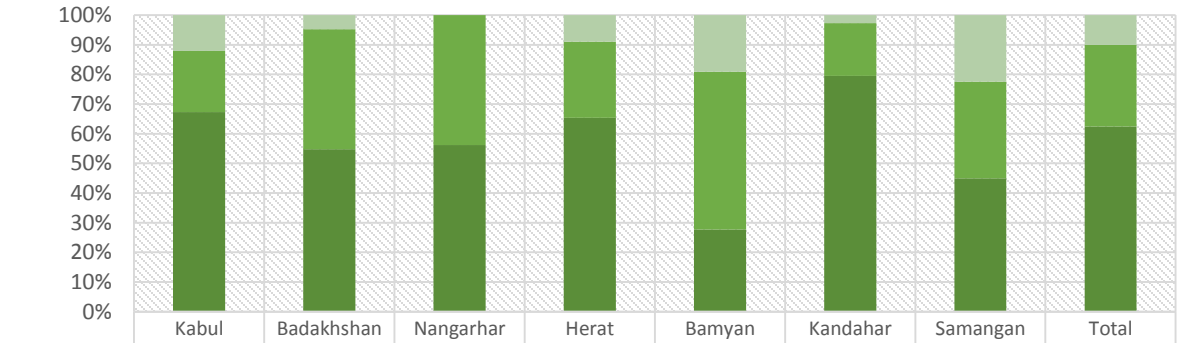
Sub-indicator 3.4	**Transparency:** The extent to which the government is transparent in its dealings with CSOs	**- 0.4**

Poor government transparency in its dealings with CSOs restricts them from working effectively. The transparency index score of -0.4 is the lowest score amongst the governance sub-indicators, and places it in the restrictive block. 62% of the respondents report that government did not inform the public and CSOs on important matters (Figure 27). The highest scores were found in Kandahar (79%), Kabul (67%),

[160] Focus Group Discussion 2, Samangan, May 20, 2017
[161] Key Informant Interview 3, July 12, 2017
[162] Nemat, O., & Werner, K., 2016, The Role of Civil Society in Promoting Good Governance in Afghanistan, AREU, p.26, https://areu.org.af/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/1613-The-Role-of-Civil-Society-in-Promoting-Good-Governance-in-Afghanistan.pdf.

and Herat (65%), with the lowest score in Bamyan (28%). These findings are in line with the EU's viewpoint that CSOs, particularly journalists, generally find "minimal application" of the 2014 Access to Information law provisions that require officials to provide information to the public.[163]

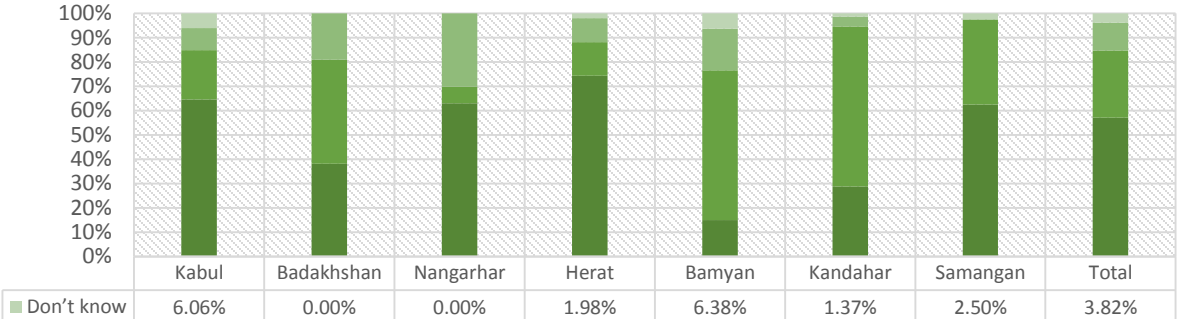
Figure 27: Government Informing Public and CSOs on Important Matters



	Kabul	Badakhshan	Nangarhar	Herat	Bamyan	Kandahar	Samangan	Total
Don't know	12.12%	4.76%	0.00%	8.91%	19.15%	2.74%	22.50%	10.06%
Yes	20.61%	40.48%	43.84%	25.74%	53.19%	17.81%	32.50%	27.48%
No	67.27%	54.76%	56.16%	65.35%	27.66%	79.45%	45.00%	62.46%

In assessing the difficulty in receiving information from government, 57% of the respondents stated that it was difficult (Figure 28). Herat had the highest score (74%) and Bamyan the lowest (15%).

Figure 28: Difficulty in Receiving Information from Government



	Kabul	Badakhshan	Nangarhar	Herat	Bamyan	Kandahar	Samangan	Total
Don't know	6.06%	0.00%	0.00%	1.98%	6.38%	1.37%	2.50%	3.82%
No	9.09%	19.05%	30.14%	9.90%	17.02%	4.11%	0.00%	11.47%
Neutral	20.30%	42.86%	6.85%	13.86%	61.70%	65.75%	35.00%	27.62%
Yes	64.55%	38.10%	63.01%	74.26%	14.89%	28.77%	62.50%	57.08%

FDG findings highlighted that seeking information from government depends more on personal relationships than on the existence of any transparent process or mechanism. For instance, a CSO representative from Nangarhar noted, "it is based on the relationship. If you know someone in the organization, they will easily give the information. Without such a relationship, they never help, but create more problems. Once I needed the exact numbers of the returned refugees and could only receive this

[163] Afghanistan EU Country Roadmap on Engagement of Civil Society-2015-2017, https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/eeas/files/2015-9-6_-_eu_roadmap_for_engagement_with_civil_society_in_afghanistan_-_final.pdf

information via my relative."[164] In a similar vein, a CSO representative from Herat shared, "here in Herat, two things are very important, if you have one of these two, you will be successful and can do everything. Having enough money and being a member of a party or team who is in power, especially in the police headquarters."[165] A participant from Samangan said, "in the government sector, without money and relations, you cannot proceed with your work and no one will help you; be it accessing information or anything else."[166]

FGD data showed that instead of providing the relevant or required information, government creates problems for CSOs. For instance, a CSO representative from Bamyan shared, "the government authorities do not want to share the information which we want or need. They are not honest in their duties, and they create a lot of problems by sending you from one department to the other and making the process more time consuming and difficult."[167] In Herat, a CSO representative said, "in general, access to information in governmental organizations is very difficult, so difficult that the applicant gets ready to pay to get the information."[168]

Access to information remains a critical challenge. It has been highlighted in many studies, and yet despite this focus on the issue and the enactment of the information law, CSOs and independent media are still deprived of reliable and accurate data.[169]

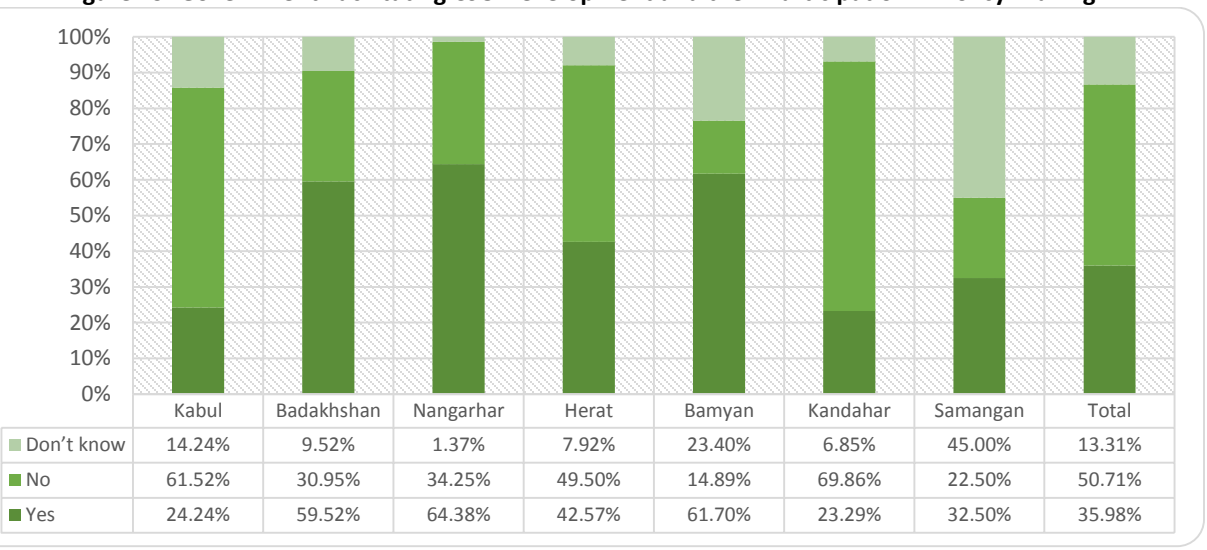
Facilitation

	Facilitation	
Sub-indicator 3.5	The extent to which the state facilitates and promotes the work of CSOs	**-0.09**

The data presents a mixed picture of the state's facilitation and promotion of the work of CSOs, depending on location and on a given CSO's role and relationships. The facilitation index score of -0.09 is in the neutral block. In discussing whether government facilitates the development of the civil society sector and its participation in policy making, 51% of the survey respondents responded negatively (Figure 29). This view was most pronounced in Kandahar (70%), Kabul (62%), and Herat (50%). A more positive view was presented in Nangarhar (64%), Bamyan (62%) and Badakhshan (60%), where respondents reported that government was facilitating the development of CSOs. In Samangan, 45% of the respondents did not know.

[164] Focus Group Discussion 1, Nangarhar, June 10, 2017
[165] Focus Group Discussion 2, Herat, June 7, 2017
[166] Focus Group Discussion 2, Samangan, May 20, 2017
[167] Focus Group Discussion 1, Bamyan, May 23, 2017
[168] Focus Group Discussion 2, Herat, June 7, 2017
[169] Civil Society of Afghanistan, 2016, Collaborating for Transformation, Position Paper for the Brussels Conference on Afghanistan, 4-5 October 2016, http://anafae.af/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/Afghan-CSO-position-paper-in-the-BCA-27Sep16-endorsed.pdf

Figure 29: Government Facilitating CSO Development and their Participation in Policy Making



	Kabul	Badakhshan	Nangarhar	Herat	Bamyan	Kandahar	Samangan	Total
Don't know	14.24%	9.52%	1.37%	7.92%	23.40%	6.85%	45.00%	13.31%
No	61.52%	30.95%	34.25%	49.50%	14.89%	69.86%	22.50%	50.71%
Yes	24.24%	59.52%	64.38%	42.57%	61.70%	23.29%	32.50%	35.98%

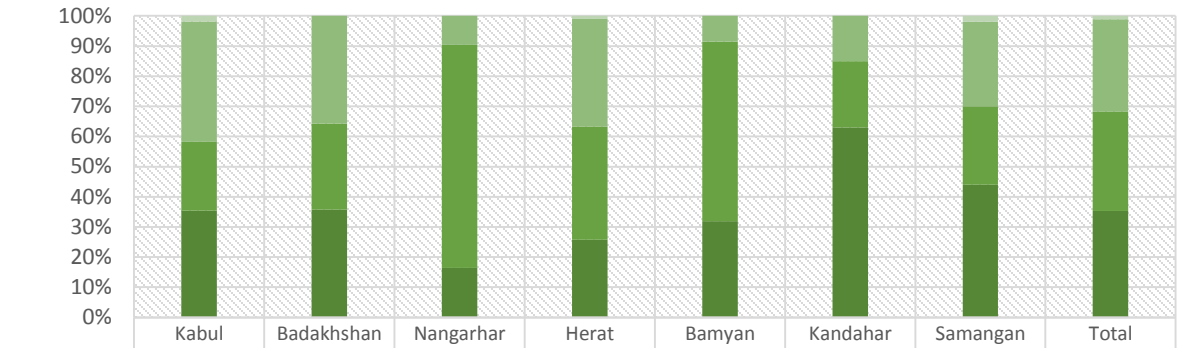
The qualitative data supports survey findings, and suggests that government facilitation differs from CSO to CSO. Once again, as with receiving government information (see above), receiving government facilitation is largely determined by personal relationships with government authorities. In other words, if CSO leadership or staff know a person in a position in government, they receive government facilitation. A CSO member from Nangarhar shared, "I know a lot of people in different organizations, and that is why I can quickly get facilitation, but for other people it is very difficult."[170] A member from Herat shared, "government authorities are not facilitators but troublemakers. If we have personal relations then we can meet them and they cooperate with us."[171]

It was also noted that there is no formal structure for facilitation, and that it is sought on a needs basis. A CSO representative from Kabul observed, "we ask for facilitation on need basis, for example, we ask the Department of Agriculture to monitor our projects and they come with us; but they ask us to provide them with transportation and a 1,000 Afs. per diem to do their work."[172] A participant from Badakhshan shared, "it is not easy to ask for facilitation from the government because they will not meet you. With lower authorities, you can still meet and discuss but with higher authorities we only ask for facilitation when it is something very urgent."[173]

In exploring the question whether government is supportive of CSO activities, 33% of respondents answered 'yes,' 31% said 'no,' and 33% were neutral (Figure 30). Despite the even spread of responses, there were noticeable differences between provinces. The provinces who had the highest scores for agreeing that government is supportive were Nangarhar (74%) and Bamyan (60%). The highest scores for not being supportive were Kabul (40%) and Herat (37%). 63% of respondents in Kandahar and 44% in Samangan remained neutral.

[170] Focus Group Discussion 1, Nangarhar, June 11, 2017
[171] Focus Group Discussion 1, Herat, June 8, 2017
[172] Focus Group Discussion 1, Kabul, June 19, 2017
[173] Focus Group Discussion 2, Badakhshan, May 29, 2017

Figure 30: Government Supportive of CSOs



	Kabul	Badakhshan	Nangarhar	Herat	Bamyan	Kandahar	Samangan	Total
Don't know	1.82%	0.00%	0.00%	0.99%	0.00%	0.00%	2.00%	1.12%
No	40.00%	35.71%	9.59%	35.64%	8.51%	15.07%	28.00%	30.59%
Yes	22.73%	28.57%	73.97%	37.62%	59.57%	21.92%	26.00%	32.96%
Neutral	35.45%	35.71%	16.44%	25.74%	31.91%	63.01%	44.00%	35.34%

As in previous years, CSOs in Afghanistan are challenged by their relationship with the government.[174] The following case study provides an example of this issue.

Case Study: CSOs overlooked by Government

The Bamyan branch of the Enlightenment Movement was established in May 2016, when the TUTAP power line was accepted over the Salang route rather than through Bamyan, the latter of which was favored in the technical survey. In response, CSOs in Bamyan began demonstrating. The government repeatedly threatened the demonstrators and restricted civilian access to the area in question.

Following the decision made in government, President Ashraf Ghani visited Bamyan to inaugurate some development projects. People and civil activists marched on the roads, protesting, criticizing and condemning the government's support of the pipeline. The demonstrators and civil activists were beaten by the police and were forcibly removed from the roads and the demonstration area.

Security personals beat the journalist and civil activists during a demonstration in Bamyan[175]

[174] (2017). Retrieved 13 August 2017, from http://www.bbc.com/persian/afghanistan/2009/08/090803_a-af88-civil-society-setiz

[175] http://afghanistantimes.af/president-ghanis-visit-stirs-protest-in-bamyan/

Ahmadi, an active member of the Enlightenment movement and a civil activist, was accused and threatened by government authorities, who labelled him as a 'destructionist.' Ahmadi said the government stole his personal computer and hard disk. He claimed that he had numerous documents proving the wide-spread corruption in Bamyan. He reported, "my house has been broken into several times, and I have lost a lot of expensive things such as a motorcycle, etc. I think that these are all government people who want to discourage and stop me from the path I am on and for which I am alive. my daughter was kidnapped and I was only able to rescue her with the support of community people." He added that Bamyan security forces have never helped him in any of the above cases; instead they have blamed him because of his role in the protests!

Ahmadi's story is a common one, as there are many civil activists protesting against government actions, and its strong-arm tactics against CSOs. The civil society activists believe that civil society's position is worsening in Afghanistan because of the government's attempt to control CSOs instead of supporting them.

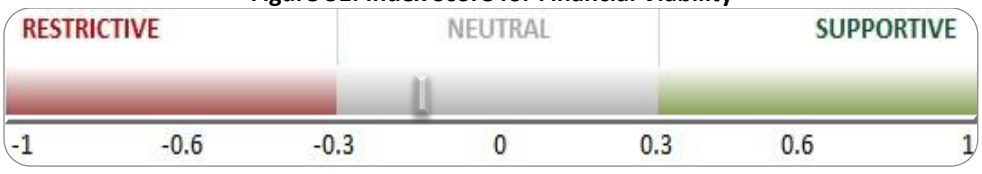
Bamyan is a comparatively secure province, and the activists there argue that they are threatened only by the government. "This is a major concern for civil society in Bamyan," said one activist. Further, the media has highlighted government restrictions of journalists attempting to document the demonstrations. Examples of journalists who have been beaten by government forces include: Sayed Mohammad Hashemi of Jumhoor News Agency, Ilyas Tahir of Radio Watandar, Najibullah Ulfat of the local radio station Nasim, Eshaq Karama of Killid, and Abbas Nadiri. These journalists were covering the demonstration, which was in protest over government policies."[176]

FINANCIAL VIABILITY

CSOs require financial resources in order to maintain successful and sustainable operations. CSO independence (and associated public perception of CSOs) is strengthened when funding sources are reliable and diversified. It is therefore important to note the way in which CSOs are funded and by whom, and how this affects their operations and mission. The sub-categories assessed within the area of financial viability are: (1) the funding process, and (2) financial independence.

The financial viability of Afghan CSOs is at question. The index score of -0.12 indicates a "neutral" picture of financial viability tending towards restrictive (Figure 31). This score is second lowest amongst all the five main indicators of the state of enabling environment index. It suggests the need to explore new alternatives, alliances and frameworks to improve the sector's survival. Many CSOs do not have sufficient funds to operate beyond one year, as they rely on single income sources and are not involved in generating income.

Figure 31: Index Score for Financial Viability



Moreover, the financial viability of CSOs worsened between 2016 and 2017, as the overall index score dropped by 0.32 points from 0.2 in 2016 (Table 6). This is due to the diminishing access to and availability

[176] TOLOnews, 30 August 2016, Media Condemns Police Action During Bamiyan Protest, http://www.tolonews.com/afghanistan/media-condemns-police-action-during-bamiyan-protest/

of funding for CSOs in Afghanistan, reflected in the dropping funding process sub-indicator score. Likewise, financial independence is worsening. The financial independence sub-indicator score of -0.03 shows how heavily dependent CSOs are on external donors.

Table 6: Scores on Financial Viability (2016 and 2017)

Indicator 4	**The extent to which the funding environment allows CSOs to shape their activities according to their mission.**	**2016 0.2**	**2017 -0.12**
Sub-indicator 4.1	**Funding process:**	0.08	-0.21
	The extent to which CSOs are able to access funding		
Sub-indicator 4.2	**Financial independence:**	0.32	- 0.03
	The extent to which CSOs are financially independent		

The sections below discuss the sub-categories of financial viability in more detail.

Funding Process

Sub-indicator 4.1	**Funding process:**	**-0.21**
	The extent to which CSOs are able to access funding	

Accessing funding is difficult for CSOs, and got more difficult between 20616 and 2017, reflected in the the funding process index score of -0.21. Data highlighted the existence of multiple funding sources, such as international funds, private donations, membership fees, government grants, and corporate funds. 30% of the CSOs depend on international funds, followed by private donations (25%). Only 14% apply for government grants. When asked about their largest contributor, respondents stated international donors (30%), followed by private donors including individuals and institutions (27%). Of the respondents, 59% stated that the largest contributor has not changed over the past year.

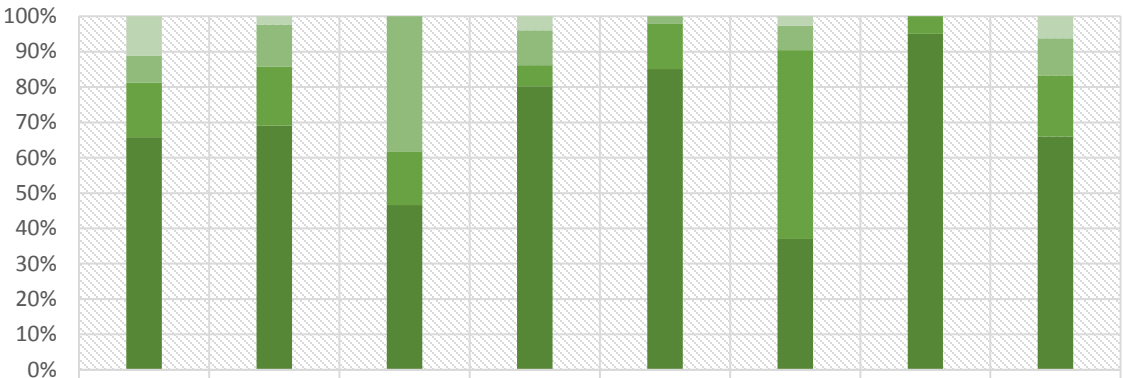
The qualitative data substantiates that CSOs tend to close down or change their strategies to satisfy the demands of new donor projects when a donor-funded project stream ends. As FGD participant from Kabul shared, "we are working based on projects; when there is no project, we can do nothing."[177] A CSO representative from Nangarhar stated, "CSOs are not financially sustainable, most of them are project-based and the financial situation has been worse because the number of projects have reduced. There is no system to keep our activities going without any project."[178] A CSO representative from Bamyan noted, "in general, all CSOs are working based on projects and if there is no donor, they have no alternative."[179]

The largest contributor (international donors) has not changed over the past year but international donations have declined substantially. This decline has made access to funding far more competitive and difficult. 66% of the respondents stated that it was difficult accessing funds, and 17% said it was somewhat

[177] Focus Group Discussion 1, Kabul, June 19, 2017
[178] Focus Group Discussion 1, Nangarhar, June 10, 2017
[179] Focus Group Discussion 1, Bamyan, May 23, 2017

difficult (Figure 32). The highest scores were in Samangan (95%), Bamyan (82%), and Herat (80%). The lowest score was in Kandahar (40%).

Figure 32: Level of Difficulty in Accessing Funds

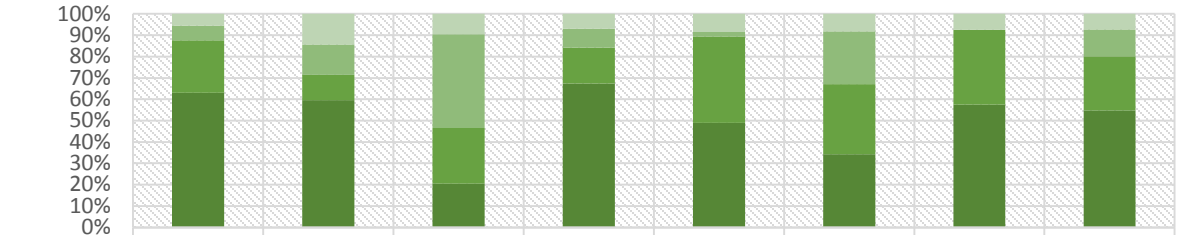


	Kabul	Badakhshan	Nangarhar	Herat	Bamyan	Kandahar	Samangan	Total
Don't know	11.21%	2.38%	0.00%	3.96%	0.00%	2.74%	0.00%	6.23%
No	7.58%	11.90%	38.36%	9.90%	2.13%	6.85%	0.00%	10.48%
Somewhat	15.45%	16.67%	15.07%	5.94%	12.77%	53.42%	5.00%	17.28%
Yes	65.76%	69.05%	46.58%	80.20%	85.11%	36.99%	95.00%	66.01%

Data from the open-ended interviews outlines the reasons that make access to funding difficult. 41% of the interviewees thought that the lack of internal capacity makes it difficult to access funds. This shows the corresponding, yet dialectic, relationship between access to funding and professionalism (indicator 2.4) - in the sense that attracting professional staff may raise operational cost or may attract additional funds. 29% of the respondents thought lack of information is an issue and the other 30% thought it is the lack of time and lack of transparency in the funding process which make access to funding difficult. Findings from the closed-ended survey match these findings. For instance, when asked, if information on how to apply for funding is widely available, 31% responded positively and 30% responded negatively. Similarly, in response to the question of whether applying for funding is a transparent process, 28% of respondents responded in the positive and 24% responded in the negative.

Accessing funds has been so difficult and critical that many CSOs have changed their organizational strategies or deviated from their primary mandate. The majority (70%) have completely (55%) or somewhat (25%) adjusted their strategies to match funding requirements (Figure 33). The highest scores are seen in Herat (67%), Kabul (62%), Badakhsan (60%), and Samangan (58%). Nangarhar (21%) scores the lowest.

Figure 33: CSOs Adjusting their Organizational Strategies to Access Funds



	Kabul	Badakhshan	Nangarhar	Herat	Bamyan	Kandahar	Samangan	Total
Don't know	5.45%	14.29%	9.59%	6.93%	8.51%	8.22%	7.50%	7.22%
No	6.97%	14.29%	43.84%	8.91%	2.13%	24.66%	0.00%	12.61%
Somewhat	24.55%	11.90%	26.03%	16.83%	40.43%	32.88%	35.00%	25.35%
Yes	63.03%	59.52%	20.55%	67.33%	48.94%	34.25%	57.50%	54.82%

The qualitative data point towards an encouraging phenomenon – that difficulty in accessing funds and decline in donor funding has sensitized CSOs to think of their sustainability in terms of seeking alternative income sources. For instance, a CSO representative from Kandahar shared, "we are working on the new regulation to establish a new council for the Kandahar, Kabul, Nimroz, Farah and Herat provinces, and through this council we would be able to solve our current financial problems."[180] A CSO member form Herat said,

> "I agree that we do not have any financial sources except project funds but we have started listing our expenditure, such as the rent of the office, internet fee, telecommunication cost, stationery, electricity and fuel. We have started charging a membership fee which is 5,000 Afs. at entry and then 100 Afs. per month. If we face a lack of budget, we pay from the membership fees."[181]

A female FGD participant in Kabul mentioned, "when our project closed, we had no money but we wanted to continue our work. We bought clothes and other necessary items, and gave it to our female members to make Afghan female clothes. Then we sold those clothes and earned some money, which allowed us to continue working, and we didn't have to stop our work."[182] A participant from Nangarhar shared, "our financial situation is not so good, but we are approaching affluent people in our area to donate funds for paying our expenses, and in this way, we are covering our expenses."[183]

The decrease in international financial support is a challenge for CSOs. While the international community pledged USD 4 billion per year for Afghanistan through 2015 at the Tokyo Conference in July 2012, this amount was a 33% decrease from the USD 6 billion provided in 2010.[184] Only a portion of aid pledges are ultimately contributed by donors, thus making it increasingly likely that less than USD 4 billion will be disbursed annually. Looking to this challenge in previous years, according to the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), US funding to support democracy, governance and civil society dropped by more than 50%, from USD 231 million to USD 93 million between 2010 and 2011. In the year

[180] Focus Group Discussion 2, Kandahar, June 1, 2017
[181] Focus Group Discussion 2, Herat, June 7, 2017
[182] Focus Group Discussion 1, Kabul, June 19, 2017
[183] Focus Group Discussion 1, Nangarhar, June 10, 2017
[184] The financial commitments ($16 billion) made at Tokyo (2012) were projected until 2016. The Brussels Conference secured commitments until 2020. The total amount of pledging announced at Brussels Conference was $15.2 billion. http://mfa.gov.af/en/page/the-brussels-conference-on-afghanistan

2011 the decrease of funds has been highlighted by counterpart international and 83% of the CSOs were challenged by funding constraints.[185] A funding analysis report by UNOCHA shows that there is a 27% decrease in funding to humanitarian response plans for Afghanistan in 2016 compared to 2013.[186]

The transition of security from international forces to Afghan armies has been one of the factors that has had a very significant impact on CSOs funding, staff losses and office closure. Also, the issue of nepotism and donor favoritism is being constantly raised, particularly in Bamyan, Takhar and Balkh, where it is stated that donors are offering more to the established CSOs, rather than to the new and innovative organizations. This limits the scope of civil society in these provinces and prevents potentially effective and useful civil society groups from being established.[187]

Financial Independence

Sub-indicator 4.2	Financial independence:	
	The extent to which CSOs are financially independent	-0.03

CSOs in Afghanistan largely struggle with financial independence. Though the financial independence index score of -0.03 places it in the neutral block, this score worsened between 2016 and 2017. The survey data indicates that 60% of respondents think that their organization does not have sufficient funds to continue operating (Figure 34). This situation is evident in all seven provinces, with the highest scores in Samangan (72%), Kabul (67%), Badakhshan (67%) and Bamyan (64%). The percentage is somewhat lower in Herat, where 52% of the respondents thought that their organization had sufficient funds. This, however, contrasts with the interview data with Government officials and CSOs in Herat. The government official shared, "in 2015, the budget for CSOs was around 35 million Afs. If we compare 2017, it has now decreased to around 18 million Afs. CSOs have limited operational funding."[188] A key informant in Herat shared, "Funding is a major challenge for CSOs in Herat as they do not have enough money to continue their work."[189]

Lack of sufficient funds could be one of the reasons that CSOs have changed or adjusted their strategic focus. This raises important questions of CSO independence and sustainability.

[185] Nijssen, S., 2012, Civil Society in Transitional Contexts: A Brief Review of Post-Conflict Countries and Afghanistan, Civil-Military Fusion Center, http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/CFC_Afghanistan_Civil-Society-and-Transition_Sept2012.pdf

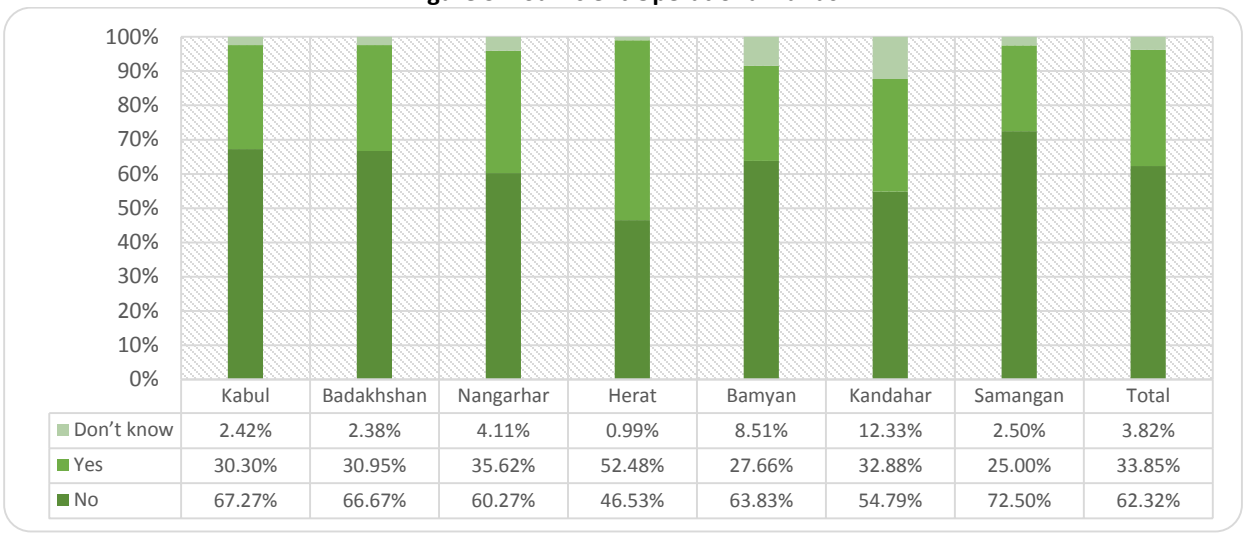
[186] Spencer, A., 11 October 2016, Crisis Briefing, Humanitarian funding analysis: Afghanistan – displacement, START Network & Global Humanitarian Assistance, http://devinit.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/START-briefing-Afghanistan-October-2016.pdf
http://devinit.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/START-briefing-Afghanistan-October-2016.pdf

[187] BAAG, August 2014, PTRO: Counting the Uncounted - Afghanistan's Civil Society in Transition, http://www.baag.org.uk/resources/ptro-counting-uncounted-afghanistans-civil-society-transition-august-2014

[188] Open-ended interview, Government Official, Herat, June 6, 2017

[189] Key Informant Interview 4, Herat, June 6, 2017

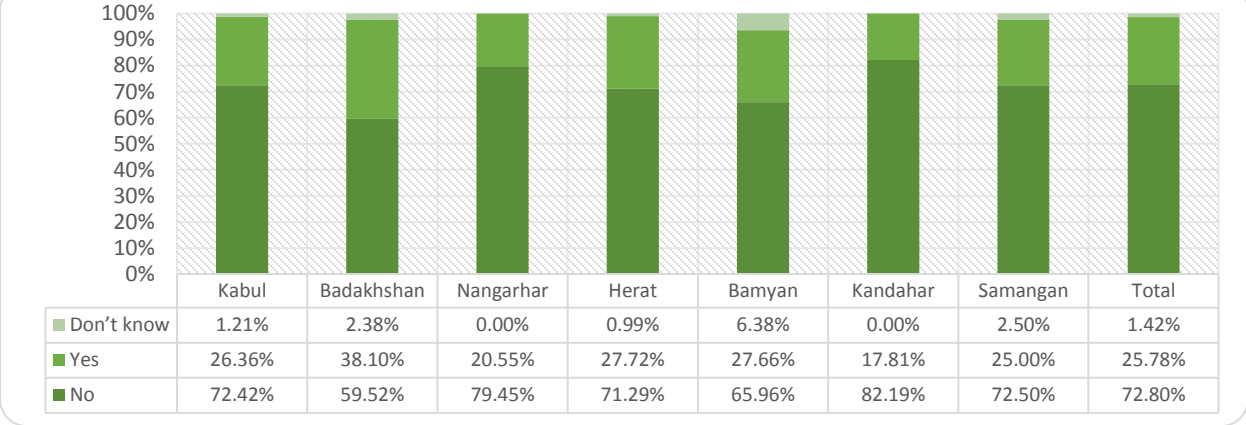
Figure 34: Sufficient Operational Funds



	Kabul	Badakhshan	Nangarhar	Herat	Bamyan	Kandahar	Samangan	Total
Don't know	2.42%	2.38%	4.11%	0.99%	8.51%	12.33%	2.50%	3.82%
Yes	30.30%	30.95%	35.62%	52.48%	27.66%	32.88%	25.00%	33.85%
No	67.27%	66.67%	60.27%	46.53%	63.83%	54.79%	72.50%	62.32%

When asked about diversified sources of income, the majority of respondents (73%) indicated that there was, in fact, a lack of diversity (Figure 35). The highest scores were in Kandahar (82%) and Nangarhar (79%), with the lowest score in Badakhshan (60%), which is still relatively high. All the provinces with larger CSO densities, such as Kabul, Kandahar, Nangarhar and Herat, rely on single sources of income. This strongly suggests the need to explore alternative funding sources. Some of these potential sources include engagement of government, philanthropists, online and crowd-funding mechanisms, and the private sector, particularly through corporate social responsibility funding.

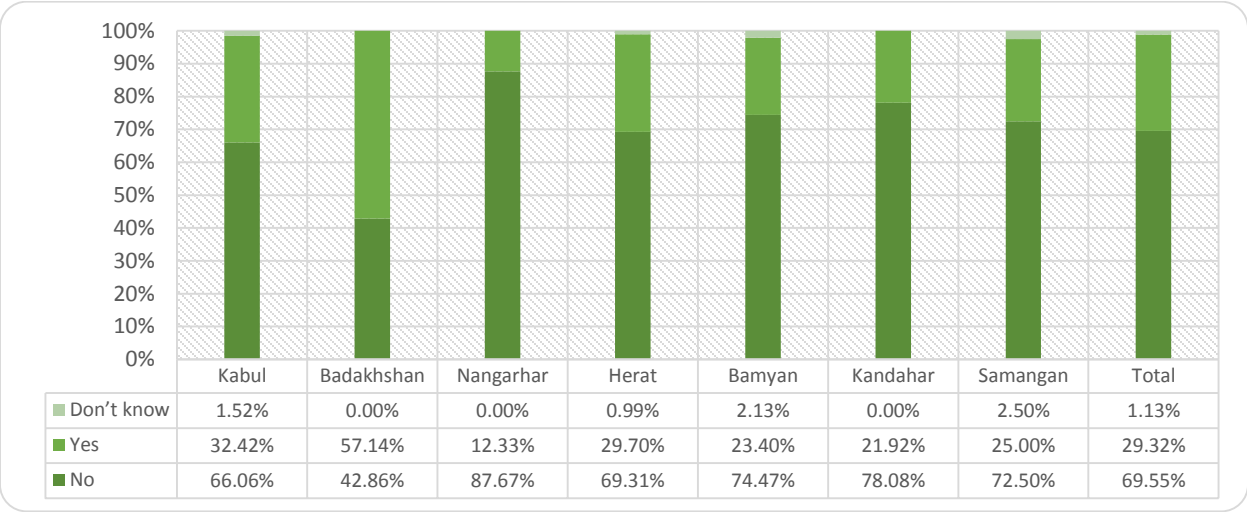
Figure 35: Diversified Sources of Income



	Kabul	Badakhshan	Nangarhar	Herat	Bamyan	Kandahar	Samangan	Total
Don't know	1.21%	2.38%	0.00%	0.99%	6.38%	0.00%	2.50%	1.42%
Yes	26.36%	38.10%	20.55%	27.72%	27.66%	17.81%	25.00%	25.78%
No	72.42%	59.52%	79.45%	71.29%	65.96%	82.19%	72.50%	72.80%

When asked if their organizations generate income, 70% of CSO representatives answered 'no' (Figure 36). The highest scores were found in Nangarhar (88%) and Kandahar (78%), with the lowest score in Badakhshan (42%). In Nangarhar, only 12% of CSOs are involved in income generation. This score is linked to Nangarhar's views on access to funds. Since accessing funds is comparatively easy for CSOs in Nangarhar, they need to pay less attention to income generation activities.

Figure 36: CSOs Income Generation



	Kabul	Badakhshan	Nangarhar	Herat	Bamyan	Kandahar	Samangan	Total
Don't know	1.52%	0.00%	0.00%	0.99%	2.13%	0.00%	2.50%	1.13%
Yes	32.42%	57.14%	12.33%	29.70%	23.40%	21.92%	25.00%	29.32%
No	66.06%	42.86%	87.67%	69.31%	74.47%	78.08%	72.50%	69.55%

FGD data highlights the observation that even though donors come with the agenda of poverty alleviation, they do not address the root causes, which is linked to the financial sustainability of CSOs. Respondents commented that donors are not interested in funding projects that could yield income or revenue. A participant form Kabul shared,

> donors do not want to invest in projects that generate income. For instance, there was a donor from the United Arab Emirates (UAE) who came with four million dollars and a woman from Badakhshan told him in a meeting, "if you really want us to stand on our own feet, you should establish a company and give the ownership to the community or a local organization so that they generate and then spend the revenue on community development." But no one listens to such demands. It means the donors spend on temporary projects that provide temporary services and then they disappear.[190]

Another CSO representative from Bamayan insisted, "we urge donors to fund projects which are continuously useful for Afghanistan, such as establishing factories and other important infrastructure and projects for generating income."[191]

Case Study: The Decline in Funding

The Women Activities and Social Services Association (WASSA) is a non-governmental organization founded and registered in 2006 with the Ministry of Economy. Based in Herat and working in Badghis, Farah and Nimroz provinces, it is the first independent women's organization in Herat working in the south-west region.

WASSA works in the areas of civil society empowerment, conflict resolution, peace building, and legal and social protection. To date, more than 30 CSOs have benefitted from its capacity building programs that includes photography, videography, journalism, web designing, social media, report writing and literacy courses.

[190] Focus Group Discussion 2, Kabul, June 21, 2017
[191] Focus Group Discussion 2, Bamyan, May 24, 2017

WASSA has benefited from the input of different donors, such as USAID, Counterpart International, Inter-news, USIP, CAID, UNHCR, MCC, Tawanmandi, Action AID and World Vision, but this landscape is changing because donor funding has substantially decreased in recent years. WASA and many of such organizations are unable to continue implementing their programs. This issue has been repeatedly raised by several CSO representatives.

Funding is a major challenge in Herat. Several CSOs have collapsed in the past two years, mainly because of the unavailability of funds. Government also does not have an allocated budget for CSOs like other countries have.[192]

In 2015, CSOs in Herat spent around 35 million Afs., whereas it fell to 18 million Afs. in 2017. Herat had never experienced such a significant decrease in funding. One of the problems is that CSOs do not have a sustainability plan for when external donor funding decreases or disappears. Over-dependency on external funding remains a significant risk for CSO sustainability.[193]

Among the many CSOs, WASSA has an alternative plan for funding and implementing programs. WASSA works with a multimedia center that belongs to the WASSA team itself and a radio station, called SAHAR with a wide listenership and good broadcasting. WASSA planned to utilize radio Sahar as the source of income for WASSA to keep their organization active. Radio Sahar gets money from the national traders and markets through advertising. Moreover, WASSA started promoting volunteerism, and they mobilized 15 people in the watch committee and 60 women for an advocacy network.

SECURITY ENVIRONMENT

A flourishing civil society typically depends upon the security provided by an effective and democratic government that ensures the rule of law. Insecurity impedes the functioning of civil society organizations in terms of limiting their access to specific locations, impacting the smooth implementation of programs/projects, and compromising staff security. Security was added to the state of enabling environment framework for this report for the first time this year. The sub-indicators assessed under security environment are: (1) access, (2) program implementation, (3) threats, and (4) staff security.

Security for CSOs in Afghanistan is mixed, reflected in the neutral security environment index score of 0.15 (Figure 37). While serious restrictive factors are present, there are also supportive factors that mitigate this in the overall score.

Figure 37: Index Score for Security Environment

The scores for the security environment sub-indicators (Table 7) suggest that CSOs are often able to safely implement their programs and projects. While threats to the CSOs and to the personal safety of staff and members exist and this makes the environment less than supportive, overall they do not restrict CSOs from carrying out their work. However, CSOs are restricted from accessing certain locations which

[192] CSO Member, Herat, June 8, 2017
[193] Government Official, Herat, June 7, 2017

impedes them from implementing programming entirely in those places. As this is a new domain, there is no comparative data from the 2016 report.

Table 7: Scores on Security (2016 & 2017)

Indicator 5	The Security Environment is conducive to the work of CSOs	2016 -	2017 0.15
Sub-indicator 5.1	Geographical Access:	-	-0.04
	CSOs are able to access different locations		
Sub-indicator 5.2	Implementation of the program/ projects:	-	0.32
	CSOs are able to safely implement their projects		
Sub-indicator 5.3	Threats:	-	0.25
	CSOs are able to continue their work without any threat		
Sub-indicator 5.4	Personal Safety:	-	0.05
	The environment is secure for CSOs staff and members		

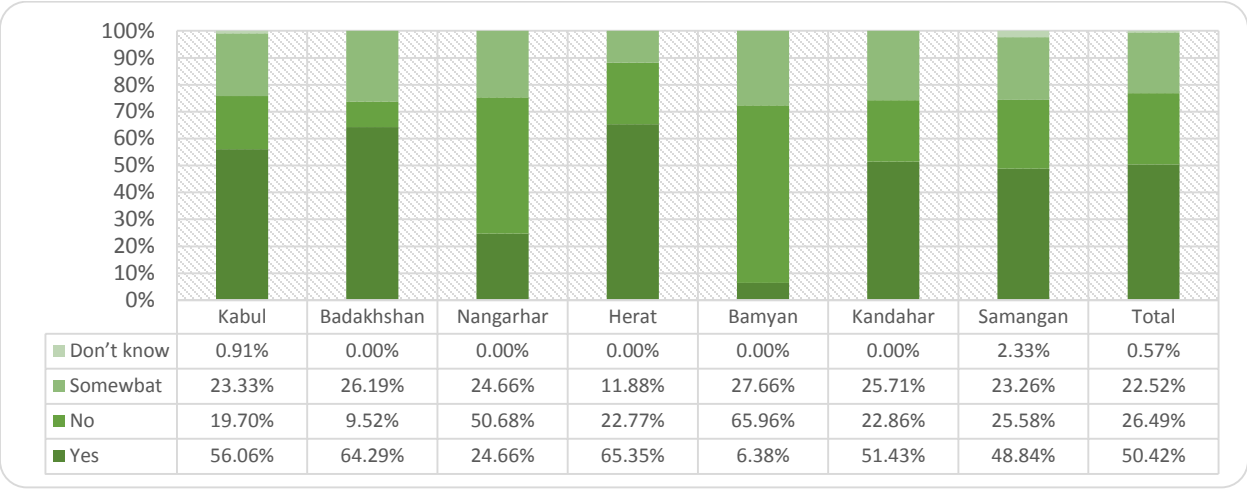
The sections below discuss the sub-categories of the security environment in more detail.

Geographical Access

Sub-indicator 5.1	Geographical Access:	-0.04
	CSOs are able to access different locations	

The security context severely restricts CSO access to certain locations within Afghanistan, and thus restricts their work overall in Afghanistan. The geographical access index score of -0.04 is the lowest of the four security environment sub-indicators. The majority of respondents (72%) stated that access to different locations is completely (50%) or somewhat (22%) restricted (Figure 38). This situation was most pronounced in Herat (65%), Badakhshan (64%), Kabul (56%) and Kandahar (51%). Only 6% of respondents in Bamyan stated that their access was restricted. This situation is explained through the following. One, Bamyam is considered to be the most secure province in Afghanistan, due to the limited, or no presence, of armed groups. Two, most of the population in Bamyan belongs to an ethno-religious group that is considered to be more progressive and peace-loving. Three, people in Bamyan are considered to more educated and liberal, and they have gained more cultural and civic exposure through migration to Iran and other neighbouring countries.

Figure 38: Access to Different Geographical Locations



	Kabul	Badakhshan	Nangarhar	Herat	Bamyan	Kandahar	Samangan	Total
Don't know	0.91%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	2.33%	0.57%
Somewbat	23.33%	26.19%	24.66%	11.88%	27.66%	25.71%	23.26%	22.52%
No	19.70%	9.52%	50.68%	22.77%	65.96%	22.86%	25.58%	26.49%
Yes	56.06%	64.29%	24.66%	65.35%	6.38%	51.43%	48.84%	50.42%

Qualitative data supported these findings by showing that CSOs are confronted each day with challenges related to security. One of these challenges is the travelling to and from their operational locations. For instance, the head of a CSO that works in seven provinces shared, "the districts where we work are fairly secure but reaching those districts from Kabul or any other part of Afghanistan is not safe. This is because on route there are many areas captured by different militant groups, and so our ability to work even in those districts become limited and less effective."[194] In 2016, research on the effects of insecurity on humanitarian coverage found that humanitarian organisations, including CSOs, experienced security incidents, either at implementation sites, or more commonly, when traveling between project sites or offices, thus not only affecting their geographical access but determining where to operate.[195] This study clearly highlights that the humanitarian aid programs have been effected by security conditions. For instance, in Afghanistan, the number of districts where aid agencies were implementing the projects have dramatically decreased over 40% between 2012 to 2014. Moreover, the average number of districts covered per organization was 18 in 2012, 12 in 2013 and only 10 in 2014.

Implementation of the Program

Sub-indicator 5.2	Implementation of the program/ projects:	
	CSOs are able to safely implement their projects	0.32

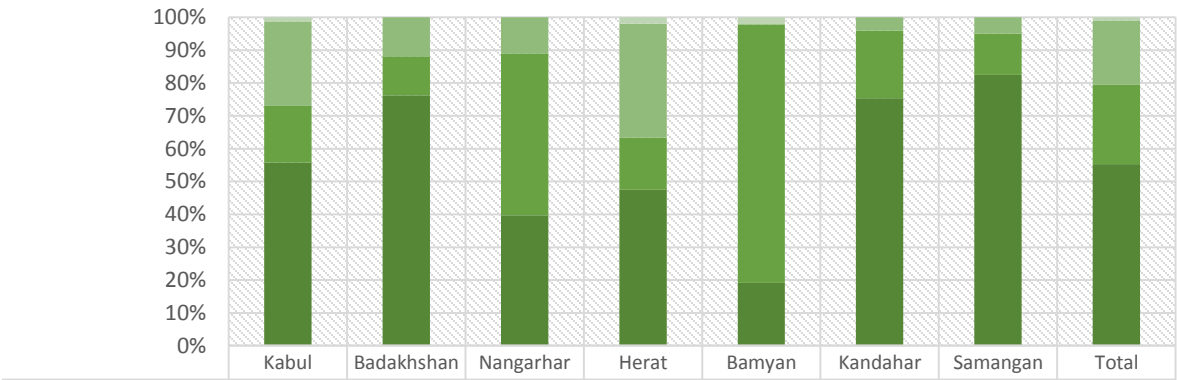
When CSOs are able to access a location, overall they are able to safely implement their programs or projects. The index score for program implementation is 0.32, and it places it in the supportive block. This is the highest score of the sub-indicators. When asked if the environment is secure for CSOs to implement their programs, 79% of respondents stated that the environment is either fully secure (24%) or secure to

[194] Focus Group Discussion 1, Kabul, June 19, 2017

[195] Stoddard, A., & Jillani, S. with Caccavale, J., Cooke, P., Guillemois, D., & Klimentov, V. (2016). The Effects of Insecurity on Humanitarian Coverage (Report from the Secure Access in Volatile Environments (SAVE) research programme. Humanitarian Outcomes, http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/SAVE_2016_The_effects_of_insecurity_on_humanitarian_coverage.pdf

some extent (55%) (Figure 39). In Bamyan, 79% of respondents stated that they felt secure, while 36% of respondents in Herat and 26% in Kabul said they did not feel secure.

Figure 39: Security Environment for Program/Project Implementation



	Kabul	Badakhshan	Nangarhar	Herat	Bamyan	Kandahar	Samangan	Total
Don't know	1.21%	0.00%	0.00%	1.98%	2.13%	0.00%	0.00%	0.99%
Not secure	25.76%	11.90%	10.96%	34.65%	0.00%	4.11%	5.00%	19.55%
Very secure	17.27%	11.90%	49.32%	15.84%	78.72%	20.55%	12.50%	24.22%
Secure to some extent	55.76%	76.19%	39.73%	47.52%	19.15%	75.34%	82.50%	55.24%

Data from the FGDs supported these findings. As a representative from Bamyan observed, "Bamyan is the most secure province in Afghanistan, and therefore we do not face any issues in conducting our activities; except in Saighan district, which is a bit problematic."[196] In the open-ended interviews one of the CSO members reported that, "in some parts, we pay a share to different insurgent groups, such as the Taliban, to get their permission for implementing our programs. When they receive the money, they do not interrupt our program implementation."[197] A key informant in Herat noted, "in the provincial center it is smooth but CSOs cannot implement the projects in districts such as Kushk, Farsi and Robatsangi due to the worsening security situation.[198] Although these findings show that CSOs do not face many issues in program implementation, the reason for this is that their presence is limited to those locations that are fully or more secure. This situation is in itself restricting because citizens in those insecure areas are deprived of the services that CSOs can provide in secure areas. The 2016 study on the effects of insecurity on humanitarian coverage highlights this point by arguing that insecurity dictates where aid agencies operate within high-risk countries, resulting in unequal coverage of needs, and that humanitarian operations cluster in more secure areas, irrespective of the relative level of need of the local populations.[199]

[196] Focus Group Discussion 2, Bamyan, May 29, 2017
[197] Open-ended Interview, Kandahar, May 20, 2017
[198] Key Informant Interview 4, Herat, June 8, 2017
[199] Stoddard, A., & Jillani, S. with Caccavale, J., Cooke, P., Guillemois, D., & Klimentov, V. (2016). The Effects of Insecurity on Humanitarian Coverage (Report from the Secure Access in Volatile Environments (SAVE) research programme. Humanitarian Outcomes, http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/SAVE_2016_The_effects_of_insecurity_on_humanitarian_coverage.pdf

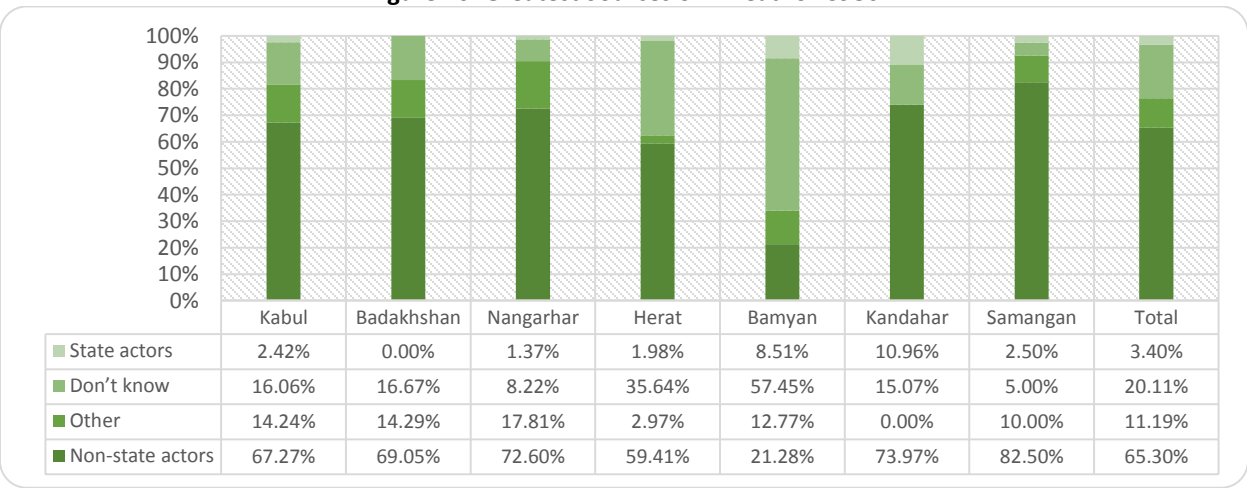
Threats

Sub-indicator 5.3	Threats:	
	CSOs are able to continue their work without any threat	0.25

Similar to restrictions on access to certain locations due to insecurity, the impact of threats on CSOs' work differs by location. However, threats exist even in places that are secure enough to provide access. The threats index score of 0.25 places it in the neutral block just outside the supportive block. FGD findings showed that the security threats for CSOs differ from one province to the other. For instance, a CSO activist from Bamyan shared, "there is no security threat for CSOs members, who can freely work all over the province."[200] Whereas a CSO member from Kandahar mentioned, "the security situation is bad because we cannot freely work there because of security threats both from the Taliban and Governmental forces."[201] A respondent from Nangarhar observed, "the security situation is bad and there are many anti-government threats, which have a direct effect on civil society and their activities."[202]

In discussing the greatest sources of threat for CSOs, 65% of the respondents responded that is was non-state actors, and 3% said it was state actors (Figure 40). Non-state actors featured highly in the six provinces of: Samangan (83%), Kandahar (74%), Nangarhar (73%), Badakhshan (69%), Kabul (67%), and Herat (59%). In contrast, Bamyan's score was only 21%. For state actors, the highest province was Kandahar (11%).

Figure 40: Greatest Sources of Threat for CSOs



	Kabul	Badakhshan	Nangarhar	Herat	Bamyan	Kandahar	Samangan	Total
State actors	2.42%	0.00%	1.37%	1.98%	8.51%	10.96%	2.50%	3.40%
Don't know	16.06%	16.67%	8.22%	35.64%	57.45%	15.07%	5.00%	20.11%
Other	14.24%	14.29%	17.81%	2.97%	12.77%	0.00%	10.00%	11.19%
Non-state actors	67.27%	69.05%	72.60%	59.41%	21.28%	73.97%	82.50%	65.30%

The qualitative data showed that CSOs are threatened by the Taliban, Daesh (ISIS) and warlords. A CSO representative, who claimed that his organization has a presence in 17 provinces, commented, "we face security threats, especially from the government, Daesh and the Taliban. Two of our colleagues have been shot recently by the anti-government elements in Kunduz province."[203] A female social activist from Kabul

[200] Focus Group Discussion, 1, Bamyan, May 28, 2017
[201] Focus Group Discussion 1, Kandahar June 1, 2017
[202] Focus Group Discussion 1, Nangarhar June 10, 2017
[203] Focus Group Discussion 1, Kabul, June 19, 2017

recorded, “the Taliban has a complete list of our colleagues and they are checking door-to-door to find the employees. One of our female colleagues was actually threatened by her own family members because they fear the wrath of the Taliban.”[204] These findings echo the concerns raised by different studies and reports repeatedly reporting threats against CSOs from government and non-government,[205] the latter forcing some CSOs, especially those working to promote women’s rights, into closing down or limiting their campaigns.[206]

Personal Security

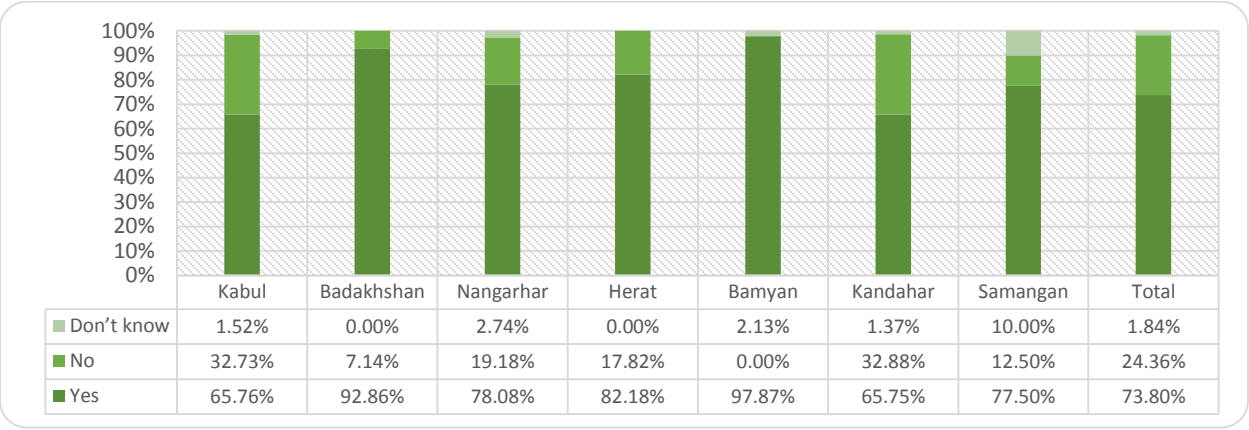
Sub-indicator 5.4	Personal Security	
	The environment is secure for CSOs staff and members	0.05

The personal safety and security for CSO staff and members is mixed, depending on location and on gender. The personal security index score of 0.05 places it in the neutral block overall. The majority of respondents (74%) perceived the environment to be secure for CSO staff and members to work, with 24% feeling insecure (Figure 41). Respondents feel most secure in Bamyan (98%), Badakhshan (93%), Herat (82%), Nangarhar (78%) and Samangan (77%). Yet in Kandahar, 33% of respondents did not feel safe.

The issue of threats to staff safety has repeatedly been raised. Civil society and human rights activists, as well as media personnel and service providers are threatened by Armed Opposition Groups (AOG), criminals, pro-government supporters, or state actors. For instance, research on the effects of insecurity on humanitarian coverage in the four most insecure countries for humanitarian coverage found that Afghanistan had the highest absolute numbers of attacks on humanitarian aid workers during 2011 to 2014.[207] This has a significant impact on CSO safety, performance and effectiveness. These threats are, regretfully, ignored by law enforcement institutions.[208]

[204] Focus Group Discussion 2, Kabul, June 21, 2017
[205] BAAG, August 2014, PTRO: Counting the Uncounted - Afghanistan's Civil Society in Transition, http://www.baag.org.uk/resources/ptro-counting-uncounted-afghanistans-civil-society-transition-august-2014
[206] Pajhwok Afgan News, 14 February 2016, In Kunduz, security threats force CSOs to scale back operations, https://www.pajhwok.com/en/2016/02/14/kunduz-security-threats-force-csos-scale-back-operations
[207] Stoddard, A., & Jillani, S. with Caccavale, J., Cooke, P., Guillemois, D., & Klimentov, V. (2016). The Effects of Insecurity on Humanitarian Coverage (Report from the Secure Access in Volatile Environments (SAVE) research programme. Humanitarian Outcomes, http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/SAVE__2016__The_effects_of_insecurity_on_humanitarian_coverage.pdf
[208] Civil Society of Afghanistan, 2016, Collaborating for Transformation, Position Paper for the Brussels Conference on Afghanistan, 4-5 October 2016, http://anafae.af/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/Afghan-CSO-position-paper-in-the-BCA-27Sep16-endorsed.pdf

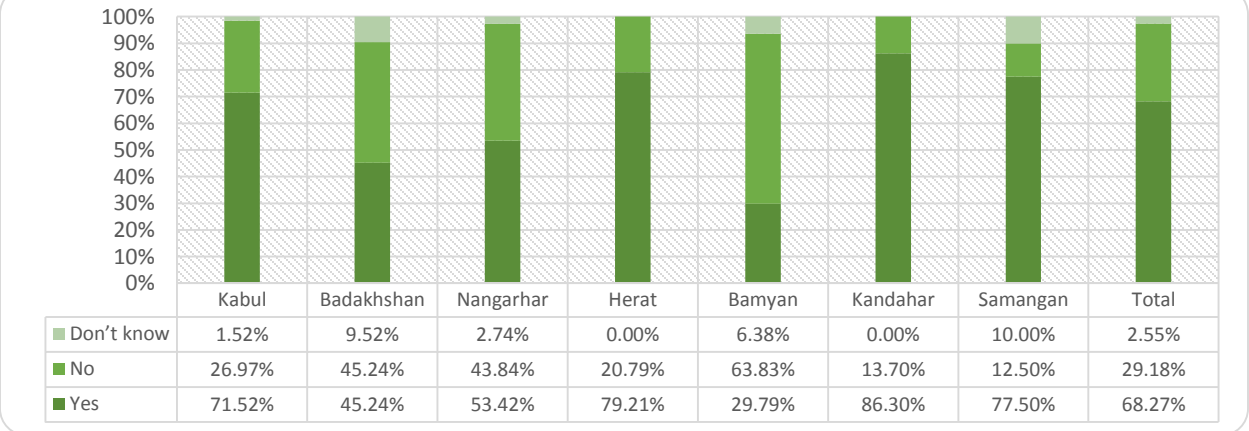
Figure 41: Secure Environment for CSO Staff and Members



	Kabul	Badakhshan	Nangarhar	Herat	Bamyan	Kandahar	Samangan	Total
Don't know	1.52%	0.00%	2.74%	0.00%	2.13%	1.37%	10.00%	1.84%
No	32.73%	7.14%	19.18%	17.82%	0.00%	32.88%	12.50%	24.36%
Yes	65.76%	92.86%	78.08%	82.18%	97.87%	65.75%	77.50%	73.80%

Insecurity has been a major challenge for women working with CSOs. When asked if the gender of the staff affected their security, the majority of the respondents (68%) confirmed that gender was an important factor. (Figure 42). The highest scores are seen in Kandahar (86%), Herat (79%), Samangan (78%), and Kabul (73%). In Bamyan, 30% of respondents felt this to be the case.

Figure 42: Gender of Staff and its Effect on their Security



	Kabul	Badakhshan	Nangarhar	Herat	Bamyan	Kandahar	Samangan	Total
Don't know	1.52%	9.52%	2.74%	0.00%	6.38%	0.00%	10.00%	2.55%
No	26.97%	45.24%	43.84%	20.79%	63.83%	13.70%	12.50%	29.18%
Yes	71.52%	45.24%	53.42%	79.21%	29.79%	86.30%	77.50%	68.27%

Female staff are more affected by the security environment than their male counterparts. The qualitative data highlights the increased risks for women working for CSOs. A female CSO representative in Kabul observed, "we have come a long way in our work as we have a presence in almost all provinces. Yet, it is still very insecure for female activists. They are targeted by many groups and pressurized through different mechanisms not to work."[209] Another member noted, "antagonism against women's work starts from home, then goes to the community, and then to the work place. Women cannot work freely and they won't be safe while traveling to district centers."[210]

When asked if CSOs provide resources such as training, equipment, and funding for their staff security, 63% CSO representative responded in the affirmative, whereas 36% said that was not the case. In

[209] Focus Group Discussion 2, Kabul, June 21, 2017
[210] Focus Group Discussion 2, Herat, June 7, 2017

Badakhshan, 86% of the respondents stated that their organizations provided them with security related trainings and equipment. The qualitative data confirmed that some CSOs do provide some security related trainings and resources to their staff but it also highlighted that these services and resources are perceived to be sub-par to those provided by international NGOs (INGOs). A CSO representative said,

> INGOs spend a lot of money for the security of their staff but when it comes to the local NGOs who actually go in far flung and less secure areas to implement their programs as their partners or sub-contractor, they never allocate any budget for security. Does it mean the lives of the local staff have no value?[211]

As early as 2012, CSOs ranked security as their biggest challenge, which included insurgent attacks and kidnapping. These challenges result in project delays and postponements.[212] Generally, security has been worsening, as reflected in several reports, including the Asia Foundation's annual surveys. In 2016, more than 48% of the people in Afghanistan cited insecurity as the key factor that is leading country in the wrong direction.[213] The International NGO Safety Organization's analysis of Afghanistan showed that the total number of security incidents recorded from January to July 2017 was 16,790.[214]

Case Study: The Challenge of Safety

The Supporting Organization of Afghanistan Civil Societies (SOACS) was founded in Herat province in 2012. The main office is in Herat and it has one sub office in Daykundi. Apart from advocacy, SOACS works in the areas of women's empowerment, capacity building and education.

SOACS has been active in raising its voice against all type of injustices in Herat and other provinces. For the last two years it has been campaigning against corruption. SOACS is credited with placing complaint boxes in Herat to document corruption. Moreover, SOACS has introduced a mobile number to report corruption cases. As result, more than 200 cases of corruption were recorded and investigated by SOACS committees established and led by Khalil Parsa. It has been a very useful, evidence-based advocacy, which has resulted in several cases going to court for investigation.

On the evening of 24 September 2016, Khalil Parsa arrived at his office to fetch his deputy, Jawad Hamidi, to join him at a family wedding party. He was in his car and talking on the phone when an unknown man riding a bike opened fire on him, wounding him in the shoulder, abdomen and hand. Two civilians took him to hospital, where it was discovered that he had been shots seven times.

He was under treatment for several days and was later moved to the Herat Provincial Army Hospital. In order to improve his recovery and protect him from the ongoing threats to his life, he was sent to the Max Hospital in New Delhi, India. He returned to Herat after six months. The case was not thoroughly investigated by government and no-one knows who was behind the shooting.

CSOs all over the country have been calling on government to make arrests, but no arrests have been made. This case study shows the reality for CSOs and civil activists in Afghanistan, even in a province like Herat, which is considered one of the securest provinces with better governance.

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[211] Focus Group Discussion 1, Kabul, June 19, 2017

[212] Nijssen, S., 2012, Civil Society in Transitional Contexts: A Brief Review of Post-Conflict Countries and Afghanistan, Civil-Military Fusion Center, http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/CFC_Afghanistan_Civil-Society-and-Transition_Sept2012.pdf

[213] Burbridge, H., et al., 2016, Afghanistan in 2016: A survey of the Afghan People, http://asiafoundation.org/where-we-work/afghanistan/survey/

[214] International NGO Safety Organization, n.d., Afghanistan Context Analysis, http://www.ngosafety.org/country/afghanistan

CONCLUSION

The present study aimed to assess the state of the enabling environment of CSOs in Afghanistan. It is important to acknowledge that Afghanistan, as a post-conflict country, faces enormous security, political and economic challenges, and this study's findings and conclusions should be read with this background in mind.

The study highlights that while the state of the enabling environment for CSOs in Afghanistan has challenges, it does contain pockets of potential opportunities for continued effective CSO work. The opportunities include the strong and stable community support, representation and advocacy influence within the socio-cultural environment, and the amenable laws within the legal framework. The score for the legal environment indicator actually increased between 2016 and 2017.

Challenges include weak governance both in the outside environment and within CSOs, lack of resources (both financial and non-financial), and the deteriorating security situation. Moreover, it is notable that the study finds that the enabling environment for CSOs in Afghanistan got more restrictive overall between 2016 and 2017. The overall 2017 enabling environment index (0.17) is lower than the index (0.33) in 2016 when comparing the four domains from 2016 and the five domains from 2017. Even a comparison of the four constant domains (excluding security) shows a score of 0.18 for 2017, compared with 0.33 in 2017. Moreover, the index scores decreased for three out of the four indicators for which comparative data is available (socio-cultural environment, governance and financial viability).

More specifically, the findings suggest that:

- The rights to freedom of peaceful assembly, of association, and of expression are protected for the most part in the constitution and basic laws. However, despite these constitutional and legal safeguards, implementing practices governing the registration, taxation, provision of information, and the banning or restriction of public demonstrations are inconsistent with the full realization of these rights. Some of the restrictive practices include unclear and lengthy procedures for registering and governing CSOs, resulting in arbitrary and selective application of regulations, lengthy delays, onerous requirements hat place undue administrative and financial burden on CSOs.

- CSOs enjoy strong community support, participation, and acceptance. They tend to facilitate participation through their advocacy work and mandate to coordinate and assemble the public to resolve key issues. They also represent the collective interests of communities to the government as well as other stakeholders, i.e. development agencies, particularly at a time when government did not engage them. However, far from being perfect, CSOs representation tends to be both parochial and unequal. Absent proactive advocacy interventions to address social issues, advocacy efforts tend to exclude particular groups and fails to promote cross-group cohesion. Moreover, community support and participation also tend to be driven by project related incentives. Furthermore, CSOs are challenged in accessing non-financial resources and lack the capacity to become sustainable, well-structured, and professional organizations.

- Poor governance is a general concern in Afghanistan and is mostly explained by factors like the fragile security situation, rampant corruption, frail institutions, and weak economy[215][216]. Weak governance, both in the external environment and within CSOs, hampers CSOs effectiveness. The endemic corruption and lack of transparency sways trust, coordination, facilitation, and service delivery. The lack of trust and coordination tends not only to impede the ongoing work CSOs engage in, but also reduces the opportunities for CSOs to influence government policies and achieve social change. Lack of transparency and lack of access to information reduces the communication space and opportunities for critical voices. Lack of transparency also contributes to stigmatizations as CSOs think government is not sincere and government think that CSOs have their own agendas. This mistrust restricts collective work, prevents facilitation, and reduces the desire to work collaboratively.

- CSOs are struggling with the dependency on donor funding that hinders their sustainability, distracts them from their original mandate or strategies, and encourages a short-term strategy of chasing funds. Though the decline in donor funding has sensitized CSOs to think of alternative income sources in order to become more independent and self-sustaining, they lack the technical capacity, support mechanism, and alliances to secure the resources needed to operate effectively and efficiently. While resources and funding may be available for CSOs, the lack of information about funding processes, corruption in granting funds, increasing competition among CSOs to access funds, low fundraising capacity of CSOs, and the absence of funding mechanism between government and CSOs are some of the key factors constraining CSOs in access these resources.

- The fragile security environment makes accessing different locations difficult, and addressing the needs of the communities living in more insecure areas almost impossible. Mostly, CSOs are operating in secure or somehow secure areas and not in areas that are under the control of militants. Moreover, CSOs are prone to security threats, particularly from non-state actors endangering the lives of those associated with them, thus creating a sense of fear that stops activists. This is particularly true for female who face manifest threats in the form of harassment, intimidation, and even murder. This contributes to the fear and mistrust that stops activists in participating in events, meetings and protests; communicating; and mobilizing.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Creating a sustainable enabling environment for CSOs in Afghanistan is imperative for a more peaceful, democratic and just society to emerge and flourish. The CSO enabling environment cannot be enhanced by a single actor; it is, rather, the joint responsibility of all actors, including the government, private sector, CSOs, and international donors. The following recommendations for all stakeholders emerged from the research findings, either directly suggested by respondents or corresponding to findings in the research about challenges CSOs in Afghanistan are facing. They are presented as a basis for discussion and action planning among stakeholders.

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[215] Agvirsabgata-Fiteu, O., 2009, Governance, Fragility and Conflict: Reviewing International governance reform experiences in fragile and conflict-affected countries, http://siteresources.worldbank.org/EXTSOCIALDEVELOPMENT/Resources/244362-1164107274725/3182370-1164110717447/Governance_Fragility_Conflict.pdf

[216] Brown-Felbab, V., 2012, The Afghanistan Challenge: A government that serves the Afghan people https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/0215_afpak_felbabbrown.pdf

KEY: CSO = Civil Society Organizations, G = Government, D = Donor, P = Private Sector

NO.	RECOMMENDATION	RESPONSIBILITY
1	**LEGAL FRAMEWORK**	
	• Concentrate on revising any potential laws or provisions to ensure they do not restrict civic freedom, in consultation with civil society actors.	• G
	• Actively work with government on strengthening the legal framework and relevant or potential laws and provisions.	• CSOs
	• Accelerate legislation process on several pending legislative initiatives, including proposed amendments to the Law on NGOs; a draft Law on Foundations; and proposed amendments to the tax code.	• G
	• Enforce the existing legal standards and guarantees for freedom of association, assembly and other related freedoms.	• G
	• Harmonize and respect the basic legal guarantees within the legal framework.	• G
	• Ensure that the authorities respect the legally prescribed timelines and processes for registration and receiving tax exemptions.	• G
	• Independently monitor and report on compliance with legally prescribed timelines and processes for registration and granting tax exemptions.	• CSOs
	• Halt arbitrary prohibition and crackdown on the freedom of assembly.	• G
	• Create and utilize clear frameworks to monitor the fulfillment of standards and regulations, in consultation with civil society actors.	• G
	• Actively work with government and contribute to monitoring, including as necessary independently monitoring and advising the public on the fulfillment of standards and regulations.	• CSOs
2	**CAPACITY BUILDING**	
	• When investing in capacity building of CSOs, consider not only financial and administrative systems and compliance with donor rules; rather, use approaches that focus on the whole organization and its sustainability.	• D
	• Support CSO capacity building by offering peer coaching and mentoring in relevant management skill sets	• P
	• Actively engage in ongoing organizational capacity strengthening within organizations by building it into organizational plans and taking advantage of resources offered by other stakeholders	• CSOs
3	**CORRUPTION**	

	• Establish a new Anti-Corruption Agency (ACA) or harmonize and streamline the various existing ACAs with clearly defined objectives, roles, and responsibilities. [217]	• G
	• Establish mechanisms such as open contracting, open government partnership, independent monitoring and reporting by CSOs to address corruption together.	• G
	• Actively engage and contribute to government efforts to address corruption, including independent monitoring and reporting to the public.	• CSOs
	• Support CSO efforts to monitor and address corruption as well as joint CSO-Government initiatives.	• D/P
	• Maintain high ethical standards through various forms of codes of ethics and pursuing internal management and administrative practices that prevent corruption	• CSOs
	• Demonstrate and uphold CSO trustworthiness by pursuing certification.	• CSOs
	• Support independent CSO certification efforts in the country by referring CSO partners to certification bodies and funding certification fees.	• G/D
4	**TRANSPARENCY**	
	• Ensure that the law of access to information is fully and effectively implemented across the country including by empowering the Oversight Committee on Access to Information (OCAI) to enforce implementation.	• G
5	**COLLABORATION AND COORDINATION**	
	• In consultation with CSOs, develop a shared frame of reference and objectives between the Civil Society Joint Working Group and the administrative office of the President to improve collaboration and coordination.	• G
	• Actively participate and contribute to government efforts to develop a shared frame of reference and objectives to improve collaboration and coordination	• CSOs
	• In consultation with CSOs develop mechanisms such as cross-sectorial advisory bodies or departments to not only ensure enforcement of the MoU signed between Civil Society Joint Working Group and the government but also to build formal institutional and personal relationships between CSOs and government.	• G
	• Actively participate and contribute to government efforts to develop mechanisms such as cross-sectorial advisory bodies or departments to build formal institutional and personal relationships between CSOs and government.	• CSOs

[217] Transparency International, 13 April 2017, Bridging the Gaps: Enhancing the Effectiveness of Afghanistan's Anti-corruption Agencies, https://www.transparency.org/whatwedo/publication/bridging_the_gaps_enhancing_the_effectiveness_of_afghanistans_anti_corrupti

6	**RESOURCES /FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY**	
	• Clearly express resource needs, both financial and non-financial to government, donors, private sector and the public in language and formats for work for the audience.	• CSOs
	• Proactively seek to understand and respond to the true resource needs of CSOs when forming policies or partnerships, or designing programs.	• G/D/P
	• Devise a mechanism to supply necessary non-financial resources such as electricity to CSOs free of charge to facilitate their work.	• G
	• Capitalize on the strong community support CSOs have gained over the years to mobilize local financial and non-financial resources in support of CSOs' work in local communities.	• CSOs
	• Support CSOs in their resource mobilization and sustainability efforts, build community philanthropy approaches into funding opportunities for CSOs.	• D
	• In consultation with other stakeholders, explore and provide recommendations for Afghanistan around different policy options that could foster CSO sustainability. (Donors should consider funding such research).[218]	• CSOs
	• In consultation with other stakeholders, particularly CSOs, develop a national framework that clearly devises institutional mechanisms and defines the roles and responsibilities of different stakeholders in improving the financial sustainability of CSOs	• G
	• Actively participate and contribute to government and CSO efforts to develop a national framework for CSO financial sustainability	• D/P
	• Actively partner with CSOs in CSR efforts and in their social enterprise income-generating activities.	• P
7	**SECURITY**	
	• In consultation with CSOs and activists, develop a comprehensive security policy for the protection of CSOs and activists.	• G
	• Ensure the full implementation of the policy by monitoring, arresting and prosecuting those who target civil society members and organizations.	• G
	• Independently monitor and report on implementation of laws related to CSO security.	• CSOs
	• Safeguard the laws on freedom of expression, association and assembly.	• G
	• Recognize the rights and legitimacy of civil society by ensuring the existence and application of enabling laws for CSOs to operate effectively.	• G

[218] Examples include provision of tax incentives for donors, corporate sectors and volunteers; development of transparent procurement processes for development projects and programs; provision of guidelines for donors to set their funding priorities in line with community needs and national priorities; fund projects that contribute to the financial sustainability of CSOs; allocation of public funds for CSOs; initiation of different funding modalities such as sub-granting schemes; creation of income-generating activities for CSOs.

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ANNEX A: METHODOLOGY

The research methodology for this study built upon the methodology of SEECA 2016, with some significant changes in the analytical framework, sampling frame and research instrument to address identified limitations from last year's study. In the analytical framework, a new dimension on security was added to provide a more comprehensive and robust measure of the enabling environment. In the sampling frame, two more provinces were added to provide a broader geographical coverage and representative sample. The tools were revised from both technical and gender perspectives to add more relevant and gender-sensitive items and questions for each sub-indicator. Further, this year's survey aimed to more comprehensively include the perspectives of CSO beneficiaries, government officials and religious organizations.

This section is divided in two parts, the first that outlines the study's analytical framework, and the second that describes the methods.

Analytical Framework

The five major domains that form the analytical framework of this research include the legal framework, the socio-cultural environment, governance, financial viability and the security environment. The fifth domain, security, was added to the analytical framework this year to address the significant impact of security in Afghanistan. These five domains form the basis for the index indicators, each of which is further divided into sub-categories and associated sub-indicators. The five domains are explained below.

Legal Framework

CSOs are significantly influenced by the legal environment in which they operate. Formal laws and policies, including the international treaties to which Afghanistan is signatory, as well as domestic laws and policies, govern the degree to which civil society activities are recognized and protected. This includes the protection of rights and freedoms necessary for a thriving civil society, including freedom of expression, freedom of assembly, freedom of religion, and access to information. CSOs are also affected by more specific laws and policies designed to monitor and regulate the civil society sphere. These include regulations around the registration of organizations, (e.g. the necessity, benefits, drawbacks and process of registration), as well as taxation. Accordingly, to assess the way in which the legal framework in Afghanistan contributes to the enabling environment for CSOs, the following three sub-categories were considered: (1) registration, (2) personal freedoms and civil rights, and (3) taxation.

Socio-cultural Environment

Many CSOs are dependent upon a strong connection with the communities in which they operate if they are to achieve their advocacy and operational goals. CSOs must, therefore, reflect at least a segment of the public both in terms of their mission and method. They must also be able to take a strong lead in programming and managing their operations, to ensure that their work has a real impact on the communities in which they work. Five sub-categories that capture the socio-cultural environment for CSOs in the country are: (1) access to resources (non-financial), (2) community support, (3) representation, (4) professionalism, and (5) advocacy.

Governance

The enabling environment for CSOs is affected by the relationship of CSOs with the government (including local authorities), the donor community, and other CSOs. Their work can be challenged by issues such as corruption, a lack of transparency, and a lack of government facilitation. Their work is also shaped by service delivery shortcomings and needs. Existing relationships and coordination activities between and amongst other CSOs may also have an impact. The five sub-categories that fall within this area are: (1) service provision, (2) coordination, (3) corruption, (4) transparency, and (5) facilitation.

Financial Viability

CSOs require financial resources in order to maintain successful and sustainable operations. CSO independence (and associated public perception of CSOs) is strengthened when funding sources are reliable and diversified. It is therefore important to note the way in which CSOs are funded and by whom, and how this affects their operations and mission. The sub-categories assessed within the area of financial viability are: (1) the funding process, and (2) financial independence.

Security Environment

A flourishing civil society typically depends upon the security provided by an effective, democratic state, in which the rule of law is enforced. Insecurity impedes the functioning of civil society organizations in terms of limiting their access to specific locations, impacting the smooth implementation of programs/projects, and compromising staff security. The sub-indicators assessed under security environment are: (1) access, (2) program implementation, (3) threats, and (4) staff security.

Table 8 below presents the five domains and the sub-categories under each domain capturing the state of the enabling environment for CSOs in Afghanistan.

Table 8: Area of Analysis and Sub-categories

Legal Framework	Socio-Cultural Environment	Governance	Financial Viability	Security
Personal Freedom and Civil Rights: **Freedom of speech and assembly as well as legal rights and obligations of CSOs**	**Access to resources (non-financial):** The factors that influence CSOs' access to resources	**Service provision:** The extent to which the environment is supportive for CSO involvement in service provision	**Funding process:** Access to and the availability of funding	**Access:** The degree to which security affects the access of CSOs to their constituencies or jurisdiction
Registration: **The process for registering organizations, as well as the necessity, benefits, and drawbacks of being registered**	**Community support:** The level of public support towards CSO activities	**Coordination:** The level of collaboration among CSOs, and the government and the existence of cooperative space between these actors	**Financial independence:** The level of financial independence of CSOs	**Operational Environment:** The degree to which security affects the ability of CSOs to implement their programs and projects

Tax: **The tax system and its enforcement; the extent to which the tax system for CSOs is fair, efficient, and transparent**	**Representation:** The degree to which CSOs successfully represent the communities they work with	**Corruption (real/perceived):** The extent to which corruption prevents CSOs from meeting their goals		**Threats:** The level of threats faced by the organization
	Professionalism: The degree to which CSOs function as independent, professional organizations	**Transparency:** The level of transparency within both the CSO sector, and its dealings with the government		**Personal Security of Staff:** The degree to which the security situation affects the personal safety and security of CSO staff
	Advocacy: The soft power used by CSOs to influence the government at national and local levels	**Facilitation:** The level of support provided by the state towards civil society		

The Study Index

Table 9 below presents the five areas of analysis described above, with their associated main and sub-indicators.

Table 9: Index Indicators

Indicators	Definition
Indicator 1	**The extent to which the prevailing formal legal framework supports the work of CSOs**
Sub-indicator 1.1	**Personal Freedoms and Civil Rights:**
	The extent to which legal rights and freedoms are supportive of the work of CSOs
Sub-indicator 1.2	**Registration:**
	The extent to which the process of registration is straightforward and registration benefits CSOs
Sub-indicator 1.3	**Tax:**
	The extent to which the tax system for CSOs is fair, efficient, and transparent
Indicator 2	**The extent to which the socio-cultural environment supports the work of CSOs**
Sub-indicator 2.1	**Access to resources (non-financial):**

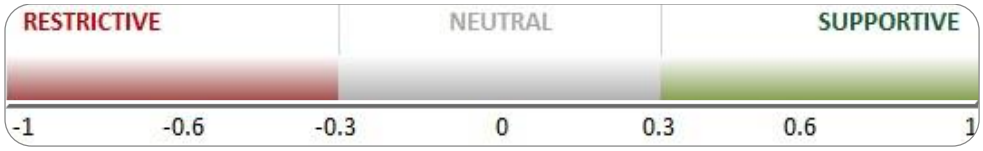
	The extent to which access to communications resources and basic infrastructure facilitates the work of CSOs
Sub-indicator 2.2	**Community Support:**
	The extent to which the public supports the work of CSOs
Sub-indicator 2.3	**Representation:**
	The extent to which CSOs successfully represent communities
Sub-indicator 2.4	**Professionalism:**
	The extent to which CSOs are independent and professional organizations
Sub-indicator 2.5	**Advocacy:**
	The extent to which CSOs successfully influence the government at national and local levels
Indicator 3	**The extent to which the governance environment (the application of law and use of authority) is conducive to the work of CSOs**
Sub-indicator 3.1	**Service provision:**
	The extent to which the environment is supportive for CSO involvement in service provision
Sub-indicator 3.2	**Coordination:**
	The extent to which CSOs collaborate with the government in order to achieve their mission
Sub-indicator 3.3	**Corruption (real/perceived):**
	The extent to which CSOs are able to work without being negatively affected by corruption
Sub-indicator 3.4	**Transparency:**
	The extent to which the government is transparent in its dealings with CSOs
Sub-indicator 3.5	**Facilitation:**
	The extent to which the state facilitates and promotes the work of CSOs
Indicator 4	**The extent to which the funding environment allows CSOs to shape their activities according to their mission.**
Sub-indicator 4.1	**Funding process:**
	The extent to which CSOs are able to access funding
Sub-indicator 4.2	**Financial independence:**
	The extent to which CSOs are financially independent
Indicator 5	**The extent to which the operational environment is secure for the CSOs to carry out their work**

Sub-indicator 5.1	**Access:**
	The degree to which the security situation affects CSOs' access to their constituencies or jurisdiction
Sub-indicator 5.2	**Program Implementation:**
	The degree to which security affects the CSO's ability to implement their programs and projects
Sub-indicator 5.3	**Security Threats:**
	The degree to which CSOs feel of threatened by non-state and state actors
Sub-indicator 5.4	**Personal Safety of Staff:**
	The degree to which the security situation affects the personal safety and security of CSO staff

Scoring Scheme

Each answer was assigned a score between -1 and 1, with a score of -1 being restrictive, 0 being neutral (neither supportive nor restrictive to the enabling environment for CSOs, and +1 being supportive. Figure 7 with the key below elaborates upon this scoring scheme.

Figure 7: Scoring Scheme



KEY

Score	Value
-1	Totally restrictive of the enabling environment for CSOs
-0.5	Somewhat unsupportive of the enabling environment for CSOs
0	Neither supportive nor restrictive of the enabling environment for CSOs
0.5	Somewhat supportive of the enabling environment for CSOs
1	Totally supportive of the enabling environment for CSOs

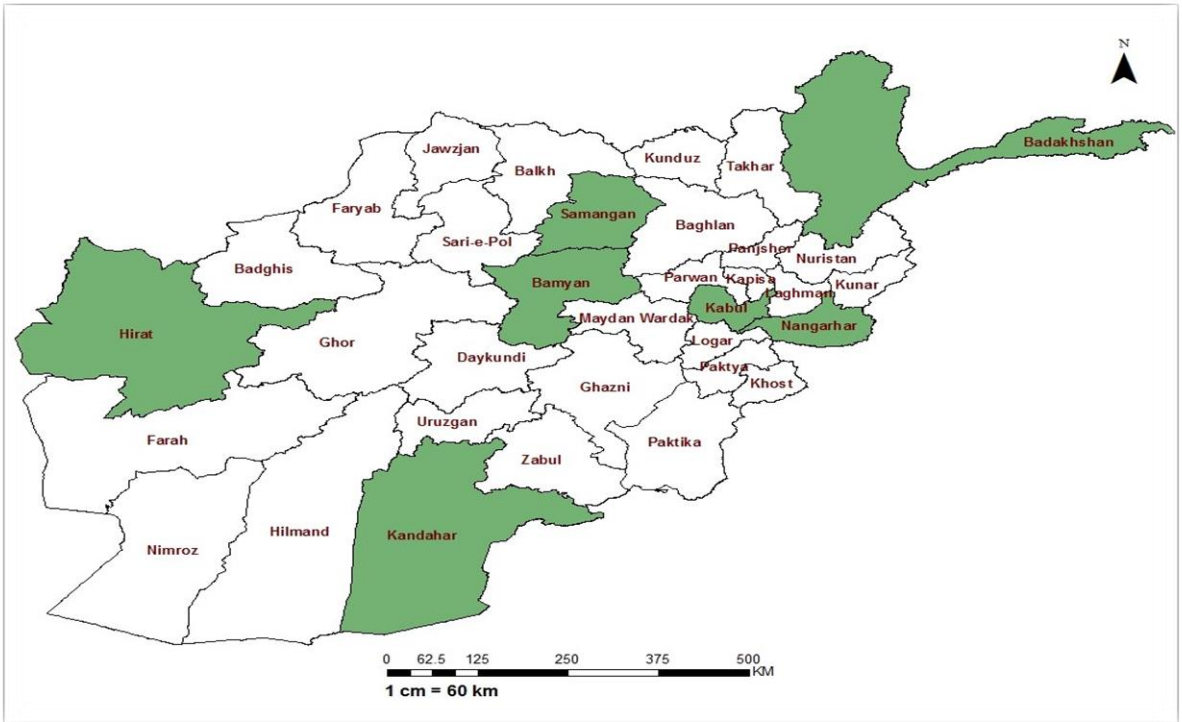
The remainder of this chapter discusses the research design, including geographical coverage and sampling frame. A description of the data collection tools, process and analysis is followed by a discussion of the study limitations.

Research Design

The SEECA 2016 study sought to ensure geographic representation and inclusivity, which enhances the level of confidence in, and generalizability of, the findings. The distribution of CSOs within Afghanistan varies across the country, ranging from intense coverage in the capital, reasonable coverage in the

provincial centers, to limited coverage in remote areas and rural provinces. In order to maximize geographical representation, the following seven provinces were chosen: Badakhshan, Bamyan, Herat, Kabul, Kandahar, Nangarhar, and Samangan (Figure 8).

Figure 8: SEECA's Geographical Coverage



While Bamyan, Herat, Kabul, Kandahar, and Samangan provinces were included in SEECA 2016, Badakhshan and Nangarhar were added to the study this year, to expand zonal coverage (Nangarhar represents an additional zone), and to include areas with less CSO concentration (Badakhshan has fewer CSOs). These seven provinces vary in terms of their population size, levels of international support, access to resources, ethnic and cultural compositions, and security conditions.

The research design for SEECA 2017 used qualitative and quantitative methods, including a desk review; survey questionnaires; open-ended interviews; and focus group discussions (FGDs). The desk review drew on relevant academic and policy publications related to civil society in Afghanistan, and the enabling environment for civil society. It was designed to inform the research, develop and modify research tools, and to situate the findings within a broader context.

A diverse collection of qualitative, quantitative and mixed-methods tools enabled the investigators to collect information from triangulated sources and add depth to the research. The following six research tools were employed:

1. Closed-ended surveys for CSO members
2. Closed-ended surveys for CSO beneficiaries
3. Open-ended questionnaires for CSO members
4. Open-ended questionnaires for CSO beneficiaries

5. Open-ended questionnaires for government officials
6. Protocols for focus group discussions and case studies.

Once finalized, these tools were imported into KoBo Toolbox, a free open-source tool for mobile data collection allowing researchers to collect data in the field using mobile devices such as mobile phones or tablets.[219]

The surveys constituted the main source of data for this research. Survey questionnaires were designed to reflect the analytical framework discussed above, and were administered directly by AICS researchers to CSO members, beneficiaries, and government officials, with results captured using KoBo. CSOs and respondent groups were selected by AICS researchers from a list provided by Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Haj and Islamic Affairs, and the Ministry of Economy. The qualitative component included open-ended interviews, focus group discussions with CSO members, beneficiaries, and government officials, and key informant interviews with civil society actors and experts. Survey questionnaires were mixed-method in design, asking mainly closed-ended questions, but also encompassing additional open-ended questions, in order to collect more in-depth and contextual information. Apart from the interviews and FGDs, several case stories were developed to further illustrate the characteristics of the enabling environment for CSOs in Afghanistan. Tables 7 and 8 respectively show the numbers of CSOs interviewed according to type of CSO, and the number of CSO members interviewed per type of CSO and by Province. Table 10 presents the number of respondents interviewed with each research tool, across the seven provinces.

Table 10: Number of Interviews per Type of CSO

Type of CSO	No of Interviews	Percentage
Public service delivery organization	243	34.42%
Media organization	107	15.16%
Advocacy organization	73	10.34%
Other	108	15.30%
Cultural and/or artistic association	74	10.48%
Community Council (CDCs, DDAs, etc.)	67	9.49%
Traditional Shura/ Religious organization	21	2.97%
Professional association	12	1.70%
Missing	1	0.14%
Total	706	100.00%

Table 11: Number of CSO Members Interviewed per Type of CSO and by Province

Type of CSO	Kabul	Herat	Kandahar	Nangarhar	Bamyan	Badakhshan	Samangan	Total

[219] http://www.kobotoolbox.org/

Public service delivery organization	105	23	27	51	19	16	2	243
Advocacy organization	25	19	5	1	9	3	11	73
Media organization	57	15	7	7	5	6	10	107
Other	54	29	7	1	0	5	12	108
Cultural and/or artistic association	46	11	0	0	5	9	3	74
Community Council (CDCs, DDAs, etc.)	34	1	16	6	7	3	0	67
Traditional Shura	1	0	11	7	1	0	1	21
Professional association	7	3	0	0	1	0	1	12
Total	**330**	**101**	**73**	**73**	**47**	**42**	**40**	**706**

Table 12: Number of Respondents Interviewed with Each Research Tool across the Seven Provinces

Research Tool	Bamyan	Herat	Kabul	Kandahar	Samangan	Nangarhar	Badakh-shan	Total	Targeted interviewees
Closed-ended surveys with CSO member	**41**	**92**	**320**	**65**	**26**	**70**	**32**	**708**[220]	Members
Closed-ended surveys with CSO beneficiaries	**6**	**10**	**10**	**10**	**2**	**10**	**10**	**90**[221]	Beneficiaries
Open-ended Interviews	**5** **5** **3**	**10** **5** **3**	**10** **5** **4**	**10** **5** **3**	**7** **2** **3**	**10** **5** **3**	**10** **5** **3**	**62** **32** **22**	Members Beneficiaries Government Officials
Focus group discussion	**2**	**2**	**2**	**2**	**2**	**2**	**2**	**14**	CSO Members
Case study	**2**	**2**	**2**	**2**	**2**	**2**	**2**	**14**	CSO members from FGDs

[220] Note that the open-ended interviews with CSO members (62) have also been counted as part of the closed-ended surveys, given that the former encompassed all close-ended questions with additional open-ended questions. Based on the sampling plan, we aimed for 708 interviews with CSOs, but the actual final number reached was 706, as two interviewees did not complete the process.

[221] Given that the open-ended interview questionnaire for beneficiaries included all the closed-ended survey questions, they (32) are counted as part of the total number of closed-ended surveys.

Sampling and Sample Size

To enable the researchers to analyze an issue from multiple perspectives and further triangulate data, three different respondent groups were chosen, including CSO members, CSO beneficiaries and Government officials. The numbers of open-ended interviews and focus group discussions were selected to achieve an equal distribution across the seven provinces, and interviewees for the open-ended interviews were randomly selected using the lottery method (discussed in more detail below). The selection of focus group discussants was purposive, targeting civil society activists in their respective provinces, and others with intensive experience working with CSOs.

Respondent selection for the closed-ended surveys was based on a representative sampling method, with representation based on the total number of CSOs found within each province, a confidence level of 95%, and margin of error of +/- 5%. Representational sampling was chosen to establish the sample size while ensuring parallels between the key features and types of CSOs across the seven provinces. The formula employed to determine the sample size was:

$$n = \frac{Z^2\, P(1-P)}{d^2}$$

where,
n = Sample size,
Z = Z statistic for a level of confidence
P = Expected prevalence or proportion (if the expected prevalence is 20%, then P =0.2)
d = Precision (if the precision is 5%, then d = 0.05).

The lottery method was used to select survey targets from lists which were provided by Ministry of Economy, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Information and Culture, Ministry of Hajj and Islamic Affairs. This involved the random selection of interviewees to minimize bias in the representative sample. Each member on the list was assigned a number, and the interviewees were selected using a random number table. When information on the list was inaccurate (e.g. the listed CSO did not exist), or if the CSO initially selected was not available, the next CSO listed on the random number table was selected as a replacement.

Data Collection (Preparation, Processes and Procedures)

Preparation for the data collection started with a review of the research methodology, revision of the research tools, pilot testing of the tools, and staff recruitment and training, followed by field entry negotiations, data collection and management.

This year's revised research tools were piloted in Kabul with representatives from all three respondent groups: CSO members, beneficiaries and government officials. Findings from the pilot-testing resulted in revising the tools to clarify language, remove repetitive questions, and reduce the length of the questionnaires.

Nineteen staff (10 enumerators, 7 lead enumerators, 1 database assistant and 1 qualitative researcher) were recruited for the data collection and management. There were two staff members per province (one enumerator and one lead-enumerator), except for Kabul where there were five staff (one lead enumerator and 4 enumerators). The staff was composed of four females and fifteen males who were

selected on merit. These field staff underwent a three-day training in Kabul aimed at equipping the participants with the necessary knowledge, attitudes, and skills to collect reliable data. The training was primarily comprised of discussions around the analytical framework, index of the study and methods, and hands-on practice using the data collection tools, e.g. 'mock interviews' using KoBo.

For the field work, permission and coordination letters were obtained from the Ministry of Economy, Ministry of Hajj and Islamic Affairs, Ministry of Justice and Ministry of Information and Culture. Field staff were provided with copies of these letters along with consent forms, the sampling frame (including the name of the CSO, name of the head of the organization and his/her phone number and office address), and data collection tools (including mobile phones, and sound recorders). Field staff were issued official identity cards to facilitate legitimate field entry. The lead enumerators were assigned the task of coordinating the data collection in collaboration with the enumerators.

Each provincial team was responsible for completing the agreed-upon number of closed-ended and open-ended interviews with all three of the respondent groups. The lead enumerators also did quality checks to ensure the accuracy of the field data. Data for the quantitative survey questionnaires was collected through smart phones via KoBo, and audio recorders were used for the open-ended questions (after seeking consent), or captured on paper and later transcribed into KoBo. Interviews were sent to the database daily, and the data was checked and cleaned by the database assistant and verified by the authors.

The qualitative researcher, with the help of the lead enumerators, was responsible for developing the case stories and conducting all 14 focus group discussions (two per province). The FGDs were recorded on audio recorders, which the researcher later transcribed and translated into English. The qualitative researcher was also responsible for identifying critical incidents or cases during the FGDs to be further investigated for developing case stories.

Data Analysis

A data analysis plan was developed for calculating the index score that included the following steps:

1. Calculating the mean or average score of each valued question
2. Calculating the average or mean score of each sub-indicator by calculating the average score of all valued questions divided by the number of valued questions under each sub- indicator
3. Calculating the average score of each indicator by adding the average scores of each sub-indicator divided by the number of indicators
4. Calculating the total index score by calculating the average score of each main indicator divided by the total number of indicator.

Descriptive statistics, in the form of frequency and percentage analyses, were applied to create contingency tables from the frequency distribution, to better represent the collected data. Qualitative data from the FGDs, open-ended questionnaires and key informant interviews were read, reread, coded and categorized under the five domains of the analytical framework and used to substantiate findings from the quantitative data as well to provide contextual information and add more insight to the index scores.

Limitations

Over the course of the fieldwork and data analysis, the following limitations were encountered by the research team. These should be kept in mind when reading the report's findings.

- **Analytical Framework:** The analytical framework developed for this study is more contextual than analytical, and, for future studies, it needs to be revised in light of the theoretical advancements that have been made in measuring enabling environments. Likewise, it could be more comprehensive, as it has left important elements such as gender relations, ethno-religious and cultural factors, issues related to literacy, social status, political affiliations, and rural and urban differences.

- **Generalizability:** This research's findings may not necessarily be generalizable to all the Afghan CSOs because: (1) the study covered only 7 provinces out of 34, (2) data was collected only from CSOs from the provincial and district centers, and excluding those located more remotely, and (3) the emphasis has been more on the formal, registered type of CSO rather than on the non-formal ones.

- **Subjectivity:** The methodology that measures the index indicators is based on self-evaluations and perceptions from CSO members. While findings from the closed-ended survey have been triangulated with secondary research as well as qualitative research, the actual values of the index rely largely on the self-evaluation of respondents. Care should be exercised when reviewing the extent to which this approach has allowed for the index to capture a comprehensive set of aspects in regard to the enabling environment given the risk of self-reporting bias.

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