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Independent External Evaluation of CIVICUS

2008-2010

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

ACRONYMS

- **AGNA** - Affinity Group of National Associations
- **BRICS** – A grouping of newly powerful countries comprising Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa
- **CIDA** - Canadian International Development Agency
- **CSI** - Civil Society Index
- **CSO** - Civil Society Organisation
- **CSW** - Civil Society Watch
- **DFID** - UK Department for International Development
- **DSG** - Deputy Secretary General
- **EWS** – Early Warning System
- **GCAP** - Global Call to Action Against Poverty
- **IPLF** - Impact Planning and Learning Framework
- **INGO** - International Non-Governmental Organisations
- **LTA** - Legitimacy, Transparency and Accountability Project
- **MENA** – Middle East and North Africa Region
- **NGO** - Non-governmental Organisation
- **PG** - Participatory Governance
- **RBA** - Rights Based Approach
- **SG** - Secretary General
- **SIDA** – Swedish International Development Agency
- **TOR** - Terms of Reference
- **UNDP** - United Nations Development Programme
- **WA** - World Assembly

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND RECOMENDATIONS

This mid-term review of CIVICUS' work and activities under the current Strategic Plan (2008 – 2012) is based on a broad assessment of programme work over a three year period - 2008 to 2010. The evaluation objectives centered on the following areas:

- Assessing CIVICUS organisation-wide performance by looking at its projects/programmes during 2008-2010
- Identifying strengths and weaknesses of CIVICUS major interventions
- Assessing the impact of the recent internal organisational restructuring, changes in human resources, and other "means" such as policies, systems, and structures
- Making recommendations on areas that need to be addressed

CIVICUS operates in an interesting political space, and in a highly complex context. Overall CIVICUS is highly valued and is considered an influential and important organisation, serving a useful and relatively targeted section of societal needs.

The development of CIVICUS over the last three years has been largely robust, effective and, given the external economic, social and political context, at times impressive. The internal context was particularly important and influential during this period. The emphasis on putting in place a new structure and strengthening the Secretariat has been begun to be vindicated by a strengthening network and growing organisational impact. CIVICUS has, in the period in question, devised and revised planning and learning systems, restructured staff structure and reformulated projects. It has introduced a range of new strategies and plans to reflect a new, and more strategic thematic direction. In terms of more specific role of CIVICUS, and targeting of its theory of change and mode of operation, there was less agreement on the detail. Further work may be required by the organisation to consider the implications of this.

The process of organisational 'renewal' was successful in terms of drafting and agreeing new systems and structures, however overall it has had some challenges in terms of both the time taken to agree the systems and structures and also in the degree to which they are operationally integrated. Planning systems have been improved over recent years but although they are technically robust, latent uncertainty amongst staff suggests that further capacity building is needed in this regard. Organisational learning and knowledge management is less vigorous at present, though this is recognised and CIVICUS has begun to act in this area. The Integrated Planning and Learning Framework is a good model of how civil society organisations should consider a holistic approach to planning, monitoring and evaluating, however the framework overall still lacks staff buy-in and further implementation and refinement will be needed to ensure a fuller impact on organisational effectiveness and performance.

While it is still too early to say whether renewal has fully had the positive impact hoped for, the new structure and thematic approach serve as a good platform on which to build for the future.

CIVICUS seems to place quite a high value on cost-consciousness and cost effectiveness, partly because funding is rarely adequate to cover all expenses of programme outputs. There are some suggestions that internal systems and capacities to deliver adequate financial information and technological support and solutions need to be - and are starting to be - addressed.

CIVICUS' focus on the three areas of: i) Protecting the rights of civil society actors ii) strengthening good practice within civil society and iii) strengthening civil society's ability to influence the policies and practices of governments, international institutions and the private sector - brings coherence to its programmes, though there is still more that can be done to maximise the synergies across the three strands of work, for example in terms of the research programme informing evidence-based advocacy fpr systemic social change.

Evidence points to quite significant and important gains, some of which can be attributed to CIVICUS and its partners' work, but mostly to which CIVICUS' work has contributed, including that of capacity building of civil society. Impacts include many instances of building the capacity of civil society, as well as high level influencing leading to policy change by CIVICUS staff and partners.

Projects such as the Civil Society Index and Civil Society Watch are particularly effective in achieving outcomes but many of the desired impacts remain at the level of 'process outcomes' or influence at one level away from what would normally be classically considered to be impact. Important projects including the World Assembly and Participatory Governance are also achieving significant outcomes. The Eurasia Network has spread awareness among civil society in a new geographic region and there was increased knowledge-sharing by activists. Such achievements are nonetheless important effects and achievement of the organisation's programmes and are widely recognised as such by partners, members and other informants.

CIVICUS has procedures to better report on impact, but the realisation of staff capacities to fully articulate impact in the longer term is still an ambition for the organisation, albeit one it is starting to take very seriously. This also applies to effectiveness, where staff and partners, although reluctant to comment on the classical evaluation components, were keen to point to effective achievements in numerous areas and were supported by the results of the e-survey, project evaluations and other literature. In terms of factors limiting effectiveness; communications, both internal and external, knowledge management and, time management and turnover, are all found to be at play.

CIVICUS interventions increasingly complement those of local civil society and NGOs, many of which have come to depend on CIVICUS as a source of expertise and a conduit for information. As far as it is possible to tell the design of CIVICUS programmes adequately involves other stakeholders and to some extent beneficiaries. The process is not always formal and there are some concerns that some projects were not adequately adaptable for local conditions and context.

Members and partners are mostly content that CIVICUS' overall objectives are being met, with greatest progress felt to be being made in terms of anaylsing the implications for civil society space and the opportunities for working in partnership. Currently, CIVICUS membership levels are relatively stable although they have been higher at various times in the past three years. More important to the organisation is that the issue of what membership for and what it means to the organisation is not yet fully settled. Member communications are mostly highly appreciated by members, including the e-CIVICUS newsletter, but communications requires sharpening against organisational priorities. Member 'voice' needs to be fortified to better reflect and reinforce the networked nature of the organisation.

Geographically CIVICUS is 'present' in over 90 countries. But this impressive breadth of organisational reach does not always translate into depth. Evidence indicates that the strongest region of organisational influence is sub-Saharan Africa, Latin America is considered to be a moderately strong region and South

Asia weaker. There is perceived need to reformulate the organisation according to the new global power dynamics and, when resources allow, expand in areas that strategically located to make the biggest possible change. This ambition is sometimes undermined by the organisational model which looks to work with existing partners who are not always present in key territories.

The work done so far on decentralisation has the laudable aim of bringing the organisation closer to its partners. The 'vision' for decentralisation: based on what is described as the 'value-proposition' is not yet agreed. There is also more work to do on how this will be operationalised, and also on the fundamental reasons for it, its link with membership, and emergent theories of change.

Whilst staff and management are equally committed in their work and are clearly inspired in what they do day-to-day, turnover of staff linked to location, continues to make organisational learning and continuity of contact with partners difficult at times. Overall, staff appear to be struggling with their workloads and are not always able to prioritise effectively. This is despite attempts to do so within the planning system. Staff may need help with prioritisation, however overall it seems clear that over time the organisation has a propensity to take on too much work and may need to slim down the number of project and while deepening others in years to come.

The last three years, although broadly successful, has left little appetite for new papers and strategies, given the renewal process and its length and scope. As the approaching new strategic phase in 2013 during the next period for any strategic work produced should be at the level of refinements of existing positions, clarifications or capacity building programmes in support of existing strategies. Nevertheless the last three years has undoubtedly left the organisation with many more opportunities going forward to continue to become more effective and have a bigger impact. The key and inter-twined challenges of tackling membership and decentralisation, and bedding down systems and structure will be the key to unlocking future potential of an already vibrant and strong network.

'STRATEGIC' RECOMMENDATIONS

☐ **Recommendation 1:** Set up a renewed process by which the outstanding and unsettled elements of theories of change are dealt with systematically before the end of the current strategic period, in order to feed into the next strategic plan.

☐ **Recommendation 2:** Continue to consider the operational and strategic implications of decentralisation, perhaps in the form of a working group which would include board members. Set a clear date for a final report and implement the decision.

☐ **Recommendation 3:** Membership voice should be addressed and the meaning and value of membership needs to be settled by an internal process. This should be integrated with the decentralisation 'project', so as to maximise the potential for regional links with members as well as link to the secretariat.

☐ **Recommendation 4:** External communications capacity should be increased when resources allow. This could follow a revised communications strategy, which in turn could shadow renewed thinking on decentralisation, membership and advocacy.

☐ **Recommendation 5:** Consider scaling back the overall number of projects that the organisation runs, with a view to further integrating projects and deepening core competencies.

'TACTICAL' RECOMMENDATIONS

☐ **Recommendation 5:** Staff may need further and perhaps ongoing capacity building, perhaps in the form of training, regarding the strategic planning processes, and particularly on the thematic plan.

☐ **Recommendation 6:** CIVICUS should develop a common and agreed understanding of impact linked to the emerging 'theory of change' discussions.

☐ **Recommendation 7:** In relation to the current programme, and in order to strengthen secretariat and country context synergies, it is recommended developing 'country evaluation reports', focusing on outcomes and impact, and that the key partners for each country organise conferences in future years looking at results and needs for the future, perhaps linked to the relevant donor.

☐ **Recommendation 8:** CIVICUS could identify internal capacity indicators to track the extent of implementation and consider refining the learning elements of IPLF, with leadership championing and further staff input.

☐ **Recommendation 9:** Consider undertaking a major risk assessment of funders, which could include a major analysis of the future of the funding 'space', with considered options further diversifying the funding base, including possibly approaching more progressive philanthropic funders.

☐ **Recommendation 10:** CIVICUS should consider the development of a renewed Membership Development Strategy. This could include updating approaches to member recruitment and retention, and take into account strategies for geographical targeting and member profiling. It could also draw out important aspects including member segmentation and identifying further strategies for *organising actively* as well as *servicing passively*. This strategy could consider a programme of regular visits and delegations to support member and partner if deemed appropriate.

☐ **Recommendation 11:** Member and partner communication could better reflect the networked nature of the organisation, ensuring clarity of member and partner voice, while highlighting current overall advocacy-oriented priorities and actions.

☐ **Recommendation 12:** Consult further with funders on options for future and deeper dialogue to build mutual understanding, seek shared objectives and attempt to maximise the opportunities presented by donors links and leverage, especially at the national level.

☐ **Recommendation 13:** Whilst it is apparent that BRICS countries are key to future global geo-politics, and that CIVICUS is well placed to provide civil society coordination in this regard, we would suggest that an analysis first undertaken, scoping opportunities and threats, and setting any scale up of work against other future organisational priorities.

☐ **Recommendation 13:** Consider establishing a scoping exercise for understanding strategic trends and drivers for the role of progressive philanthropy

'PRACTICAL' RECOMMENDATIONS

☐ **Recommendation 14:** Recommendation: Prioritise and upgrade internal systems for financial reporting and information with systems built around providing the information that managers need to plan effectively.

☐ **Recommendation 15:** Consider prioritising plans to prioritise and upgrade information technology systems.

☐ **Recommendation 16:** Wherever possible seek to make translation more comprehensive and, when budget allows, employ professional translation services for documents, workshops and events

☐ **Recommendation 17:** Consider three-monthly (or similar) shortlisted organisational priorities that are clearly indentified, shared and reflected in external communications.

☐ **Recommendation 18:** Consider further tools and support to increase the action elements of the CSI research and ensure systems for follow up. Also ensure plans for continuity of partner contact are put in place and acted upon.

☐ **Recommendation 19:** AGNA and CIVICUS consider revisiting and discussing the issue of AGNA membership rules.

"When people participate, things get better" (CIVICUS member[2])

1. INTRODUCTION

CIVICUS: World Alliance for Citizen Participation is an international alliance of civil society organisations dedicated to strengthening citizen action and civil society. Formally established in 1993, CIVICUS occupies a unique position as the largest, most diverse and broadly recognised civil society alliance in the world. Its vision is of "A worldwide community of informed, inspired, committed citizens engaged in confronting the challenges facing humanity."[3]

In January 2011 CIVICUS published a terms of reference for an External Evaluation of CIVICUS. The authors of this report, Steve Tibbett and Chris Stalker[4] (from here on referred to as 'the consultants') were appointed in March 2011 to undertake the evaluation and worked closely with the 'Evaluation Management Team' made up of six CIVICUS staff.

PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES OF THE EVALUATION

This mid-term review of CIVICUS' work and activities under the current Strategic Plan (2008 – 2012) is based on a broad assessment of programme work over a three year period - 2008 to 2010. It used the lenses of relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact, sustainability and implementation processes to assess CIVICUS' performance during this period. The evaluation is intended principally for learning and accountability purposes, and aimed at generating relevant findings, lessons and recommendations to inform and guide CIVICUS' current and future work. The report was also commissioned by DFID and NOVIB, whose performance framework is annexed.

The end-users of the evaluation results are principally CIVICUS itself as it plans for the next strategic period post 2012. Additionally other stakeholders – donors in particular, but also members, supporters and other civil society groups – may also want to use the findings to better understand organisational challenges and strategic impact.

The specific evaluation objectives were to:

- Assess CIVICUS organisation-wide performance by looking at its projects/programmes during 2008-2010 along the identified evaluation criteria (relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability)

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[2] Insight from a CIVICUS member when responding to this evaluation
[3] CIVICUS Website
[4] Chris Stalker and Steve Tibbett are independent consultants and have successfully collaborated on many NGO and IGO strategic reviews, evaluations and organisational development and strategy processes. The team has a long history working within the environment within which CIVICUS operates and of working with and within global networks, alliances and international coalitions. Examples of recent joint work include an evaluation of UNFPA's advocacy grants programme (2008); a review of World Vision's advocacy programme (2008-2009); an organisational strategic review of Bretton Woods Project (2010) and a review and framework for impact and effectiveness for WaterAid (2010-11). Chris and Steve work with a range of consultants based in the UK and across the globe and bring in other skills and support as required.

- Identify strengths and weaknesses of CIVICUS major interventions by focusing on the effectiveness and efficiency of systems established for the implementation of projects/programmes during 2008-2010

- Assess the (potential) impact of the recent internal organisational restructuring ("renewal"), changes in human resources, and other "means" such as policies, systems, and structures on the performance and achievements of CIVICUS. This includes assessment of CIVICUS' capacity enhancement activities for partners and analysis of the effects of these activities as well as future needs

- Make recommendations on areas that need to be addressed more or better during the remaining part of strategic plan (2011 – 2012) and in the next strategic plan period (2013 – 2017). This is in order to have organisational continuity and use of innovative approaches.

THIS REPORT

This report is the central output of the Evaluation project. The report employs the common technique of using quotations from interviews and focus group participants for illustrative purposes. Such quotations are generally used to illustrate a wider - or widely held - point of view, although occasionally they are used to outline a particular finding or viewpoint that is considered interesting or important by the evaluators. Where it is the latter, this is indicated. In the categorisation employed, the term *'staff member'* applies to any staff member or ex-staff member interviewed. *'Insider'* could also apply to staff members, ex-staff, board members and consultants. Other respondents ('*interviewees', 'outsider', 'informant'*) would usually indicate a partner or member, but sometimes a donor. Some comments made by donors (where deemed necessary) are explicitly indicated.

2. EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

The methodology for the evaluation was informed by the Terms of Reference published by CIVICUS and proposed by the consultants and subsequently negotiated collaboratively between CIVICUS and the consultants (See annex 1). Annex 2 contains the Evaluation Framework and research questions. The Evaluation Framework and research questions were drawn from the Terms of reference, but also supplemented by questions from staff and donors.

The methodology and approach draws from both quantitative and qualitative data, but with an emphasis on the latter.

EVIDENCE BASE

Sources of evidence for this evaluation were drawn from the following methods:

- Semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders including partners, members, donors, board members and staff. The interviews were non-attributable. The total number of interviewees was 67, which included 33 staff, two board members, six members, 13 implementing partners, eight donor representatives, and five other constituents

- Small group discussions with staff members and partners

- Focus groups discussions with partners, members and staff during site visits in four countries where CIVICUS is operational – South Africa, Uganda, Zambia and Mexico.

- A wide-scale e-survey sent to 499 CIVICUS constituents: members, partners, staff, donors and other key informants on CIVICUS' database[5]

- A literature review of key documents and reports produced by CIVICUS as well as several independent assessments and evaluations (see Annex 3).

- Other desk research in order to analyse the civil society context and emerging trends that CIVICUS may need to respond to in the future

Sampling and site visits

Given that CIVICUS' work is global and covers a wide spectrum of civil society issues and involves inputs from a wide array of stakeholders notably members and implementing partners it was found necessary to include country level field visits in the evaluation design. The purpose of these visits was to generate empirical data that would illuminate CIVICUS' performance on the various evaluation issues in a more concrete and evidence based way. At least one country from four identified regions - Middle East and North Africa, Latin America, Eastern Africa, and Southern Africa – were identified for in-depth country study.

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[5] The survey respondents numbered 42. Respondees were self selecting and, as always with quantitative opt-in surveys such as this, the result may therefore be skewed with respondees disposed to positive impressions of CIVICUS. The e-survey results have been used as supplementary information and triangulated with data sets from other sources to base the evaluation findings.

Based on the information available (numbers and distribution of members and implementing partners, location of projects, etc), supplemented with CIVICUS' staff knowledge about the various regions and locations, the following countries[6] were selected for site visits: **Uganda** (Eastern Africa), **Mexico** (Latin America), **South Africa & Zambia** (Southern Africa), and **MENA**[7].

For the purposes of the in-depth portion of the research in these countries, a mixed methodology approach, using a mixture of interviews, literature reviews and focus groups was applied. The site visits were necessarily short (mostly 3-4 days) in line with data requirements, budget and also commensurate with the numbers of stakeholders available.

Analysis

As noted above a mixture of quantitative and qualitative approaches and methods were applied, but with the emphasis on the latter. The basis for analysis included key strategic and planning benchmarks, previous evaluation and the DFID and NOVIB performance frameworks annexed here. Wherever appropriate, triangulation (convergence of multiple data sources) was used to interpret and validate findings and deliberate on *prima facie* contradictory findings. Based on the analysis, and drawing on experience, sector knowledge and good practice, the consultants developed the key findings and recommendations.

Limitations

In large part due to CIVICUS' intended wide use of the evaluation results, the evaluation design was, understandably, very broad as it covered almost all aspects of CIVICUS' programmatic work and operational organisation during the evaluation period. Therefore while broad assessments are made on a range of topics and issues, the depth that a more singular or narrowly focussed assessment might have made has not been feasible. This applies particularly to the many projects that CIVICUS runs, which, although limited comments are captured noted on some projects – have been approached in terms of their impact and as exemplars of wider organisational trends.

In addition to the challenges of scale, the other notable contextual challenge was one of timing, especially in regard to issues of recent CIVICUS internal organisation. It was clear from a number of internal interviewees that the organisational 'reform' process of 2010 is still continuing to have implications on motivation and morale - some negative, some positive – and the evaluation may have been conducted early to truly reflect the impact of this in the medium-term.

Whilst the site visits were useful additions to the evaluation picture, the findings from the in-country case studies cannot be generalised for the regions covered because none of these regions is homogenous. Furthermore, because CIVICUS does not have a direct presence on the ground and has wide coverage rather than large concentrations in particular countries, it was difficult to interrogate deeply into CIVICUS

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[6] These were regions and countries where CIVICUS projects/programmes were operational during the evaluation period (2008 – 2010), where there were a fair number of active members and implementing partners, and countries which may not been covered as case studies in recent CIVICUS evaluations.

[7] Given the social context and political difficulties at the time of the evaluation, and constraints on time and budget, a field visit to this region was not possible. Instead, a series of telephone semi-structured interviews were held. Members/partners from this region were also involved in the e-survey.

work at the country level by visiting particular countries. This was particularly the case in Zambia, but also applied in other contexts. Nonetheless, the in-country findings offer some concrete and useful examples to illuminate CIVICUS' performance in its global work, where it has worked mostly with others (members and implementing partners) in-country.

3.1. CONTEXT AND HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

TRENDS AFFECTING CIVIL SOCIETY AND CIVICUS

CIVICUS operates in an interesting political and social space, and in a highly complex geo-political context. The arena in which it operates is also a contested one and, arguably, in many territories it is also a shrinking space. There is a sense in which - in the words of one participant in this evaluation - "benevolence towards civil society has gone". This ill will has perhaps been most striking in Sub-Saharan Africa and Central Asia, but civil society is also assertive and centre stage as witnessed currently in the Middle East and elsewhere.

The implications of globalisation and 'interconnectedness' continue to generate shifting patterns of poverty and insecurity both within and between countries that call for new and international responses. Following the economic crisis in 2008 and as bilateral and multilateral aid declines, new forms of international co-operation are emerging to meet the realities of this changing world, with a focus on transparency, accountability and standards rather than subsidised resource transfers.

In this context, a key question is whether the states of the future will benefit people in poverty and poor countries. CSOs have an important role to play in ensuring that this happens - by building strong domestic constituencies for international co-operation, forging transnational alliances that seek to represent poor peoples' interests in more pluralistic structures of governance, and enhancing the capacity of civil society to participate at every level.

The so called "Arab Spring" of 2011 has, at least in part, been testament to the power of citizen-led social accountability movements. CSOs have been drawn deeply into a tangled web of tensions and dilemmas. This has followed an unprecedented period of self-examination, and a radical re-assessment of civil society roles in the humanitarian arena. A traditional relief focus has given way to a range of inter-connected peace-building, conflict-resolution, advocacy and humanitarian assistance strategies that try to lever macro-level changes as well as positive results on the ground.

Arguably, along with the political scope for civil society, the funding space has also been shrinking and some important donors increasing quest for results, outcomes and value for money metrics is proving a challenge for many CSO's including CIVICUS. One interviewee said that "funding has become more unreasonable … the outcome based approach (which has become popular) is not right for civil society organisations like CIVICUS". Parallel with this, however, new social and progressive philanthropy has grown, providing new opportunities for civil society but also new challenges and a changing balance of power.

HISTORICAL FEATURES OF CIVICUS

CIVICUS has been an important actor on the global civil society stage, working on knowledge generation, networking and influencing over the last nearly 20 years. CIVICUS' reach, reputation and impact has

generally increased over time, growing from a small platform emanating from a board comprised of key players from the sector in the early 1990's, to the globally recognised civil society network with partners in 50 countries and 284 members in 92 countries[8].

The organisation had a period of "boom years" under the stewardship of a high-profile and dynamic Secretary General, during a time of growing global interest in (and increasing money and space for) civil society. CIVICUS managed to link itself to a growing number of projects, platforms and campaigns over this time, described by one insider as "an accumulation of a hodgepodge of projects". Many of these projects were (and continue to be in some cases) tied to particular funding streams and though some funders have resisted, other funders only fund projects and some are going back to it. It some ways this led the organisation into a 'projectisation' mode". It is also the case that these projects operated largely in isolated silos within the organisation, with little recognisable and realised synergies between them.

Much of the internal energy past three years (2008-10) has been spent dealing with the fallout (both positive and negative) from the past. One notable facet of the more recent past was that of CIVICUS having a reputation as a successful, high profile organisation, but without necessarily the structures, strategies, systems and funding to sustainably deliver effectively in the future and had "a big reputation to live up to". This was reinforced by an 'activist' rather 'reflective' tendency in the Secretariat.

Senior management and the board realised that more and better structures were needed for CIVICUS' work and that silos needed to be broken down. There were moves initiated towards a more deliberate advocacy approach and more overall coherence given to the strategy, with more synergy sought between projects and teams.

The funding base also needed to change, moving away from project funding and towards core funding. There were also a significant number of donors signaling a willingness to fund CIVICUS as a whole, but also indicating that a more coherent strategy and structure be put in place.

CIVICUS in recent years has been driven by three key *Strategic Directions* that were finalised in 2008. These were:

- Protecting the rights of civil society actors
- Strengthening good practice within civil society
- Strengthening civil society's ability to influence the policies and practices of governments, international institutions and the private sector

Structurally, and in terms of staffing, CIVICUS realised that it would have to amend its team structures and set about undertaking a process which became known as organisational 'Renewal'. The process, which took place over the period mid 2009 to late 2010 attempted to deal with a multiple and overlapping set of problems around sustainability of the funding model, staff structure, silos and strategic synergies. In some ways it is what one of the evaluation participants referred to as the organisation "growing up".

This *Strategic Directions* model for the organisation was supplemented by a recent document – the *Thematic Plan 2011-2012.* This document attempts to help to bind organisational cross departmental working more closely together, make more sense of the organisation's strategic roles, and give a clearer thematic structure to the organisation's work that didn't simply follow a project-driven workplan.

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[8] Most recent membership information provided by CIVICUS - email correspondence, 10/03/11

Overall we would consider these internal contextual factors to be particularly important in the organisational performance over the evaluation period.

SOME COMMENTS ON RECENT EXTERNAL REVIEWS

Universalia Organizational Assessment of CIVICUS

This was a very wide ranging and major organisational evaluation funded and represents a snapshot of the organisation at the end of the last, and beginning of the current strategic plan period. Comments on finance, management, structure, governance, strategy, network, gender and so on are mainly focused on work emanating from the Secretariat rather than the wider network.

In general the review is quite positive. It also shows the very broad mandate of CIVICUS. Civil Society Index and World Assembly return a positive assessment, but Civil Society Watch less so. It found that CIVICUS had made progress towards its mission of strengthening civil society by creating a global platform, raising the profile of key issues, carving out space, providing access to information and facilitating tools and processes at national levels. It found CIVICUS to be generally effective and efficient (where data allowed an assessment) and was mainly complimentary about leadership, management and relevance.

However, it found that the broad mandate has made it difficult to establish clear priorities and demonstrate how it is meeting its goals and expressed concerns about the lack of an affective M&E system, staffing problems and engagement of members. It also raised concerns about lack of programme synergy, clarity about the value and role of membership, and location and incentives in relation to staffing.

CIVICUS Social Change Network Survey: iScale & Keystone

This survey of CIVICUS, popularly known as the CCF survey (Comparative Constituency Feedback) was undertaken in early 2010 and involved all categories of CIVICUS' constituency. Like most survey-based reports the findings are limited, nevertheless they remain a very valuable, partly because they are based on a comparison of nine networks. Overall CIVICUS comes out fairly average or perhaps slightly below average on most areas measured such as meeting expected needs of members, value of new relationships, impact and synergy produced.

Civil Society Index Impact Assessment

This was an external evaluation by Swiss consulting firm Skat of a period of the Civil Society Index. Findings point to knowledge creation being the main achievement of CSI, as well as some impact on legitimacy and accountability of CSOs and strengthening of many of the in-country 'National Coordinating Organisations' (high profile national CSOs). In many ways it put CIVICUS 'on the map' and helped the organisation to link up with lots of CSOs around the globe.

Gender and Diversity Assessment

This assessment followed the setting up of a gender policy task force to deal gender and diversity issues. It focussed internally on Secretariat rather than the wider work. Its assessment is that, in terms of attitudes, gender is less of a problem than race and awareness on gender is quite high, but it found that there is somewhat of a lack of skills to act on it in programmatic approaches for instance.

3.2. STRATEGY AND PLANNING

In the longer term and at the macro level at least there has been clarity about the way in which the organisation has grown, and conceptualised its own role and purpose. At the level of mission and

E-survey statement:
"CIVICUS is clear about its mission and purpose "
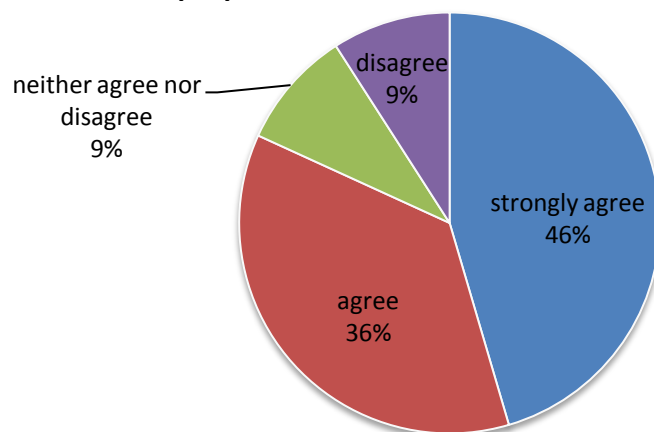
purpose, for instance, e-survey respondents were fairly whole hearted about CIVICUS' own clarity.

As recognised above there have been a number of strategies and plans which have attempted to give the organisation direction and structure. The key strategic guide for the period in question is the *Strategic Directions 2008-2012* document which underpins the operational plans and informs most of the 2008-10 priorities, and continues to prop up much of the current planning and activity.

The *Strategic Directions* document itself is bold in terms of scope and ambition. It has also perhaps suffered from some dissonance with views of some current staff, as its authors and proponents have mostly moved on. At some levels it seems that there is, to an extent, a lack of clarity amongst some staff about which of the strategic planning documents is the primary document to guide ongoing operational decision-making and prioritisation across and within programme areas. As one key staff member said: "There are too many planning documents and processes, some are useful but we do need more focus and agreement about what our [organisational] priorities are…at any one time". It was not found, from a technical planning point of view at least, that too many documents and processes necessarily exist, but want to reflect back this fairly common view, which may reflect a lack of understanding of processes or lack of training in the use of planning processes.

Core funding for CIVICUS (as opposed to project-specific funding) has increased in recent years. This is due both to the willingness to award it from donors and the ability of the organisation to outline a credible proposition to be core funded. But this has brought pressures too, in terms of a need to restructure and re-format the organisation in a more synergistic form. In the field of planning and strategy, the *CIVICUS Integrated Thematic Plan 2011-2012* developed through a staff workshop process during December 2010 is intended to, under the broad trajectory of the *Strategic Directions* strategy, put some thematic structure into planning and under the guide of the IPLF. The plan is again quite bold, but coherent and

considered, and should help managers plan and integrate work better. It was described by one as a "middle step between the strategy and the plans".

There was a clear support amongst some staff members for the attempt to give planning a clearer thematic structure. One staff member said: "we now do a lot more planning and thinking … we used be very reactive now we have more plans and a bit more structure (to our work)".

Whilst most partners were not aware or only dimly aware of this new approach, some staff did had strong views on it: "Thematic planning is something that we have not got our heads around yet … we do not feel ownership over it (yet), a lot of stuff will need to change if we are to work with it, but it will eventually work I think". There were several comments along these lines. However, it also the case that, because of staff turnover and restructuring, work culture issues and the period of change the organisation has been through, that such changes are likely to be difficult to implement in the short-to-medium term.

There is undoubtedly a period of bedding down which is necessary in order for the thematic planning processes to work or to be seen to work. Our finding in this area is that it is too early to judge whether thematic planning has worked and that the changes envisaged will come to pass.

In general on planning, there is some perceptible resistance amongst staff. For instance several staff members views are represented by the comment: "sometimes it feels like you spend (too much) … time planning and not enough time doing – we need to swing back to a happy medium".

An insight from the online e-survey relevant in this area was: "More holistic planning needed in the future – a stronger link needed between strategic directions (SDs) and programme work -- this requires better project planning and design (including prioritisation), and establishment of clear milestones and indicators against which progress towards SDs can be measured. CIVICUS also needs to clearly define and develop its role as a Secretariat that enables and facilitates its networks (to work towards SDs), rather than doing the work by itself."

Although the guidelines for planning are technically robust and provide guidance about processes and stages of implementation, the latent uncertainty amongst staff suggests that further capacity building is needed.

Recommendation: Staff may need further and perhaps ongoing capacity building, perhaps in the form of training, regarding the strategic planning processes, and particularly on the thematic plan.

THE INTEGRATED IMPACT PLANNING AND LEARNING FRAMEWORK (IPLF)

The IPLF is a comprehensive framework that aims to guide staff through planning, M&E and reporting processes. The need for the framework was identified by CIVICUS in 2008 and its development commenced with a concept paper in 2008 based on wide staff consultations. The framework was developed in phases during 2009 and 2010 and was at the time of the evaluation undergoing refinement in preparation for piloting and eventual roll out. It covers six core elements of CIVICUS impact planning and learning cycle – assessment and planning, monitoring, reviewing, evaluating, reporting, and learning and is largely a consolidation and refinement of CIVICUS' past and present practices in these areas. It is meant to be a "living" guideline that will shape and also be shaped by other processes at work in CIVICUS as well as developments in the external context that relate to CIVICUS' work.

Technically it is very robust and broad, covering all the expected areas of planning, monitoring, evaluating and learning in an inclusive and complete way. An excellent example of the rigorous conceptual thinking in the IPLF is the 'hierarchical levels' of planning - Strategic, Thematic, Operational, Project and Individual - and the clarity of the reporting processes set out in Section 8 including outlining of guidelines. This reflects the extremely high quality of input and participation in the development of the framework and those involved should be commended for the approach.

However, despite this initial momentum and the development of an IPLF implementation plan, many staff, especially at more junior and middle management levels are yet to 'adopt' the system as their own. Specifically, the monitoring and reporting elements of the IPLF that people seem to struggle with: "There is a resistance on the reporting part". One manager said "it needs to be made much easier for managers to use".

However some, pointing to the relatively normative nature of the processes involved, indicated another type of challenge: that the resistance is also potentially about attitudes and knowledge gaps and that changing attitudes and organisational culture is the key to the adoption and eventual full implementation. It is also clear that, given the degree of staff turnover, implementing a major system such as the IPLF requires ongoing capacity building and continual seeking of staff support, as well as senior management leadership and championing in its eventual full roll out.

Overall there are mixed views on the IPLF, but overall it is found that it is a technically good framework but may be a little complex for the size of the organisation and the intricacies and delicacies of the transitional context, especially if it is implemented wholesomely without considering internal capacities.

Our overall assessment of the IPLF is that it represents a best practice model of how civil society organisations should increasingly consider a holistic approach to planning, monitoring and evaluating strategies for institutionalising learning and accountability. It is unprecedented - in our experience of evaluating CSOs and NGOs - for quite such an organisational commitment to have been made a) in this area; b) to this extent with; c) the quality of work behind it. However the framework overall still lacks staff buy-in and further implementation and refinement will be needed to ensure a fuller impact on organisational effectiveness and performance.

Recommendation: CIVICUS could identify internal capacity indicators to track the extent of implementation and consider refining the learning elements of IPLF, with leadership championing and further staff input.

Prioritisation and time management

There are different views about whether the organisation adequately and strategically prioritises its work. One senior member of staff said "we should be doing more", but most agreed that the organisation was stretched and could be better focussed. Junior staff reactions were typified by the following response: "senior management should do more prioritisation between and across teams".

There was some evidence that time management is a problem. At one level this is a question of training, management skills, staff skills and planning. A newer issue is with the 'de-siloisation' and thematisation of the organisation discussed above. Some staff have clearly struggled with what they see as new workloads

and new areas of responsibility in addition to what they have been doing before. "Before there was (my job), now I do (that job), (a function role), and a (part of someone else job)"[9].

Some other qualitative comments relating to prioritisation from the e-survey were also about strategy, focus and scope: *"CIVICUS could become better in prioritisation and effectively communicate the areas of prioritisation. There have been a lot of improvements, and overall I think that the organisation is doing an impressive job. It would benefit though from further focus".*

And another reflected: *"CIVICUS needs to be clearer in its mission - it tries to cover too many issues and topics, rather than focusing on being a platform for civil society and to capacitate and empower civil society while providing a voice. Trying to define or even describe what CIVICUS is is near impossible".*

One suggested way of involving members in this was that there could be more involvement (e.g. every six months) regarding prioritising CIVICUS programming through online consultation", and on capacity building strategies: "CIVICUS could likely reduce even further the number of programs to have greater focus. I believe that capacity building is likely better left to national associations/platforms and CIVICUS could be focusing more on advocacy with governments and international institutions".

It was also found that, overall, staff appear to be struggling with workloads and are not always able to prioritise their work effectively and follow up comprehensively. This is despite attempts to do so within the planning system. Staff may need help with prioritisation and time management, but overall it seems clear that over time the organisation has a propensity, like many CSO's to take on too much work. As one key internal informant noted: "…our work is not focused enough, still too project-oriented, what we're trying to influence needs to be aligned".

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[9] Bracketed generics are given here to protect anonymity.

COMMENTS ON ORGANISATIONAL 'RENEWAL'

In 2009 and 2010 CIVICUS embarked upon a process (partly described above) which attempted to both further rationalise the organisation's approach to themes and directions, and deal with the resource implications of this through a major restructuring. A new structure, following a full and lengthy consultation, was implemented in October 2010.

In the words of one: "Renewal was meant to make the organisation more effective and overcome the silo mentality, as well as become more responsive to members". Another mentioned one of the key structural sticking points that it aims to address: "silos were really bad … they: hindered scale up". The restructuring also aimed to empower 'middle-managers' and reduce the reliance of staff to defer decisions to senior management unnecessarily.

One interviewee represented a clear view amongst some more senior members of the organisation, board and some close partners: the leadership have "been able to do a lot of the organisational stuff that needed doing – on recruitment, on organisational culture; on getting funds in – those fears are allayed … there is more stability today than there was".

Renewal was also intended to address the issues of an over-emphasis on 'project-thinking' and operating in discrete silos. The legacy of this still evident with many interviewees describing, often in some detail, the content and purpose of projects, while also not having the same degree of confidence in the wider organizational strategic orientation. The process also importantly dealt with some elements of prioritisation and having a clearer idea of some the areas that the organisations should not get involved in: "We have built a better-focussed organisation, with more ownership both internally and externally, but we have paid a price in terms of being able to lead a big global coalition".

On the process itself, there was evidence that the procedure was overlong. All agree that it cost a good deal of staff time and energy in 2010. A response that was typically robust in its view of the degree to which the process over-consulted and lacked clear direction was: "This went on far too long. It was frustrating … above (worse than) sector norms … they just wouldn't make a decision." There was "process fatigue" with some saying that while consultation was important it was perhaps over-used on this occasion.

On the outcomes of the process, there is evidence of support for the aims, and the also the general direction, theoretical and analytical thrust of a greater thematic approach to working. On balance however there are probably mixed and pragmatic feelings about the practical implications, given the resources available. Typically: "working by function does make a lot of sense if we have more people – but in reality we are really stretched", while another said "There is more energy at the mid-management level now".

There seems to be outstanding issues around time management and the division of tasks. This is partly attributed to the matrix working structure and partly to a high ratio of managers to other staff. Some of these issues may also relate to the organisational/staff culture (see Notes on Organisation Culture section. It is still too early to tell whether the process has delivered a better structure and but there is evidence of a generally positive assessment of how it will 'bed down' in the future.

DECENTRALISATION (AND OFF SITE WORKING)

Related to the renewal process and perhaps the next logical step in organisational restructuring is the idea that the organisation would decentralise to some degree into regional offices, or perhaps regional 'hubs' which would be based at currently existing important regional civil society actors. The central aim of decentralisation seems to be to get closer to members and partners and become a more responsive and grounded organisation. There is also a perceptible (and understandable) subtext that decentralisation will allow the organisation to recruit more widely and offer more opportunity to staff to move outside of Johannesburg.

Decentralisation has been broadly agreed upon by the board in terms of principles and approach but it is not yet operationalised. It was described as an idea agreed but with no concrete direction for staff to take forward. One interviewee said "(the board) have talked about it but needs money and better ideas. We need to look at funding and there needs to be a pragmatic assessment".

It seems that, although key staff are taking the idea forward and are keen to do so in a strategic manner, this has been done on the more technological and practical implications. The 'vision' for decentralisation: based on what is described as the 'value-proposition' is not yet agreed. If CIVICUS a knowledge hub, for example, the knowledge of CIVICUS is many times the knowledge of the Secretariat, and it is stored in multiple organisational memories in many parts of the world.

One of the contributions made through the online e-survey outlined the following suggestion on decentralisation: "CIVICUS … has to consider opening regional offices in the regions to enable its members to share best practices in their regions to inform the wider network of civil society operating in those regions, and act as catalyst to inform governments on its work."

Whilst it has been mentioned that decentralisation is a "strategic choice" that has little to do with off-site working – a practice that has long existed in CIVICUS - the two issues were lumped together by some people (they are also combined in the *2010 Annual Report*). Several staff currently work off-site and, as far as it is possible to tell, the downsides of off-site working (when the benefits are taken into account) are not especially problematic. The key issues are (typically) those of internal communication and staff willingness to participate, feedback and buy in to key processes and dialogues. Predictably, such a system requires ongoing management and technological support. There is a useful but limited off-site working policy.

There is some discernable concern that some senior staff, including at the leadership level, are working away from the office for long periods, and while there are clearly legitimate reasons for this and we didn't find this view to be pervasive, it would have been impossible for us to not reflect this back. There seemed to be a view that this may need mitigating in the longer term, and also in the shorter term to see through the bedding down of renewal process.

In general it was found to be plausible to suggest that decentralisation into some sort of regional structure would work well. However, given resource constraints, we would favour a lighter structure of strategic regional hubs, perhaps based in existing regional organisations.

Recommendation: Continue to consider the operational and strategic implications of decentralisation, perhaps in the form of a working group which would include board members. Set a clear date for a final report and implement the decision.

Recommendation: Within the continued vision and thinking about decentralisation, consider the possibility of regional 'hubs', making use of key pre-existing members and partners and the mainstay of his approach, within a wider analysis of the strategic role of key states and regional actors.

'THEORY OF CHANGE', VISION, NICHE, PURPOSE AND MISSION

Overall, almost everyone associated with this evaluation felt that CIVICUS was a worthwhile and important organisation, serving a useful and targeted section of societal needs. Interestingly, at the level of mission and purpose at least, e-survey respondents were really exceptionally positive about CIVICUS' own clarity. Indeed this type of agreement and clarity is uncommon in the sector, although this is tempered by other areas of investigation which casts uncertainty on the detail of the role of CIVICUS.

E-survey statement response: "CIVICUS is clear about its mission and purpose"

disagree 9%

neither agree nor disagree 9%

agree 36%

strongly agree 46%
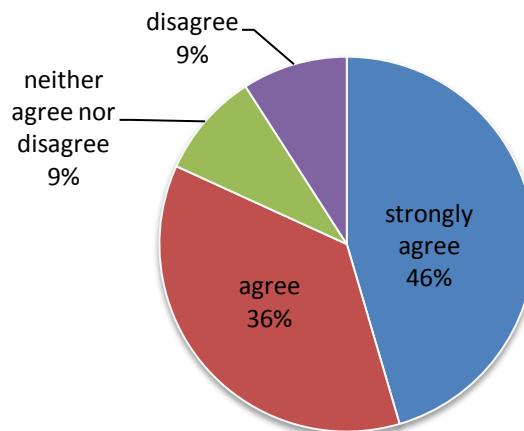
In relation to this, has become modish for some civil society organisations to outline a 'theory of change' that helps staff and partners and other key stakeholders to understand the means by which the types of social change they want to see can come about, alongside their role in this change vis-à-vis the role of other actors. The draft IPLF document has outlined a tentative CIVICUS theory of change for the 2008 - 2012 as an attempt to facilitate organisational dialogue on this issue[10]. A Theory of Change and programming workshop held in 2010 provided an important opportunity for dialogue but theory of change is still "a work in progress". The workshop discussions seem to recognise that it may not be ideal to settle on one, inflexible theory of change.. The discussion seems to have gone beyond the typical model of change boundaries into areas dealing with vision and mission[11]. The confusion seems to stem from the role CIVICUS have as both an actor and facilitator. One of the cleavages that exist seems to be whether the convening role and increase civil society space an end in itself or a means to an end. In other words is the organisation really about facilitating changes in people's lives or does the mission stop at opening up space?

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[10] This is contained in the initial IPLF draft of July 2010. It has since been decided to develop a separate Theory of Change document that will consolidate organisation-wide discussions and decisions on this aspect.
[11] See *Theory of Change and programming Workshop Report, 2010*

One said: "We all agree that we want to see a stronger civil society, but the question of why we want a stronger civil society, we have not reached that yet … whether we want to change people's lives is not something we have settled".

These views are linked to discussion about the role of human rights in CIVICUS' work. Most agreed that human rights were now more important in the organisation view of both the changes it wants to see and the way it wants to see them brought about. "The 'human rights' view is in the ascendency but management (as well as the rest of the staff) are split", was one comment. Further participatory work may be required – both internally and with members - in order to deepen the cross-organisational understanding of the implications of moving towards being a human rights organisation, with a human rights–based approach to programme research and analysis[12].

The other contention over time is on the degree that CIVICUS should be working directly with decision-makers as an advocacy organisation with a lobbying function, or whether it should simply amplify partners concerns and issues, provide support and connections.

The tendency has been both to move towards direct advocacy interventions but (wisely perhaps) to withdraw from major coalitions and in-depth policy work on development issues. "It has been perceived as a convening platform but since 2005/6 it has come out with a more instrumentalist agenda of its own" …. "One area that we have done that is through an agenda of our own … we have progressed to a stage where we are leading the narrative around civil society space … demands, effects … in this sense we are coming out strongly as leaders". One donor was keen that CIVICUS held on to their successful high level lobbying role, for instance in Geneva and New York, but "more clearly define what types of high level (lobbying) interventions they make".

There was a claim that – at least in areas where it has perhaps obviously gone beyond its mandate there has been an attempt to row back: "In areas where we do not have strong expertise like development cooperation, climate issues we have deliberately withdrawn from the content generation – we are more supporting convening, creating the platform". An interviewee also gives the example of the role that CIVICUS had played in the Global Call to Action Against Poverty (GCAP). The role had been significant and arguably anomalous: "We have now withdrawn mostly from GCAP". The organisation might usefully gain from articulating a clear position on its potential role leading and/or facilitating global networks in the future.

In terms of working with other global players – INGOs, human rights organisations – it was not possible to identify a strategy or positioning piece that explicitly promoted joint working. It is of course implicit in the model, vision, mission and strategy to some extent, at least to work in partnership. But such partnerships are mainly with local (national) partners or with other global networks or platforms, and less often with global 'competitors' and INGOs. In practice the degree to which CIVICUS works with other global players seemed to be a choice left to middle managers in most instances.

One suggestion from an e-survey participant was to broaden the high level scope: "CIVICUS should continue engaging with different players in the world like the UN and Africa Union besides that we should also scout for new partners that we can leverage to make effective changes in the world. We need to have

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[12] This might imply training in HR-based approaches to development, more clarity in staff understanding the role of human rights in relation to partners, the voice of actors on the ground, more participatory approaches to developing projects, issues around branding and space, etc. It might also be recognised that there are competing HR-based approaches, version and models.

a big influence on Africa governments which are struggling with governance issues and violence against their own people".

Externally and internally most people see CIVICUS as playing an important and somewhat unique role. "Uniqueness is its biggest strength" said one. Another complementary internal view was that "no one else is doing what we are doing – research, advocacy and communication for civil society- on a global scale - in the way we are doing it".

There was a view amongst some that the organisation has taken on too much. One informed external voice said: "They have suffered from mission creep". The mission creep element also played into the reputation for 'getting involved' that perhaps stemmed from the earlier approaches: "Reputation is sometimes bigger than the ability to deliver".

Many people recognised the important role played by the Secretary General of CIVICUS, both for the organisation and for civil society. "the GS profile is important … not just for profile … people sometimes fail to understand the role she plays in civil society at the highest levels … this is important (in and of itself)".

 "We are not a development organisation and we are not a human rights organisation … our role is about thinking about what civil society needs to function …we focus on expression, assembly and association … we look at how an issue is affecting those three spaces … looking for the exemplars, the case that highlight the (wider) issue) … we are looking for systemic change".

Another external view was of an organisation that is perhaps less instrumental and more process oriented, but still influential: "There is a potential for CIVICUS to be the glue that ensures that various networks and movement are in touch with each other. I do not know that it has managed to do this that much".

Recommendation: Set up a renewed process by which the outstanding and unsettled elements of theories of change are dealt with systematically before the end of the current strategic period, in order to feed into the next strategic plan.

Recommendation: Consider three-monthly (or similar) shortlisted organisational priorities that are clearly indentified, shared and reflected in external communications.

3.3. IMPACT (AND OUTCOMES)

CIVICUS' direct impact is mainly on its key areas of civil society space, capacities and knowledge. There are undoubtedly many outcomes and impacts of the work that CIVICUS does many of these will be impossible to disaggregate, dissect and discern these fully within the complex space in which the organisation operates (and certainly in a broad study such as this). Impacts and outcomes are discernable from the various quarterly and annual reports which are not repeated here, but which are numerous and creditable.[13]

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[13] High level, mid-level and low outcomes are more discernable than what would technically be described as impact, but given the complexity of the issues involved and complexity of CIVICUS' global work, the often long timeframe for change and the

Staff and partners were able to point to quite significant and important gains which can be attributed to CIVICUS and its partners' work or to which CIVICUS' work has contributed, including that of capacity building of civil society mention in the section above. Many of these remain at the level of 'process outcomes' or influence at one level away from what would normally be classically considered to be impact by evaluators, but they are nonetheless important effects. Among these were that "UNDP has decided to use the CSI as one of its assessment tools" and that **"Better Aid Platform and the Open Forum for CSO Development Effectiveness have used CIVICUS assessments and measures"** and "DANIDA has quoted CIVICUS".

On the CSI, there is evidence that it has created new spaces where diverse actors can discover synergies and forge new alliances. One Mexican focus group participant said that "there are few moment where civil society comes together normally in Mexico – this research helped create synergies".

One key impact raised is that Dutch Foreign Ministry influenced by the CSI and it has influenced their evaluating framework for NGO's impact at the national level. The Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs has asked Dutch NGOs receiving money from it through its MFSII financing scheme to monitor, evaluate and report on the impact of their civil society strengthening work against the CSI result areas, using a CSI-derived methodology. The Ministry is not using the CSI itself, but has asked Dutch NGOs to do so. CIVICUS is currently talking with both the Ministry and the NGOs about how CIVICUS might play a role in tailoring the methodology to suit these purposes and to help monitor and evaluate the strengthening work.

Another key impact in which CIVICUS had a clear and substantial role is the appointment, by Sihasak Phuangketkeow, President of the UN Human Rights Council, of Maina Kiai to become the new Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and association. This, according to CIVICUS, "crowned CIVICUS' and our partners' efforts" over the years and represented, according external views, a significant investment by the organisation.

In Uganda, the country study makes the point that although the CSI is not used that much by civil society it appears to have influenced government thinking and contributed to constructive government-CSO engagement. If attention is given to publicity and distribution when the new report is prepared, there is the potential for it to have a significant impact.

Furthermore in Uganda there is evidence of value added from the CSW programme to coalition advocacy on the overall environment for civil society, through supportive analysis and international comparison on the *NGO Amendment Act*. There is also indication that the LTA programme is contributing to the thinking behind the development and implementation of a new *NGO Charter* in Uganda.

Ugandan respondents also signalled that those who have attended the World Assembly have made good use of networking opportunities, which has materially benefited the quality of their work and their fundraising opportunities.

According to the Zambia country study, CIVICUS was involved in spearheading the necessary amendments required of the NGO bill and act in Zambia. It also highlighted the unfair clauses and stipulations of the NGO act in Zambia. To an extent CIVICUS empowered local CSO's to address it.

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interlinkedness of the counterfactuals, impact is extremely difficult to show in a logframe or table. Impact monitoring and assessment may require more narrative forms of reporting.

There was not much in the way of discernable negative impact from CIVICUS' work. The types of comments and information gleaned revolved around operation or strategic weaknesses – for example - "they are weak in the development cooperation space". Beyond this, the main downside of CIVICUS' work seemed to be "raising expectations beyond the ability to deliver", a point which is also picked up elsewhere in this report.

HOW IMPACT IS MONITORED AND ASSESSED

CIVICUS makes regular attempts to identify and document changes (positive and negative impacts and outcomes) it makes through its global work by means a quarterly progress reporting system established by the IPLF. In particular, useful "signs" of impact noted by individual projects and staff are record in the quarterly and annual progress reports, although many of these remain at the level of outcomes or outputs (useful and important though they undoubtedly are, given the context). There are also a number of impact level indicators contained in the Thematic Plan. This is commendable achievement in the medium term and represents progress from the last organisational evaluation in 2008.

It has proved difficult during this evaluation to evidence outcomes and longer-term sustainable impact from the CIVICUS programmes at country level, not least because of the (understandable) paucity of credible impact indicators against which the results of individual projects could be measured, as well as the fact that in many countries, sub-projects are still being implemented.

Impact on civil society space itself is complex and the timescales for change are often long. The picture is also blurred by the multiple counterfactuals. This is recognised by donors: "they are always two or three steps away from demonstrable impact …the nature of the work is that it is long term work and affected by external events". However, respondents - including donors – were split on whether this should change: "They are a little too activity-focussed in their reporting and it is difficult to get results based and impact based reports but they are working a lot to improve systems … they are not behind and not in the forefront – average or a little better than average (at measuring and reporting impact)".

Views from some countries and good practice suggest that indicators should only be goals for the overall programme, as indicators themselves need to be country specific. It is clear that any country-based indicators should be set against a baseline and an understanding of the country, as well as against overall strategic goals for the programme.

The question of results-based systems is relevant here. These should be outcome-based, and not output-based. The latter would not necessarily increase the effectiveness of projects, nor enable a reflection of the effect and outcomes of many of the types of projects that could be supported through these activities – some interviewees noted that most NGO projects are at base very qualitative and about attitudinal, political and social change through project activities. Achieving attitude change is a key issue across all the country case-studies**.**

Recommendation: In relation to the current programmes,, and in order to strengthen secretariat and country context synergies, it is recommended developing 'country evaluation reports', focusing on outcomes and impact, and that the key partners for each country organise conferences in future years looking at results and needs for the future, perhaps linked to the relevant donor.

One instructive example of the measure of success is the example of CIVICUS' work in Ethiopia. The release of activists in part from pressure attributed to CIVICUS efforts (including Netsanet Demissie, who now works for CIVICUS) was frequently mentioned as an impact and clearly such an impact is palpable. However, the closing down of civil society space in Ethiopia continues apace, with new laws in place on civil society groups. This is noted in EWS questionnaire from the Ethiopian partner: "for our case, it would have been better to have started the EWS way ahead of time before the (civil society-unfriendly) *Charities and Societies Legislation* was enacted".

Comments made by internals and externals on impact measurement have to be taken with some caution. Monitoring and measuring impact (and effectiveness) is not something that is regularly or well done by many civil society groups and CIVICUS, through an analysis of the types of impact shown for instance in the Quarterly Progress Reports and Annual progress reports for 2009 and 2010 show a reasonable attempt, given the context and modus operandi of the work, at showing impacts, albeit often in the form of processes taken place and outputs produced[14].

Allied to this, it is important to think about the impact of CIVICUS sometimes in terms of solidarity, support, dialogue and resistance. Such effects might not be prised by donors or some evaluators but they are valuable to civil society groups operating in difficult context. They are also recognised by some actors that that the impact may in fact be the *process* itself. One MENA region representative said: "The CSI is very important tool that we can use – it is not just about the outcome but also about the process which is important – engaging people in a debate is valuable". He goes on to say that in an area of regional oppression that "Civil Society Watch is a kind of solidarity – tool to express local and regional support".

Internally hopes are pinned on the IPLF: "it is only in 2011 with the full implementation of the IPLF that CIVICUS will be able to tell whether it yields the kind of qualitatively rich information needed to assess the effectiveness of complex work such as civil society strengthening. It is likely that there will be further refinements through 2011 and beyond." However, it may be that a mixture of staff capacity and a challenging context for impact monitoring and measurement may be equally important dictators of progress in this area.

What is clear is that the organisation has already started to think more about impact, partly driven by donors but also by peers, the board and some staff, and mainly through the efforts made through the IPLF. One respondent close to CIVICUS took a broad view of the issue: "everyone's talking about impact measurement including the board … but I doubt they have cracked it yet". She goes on to question the consistency of the approach: "but is it really possible for an organisation operating in such a context and space?"

Recommendation: CIVICUS should develop a common and agreed understanding of impact linked to the emerging 'theory of change' discussions.

3.4. RELEVANCE

PROGRAMME DESIGN15

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[14] See for instance, CIVICUS ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORT, 2010 pages 15-17
[15] Issues of programme partnership and management integrated throughout the document

As far as it is possible to tell from both documentation and interviews, the design of CIVICUS programmes involves other stakeholders and to some extent beneficiaries (although this is limited by the degree to which beneficiaries are a defined group within CIVICUS). The process is not always formal but as one interviewee put it "we have always involved others". Another implied there was an improvement in the way the organisation went about consulting on programme design: "we are relatively more formal than we used to be".

Comments made in a report to Global Reporting Initiative[16] reinforced this: "It is a central tenet of CIVICUS programming that projects should be undertaken in partnership wherever possible, and led predominantly by CIVICUS members or constituents". Although there is no 'formal' feedback mechanism, in practice there are multiple opportunities: "CIVICUS did have established institutional practices through which feedback and complaints were received from constituents".

There were some concerns voiced that some projects were not adequately adaptable for local conditions and context. Throughout CIVICUS interventions, there are voices saying that the some of the concepts that underpin the work are 'imported' or need 'localising'.[17] The Civil Society Index for example, which has been criticised in some quarters as "too much of a one-size fits all approach" that at local levels it does not always make methodological sense[18]. It is pointed out however that that methodologically it needs to be a standard product for comparator analysis reasons. This point is taken by most CSI researchers and compilers as far as we can tell.

One point mentioned in connection with programme design and implementation in both Latin America and the MENA region is that of language. While it is acknowledged that efforts have been made with translation, there were frustrations of both the quality of the translation and its consistency of coverage.

Recommendation: Wherever possible seek to make translation more comprehensive and, when budget allows, employ professional translation services for documents, workshops and events.

ACCOUNTABILITY: WHO AND HOW

At various levels, and in common with most civil society networks, CIVICUS has multiple (sometimes overlapping) external accountabilities. The key accountabilities as identified by CIVICUS staff are donors, partners, members and the board. Out of these the most often talked about accountabilities are to donors and partners. Although members are considered important it is not immediately clear how this accountability manifests itself and what mechanisms (beyond the important board member voting function that members) members have for holding the organisation to account, shaping work and inputting into future directions and strategies.

CIVICUS seems to be quite keen to seek members' views, commissioning surveys, evaluations and assessment on a regular basis at both project and organisational level. The degree to which they are responsive to this is more difficult to assess. Project coordinators in general certainly seem concerned with partners' views and apparently make an effort to act on feedback.

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[16] *Global Reporting Initiative Level C Reporting Template for NGOs*, CIVICUS Report 2010
[17] This is a common complaint with a Rights Based Approach.
[18] In Mexico some of the participants felt that some of the weighting of metrics did not make sense in the local context, though they understood why the parameters are set.

For example, one germane but negative comment here from the online e-survey is:

"Despite statements to the contrary, CIVICUS often is not very participatory in planning or implementing programs. CIVICUS often does not leverage the capacity of partners. It often seems like CIVICUS wants to lead and be viewed as a core expert, even when partners have greater capacity on the issue. There's a tension between being a "leader" and substantive expert on the one hand and a "convener" and "facilitator" on the other. On a project basis CIVICUS too often focuses on the former rather than the latter. CIVICUS should focus more on facilitating work among members and then working with members to identify gaps that CIVICUS could fill. This is done less in practice than CIVICUS' rhetoric would suggest".

MEMBERSHIP

The issue of membership is a pressing one for the organisation. Based on information available CIVICUS currently has 284 members, mostly made up of organisations, but also some individuals. Currently CIVICUS membership levels are relatively stable although they have been higher at various times in the past three years.

However, CIVICUS has rightly recognised that the *size* of the membership is not nearly as important as the *quality* of members. Membership, it is commonly agreed, is at least in part about legitimacy and credibility and it is not really a major income source. It is often found that organisations that rely on donor funding find it difficult to balance donor needs and integrate and respond to membership direction as well.

The CCF survey found that the "adequacy of the diversity and the size" of the CIVICUS network were rated 3.8 and 3.6 out of 5 respectively. This placed CIVICUS for both aspects at the beginning of the highest rated group of networks surveyed. The Universalia 2008 assessment found that membership was a major issue.

The questions of what membership means to members themselves, as well as what its purpose and value is for CIVICUS, are big strategic questions which are not new and which have been flagged in previous reviews and internal documents. They are also related to discussion around theory of change and decentralisation. They have been partially addressed by a *Membership Recruitment and Engagement Strategy* and also a *Membership Policy,* both drafted in 2010. However, a further challenge to membership is the degree to which the organisation is donor, rather than member or individually funded.

Input into the evaluation pointed to the need to think more strategically about membership and situate the concept within a fuller discussion of organisational needs and operations. One insider said: "There is a need for outreach and a need to have a more thematic relationship with other civil society organisations … there is a need to establish a more systematic relationship between the partners and membership." It was also pointed out that, referring to the discussion about decentralisation that the idea of regional hubs might help to bring about such a closer relationship.

Although it is recognised above that numbers of members is not, and should not, be a central concern, there is evidence that there are some 'missed opportunities', in terms of getting the right kinds of organisations to joining CIVICUS. There are mixed findings on the degree to which membership is as relevant, up-to-date and comprehensive as it could be.

In both Zambia and Uganda, many organisations that could usefully play a part in the membership, and who are significant and important civil society actors, are not members. In Uganda for instance, three organisations described as "natural conveners" are not members of CIVICUS even though they are involved in CIVICUS projects. One said: "We're not a member. We could be, I do not know why not… We believe in networking, it's very important to us… We would be interested to be a member, because of their work, but no-one's approached us to be a member." In Mexico, at least two relevant organisations felt that they could or should be members of CIVICUS but had never been approached or persuaded of the case. There may therefore be arguments to integrate stronger membership recruitment strategies into the ongoing planning and implementation of projects, or under an integrated regionalisation strategy.

One input to the online e-survey was: "The systematic outreach to members/partners should be much better directed and targeted. The systematic monitoring of CIVICUS own work, results and processes is close to be missing (statistics on use of materials, use of web, CSI-processes afterwards, results of advocacy, outcome of workshops etc.). Less theoretic and more for direct use / acting. More networking with relevant regional networks in Civil Society".

The site visit to Uganda found that there is a strong case, from on the evidence of the visit, for a substantial change and improvement in membership strategy. A small amount of work would deliver a few key organisations into membership of CIVICUS. This would balance usefully and importantly against the random nature of current membership spread. In addition to this there were concerns in some of the areas covered in the review, that the CIVICUS had not always identified the best implementing partners in the country concerned.

As well as these country comments, there was also a call from a number of quarters to consider more CIVICUS staff visits to countries. It is clear that partners in particular value highly the support of CIVICUS staff in their particular area of expertise. In some regions, there was also a request to consider more CIVICUS-organised delegations, highlight key issues of civil society space and help mitigate threats.

Some members were also skeptical about the value to them of membership: Overwhelmingly (at least amongst those interviewed that were members or had a view) Membership is thought of more in terms of an act of solidarity and information. This was reflected in the CCF survey as well. One commonly held point of view, while another made the point that although there were some 'benefits' such as voting for the board, opportunities to shape the organisation's agenda didn't really exist: "in my view we should be more member led", but there was also some sense of momentum "engaging members … is something we are working on right now" said one senior staff member.

Given that membership was an area that was flagged in the 2008 Universalia Organisational Assessment, membership requires relatively urgent action.

Recommendation: Membership voice should be addressed and the meaning and value of membership needs to be settled by an internal process. This should be integrated with the decentralisation 'project', so as to maximise the potential for regional links with members as well as link to the secretariat.

Recommendation: CIVICUS should consider the development of a renewed Membership Development Strategy. This could include updating approaches to member recruitment and retention, and take into account strategies for geographical targeting and member profiling. It could also draw out important

aspects including member segmentation and identifying further strategies for *organising actively* as well as *servicing passively*. **This strategy could consider a programme of regular visits and delegations to support member and partner if deemed appropriate.**

Member communications

The member's newsletter – e-CIVICUS - is mostly well-regarded and considered useful. It was often mentioned without prompting as the key way in which people receive information from the organisation, although one or two people said it was too frequent. There was a sense in which the newsletter is not focussed enough and still reflected a very broad range of work rather than a sharper sense of current organisational priorities.

One key partner said: "it is very important – coverage of issues – via the newsletter is very important – people active in civil society know about the newsletter". Another said: "I have good feedback - not just because of information - the newsletter is a good tool for networking". Another said: "It is the way to be in contact with people … introduction from the office of the Secretary General which is very important and useful and reflects the position of CIVICUS".

Whilst CIVICUS has made important strides in the direction of more advanced technological and campaigning methods in recent years they are they are not considered to be 'ahead of the curve'. Members do not necessarily feel part of the organisation "in the way that you feel part of Avaaz or something like that". Another said that CIVICUS should: "Look at communication … services to members should be better packaged and more streamlined".

Partners felt that they got the right amount of general communications from CIVICUS, and they were by and large happy with the quality. There were one or two comments about missed opportunities in communications and also about translation (both quality and quantity thereof).

There was a sense in which member communications (and communications to partners) is not wholly owned by the organisation and is still 'siloed' in outreach and thought of by the rest of the organisation as their job. In other words that communications with members and partners should reflect organisational priorities and reinforce the network, rather than individual project needs and priorities.

The website, which in general is considered a useful resource with most relevant information available, was deemed by some to be not sharply focussed enough on organisation priorities and actions. The summary view is that the website is valuable in terms of functions and information but could do with a clearer and sharper advocacy-based front page.

Recommendation: Member and partner communication could better reflect the networked nature of the organisation, ensuring clarity of member and partner voice, while highlighting current overall advocacy-oriented priorities and actions.

GEOGRAPHICAL SPREAD

CIVICUS is 'present', either through partnership or membership (or both) in over 90 countries. But this breadth of organisational reach does not always translate into depth. Evidence indicates that the strongest region of organisational influence is sub-Saharan Africa, but that links and contacts are perhaps

weaker in South and South East Asia. Although the work in Africa is considered strong and broad-based, there was indication that in some countries the links were relatively superficial and did not necessarily match the huge potential and appetite in some part of the region.
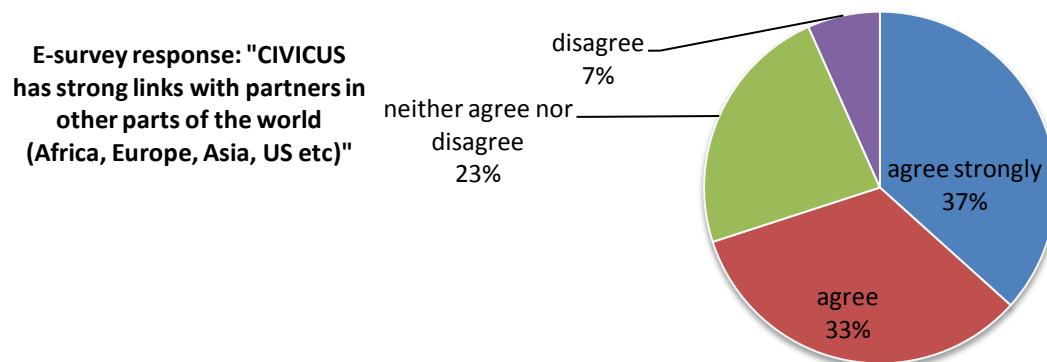
Latin America is considered to be a moderately strong region but patchy (and potentially undermined by lack of translation and follow up mentioned elsewhere). One internal respondent said: "We have strong partners in Latin America but could be better grounded there", whilst local partners felt that CIVICUS "was not present like they used to be in Latin America".

As well as regionalising eastwards, and deepening elsewhere, there is perceived need amongst some internal and external commentators to reformulate the organisation according to the new and real power dynamics. Part of this is about strategic effectiveness. Given limited resources, CIVICUS needs to "look at 'game changing countries' which may have a regional domino effect".

Linked to this it also seems that the BRICS countries are area grouping that CIVICUS has yet to formulate a full strategy towards, looking at the opportunities and threats that could emanate from a closer and more deliberate engagement. One senior manager admitted "we know we need to be stronger there", and an external respondent said, "We really need CIVICUS to be a stronger link amongst these kinds of countries".

A longstanding weakness in the (Republic of) South Africa has been noted in some of the literature and also by staff and local members. This has been partly addressed in recent years but is still considered a relative weak point, given the obvious advantage of location of the organisational headquarters.

Some views from the e-survey are outlined in the graph below, showing that respondents mostly agreed that the organisation has strong links with partners around the globe.

E-survey response: "CIVICUS has strong links with partners in other parts of the world (Africa, Europe, Asia, US etc)"

disagree 7%

neither agree nor disagree 23%

agree strongly 37%

agree 33%

Overall, and given organisational resources, the spread of the organisation is unlikely to change drastically in a short time. It would be prudent, however, top have a clear direction of travel, based on strategic locations and link plans for expansion to this though work on decentralisation and membership.

Recommendation: Whilst it is apparent that BRICS countries are key to future global geo-politics, and that CIVICUS is well placed to provide civil society coordination in this regard, we would suggest that an analysis first undertaken, scoping opportunities and threats, and setting any scale up of work against other future organisational priorities.
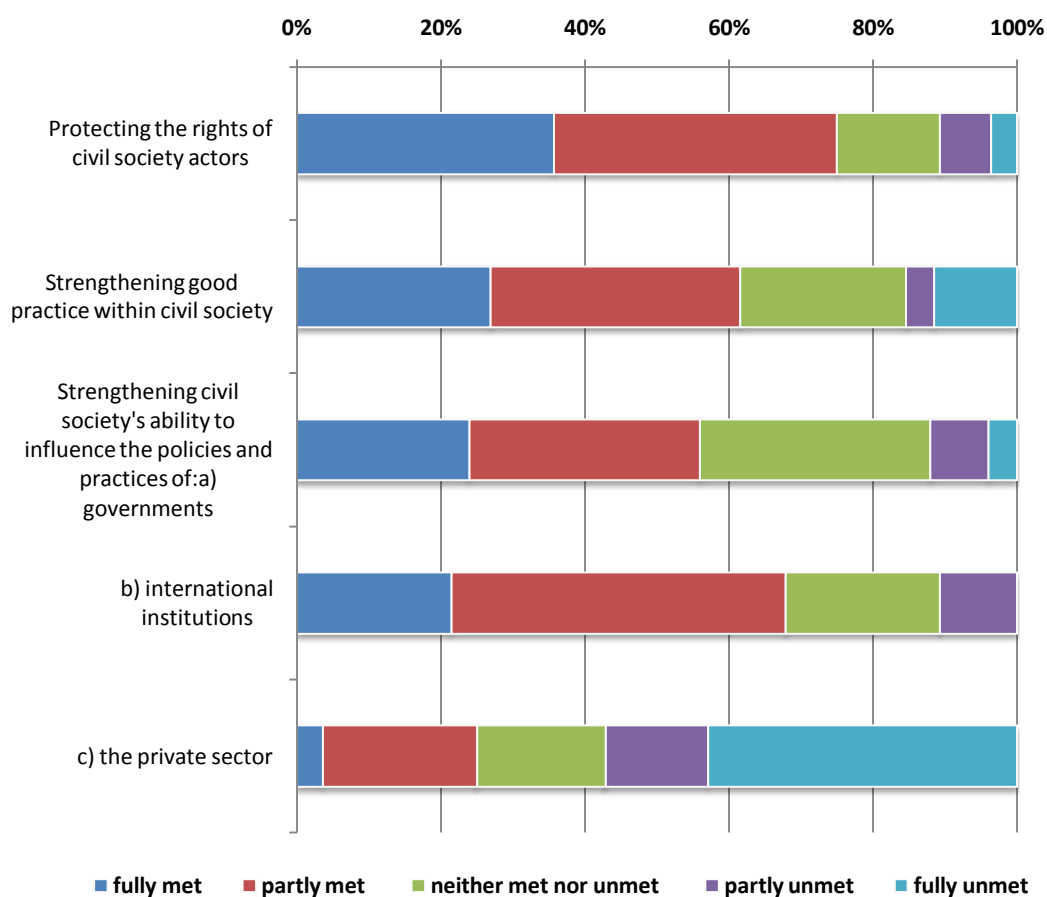
EFFECTIVENESS

The overall areas that CIVICUS is trying to achieve change on are the Strategic Directions: protecting the rights of civil society actors, strengthening good practice within and strengthening civil society's ability to influence the policies and practices of governments, international institutions and the private sector.

The e-survey results below give a snapshot of what internal and external respondents think are the main areas of success. The results are mostly very positive, perhaps with the obvious exception of a strong positive response on enhancing civil society's ability to influence the private sector. Whilst not conclusive, the survey shows that those in a good position to judge CIVICUS' influence – the partners, donors, members and staff that the survey queried – are generally convinced of the organisation's impact on civil society rights, good practice and influencing capacity.

E-survey statements responses: "In your opinion, to what extent has CIVICUS met these during the past 3 years" (excl. 'dont knows')

These results reinforce the broad thrust of the CCF survey which asked respondents to make comments on areas including similar ones above.

The main assumption underlying this area of exploration is that the key gauge of effectiveness is an exploration of the relationship between output and outcomes. In the context in which CIVICUS operates is assessing organisational effectiveness is widely recognised both in the literature, and by staff and partners, that especially unforgiving in classical evaluation effectiveness terms. Processes leading to social are complex and is often difficult to assess process supported or directed led to what level of outcome. It may also be because the definition of an effective CIVICUS has not been fully tied down through the theory of change discussions.

The organisational outcomes sought by CIVICUS in 2009-12 Operation Plan are as follows:

- Increased knowledge generated and shared among civil society and other stakeholders, especially with regard to the role and state of civil society; threats against civil society's ability to express and assemble; good practice and effectiveness within civil society.
- Capacity strengthened within civil society on a range of skills based areas that contribute to the sector's effectiveness
- Active and effective national and international platforms for networking and collaboration within civil society, especially north-south and south-south collaboration
- Broader and stronger connections and networks established between civil society and other stakeholders, nationally, regionally and internationally
- Enhanced capacity of citizens and civil society actors to participate in decision making processes and increased opportunities at local, national and international levels
- Increased knowledge based actions and evidence based advocacy by civil society actors

Interviewees were generally reluctant to comment on the overall effectiveness of the organisation, perhaps because of the complex nature of the variables involved and also perhaps because effectiveness is a contested term, especially when it come to social and political change. In general, and the larger 'organisation goals' feedback was generally positive.

In the Annual Progress Reports for 2009 and 2010, good progress was reported and we not in particular that improved performance, for instance, in timeliness and completion of deliverables was shown to be a regular and worthy judgment and that clear attempts has been made to allow staff to capture 'deliverables'. However, there is some inconsistency in the identification of success indicators across different planning and reporting processes (for example the QPRs, APR, among others) where it would be important to ensure that common effectiveness indicators are captured and communicated. For example, the one page Operational Plan 2009-2012 rightfully identifies "Change Pathways" and carries the question: "How do we know if we've succeeded?" It also reflects a number of outcome indicators that could be the framework for future consistency in this area of effectiveness.

In terms of the e-survey, as the graph below from the e-survey shows, respondents were positive about the effectiveness of CIVICUS in its specific work on all seven projects that were listed. In all cases the largest group were those agreeing with the statement on effectiveness in the relevant project area. In all cases a majority either agreed or agreed strongly that CIVICUS ran the project effectively. There is a relatively small but marked difference between the areas considered by most to be effective (Civil Society

Index and the World Assembly) and the least (AGNA), although we wouldn't necessarily say that this was reflected in other arenas of research. .

One key area of effectiveness which is clearly difficult to aggregate in an evaluation such as this is that of building capacity of civil society. Undoubtedly there have been strong instances of capacity building through many CIVICUS projects and this has been shown in individual project reporting and evaluations for individual projects such as that on Participatory Governance and the CSI.

The overall effectiveness is also evidenced by the e-survey response shown below to the question *'CIVICUS is effective in its capacity building work'*, which shows a positive though reserved view of progress in this area, with most respondents either agreeing or choosing to remain neutral. However a significant minority declined to agree with the statement, though none felt this strongly.

E-survey responses: "CIVICUS is effective in its capacity building work"
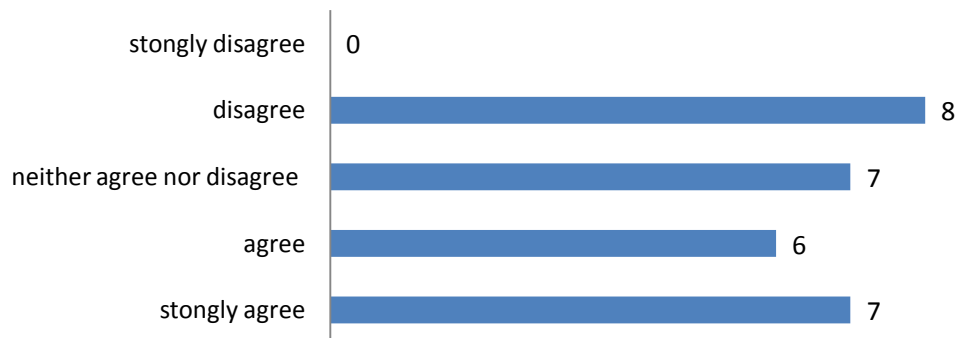
The CCF survey found that, in comparison to the other networks, CIVICUS's ratings as a network in the area of effectiveness (3.3 out of 5) are below average (3.5 out of 5) and place CIVICUS as the third lowest performer. The only area in which CIVICUS scores above average is in *'coordinating advocacy actions'* (3.7 out of 5 in comparison to a mean of 3.3).

Respondent are more split however (though still broadly positive) on the degree to which CIVICUS has the right systems to build South-South linkages yet. This was confirmed in interviews, though some interviewees were keen for CIVICUS to play a stronger role in this regard.

E-survey responses: "CIVICUS has internal systems that help to build South-South linkages"
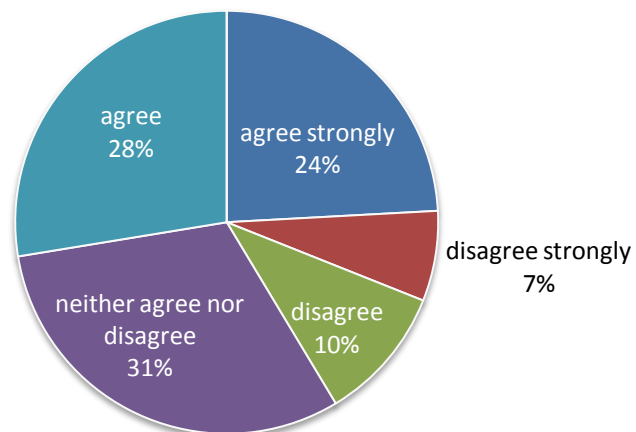
Overall, and looking at evidence across the various sources of inputs: the literature, interviews, country studies, reporting and surveys, CIVICUS is found to be relatively effective organisation. Many of the planned outcomes are achieved, within a very difficult context. However, more clarity may be needed for staff and other stakeholder capture further feedback for monitoring effectiveness.

What a more effective CIVICUS might look like

The types of outcomes that CIVICUS wants to see, and the way that it delivers them, is closely related to the theory of change discussion above. One internal voice was keen to point the role of an effective CIVICUS in relation to knowledge brokerage and as a knowledge hub: "we should serve as a one-stop shop for knowledge and the state of civil society globally".

There was also a view that "we should come out strongly as an honest broker in creating dialogues between the private sector, citizens and governments …(creating) unique convening space … comfortable for these different actors". This convening needs to be non-competitive with the sector as it is important that CIVICUS adds value rather than competes with other dialogue processes.

Related to the attempt to join up the organisation the organisation might be "Able to respond synergistically and coherently". The view here is of "360 degree responses", where the organisation, to really be effective, should go about its work in a way which is a "complete offer" to civil society, responding to threats and opportunities at the same time.

The role of thinking, analysing and publishing has grown and needs to be kept but not over-expanded. The action needs to be clearer: "there should be a sprinkling of analysis and there is a lot of analysis … but the action part is often lacking, we need to be more action-oriented to be effective".

It is too early to credibly tell whether the new organisational structure is a boost to effectiveness, although overall the signs seem to be good so far, in terms of potential energy released and willingness to move forward amongst middle managers.

INTERNAL FACTORS LIMITING EFFECTIVENESS (AND EFFICIENCY)

There are a number of key areas affecting effectiveness that were commonly brought out in during the evaluation. There is concern in the organisation that knowledge is not managed internally that well. Furthermore there are worries that externally and internally, communication could be better. One senior team member put it this way: "(External) communications, internal communications, and knowledge management … are all very far from where they need to be".

Particularly the feeling that "external communications is clearly a weakness", was one common rejoinder, specifically linked with an inability to cut through into the mainstream media. Set against this, and limited by resources, it was also acknowledged that "it (CIVICUS' stories) is a difficult sell, media-wise; we are stuck in the development media, difficult to get into the mainstream".

It was also acknowledged that the ability and experience of staff is closely related to effectiveness: "sometimes global staff are not always able to be employ sensitivity and flexibilities … their ability to do this is closely related to ability of the staff". It follows that some projects are more successful than others because they have been able to attract the right kind of staff. But, related to this, there is also a sense that

some projects – CSI and CSW are often picked out – are 'favoured' by the senior management and board and therefore get more resources. Also related to this is a point already reflected above about staff resources, scope and ambition. There is a sense, admittedly more present amongst external respondents than staff, that CIVICUS is over-stretched and not able to be fully effective in within a limited and defined area. This is backed up by reviewing the literature and the evaluations.

Another area, one that is also linked with knowledge management, and that may potentially limit effectiveness is the lack of a strong learning culture. This feature is perhaps related to the activist background to the organisation. The lack of a protected and reflective learning space may limit abilities to think about, understand and repeat key successful strategies.

The lack of certain language skills and the ability, perceived willingness, and financial resources to translate key documents and outputs are "definitely limiting factors", hindering effectiveness, especially in Latin America. One commented that "there is comparatively little feedback in Spanish" - and to some extent the same issues are raised in the MENA region. This was also raised in the Universalia report in in 2008.

At the level of strategic interventional and operational ability, some convincing views were put forward around the notion that there is a central conundrum built into the model of operation of CIVICUS: that CIVICUS tends to be weakest where the need is greatest, that is the model relies on the ability to access information on the ground and that this is weak where civil society is weak. This key weakness is widely recognised by internal interviewees and those close to CIVICUS, but not always appreciated by externals, who sometimes assume a larger organisational reach and more resources. This is not an area that necessarily requires changes, but simply an awareness of the limitation of the model which should be taken into account (as it doubtless is) in operations and strategies.

Recommendation: External communications capacity should be increased when resources allow. This could follow a revised communications strategy, which in turn could shadow renewed thinking on decentralisation, membership and advocacy.

Staff turnover/recruitment/location in relationship to effectiveness

Over the last three years, but not specific to this period both recruitment and staff turnover has been a major problem. This has been "ongoing since the move to Johannesburg" and many concurred that the secretariat's location limits the availability of talent. Johannesburg is perceived as a difficult location, especially for families and there have been particular problems stemming in part from this factor in recruiting and retaining managers and senior managers. This was also a strong finding in earlier evaluations.

Remuneration was not particularly raised as a problem by most, although pay and conditions together did surface occasionally. However, the ability to compete with the INGO and Inter-Government sectors in an ever-more international labour market is limited for a small-to medium sized organisation like CIVICUS. One said: "there is an expectation that we would pay like an INGO ... you can't compare us to big INGO. Pay at that level is not possible"

Additionally, and linked to the above issues, there is a perception amongst some that staff tend to be less experienced in the finer points of civil society negotiation and understanding of complex and intricate

politics around civil society space. Although capacity building in staff was raised, training of such specificity does not readily exist. It is also found that the quality of work and analysis often belies these factors and it may be that other issues in this report weigh more heavily on effectiveness than staff skills, which are more than adequate in most case and impressive in others.

EFFICIENCY

More and more donors (and partly as a result of the changing priorities of their grantees) are looking at the issue of efficiency, and related issues around value money, cost effectiveness and cost control. Although technically it is best to consider efficiency through an assessment of the relationship between inputs and outputs, we have again taken a slightly wider view.

In general it seems that, as there is often not adequate resourcing to comfortably undertake most tasks within projects, staff tend to keep a fairly tight rein on costs. One said: "I think it (cost consciousness and value for money) is quite a conscious part of people's work. There was a view, however, that systems were and are not always in place to allow efficient use of staff time, one respondent said: "we could have better available information around procurement and suppliers. The systems for this were poor or non-existent. There was lack of institutional memory around this sort of thing."

One of the most frequently mentioned issue in terms of efficiency (and on effectiveness by implication) is information technology, although there was some recognition that things had become a little easier since the last evaluation by Universalia.

The other area raised was on financial systems, which have been historically weak. Most donors seemed satisfied with the level and quality of financial information and with the reporting in general (although there were some reservations about the perceived lack of ability to report on results and impact). One donor said "I have had reports but when I deal with programmatic staff it seems more disorganised … interactions are sometimes difficult … but their donor relations staff members seem to be fairly on point".

One external interviewee complained: "On cost effectiveness and financials they report extensively but there is a high proportion going to admin as opposed to operations … we decided that 'support' operations at 29.2% of expenditure is too high". This was not something we heard repeatedly but felt it was worth reflecting back, and it is speculated that this may be in part due to the way CIVICUS financial systems capture 'programme' costs versus 'support' costs.

Another issue affecting efficiency (and possibly effectiveness) is time management. Many staff complained that they didn't have adequate time to complete the tasks they needed to and some claimed this was partly about a lack of time management, while others said it stemmed from a lack of management per se. This was echoed by complaints from partners that programme management and follow up was not what they would have expected.

We didn't find a clear and comprehensive view that explained the issue of time management internally but we believe it is a credible view to see it as linked with issue of over-burdened staff agendas, as commonly found in civil society organisations. Linked to this is a meetings-driven organisational culture. While most recognised that meeting were essential, and again in line with sector 'norms' there were some issues raised about the length of meetings and lack of clear decision-making in meetings.

Recommendation: Prioritise and upgrade internal systems for financial reporting and information, taking into account the information that managers need to plan effectively.

Recommendation: Consider prioritising plans to prioritise and upgrade information technology systems.

Sustainability

Gross income was $3.18 million in 2009 rising to $3.89 in 2010[19]. Whilst this seems healthy in the medium term, it should be noted that there is a widespread feeling that it is not enough to cover the programmes ambitions and secretariats needs. Accordingly, there is a "major resource gap of $1-1.5 million" according to one informed senior source. Funding-wise, as noted elsewhere, there is some anecdotal evidence that the funding space is shrinking.

In addition the 'traditional' resources constraints, there are also other factors potentially limiting sustainability including the heavy use of interns and volunteers, sometimes for core tasks, and the lack of organisational knowledge-management and learning systems, allied to staff turnover. Comments on these issues are also picked up elsewhere in the report.

There is also some indication that some donors do not fully understand what it is that CIVICUS does, or that the value of what CIVICUS does is not clear. "There needs to be greater dialogue with donors" said one donor, while an internal voice put it like this: "donors in the North do not understand us, there needs to be more work done with them". There are also potentially missed opportunities and mutual objectives that donors could help provide.

There is some evidence that the organisation has been led in the past by donor funding availability, but the clear current consensus is that they should not and do not do this anymore: "We do not design projects according to donor interests". [20]

There is a sense in which, looking at the organisational capacity, budget and overall skill set, the organisation appears to be doing too much. Not only is it attempting to do ambitious things within projects – deal with civil society legitimacy and accountability, build a system for early warnings on civil society oppression, etc - but there is a tendency to undertake lots of individual and joint projects as well. This was borne out by some interviews. One person said "like most NGO's the tendency is to do everything". However others disagreed. One senior staff, referring to the overall ambition of the organisation said "actually, we are not doing enough".

Overall, it seems that the organisation is attempting to 'fight' on too many fronts. This is driven partly by the (older) funding model and partly by culture and (laudable) ambition of staff and the leadership. As funding continues to be difficult the organisation would do well to consider scale back some projects that are considered outside the key scope and less compatible with future directions.

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[19] Global Reporting Initiative, op cit
[20] One interviewee demurred from this saying on one particular project "(the project) was definitely donor led – it was chasing donor money".

Recommendation: Consider undertaking a major risk assessment of funders, which could include a major analysis of the future of the funding 'space', with considered options further diversifying the funding base, including possibly approaching more progressive philanthropic funders.

Recommendation: Consider scaling back the overall number of projects that the organisation runs, with a view to further integrating projects and deepening core competencies.

Recommendation: Consult further with funders on options for future and deeper dialogue to build mutual understanding, seek shared objectives and attempt to maximise the opportunities presented by donors links and leverage, especially at the national level.

3.6. PROJECT AND COUNTRY-SPECIFIC FINDINGS

PROJECT-SPECIFIC FINDINGS

In general and in most cases findings and comments related to experiences of a particular project have been integrated into the main body of the report. In a relatively small number of cases where it was considered appropriate, comments and findings have been provided below.[21]

Civil Society Index

In the words of external interviewee the Civil Society Index is the "flagship programme", and in the view of one staff member it is "one of the two most important projects" of CIVICUS. This was the overwhelming view of respondents who generally concurred that CSI was not only one of the most socially useful projects that CIVICUS has in its portfolio, but also one of the ways in which the organisation is widely known and on which its reputation has been both built and continues to rest.

One view was that the CSI could yet emerge as something even more valuable for the organisation and that even more effort should be put into it to make it into the kind of flagship defining project that the Human Development Index is. One suggested that it should be aggregated into a kind of 'State of Civil Society' every two or three years.

Notwithstanding the many positive comments made, there was also quite a lot of constructive criticism. Methodologically, there were some criticisms of what was called "a one-size-fits-all approach" noted elsewhere in this report.

Reports from the Zambia country study indicated that there was untapped potential: "in terms of real impact and effectiveness there is little evidence that many organisations, even those in the core group of civil society organisations are aware of the index … this hides a real opportunity and there is a genuine interest with donors, government and across civil society in a process of quality assessment, capacity building, empowerment etc across civil society that will enable there to be much bigger impact on people's empowerment and search for rights, poverty levels, accountability and corruption etc. The index – perhaps, enhanced and updated, but certainly more strongly disseminated within Zambia – can be basis for such a process".

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[21] The substantive comments on the CSI reflect the larger number of interviewees and country visits that incorporated CSI interviewees and focus groups

Most of the negative views focused on the level of follow up and support offered: "In many countries CSI is something new – in some countries they have professionals but in others capacity is limited. Before implementing the project in some countries with limited experience and young civil society, someone (from CIVICUS) should be sent to help different environment".

The lack (perceived or otherwise) of follow up also extended to a belief that the action part of the research is lacking. "Research on the state of civil society is useful but not sure that CSI is being used in a way that provides (additional and useful) policy development/research. I am not aware of whether it gets used in a way that furthers civil society … it is interesting but also a bit tedious". Another CSI researcher said: "They provided us with ideas about what to do but they weren't specific. It was really left up to us". We are aware that this element of the CSI is an ongoing criticism but also that CIVICUS maintain that the action part of the research is a local responsibility. One critical actor said, representing the more negative end of the spectrum of views said: "CSI needs more effort. The follow up is not enough. It is (supposed to be) a process to enhance national dynamics. This is CIVICUS' most important tool and it is not up to the level of expectation."

This issue reflects on an earlier area outlined in this report, that of articulating a clear CIVICUS theory of change. A number of interviewees indicated that while the CSI is a "flagship CIVICUS project" it is "a tool with profound potential", which may also represent some missed opportunities. There are therefore some strategic questions about the purpose of the CSI: is it to only *reflect* the space for civil society as an end in itself or, as some stakeholders proposed, it should have greater use as *an agent for change* in, for example, tracking the size and scale of the space and being used as an advocacy tool, generating leverage in influencing opinion formers and policy and decision-makers?

There is some evidence that this is beginning to change and that the 'next generation' of CSI has started to deal with some these issues: "they are definitely listening", although it is too early have robust findings in this regard.

Recommendation: Consider further tools and support to increase the action elements of the CSI research and ensure systems for follow up. Also ensure plans for continuity of partner contact are put in place and acted upon.

Civil Society Watch and Early Warning System

Civil Society Watch is a centrepiece project which, within the 2008-10 period, has shaped newer projects within it such as the Early Warning System and the Eurasia project. It is almost exclusively described by partners as "important" and its impact as "significant".

The strategy now is to "Move towards a bigger scope … a more institutional approach … we are looking for policy change and 'game changing countries'".

The Uganda study report says that: "The CSW programme is valuable and appreciated in Uganda, and the key players make use of its support, advice and analysis. A case is made that international information dissemination could be stronger. There is the possibility of inadvertent contributions by CIVICUS to the complications of contested civil society space."

The EWS is a cornerstone service and project of CIVICUS. Operating in 12 countries it aims to "identify and respond to the initial signs of threats to civil society". The idea behind the EWS is that "Preventative action is better than remedial" and that once governments have clamped down on civil society space it much more difficult and time-consuming to reclaim it that to protect it in the first place. In this sense, the EWS is an evolution of CSW and represents a more sophisticated approach based on experience and knowledge built up over time.

Responses to an internal questionnaire received from several EWS partners in 2009 and 2010 were broadly positive. One finding that stands out is that the EWS not only is useful for raising awareness and signaling upcoming problems but that it also in generating knowledge, producing connections and linking issues and partners together.

World Assembly

In general from the large section of interviewees who have attended, the literature and previous assessment and reports, there is mostly positive opinion about the World Assembly. Described by one as "A smaller, better-run version of the World Social Forum", it is useful for networking, exchanging ideas, network-building (on an organisational and movement basis) and making connections over common and related issues across continents and disciplines. In terms of positioning, the Assembly is also crucial as an organisational marker and showcase for CIVICUS work.

One veteran said: "I know it is valued by many people". The Uganda report notes that it "delivers actual change". Recent attendees were generally complimentary about the organisation and programme.

For civil society from the MENA region – "the World Assembly is a very important moment in relation to the global space … (it helps forge) links between the regional, national, and global levels – on trade, poverty, other developments … regional participation (in the World Assembly) was important".

There were some detectible views that the World Assembly should be held at least some the time in the South, typified by the following response "The World Assembly could be better connected to people if it was more in the Southern countries", although some others appreciated that the location was less important if people from the South could attend more easily, either via grants, or because flight costs may actually be cheaper for most attendees from the South.

On translation, there were some comments that more and better translation is needed, especially into Spanish and Arabic, but it was also recognised this is difficult to achieve in terms of budget and logistics.[22]

Participatory Governance

There are not many consistent findings to be drawn across these project areas. One that we can draw out is that the PG programme was a good illustration of both weaknesses and past achievements. In other words, the PG appears to have been an exciting area of work that reflected a significant emerging civil society trend, but, compared to the scale of some of the problems it seeks to tackle, it seems to have been under-resourced and de-prioritised in recent years.

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[22] One helpful suggestion was for CIVICUS (perhaps via a Mexican partner) to approach the Mexican embassy in Montreal to assist with translation into Spanish.

It may be that there is a plausible rationale for this, but we were unable to identify one, and it seems to be a manifestation of 'project thinking' rather than a strategic approach, although this is something that the renewal is seeking to address. As one key external informant said: "…I understand people have been a bit disappointed with support…it's not as proactive as would have hoped, very dependent on individual support … but PG has never generated interest at senior levels".

PG was not one of the most highly referenced CIVICUS programmes by staff or in interviews. Survey comments were broadly positive as were the results of a relatively recent evaluation[23]. While the evaluation was upbeat about the efficiency, relevance and effectiveness of the work, the scale of the programme, compared with the need and potential for positive change, the impact was not so immediately clear and lagged quoting a participant who said" "The results of the programme have been mixed".

Legitimacy, Transparency and Accountability

The comments we heard about LTA were generally warm and positive, although interviewees rarely expressed strong opinion about it, other than awareness and its growing importance as a trend within civil society as a crucial means to respond to increased external critique. Indeed as one interviewee said: "The LTA is an important defensive move by CIVICUS, if it wasn't for the LTA they would be asked what they are doing on these issues, they are big issues for governments". Another found the linkage made between AGNA and LTA via a workshop "useful and very good", and these examples of cross-project synergies and linkages are an initiative that CIVICUS could continue to aim to identify and strengthen.

The literature - APR, QPR's etc – gives the impression of lots of relevant and 'on track' LTA activity, including .

Affinity Groups of National Associations

AGNA is an attempt, according to one interviewee "to strengthen national associations to advance citizenship". Participants generally found useful networking synergies and the support offered including the National Guide was "very good", although, as in other areas, "staff rotation is a problem". The AGNA meetings themselves at the World Assembly proved to be "very participatory".

From the Uganda report it is clear that - in that country at least - some confusion exists in AGNA membership vis-à-vis other CIVICUS partners: "CIVICUS, and AGNA particularly, is in danger of missing complementary contributions from different national associations in countries where there is more than one. There is a case for revisiting the rulebook. CIVICUS probably loses significant impact and profile as a result of an inadequate system for synergising contact points".[24]

In Zambia interviews it was clear that the very few people who attended these gatherings gained a lot both personally, professionally and organisationally from engaging with this initiative. But, despite clear views about the potential, there are "no processes to transfer any of this learning or exchange back into Zambian civil society which undermines its impact".

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[23] Chiku Malunga, February, 2010, *CIVICUS Participatory Governance Programme External Evaluation Summary Report,* Capacity Development Consultants (CADECO)
[24] There are some additional comments on the relationship between AGNA organisations in Uganda in the Uganda report attached at the end of this report. Please see Annex.

One interviewee – a lone but knowledgeable external voice – was more critical: "we really do not know what AGNA is doing in CIVICUS. It is an exclusive group and has a strong reputation and could have been an excellent thing … but it seems like AGNA is operating in parallel, it is really not thought into the rest of the programme … I believe AGNA should be floated off".

However there was a counter view from one external respondent involved in AGNA: "In terms of membership, I am in favour of strict criteria … exactly what a national association does … is it is important to note that an organisations may have some limitations"

There is also a suggestion that the consultation with CIVICUS members could be more organised in relation to the input into the World Assembly: "CIVICUS could and probably should explore the potential for key members to take on some national or regional convening responsibilities. There is the potential for this to be part of a systematic means for a wider range of members making a contribution to discussions at the World Assembly, without having to attend in person".

There was a strong suggestion that perhaps yearly regional meetings would be a productive and useful addition to the current AGNA structure. It was pointed out, however, that whilst Asia and Europe are two regions within the AGNA network which do have yearly meetings, other regions may not have the capacity and or funds to hold meetings annually in their respective regions. There is a space for regional meetings during the World Assembly.

Recommendation: Consider relaxing the AGNA rules so that more than one member per country can join.

COUNTRY-SPECIFIC COMMENTS

Most of the findings from country visits have been integrated into the report however there are a few additional and specific points that should be noted. A report on the visit to Uganda is attached in Annex 6.

MENA region

There is a general sense that the region is in crisis mode and it was sometimes difficult for respondents to judge CIVICUS over the period of the programme. In general there was support for CIVICUS and interviewees were able to point to specific examples of help and support "solidarity" that CIVICUS has given. This was considered particularly important in the current and recent period, and interviewees were keen to point at that the appetite for CIVICUS-type support, help and guidance is very large and growing.

"The region has many challenges for CIVICUS. Civil society in the region is dogged by the struggle of the right to exist – main objective – this creates limitations: passive participation – security and repression – violations of the national security – limitations – all challenges that CIVICUS faces".

On the CSI there were concerns that about funding. "There could have been an expert who could supervise the survey and complete the analysis … in (country removed) you need to have a license – only the government are licensed to do surveys the minimum deal with $30,000. In this and other comments it was said that overall there were not enough resources to complete the tasks and "if we had staff from CIVICUS then we could have had completed it".

In Bahrain the survey was not completed due to "technical reasons" to do with the funding model and also the ability of the major indicators to fits with the country context.

Zambia[25]

There is some limited awareness of CIVICUS and what it can offer. In terms of the CSI, on impact and effectiveness there is little evidence that many organisations , even those in the core group of civil society organisations are aware of the index itself, the specific measurements for Zambia, or what its potential is. This hides an opportunity: there is a genuine interest with donors, government and across civil society in a process of quality assessment, capacity building, empowerment etc across civil society that will enable there to be much bigger impact on people's empowerment and search for rights, poverty levels, accountability and corruption etc. The index – perhaps, enhanced and updated, but certainly more strongly disseminated within Zambia – can be basis for such a process – if CIVICUS and its partners are able to apply the necessary energy, direction and resources.

An NGO Act passed in 2009 this has been a process and bone of contention between government and civil society for some years. CIVICUS was involved in spearheading the necessary amendments required of the NGO bill and act in Zambia. It also highlighted the unfair clauses and stipulations of the NGO act in Zambia. To an extent CIVICUS empowered local CSO's to address it. There was a test case where one organisation (SACCORD), whose actions concerning democratic systems displeased the government, and they were de-registered. The efforts of civil society, supported by CIVICUS, caused the decision to be resolved but the action was an example of the some of the dangers inherent in the Act, especially if the country continues to move (as many perceive it is) away from democratic systems and freedom of expression. There is now a working group of 5 local "umbrella" type organisations - CSPR, NGOCC, SACCORD, TlZ and ZCSD .

On AGNA, from interviews it was clear that the very few people who attended these gatherings gained a lot both personally, professionally and organisationally from engaging with this initiative. But there is a lack of processes to transfer learning or exchange back into Zambian civil society which undermines its impact. A number of other people talked to saw that was real value and potential in the meetings and newsletters for adding to civil society in Zambia.

Mexico

Mexico is a region where civil society has made gains in recent years but also where these gains are potentially under threat. There are no CSW partners operating in the region and yet interviewees representing relevant civil society organisation showed interest in the project, although they had not been approached by CIVICUS.

In general there is a sense that - while in years gone by (and considering the central role of Mexican civil society in setting up CIVICUS) there was more CIVICUS presence felt in the country - there is little current interest. "Four or five years ago there was an effort to increase membership but there was no follow up."

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[25] This section is taken from the country study report by Colin Williams

There perceived lack of interest is amplified by a lack of ongoing support and communication in the CSI process in Mexico. "There was a frustrating lack of contact … and also of continuity of contact".

The lack of follow up in recent years perhaps also lends itself to a lack of sustainable impact on the overall effectiveness of civil society. With the exception of the (relatively recent) CSI, the impact of which was palpable, other impacts could not be discerned by interviewees.

EURASIA INTERNATIONAL DIGITAL EXCHANGE AND ADVOCACY (IDEA) NETWORK

The Eurasia network is a fairly recent project in a region of very limited space for civil society. Comments made here as an assessment of the Eurasia network are based mainly on an internal evaluation report: *Internal Mid Term Review of the Eurasia Idea Network Project, March 2011*. The report follows the five performance areas as set down by the IPLF and is commensurate with the areas of assessment - relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability, and participation - underpinning this report. The report also feeds into the overall findings of this report on CIVICUS as a whole, and is supplemented by feedback from key staff.[26]

FINDINGS OF THE INTERNAL EVALUATION REPORT

Findings of the internal evaluation report include the following:

- There is a high level of enthusiasm for the Eurasia Network among Network participants among partners in continuing involvement in this project.
- There is still much to do in order to build strong Networks in Eurasia.
- There needs to be a stronger evaluation process for establishing partner relationships.
- The Eurasia Network Project has met the majority of the grant criteria set forth in 2008.
- The single overwhelming success story is the abundance of Network meetings and assemblies organised throughout the grant period.
- While under the auspices of the EC grant, many press releases, articles and documents have emerged; one ongoing deficit has been the circulation and publication of academic analysis, lengthy articles and narratives produced by CIVICUS and partners on the region.
- While the Google group created in 2010 served to link many Eurasia Network members across the region, a website remains a deficit.

The staff survey conducted as part of the evaluation had a number of complimentary findings which included:

- More short and regular updates are required from the Eurasia Coordinator.

- Eurasia is still unknown to CIVICUS.

- In the future finance should be involved from the beginning

- The Network achieved some admirable deliverables, just not necessarily those outlined in the grant.

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[26] The e-survey was sent to members of the network and this provided additional information from the region.

- The project has always benefited from communications, research, policy and RM support, although there is definitely room for improvement.

- While the programme is highly regarded at CIVICUS, there is no evidence of inter departmental synergy, although there is huge potential for synergy

The results of the survey revealed that there was general optimism regarding the Eurasia Network project among CIVICUS staff. Positive feedback included that the Network allowed CIVICUS to spread awareness among civil society in a new geographic region; and that through its substantial outreach activities and CIVCIUS-led coordination, there was increased knowledge-sharing by activists. However, it also emerged that the Network would have benefited from a project that was written in a more participatory manner with more partner input. There was also consensus among staff that areas of growth might be realised with improved understanding and synergy. These ideas are captured under key themes, which are supported by individuals' observations.

The findings of the Eurasia project indicate a clear willingness both amongst staff and partners to continue with the project. It is also clear from the report that most of the 'deliverable' aspects of the project have been achieved or partly achieved.

The apparent lack of outcome and results-oriented objectives and achievements is mostly commensurate with the landscape, subject matter and modus operandi of the project as discussed elsewhere in this report. One external informant said: "My own hope is that CIVICUS is more outcome-driven... it's not that they can't measure them, it's that they do not really set them".

The lack of synergy with other teams and projects is consistent with other findings in this report and, as also acknowledged elsewhere, this is recognized by senior management. However, there does seem, from the perceptible lack of knowledge and understanding in other parts of the organisation, a particular disconnectedness of the project. This may partly be because of the way that the network has emerged, and partly because of cultural and language barriers.

In addition, this lack of organisational memory, combined with staff turnover in the role of network coordinator has perhaps affected the handover to the current coordinator. One interviewee said: "it seems there was a poor handover process … there needs to be more and better oversight of the project in the future".

It is noted that there is also a lack of documentation and relatively scant reporting on the Network within the annual reports and other feedback and analysis that CIVICUS produces. One key external commentator said: "Seems to be reporting on what they have done rather than what they have achieved – little tends to be achieved in the difficult countries".

Notes on organisational culture

In general people are committed, work hard and are very passionate about what they do at CIVICUS. At the same time there is a perceptible silo attitude that persists in some quarters. This is partly a legacy of the 'projectised' environment, but a perceived lack of willingness to deal with the new reality is starting to frustrate some staff: "we need to accept that we should work together". Another said: "the atmosphere is good, friendly but there is also a 'can't do' attitude" and we heard that "there should be more openness to learn from others – we are not experts in everything …we need to be flexible"
There is some disquiet about the restructuring but on balance probably less than you might expect at this stage, given the relatively deep nature of the restructure. Perhaps more important is the lack of staff time and resource to do what is needed. "Because we are so short staffed we are not able to fully follow through" was typical view repeated by nearly everyone. Additionally, one said, "there is a culture of too many meetings" and "there should be responsibility taken for decision making" were typical comments. One also said "there is a disconnect between senior management and 'shop floor'"

CIVICUS has undergone recent significant change through changes in senior management (and Secretary General in particular) and institutional leadership. This appears to carry considerable importance as the new Senior Management have, quite rightly in our view, focused on building the organizational infrastructure, systems and processes.

Further to this there are varying views on the model of leadership needed. CIVICUS was described a "top down" organisation in the past, has current leadership that believes in more of a 'middle-out' model. While there are some calls that the leadership should be more 'present', and as one online e-survey contributed: "CIVICUS needs greater visioning and hands on leadership", this should not extend to a model of over-interventionist management.

4. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1. CONCLUSIONS

Given the complex context in which it operates and the challenging global economic and political changes that have taken place over the period 2008-2010, CIVICUS has undertaken important and valuable work. These efforts have had unarguable and multiple positive impacts across the world, even as the organisation has sought to renew its internal structures and systems and civil society has suffered renewed onslaughts in many regions and countries. The internal context – of 'renewal' and transition – is considered a particularly important factor in this evaluation period, but the organisation has shown significant progress during this phase, and across the range of projects there has been shown to be advancement and achievement.

Overall CIVICUS is highly valued and is considered an influential and important organisation, serving a useful and relatively targeted section of societal needs. In terms of more specific role of CIVICUS, and targeting of its theory of change and mode of operation, there was less agreement on the detail. Further work may be required by the organisation to consider the implications of this and further refine its focus and mode of operation.

The organisation can be shown to be successful in many of its projects, with work around the Civil Society Index and Civil Society Watch demonstrating perhaps the biggest impacts on the ground, if not necessarily the most effective and efficient operation and optimum follow up. Staff and partners were able to point to quite significant and important gains which can be attributed to CIVICUS and its partners' work or to which CIVICUS' work has contributed, including that of capacity building of civil society mentioned in the section above. Many of these remain at the level of 'process outcomes' or influence at one level away from what would normally be classically considered to be impact by evaluators, but they are nonetheless important effects from the work that CIVICUS has contributed to, sometimes as a primary or indispensable actor. The private sector is considered to a weak point of modality.

CIVICUS has, in the period in question, devised and revised planning and learning systems, restructured staff structure and reformulated projects. It has introduced a range of new strategies and plans to reflect a new, and more strategic thematic direction. Overall this process of renewal was successful in terms of drafting and agreeing new systems and structures, however overall it had some challenges in terms of both the time taken to agree the systems and structures and also in the degree to which they are operationally integrated. It is still too early to say whether renewal has had the positive impact hoped for. The new structure and thematic approach serve as a good platform on which to build for the future.

CIVICUS has started procedures to report on impact, but the realisation of staff capacities to fully articulate impact in the longer term is still an ambition for the organisation, albeit one it is starting to take very seriously. This also applies to effectiveness, where staff and partners, although reluctant to comment on the classical evaluation components, were keen to point to effective achievements in numerous areas and were supported by the results of the e-survey. In terms of factors limiting effectiveness; communications, both internal and external, knowledge management and staff limitations in terms of knowledge and turnover, are all found to be at play.

Currently, CIVICUS membership levels are relatively stable although they have been higher at various times in the past three years. More important is that the issue of what membership for and what it means to the organisation is not yet settled. Member communications are appreciated by members but require sharpening against organisational priorities.

The work done so far on decentralisation has the laudable aim of bringing the organisation closer to its partners. There is more work to do on how this will be operationalised but also on the fundamental reasons for it, its link with membership and a theory of change.

CIVICUS seems to place quite a high value on cost-consciousness and cost effectiveness, partly because funding is rarely adequate to cover all expenses of programme outputs. There are some suggestions that internal systems and capacities to deliver adequate financial information and technological support and solutions need to be - and are starting to be - addressed.

Whilst staff and management are equally committed in their work and are clearly inspired in what they do day-to-day, turnover of staff continues to make organisational learning and continuity of contact with partners difficult at times. Overall, staff appear to be struggling with their workloads and are not always able to prioritise effectively. This is despite attempts to do so within the planning system. Staff may need help with prioritisation and time management, but overall it seems clear that over time the organisation has a propensity, like many CSO's to take on too much work and lack the discipline of sharp focus and deliberate and calculated de-prioritisation.

It is fair to say, at least amongst staff below the senior management level, the renewal process has left little appetite for new papers and strategies. Arguably, and given the approaching new strategic phase in 2013, it might be best during the next period for any strategic work produced to be at the level of refinements of existing positions, clarifications or capacity building programmes in support of existing strategies. Nevertheless renewal has undoubtedly left CIVICUS with many more opportunities going forward to continue to become more effective and have a bigger impact.

4.2. RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations given below are split into three categories: 'strategic', 'tactical' and 'practical'. They will need to be prioritised according to organisational requirements in the *Evaluation Action* Plan that will follow this report. Some will also need to be sequenced with each other in order to logically deal with interdependencies and synergies. Most, but not all, recommendations appear in the text above.

As we have acknowledged, we are aware that recommendations in a report such as this often lend themselves to further internal processes, strategies and consultations. We recognise that the organisation has recently been through many such changes, and that come changes are already in the pipeline or underway, including some that we may not be aware of. Therefore care should be applied to the way in which the recommendations are implemented.

'STRATEGIC' RECOMMENDATIONS

☐ **Recommendation 1:** Set up a renewed process by which the outstanding and unsettled elements of theories of change are dealt with systematically before the end of the current strategic period, in order to feed into the next strategic plan.

☐ **Recommendation 2:** Continue to consider the operational and strategic implications of decentralisation, perhaps in the form of a working group which would include board members. Set a clear date for a final report and implement the decision.

☐ **Recommendation 3:** Membership voice should be addressed and the meaning and value of membership needs to be settled by an internal process. This should be integrated with the decentralisation 'project', so as to maximise the potential for regional links with members as well as link to the secretariat.

☐ **Recommendation 4:** External communications capacity should be increased when resources allow. This could follow a revised communications strategy, which in turn could shadow renewed thinking on decentralisation, membership and advocacy.

☐ **Recommendation 5:** Consider scaling back the overall number of projects that the organisation runs, with a view to further integrating projects and deepening core competencies.

'TACTICAL' RECOMMENDATIONS

☐ **Recommendation 5:** Staff may need further and perhaps ongoing capacity building, perhaps in the form of training, regarding the strategic planning processes, and particularly on the thematic plan.

☐ **Recommendation 6:** CIVICUS should develop a common and agreed understanding of impact linked to the emerging 'theory of change' discussions.

☐ **Recommendation 7:** In relation to the current programme, and in order to strengthen secretariat and country context synergies, it is recommended developing 'country evaluation reports', focusing on outcomes and impact, and that the key partners for each country organise conferences in future years looking at results and needs for the future, perhaps linked to the relevant donor.

☐ **Recommendation 8:** CIVICUS could identify internal capacity indicators to track the extent of implementation and consider refining the learning elements of IPLF, with leadership championing and further staff input.

☐ **Recommendation 9:** Consider undertaking a major risk assessment of funders, which could include a major analysis of the future of the funding 'space', with considered options further diversifying the funding base, including possibly approaching more progressive philanthropic funders.

☐ **Recommendation 10:** CIVICUS should consider the development of a renewed Membership Development Strategy. This could include updating approaches to member recruitment and retention, and take into account strategies for geographical targeting and member profiling. It could also draw out important aspects including member segmentation and identifying further strategies for *organising actively* as well as *servicing passively*. This strategy could consider a programme of regular visits and delegations to support member and partner if deemed appropriate.

☐ **Recommendation 11:** Member and partner communication could better reflect the networked nature of the organisation, ensuring clarity of member and partner voice, while highlighting current overall advocacy-oriented priorities and actions.

☐ **Recommendation 12:** Consult further with funders on options for future and deeper dialogue to build mutual understanding, seek shared objectives and attempt to maximise the opportunities presented by donors links and leverage, especially at the national level.

☐ **Recommendation 13:** Whilst it is apparent that BRICS countries are key to future global geo-politics, and that CIVICUS is well placed to provide civil society coordination in this regard, we would suggest that an analysis first undertaken, scoping opportunities and threats, and setting any scale up of work against other future organisational priorities.

☐ **Recommendation 13:** Consider establishing a scoping exercise for understanding strategic trends and drivers for the role of progressive philanthropy

'PRACTICAL' RECOMMENDATIONS

☐ **Recommendation 14:** Recommendation: Prioritise and upgrade internal systems for financial reporting and information with systems built around providing the information that managers need to plan effectively.

☐ **Recommendation 15:** Consider prioritising plans to prioritise and upgrade information technology systems.

☐ **Recommendation 16:** Wherever possible seek to make translation more comprehensive and, when budget allows, employ professional translation services for documents, workshops and events

☐ **Recommendation 17:** Consider three-monthly (or similar) shortlisted organisational priorities that are clearly indentified, shared and reflected in external communications.

☐ **Recommendation 18:** Consider further tools and support to increase the action elements of the CSI research and ensure systems for follow up. Also ensure plans for continuity of partner contact are put in place and acted upon.

☐ **Recommendation 19:** AGNA and CIVICUS consider revisiting and discussing the issue of AGNA membership rules.

ANNEX 1: ORIGINAL TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR CIVICUS EVALUATION[27]

MARCH 2011

1. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

CIVICUS: World Alliance for Citizen Participation (www.civicus.org) is an international alliance of civil society organisations dedicated to strengthening citizen action and civil society. Formally established in 1993, CIVICUS occupies a unique position as the largest, most diverse and broadly recognised civil society alliance in the world. CIVICUS' network currently includes approximately 450 members from over 100 countries. CIVICUS' members and partners constitute a broad and influential network of organisations, which span the spectrum of civil society, including: local, national, regional and international civil society networks and organisations; trade unions; faith-based networks; professional associations; and NGO capacity development organisations. CIVICUS works in partnership with this wide range of organisations to implement complex, global, participatory civil society strengthening projects.

Through its worldwide membership base, CIVICUS aims to have a positive impact on the ability of civil society organisations to engage all sectors of society by working to ensure free speech and free association. CIVICUS' programmes seek to amplify the voices and opinions of ordinary people and enhance the accountability, performance and impact of civil society organisations. CIVICUS' key programmatic approaches are knowledge generation and analysis, convening and multi-stakeholder engagement, communication and advocacy. The overall programme is closely aligned to the principles of human rights and participatory governance, and promotes civil society's role in supporting achievement of the human development goals, in particular through building global partnerships.

2. PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES OF THE EVALUATION

The evaluation is intended principally for learning and accountability purposes. It is expected to generate relevant findings, lessons and recommendations which will be shared with key stakeholders of CIVICUS and used by the implementing agencies to guide and inform current work and future programming.

Objectives
1) To assess the performance of CIVICUS along the following dimensions:
a) Relevance
- How appropriate was the project/programme design?
- To what extent did the stated objectives correctly address the problems and real needs of the target groups?

b) Efficiency
- How economically were project/programme inputs—funds, expertise, time, etc— converted into results in required quantity and quality and in good time?
- Was the use of the project/programme/CIVICUS resources cost-effective?
- Could the stated results have been achieved more cost efficiently?

c) Effectiveness
- To what extent have the stated CIVICUS results and purpose been achieved in a sustainable way?

d) Impacts
- What sustainable changes–positive and negative, intended and unintended–did the project/ programme have on the target groups?

e) Sustainability

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[27] This Terms of reference was subsequently negotiated and agreed between the Consultants and CIVICUS

- What is the likelihood of the project/programme continuing after end of the project?
- What sustainability measures have been put in place?

f) Implementation processes

- To what extent were the activities of the project/programme implemented in a participatory and empowering manner? How involved were the key stakeholders of the project/programme in planning and executing activities, and steering the project/ programme?

2) To identify the strengths and weaknesses of CIVICUS' interventions and produce findings, lessons and recommendations to guide and inform future programme work with a special focus on CIVICUS' vision, mission and values

3. SCOPE OF THE EVALUATION

The evaluation will cover the last 3 years of CIVICUS' work (2008 – 2010) and include all programmes and activities stated in the MOU and Strategic Framework Arrangement. In view of the fact that CIVICUS is in the mid-term of its Strategic Plan (2008 – 2012) and has undergone an organisational restructuring, the evaluation is expected to provide insights on the impact of the new structure on the achievement of CIVICUS' goals and also recommend areas that need to be addressed in the next planning phase. Within this framework, the evaluation will also look at the renewal of staff and assess its implications for CIVICUS, both in terms of continuity and innovation.

3.1 Evaluation criteria

The evaluation will concentrate on internationally agreed evaluation criteria, namely: relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact, sustainability, coverage, coherence and coordination of the project/programme.[28]

3.2 Evaluation principles

The Principles underlying this evaluation exercise are:

a) Usefulness: The information will be used by the different stakeholders to design or improve intervention

b) Cost-effectiveness: The evaluation will be managed as effectively as possible to maximise the benefits while minimising use of scarce resources and unnecessary time demands on stakeholders.

c) Accuracy: The data and information will be accurate and reliable and reflect input from a variety of stakeholders.

d) Credibility: The process will be systematic, transparent and inclusive, and the evaluators and the process managers will have as the skill and experience to manage the process.

3.3 Specific tasks

Working closely with other members of the Evaluation Team, the evaluator(s) will undertake the following tasks:

i. Develop evaluation framework and methodology, taking into consideration how this evaluation can build on the CCF survey.

ii. Develop the evaluation plan and refine with input from and in consolidation with CIVICUS management team.

iii. Meetings with relevant CIVICUS officials and donor (DFID) as required

iv. Undertake extensive document review to become familiar with CIVICUS.

v. Develop the evaluation tools and conduct validation and field testing of the same.

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[28] Drawn from OECD-DAC evaluation criteria, including for humanitarian evaluations

vi. Assess the systems established for implementing the programmes and make recommendations for improvement.

vii. Assess the capacity development interventions CIVICUS has undertaken with partners and their effectiveness.

viii. Prepare the evaluation draft reports and present the findings to relevant staff and stakeholders.

4. METHODOLOGY

The evaluator(s) will be expected to utilise various evaluation techniques and research methods including review of CIVICUS monitoring information and other relevant documents, Participatory Learning and Action/ Participatory Rapid Appraisal (PLA/ PRA), Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), key informant interviews, semi-structured interviews, and observations, among others.

4.1 Data collection methods and tools

a) Document Review

Among others, a review of the following documents is required:
• CIVICUS organisational assessments and survey reports (including CCF Survey Report 2010, Gender Assessment 2010)
• CIVICUS strategic plan (2008-2012) and organisational operational plan (2009-2012)
• Narrative and financial reports (2008-2010)
• Quarterly and annual progress reports (2008-2010)
• Partnership agreements (2008-2010)
• CIVICUS proposals (2008-2010)
• Opportunity and Risk appraisal document (Oxfam Novib)
• Key Questions developed by CIVICUS staff and donors (2010)

b) Focus Group Discussions

Focus Group Discussions will be held at the CIVICUS office and other key stakeholders (such as civil society organisations at the regional level). This method will also be used with selected stakeholders.

c) Semi-Structured Interview (SSI)

SSI will be carried out with selected individual male and female staff and beneficiaries of CIVICUS' programmes. In addition, this method will be used to gather information from donors and government authorities at various levels.

d) Observations

Careful and systematic observation regarding the operations will be carried to capture primary information. The evaluation team will also observe practices within selected civil society.

e) Key Informant Interviews

This method is important to capture the views and professional opinions of people who know about the circumstances on the ground and CIVICUS in particular. Both internal and external stakeholders will be contacted to ensure that the evaluation reflects the views of all CIVICUS stakeholders. Such persons should be identified from among key partners, members, and donors.

f) Most significant change stories

It is suggested that the evaluator(s) should collect stories of change from identified beneficiaries. The stories will focus on what the beneficiaries consider to be the most significant change CIVICUS has brought to their lives, capacities or way of operating.

4.2 Data analysis

The evaluators will be expected to produce detailed data/information analysis methods to collate, analyse and interpret data. It is expected that the analysis and interpretation shall be made according to the key issues of the evaluation. It is suggested that the evaluator(s) employ triangulated data analysis procedures. It would be possible to utilise social science data analysis software such as the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPPS) as appropriate and to supplement this with qualitative techniques of data analysis.

4.3 Evaluation sites

The following sites are suggested to be included for field investigation: Johannesburg, Latin America, Mena Region and West Africa. Other sites may be identified.

5. DELIVERABLES

i. Detailed evaluation framework and plan endorsed by the evaluation team.
ii. Development and finalisation of the evaluation tools.
iii. Orientation/training of the evaluation team.
iv. Draft reports.
v. Facilitation of validation workshops on the basis of the draft reports.
vi. Presentation of the evaluation findings in draft reports to CIVICUS management and staff based in Johannesburg.
vii. Finalised draft reports.
viii. Finalised report based on consolidated comments from the above-mentioned stakeholders. The evaluator(s) should submit the draft and final reports in soft and (2) hard copies to the Planning and Learning Unit (PLU) Manager based in Johannesburg for approval.

6. TIME FRAME

The consultancy will run for 45 effective days commencing 1 March 2011 and ending 1 May 2011, with a final report. The tentative work plan, to be agreed upon between the evaluator(s) and CIVICUS, is outlined in the table below. In the case where this consultancy is conducted by more than one person, the proposal submitted by the consultants must indicate who the lead consultant is and the activities that they will be implementing, as well as the activities and days allocated to any co-consultants. However, the total number of consultancy days should not exceed 45 days.

6.1 Work Plan

Activity	Number of days	Location	Person responsible
Briefing	1	Johannesburg	Consultant(s)
Document review	2	Johannesburg	Consultant(s)
Development and revision of evaluation tools	2	Johannesburg	Consultant(s)
Travel	8		Consultant(s
Training of evaluation team	1		Consultant(s)
Pre-testing and revision	3	Field	Consultant(s)

of evaluation tools

Field work	20	Field	Consultant(s)
Data analysis and report writing	3	Field	Consultant(s)
Validation and debriefing meeting	1	Johannesburg	Consultant(s)
Revision and submission of revised reports	2	Johannesburg	Consultant(s)
Presentation of final report	2	Johannesburg	Consultant(s)
Total	45		

7. REQUIRED EXPERTISE

The consultant(s) should meet the following requirements:

· Holder of post-graduate degree in Social Science or Development Studies
· Extensive experience in civil society and human rights
· Experience in research, monitoring and evaluation
· Knowledge and experience of project cycle management
· Excellent facilitation skills
· Excellent report writing skill
· Experience of working with local and international NGOs

8. SUPPORT AVAILABLE

On behalf of the implementing agencies, CIVICUS will:

• Provide officers to be part of the evaluation team and specifically to assist in the collection of the required data.
• Facilitate timely accomplishment of the assessment work.
• Pay the professional fee and other arising costs from the contract.
• Provide logistical support (transport, accommodation, food, etc during the assignment).
• Review/comment on methods and other outputs of the evaluation.
• Provide management and other support that may be required by the evaluation team.

9. SUPERVISION AND MANAGEMENT

The consultants will report to the Planning and Learning Manager (or a designated officer) based in Johannesburg. While the consultants will be expected to work closely with and interact with partners, beneficiaries and other stakeholders, the overall management will be provided by CIVICUS as the lead organisation. As such, the Planning and Learning Manager will provide day to day supervision and support to the consultants.

10. TERMS AND CONDITIONS

Logistics: The consultants' travel from base to the field and back after the end of the contract (including airport tax), food and accommodation will be covered by CIVICUS.

Professional fee: Applicants will be asked to submit a budget/financial proposal. The consultants will be paid a professional fee for consultancy days agreed with by CIVICUS.

Tax and insurance: The consultants shall be responsible for their income tax and/or insurance during the assignment.

Code of conduct: Because CIVICUS' work is based on deeply held values and principles, it is essential that our commitment to human rights and humanitarian principles is supported and demonstrated by all members of staff. The CIVICUS Code of Conduct (CoC) sets out the standards which all staff members must adhere to. The consultant will be expected to adhere to the CoC.

Additional terms and conditions of service shall be spelt out in the contract.

11. MODE OF APPLICATION

Applications with non returnable copies of CVs, testimonials and sample of previous work should be submitted on or before 7 February 2011 via email to humanresources@civicus.org.

Applications could also be submitted to the CIVICUS Office in Johannesburg. All applications should include the following;
• Cover letter (max 1 page)
• Technical proposal (max 4 pages)

The technical proposal should include:
(i) brief explanation about the Consultant(s) with particular emphasis on previous experience in this kind of work
(ii) profile of the Consultant(s) to be involved in undertaking the evaluation
(iii) understanding of the TOR and the task to be accomplished
(iv) draft evaluation framework and plan

• Financial Proposal (max 2 pages)
The financial proposal should be submitted together with the technical proposal. Data collection and data processing costs are on the account of the Consultant. The Consultant should also use his or her own computer. Costs pertaining to transport, stationeries and supplies needed for data collection, persons that will take part from consortium partners and government authorities during evaluation process, enrichment workshop should not be included in the financial proposal.

• Samples
At least two samples of previous work i.e. final evaluation reports of similar global institutions
Draft Terms of Reference for CIVICUS Evaluation, March 2011

Critical Questions	Indicators	Means of verification
Relevance		
How appropriate was the project/programme design?	• Relevant evidence that the programmes were designed in a way that stakeholders, especially members, found appropriate. • Comparability with similar organisations and networks programme design.	• E-survey • Interviews with and input from target stakeholders • Desk review of documentation
To what extent did the stated objectives correctly address the problems and real needs of the target groups?	• Evidence that strategies to address needs of target groups were implemented appropriately.	• Ongoing reporting • Literature review • Interviews with and input from target stakeholders
Efficiency		
•How economically were project/programme inputs—funds, expertise, time, etc—converted into results in required quantity and quality and in good time?	• Sufficient evidence of relationship between inputs and outputs	• Literature review and desk research • Input from target stakeholders • Management information and reports of meetings • Etc
Was the use of the project/programme/CIVICUS resources cost-effective?	• Sufficient evidence of relationship between inputs and outputs	
• Could the stated results have been achieved more cost efficiently?	• Evidence of analysis of critical choices and opportunity cost etc	
Effectiveness		

To what extent have the stated CIVICUS results and purpose been achieved in a sustainable way?	• Sufficient evidence of a reasonable relationship between outputs and outcomes	• Literature review and desk research • Input from target stakeholders in interviews • E-survey • Management information and reports of meetings • Most significant stories
Impact		
What sustainable changes– positive and negative, intended and unintended–did the project/programme have on the target groups?	• Sufficient evidence of a reasonable relationship between outcomes and [notional] impact • Comparability with similar organisations and networks programme design.	• Literature review and desk research • Input from target stakeholders in interviews • E-survey • Management information and reports of meetings • Most significant stories
Sustainability		
What is the likelihood of the project/programme continuing after end of the project? What sustainability measures have been put in place?	• Evidence of need • Evidence of capacity and sufficient resources • Sufficient evidence of commitment from governance structures	• Literature review and desk research • Input from target stakeholders • Management information and reports of meetings
Implementation processes		
To what extent were the activities of the project/programme implemented in a participatory and	• Sufficient evidence of participation and inclusiveness • E.g. indicators of meaningful	• Literature review and desk research • Input from target stakeholders in interviews

empowering manner? How involved were the key stakeholders of the project/programme?	consultation and upstream co-design (where appropriate)	• Management information and reports of meetings

ANNEX 3: LIST OF INTERNAL DOCUMENTS CONSULTED

- *Evaluation TOR*
- *Evaluation Management Team TOR plus list of specific evaluation questions from staff & donors*
- *Regional Distribution of CIVICUS Projects and Constituents 2011 plus contact details*
- *DFID PPA Contract 2009-11*
- *Oxfam NOVIB contract with CIVICUS 2009-11*
- *Contract summaries 2009-11*
- *EU Contract 2009*
- *Contract Irish Aid 2008*
- *SIDA contract 2007-09*
- *AGNA CS Mott contract 2010-12*
- *Project CS Mott 2010 contract*
- *EIDHR interim report 2010*
- *Ford contract 2010*
- *EIDHR contract 2008*
- *Grant Agreement CIDA 2009*
- *Grant Agreement Irish Aid 2006-08*
- *CIVICUS Agreement SIDA 2007-2009*
- *Contract of collaboration PATC 2008*
- *NORAD contract 2010-12 ; Proposed milestones 2008*
- *UNDEF PG Contract 2008-10*
- *ODI PG Contract 2009-10*
- *Proposal Strengthening gender and mainstreaming 2010*
- *Organisational Assessment: Universalia 2008*
- *PG Evaluation Report: CADECO 2009*
- *CSI Impact Assessment: Skat 2009*
- *CIVICUS CCF Survey: iScale & Keystone 2010*
- *CIVICUS Gender and Diversity Assessment 2010*
- *CSI Status Report 2010*
- *Eurasia Network mid-term review report 2011*
- *Oxfam NOVIB Evaluation Policy 2004*
- *PPA 2009-10 self assessment form*
- *CIVICUS Strategic Directions 2008 -12*
- *CIVICUS OP 2009-12*
- *Draft Thematic Planning 2011 – 2012*
- *Thematic planning and operational planning & budgeting documents 2010 (guidelines, templates, timeframes)*
- *Organisational Structure 2010*
- *CIVICUS Handbook*
- *Draft IPLF 2011 (March) including Evaluation Report Format, IPLF Concept note & implementation plan, and CIVICUS' Planning, M&E & Reporting templates and guidelines*
- *Draft Theory of Change & workshop report 2010*
- *Gender Equality Policy 2007*

- *Offsite Policy & Offsite agreement form 2010*
- *PG Interim report Irish Aid 2008-09*
- *Interim Narrative report LTA 2008-09*
- *Narrative report Irish Aid – CSI 2008-09*
- *Ibis PG Narrative 2008*
- *Christian Aid Report 2009-10*
- *Financial Report 2010*
- *Annual Progress Report to PATC 2010*
- *Core report NOVIB 2009*
- *Annual report SIDA CSI 2007-09*
- *Nduna Foundation EHHR contract 2008-11*
- *UNDEF PG Narrative report 2008-10*
- *Annual Report 2010 General Funding*
- *Annual Report EHHR 2009-10*
- *QPR Analysis Reports 2009 & 2010*
- *Annual Progress Reports 2009 & 2010*
- *CIVICUS Annual Reports 2008 & 2009*
- *Accountability Charter Reports 2009 & 2010*
- *2009 Audited Financials*
- *2011 Approved Budget*

Original 3 year Outcomes	Revised 3 year Outcomes	2009 Milestones

Increased knowledge generated and shared among civil society and other stakeholders, especially with regard to:
 	
    o   the role and state of civil society;
 	
    o   threats against civil society's ability to express and assemble;
 	
    o   good practice and effectiveness within civil society.
 	
Capacity strengthened within civil society on a range of skills based areas that contribute to the sector's effectiveness;
	By end 2011, the state of civil society has been analysed using the CSI in 50 countries and recommendations (including on Gender Justice) put forward by CIVICUS and partners	• Quantitative data on the state of civil society gathered and disseminated in at least 30 CSI partner countries and a similar number to have also produced some of the major qualitative outputs, such as case studies and policy action briefs.

	By end 2011, threats to civil society are being monitored in at least 25 countries, with CIVICUS and partners co-ordinating national and international responses	• Legal analyses of the operating environment for civil society conducted for 10 countries, indicating legal impediments to civil society activities; • Submissions to the UN Universal Periodic Review Process, UN and regional human rights bodies and/or national governments covering at least 10 countries; • The Early Warning System on threats to civil society being implemented in 14 countries. [There will be some country overlap between the above

		mentioned activities].
	By end 2011, CIVICUS is co-ordinating involvement by 100 CSOs in communities of practice, at least 50% of which are signatories to a formal code of conduct or other mechanism to facilitate civil society good practice and effectiveness developed, identified or promoted by CIVICUS	At least 30 organisations engaged in Communities of Practice.
Active and effective national and international platforms for networking and collaboration within civil society, especially north-south and south-south collaboration;	By end 2011, CIVICUS will have co-ordinated at least 20 platforms within civil society, (Affinity Groups, Communities of Practice, national/regional interest groups, World Assemblies), facilitating networking and the creation of collaborative efforts, especially north-south and south-south;	• Establishment and/or co-ordination of 10 Communities of Practice (2 in LTA and 8 in PG, 1 international and 7 regional) and 1 regional network (for civil society in Eurasia, primarily Belarus, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Russia and Kazakhstan). • CIVICUS' continued support to activities by the Affinity Group of National Associations (AGNA) and International Advocacy NGO (IANGO) network. • At least one Innovation Award presented in 2009 to a project arising from the 2008 World Assembly.
Broader and stronger connections and networks established between	By end 2011, other stakeholders (e.g. government,	[As a result of the postponement of the 9th World Assembly until

civil society and other stakeholders, nationally, regionally and internationally;	corporate and inter-governmental institutions) represent at least 25% of delegates at the CIVICUS World Assembly	2010, milestones relate to preparations for the next event.] • 6 high level invitations issued to WA 2010 speakers (for keynote addresses, plenaries and individual speaking opportunities) from non-Civil Society stakeholder background i.e. business and governmental/inter-governmental • 5 non-Civil Society stakeholder events (workshops, launches, presentations, co-located events) for confirmed for 9th World Assembly
Enhanced capacity of citizens and civil society actors to participate in decision-making processes and increased opportunities at local, national and international levels;	By end 2011, at least 350 Participatory Governance practitioners from civil society and government have participated in the PG programme	• 3 workshops have been held for practitioners in the MENA, Central America and South/South-East Asia regions, each targeting around 35 practitioners. • A workshop for regional partners and selected skills-building programme partners from Round 1 (16 participants in total) has been held. • At least another 50 practitioners have benefited from the services provided by the PG on-line Resource Centre.

Increased knowledge based actions and evidence based advocacy by civil society actors;	By end 2011, CIVICUS information and analysis is being used by civil society actors for independent follow up action in at least 50 countries.	- Impact assessment of Phase I CSI implementation completed, focused on what follow up action resulted from the CSI process. - Communications Strategy developed to address issues including the reach and accessibility of CIVICUS materials. - Support provided to local partners and members in conducting their own activities through skills development and exposure to various audiences (e.g. UN bodies).
Gender, race, class and issues of marginalisation built into programme design and organisational review.	By end 2011, at least 50% of participants in programme activities are women and/or drawn from other marginalised groups in civil society.	- Training provided for staff on issues of gender, race, class and marginalisation in programmatic work. - Processes established to capture and track programme participant details.

NICHE: CIVICUS: World Alliance for Citizen Participation is an international alliance of civil society organisations dedicated to strengthening citizen action and civil society around the world. CIVICUS has members and partners in over 100 countries, which represent a broad and influential network of organisations at the local, national, regional and international levels, spanning the spectrum of civil society. CIVICUS works in partnership with this wide range of organisations to implement complex, global, participatory civil society strengthening programmes.

CIVICUS' programmes seek to amplify the voices and opinions of ordinary people and work to enhance the accountability, performance and impact of the voluntary organisations that they organise. CIVICUS' key programmatic approaches are knowledge generation and analysis, convening and multi-stakeholder engagement, communication, and advocacy. The overall programme is closely aligned to the principles of human rights, participatory governance and promotes civil society's role in supporting achievement of human development goals.

PURPOSE: To strengthen civil society and foster better terms of engagement with governments, donors, international institutions and the private sector, particularly around issues of participatory democracy and human development.

Strategic objectives	Indicators	Means of verification	Assumptions/ Risks
1. Contribute to strengthening citizen action and protection of citizens' rights, particularly in cases where participatory democracy and freedom of association are threatened	• Contribute to knowledge generation and sharing on the roles, internal practices and external environment for civil society through increasing the number of reports and analysis produced by CIVICUS with its partners by 85%. • Increase by 75% the number of national and regional networks formed by CIVICUS with its partners that are producing country reports and analysis on civil society's rights to operate freely for use in awareness raising, advocacy and legal challenges. • Increase by 15% the number of international solidarity and awareness-raising actions taken by CIVICUS and partners on threats to civil society, resulting in increased citizen awareness and participation, as demonstrated an increase of 50% in the sign up to the EHHR pledge.	CIVICUS Civil Society Index reports Official submissions, solidarity campaign materials, participation levels and diversity of those involved, and recorded responses Country reports and analysis taken from CIVICUS' Early Warning System on threats to civil society Reports by CIVICUS and aligned organisations (e.g. Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, ICNL) on • issues of civil society space to operate • restrictive pieces of legislation and administrative measures overturned or not passed Quotes and testimonials regarding use of CIVICUS' knowledge generation and analysis EHHR (Every Human Has Rights) web platform	Sufficient numbers of members and partners want to participate and have sufficient capacity and resources to do so Activists in restrictive environments are prepared to take personal risks to be involved Quality and timely information can be

2. Support civil society organisations in developing principles and standards of good practice and promote compliance with mechanisms aimed at improving civil society's accountability, performance and impact	• Increase from 0 to 5 in the number of Communities of Practice co-ordinated by CIVICUS that are discussing and producing materials on issues of improved accountability and building public trust in civil society organisations, particularly those in the global South. • Increase by 50% the number of civil society organisations participating in capacity enhancing activities provided by CIVICUS and partners to support civil society in performing its vital role in confronting the challenges to humanity. • Support and promote the INGO Accountability Charter and CSO Development Effectiveness processes, leading to an increase from 23 to 50 in the number of civil society organisations adopting standards and principles of good practice under either or both (counting affiliates as one).	Records of meetings, discussions and evidence of structures for Communities of Practice Recommendations, papers and best practice studies produced by Community of Practice members Minutes and reports from training workshops and other capacity building activities Member and partner surveys/impact evaluations Number of members and annual compliance reports for the INGO Accountability Charter (CIVICUS is secretariat) Number of INGOs/ICSOs and international networks adhering to the principles of CSO Development Effectiveness (CIVICUS is responsible for outreach to these groups) and reports from the Open Forum for CSO Development Effectiveness	accessed to inform civil society advocacy and action There is political will within the civil society sector to adopt shared approaches and collaborative ways of working There is political will from other actors to engage in democratic processes with multiple civil society stakeholders
3. Effective engagement by civil society, through advocacy and involvement in policy discussions, to influence the policies and practices of governments, donors, international institutions and the private sector to support poverty eradication	• Increase by 100% the number of major global policy and decision-making processes that CIVICUS participates in and that provide for civil society involvement and for their voices to be heard (for example formal opportunities to address the UN Assembly). • Increase by 85% instances of CIVICUS and/or members/partners reporting that engagement results in their positions being reflected in policy making. • Member satisfaction rating increases from 66% (2008 figures) to at least 75% satisfied or very satisfied with CIVICUS. • Increase by 50% the number of opportunities for multi-stakeholder engagement and international networking participated in, convened or co-convened by CIVICUS.	Number of policy and decision-making processes where CIVICUS and/or wider civil society participates, the diversity of voices heard, and whether those contributions are reflected in policy formation Reports from members and partners, resulting policies, legislation and standards (e.g. development of IATI standards and better aid practices) Member and partner surveys Reports on events and facilitated platforms	The external operating environment for civil society (geopolitical and economic) remains stable or improves CIVICUS' internal operating environment (financial sustainability and member

			engagement) improves

Richard Bennett; April 2011

INTRODUCTION

This report is a contribution to the evaluation of CIVICUS, 2008-2010. It summarises the results of a series of semi-structured interviews with civil society organisations in Uganda which are members, partners or otherwise associated with CIVICUS.

Seven interviews were carried out in Kampala, on 18-19 April 2011. Interviewees are listed in the Annex. Interviewees were asked about their organisation, the history of its engagement with CIVICUS, their views on membership or partnership with CIVICUS, their perspectives on the strengths, successes and challenges of CIVICUS, and (where their engagement with particular programmes had been sufficiently close) their understanding of approaches to design, contributions by CIVICUS and partners, participation levels and types, target groups, skill-sharing and impact.

Absences from Kampala, alongside challenges in establishing the interview schedule, resulted in three prospective participants not being interviewed. One additional current member of CIVICUS asserted that, as a very new member, it knew nothing about CIVICUS, had not engaged with it in any way, and had nothing to contribute through an interview, so declined the invitation.

Of the seven interviewees, three were from member organisations of CIVICUS. Two interviewees came from an organisation which is engaged in all the major programmes of CIVICUS, but is not a member. One has regular engagement with one programme of CIVICUS, and is aware of others. One participated in the Civil Society Index (CSI) country study; has made occasional use of its outputs; but is otherwise not engaged with CIVICUS directly.

Three of the organisations interviewed were national networks, two being umbrella organisations for NGOs (with a history of both contestation for umbrella space and collaboration on key issues), the other being the primary network campaigning on human rights. Two member organisations were sector-specific (one working on child rights and international volunteering; the other on family issues). One interviewee was a Board member of CIVICUS, and leading an organisation specialising on women's and young people's leadership.

KEY FINDINGS

CIVICUS membership

It is very noticeable from the interviews that the organisations that are most naturally close associates of CIVICUS are not members; while those that are members are a small and random selection of NGOs scattered across sub-sectors of the NGO spectrum.

Motivations for membership, amongst those that are members, vary. One makes intensive use of the World Assembly, and has built a network of contacts met there who are actively helpful to his organisation's development and resourcing (see 2.3 below). One was primarily impressed by the

outspokenness of an individual member of CIVICUS staff on homosexuality laws during a visit Uganda, and wanted to be part of an organisation that was as assertive as this on individual rights and the law. One is an instinctive international networker, who has gained personal skills through engagement in CIVICUS that are brought to their own organisation's work.

All three came across CIVICUS by relative chance. It appears that there are very large numbers of organisations in Uganda which could be similarly attracted to membership, should CIVICUS wish to substantially expand its membership.

On the other hand, the three organisations that are natural national convenors on CIVICUS issues are not members of CIVICUS. One is engaged in four major CIVICUS programmes, and is the formal partner in one programme. One is in regular contact with Civil Society Watch (CSW) staff in the Secretariat, has recently become a member of the Affinity Group of National Associations (AGNA) and engages in other programmes more occasionally. One leads in Uganda on human rights, including advocacy on laws that restrict space for civil society, but is not aware of much of the work of CIVICUS. Two of these have never been asked to be members. One said,

'We're not a member. We could be, I do not know why not… We believe in networking, it's very important to us… We would be interested to be a member, because of their work, but no-one's approached us to be a member.'

Conclusion:
There is a strong case, from this evidence, for a substantial change and improvement in membership strategy. A small amount of work would deliver a few key organisations into membership of CIVICUS. This would balance usefully and importantly against the random nature of current membership spread.

2.2 AGNA, national associations and CIVICUS in-country coordination

In Uganda, two networks – the National NGO Forum, and the Development Network of Indigenous Voluntary Associations (DENIVA) – both perform the functions of the type of National Association that is a natural member of AGNA. There is a long history of difference between the two organisations (one grew away from the other originally, as a result of differences in approach and priority); they have different cultures and priorities, but a strongly overlapping agenda, and they collaborate in some key areas of work, including some that intersect with the CIVICUS agenda.

The National NGO Forum has recently become a member of AGNA (though without becoming a member of CIVICUS, which represents a slip in Secretariat ground-rules). DENIVA is not a member of AGNA, but is a very active partner in the CSI, CSW, Participatory Governance (PG) and Legitimacy, Transparency and Accountability (LTA) programmes. AGNA has a rule stipulating that only one network in each country can be a member of AGNA, so DENIVA now has no opportunity to join AGNA discussions, but is more engaged in CIVICUS programmes. It is not clear that relations between the National NGO Forum and DENIVA are smooth enough for effective communication between them, to ensure that the different CIVICUS activities in which they are engaged are of benefit to their respective members.

This points to a challenge for the AGNA Steering Committee and CIVICUS Secretariat: the AGNA rules do not conform comfortably with the networking reality of Uganda, and probably of a number of other countries. Meanwhile, the inadequacy of a system for cross-referencing differing programme engagements and/or ensuring that an informant in Uganda helps to underpin the logic of the CIVICUS Secretariat's engagements with civil society infrastructure results at best in inefficient mixes of engagement, and at worst significant loss of impact and profile.

Conclusion:
CIVICUS, and AGNA particularly, is in danger of missing complementary contributions from different national associations in countries where there is more than one. There is a case for revisiting the rulebook. CIVICUS probably loses significant impact and profile as a result of an inadequate system for synergising contact points.

There is substantial evidence from these interviews that most organisations in contact with CIVICUS (as members, partners, or informal contact points) are unaware of the overall picture of CIVICUS programmes, and unengaged in aspects that could be of value to them. The Secretariat is too distant, and its staff too stretched, to address this directly. There was a meeting convened by the Ugandan Board member two years ago, attended by some Secretariat staff, that brought together Ugandan members for discussion of CIVICUS and its engagement with Uganda; this was warmly appreciated, and has led to an (unrealistic) expectation that this is the way contact is maintained.

A strong case was made, by one interviewee, for national and regional convening budgets with key local members taking responsibility for organising annual meetings. These could be, in the view of this interviewee, aligned with – and feeding into – World Assemblies. This is potentially part of a larger devolved convening role for CIVICUS that could be explored in more depth. In the view of this interviewee, CIVICUS could and should move away from an assumption that Secretariat staff need to be responsible for all convening and coordination, arguing that key members would be willing and able to take on the role, and this would contribute to the vibrancy of the network, as well as being more cost-effective than a staff-based approach.

Conclusion:
CIVICUS could and probably should explore the potential for key members to take on some national or regional convening responsibilities. There is the potential for this to be part of a systematic means for a wider range of members making a contribution to discussions at the World Assembly, without having to attend in person.

The World Assembly

Three interviewees had attended World Assemblies. All had gained significantly from the events, reporting particular discussion from which they had gained knowledge or new insights. Two of the three could reliably cite new contacts made at World Assemblies with whom they had remained in contact; and could point to either knowledge networking or assistance with funding opportunities that arose from these new relationships. All three spoke very positively about the World Assembly experience.

It is clear from this that World Assemblies deliver actual change for members and partners who attend, in ways that are almost certainly invisible to Secretariat staff, and therefore probably under-reported in CIVICUS documentation. CIVICUS' convening role – on this small sample – results in networking that results in improvements in NGO or national association practice, and in easing their path towards internationally available resources.

Conclusion:
The World Assembly is valuable to (this small sample of) members and partners, as much for the networking opportunities on offer as for the actual content of workshops and structured discussions.

Civil Society Index

A CSI country study was conducted in Uganda in 2006, led by DENIVA, who won the tender to coordinate the process. There have been opportunities to conduct a further country study since then; DENIVA's view was that not enough had changed to justify a further study until recently, so the opportunities were not

pursued. However, the situation is deemed now to have moved on sufficiently for a second study to be justified, and the early stages of the process are now under way.

Four of the seven interviewees (the Board member and the three networks, including DENIVA as coordinator) were aware of the existence of the CSI report; three of these had been involved in its production. Two (the broad umbrellas) have used it actively, while the human rights network is not doing so. DENIVA claims to have circulated the report to all of its own members, so believes it to have had wide circulation, but has not monitored its use; this evaluation was not able to verify levels of awareness beyond interviewees.

One interviewee reported that the current National Plan of government contains a section analysing the situation of civil society in the country which draws very heavily on the language and analysis of the CSI report. This is evidence that the report has minimally been noted, and more significantly has had some influence, in government circles. The same interviewee reported that this has now resulted in the umbrella organisations being approached by government officials for collaboration in using the analysis to develop government planning on its relations with civil society; so the CSI analysis appears also now to be underpinning the promotion of constructive government-CSO engagement.

Conclusion:
The CSI report (now 5 years old) appears not to be widely in use by civil society, but key networks do make use of it. More importantly, it appears to have influenced government thinking and contributed to constructive government-CSO engagement. If attention is given to publicity and distribution when the new report is prepared, there is the potential for it to have a significant impact.

Civil Society Watch

Uganda is one of a number of African countries to have legislated in the recent past to constrain the environment for civil society. The NGO Amendment Act came into force some 5-6 years ago. DENIVA, the National NGO Forum and HURINET, the human rights network, formed a coalition when the legislation was first mooted, to oppose its more onerous elements; the coalition continues, advocating for changes to the law on civil society.

DENIVA is the formal contact point with CSW for the coalition, and feeds advice, analysis and international comparisons into the coalition from the Johannesburg-based staff. There is, then, active on-going engagement. Interviewees were appreciative of both the swift, helpful analysis, and the advice and support, forthcoming from the CSW team.

There is also a sense that Uganda's legal situation is not well enough known internationally; two interviewees suggested that CIVICUS could be doing more both to publicise, and to solicit international solidarity support for, their situation.

In addition to DENIVA's formal role, it appears from these interviews that the National NGO Forum has a less formal, but regular and systematic, relationship with staff in the CSW team. It was not possible to elicit the full implications of a dynamic in which two national NGO umbrellas, contesting space between them (within the boundaries of coalition relationships), each receiving advice and support from CIVICUS. But the possibility exists that the CIVICUS Secretariat could be feeding competition within civil society without fully appreciating the situation.

Conclusion:
The CSW programme is valuable and appreciated in Uganda, and the key players make use of its support, advice and analysis. A case is made that international information dissemination could be stronger. There

is the possibility of inadvertent contributions by CIVICUS to the complications of contested civil society space.

Programme management and partnership

Only one interviewee had experience of significant levels of direct engagement with the Secretariat and core CIVICUS programmes. DENIVA is an active participant in the CSI, CSW, PG and LTA programmes.

They attended training for the 2006 CSI exercise, and then discussed and negotiated timelines and planning. There were monthly monitoring phone calls which gave space for DENIVA to discuss and resolve challenges. CIVICUS provided resources for key meetings, but DENIVA was expected to raise its own resources for other aspects of the work, and this resulted in delays while resources were secured. The Secretariat was as flexible as needed in adjusting timeframes when resourcing challenges arose.

During the second (current) CSI exercise, arrangements are similar, but there are no monthly monitoring calls and little other information from the Secretariat (*'that was really important in Phase 1; I really miss it this time.'*)

In other programmes, DENIVA was not consulted about planning. However, when engaging in workshops, they are regularly asked to contribute to objectives, priorities and content, which they appreciate. They have contributed presentations to workshops and webinars in the LTA programme, and found both participation and presentation opportunities very helpful to their own work.

There is a strong feeling from DENIVA that the range of CIVICUS programmes is exactly right for Uganda's needs. CSI is proving useful in relations with government; CSW supports an important campaign for civil society space; *'Citizens demanding for rights from duty bearers is really important here at the moment'* so PG is relevant; and the key Ugandan networks are developing a common charter at present, hosted by DENIVA, so the LTA programme is an important arena for support and learning.

Conclusion:
One interviewee is not sufficient to produce reliable results. However, on the basis of this interview, there is strong endorsement of CIVICUS programme selection; historical appreciation of the approach to planning and support CSI, but more concerns about changes to this in the current Phase 2; and appreciate of engagement in workshop preparation.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Positive contributions

There is evidence, from these interviews, of a significant contribution by CSI to advocacy for civil society in Uganda, and to opening avenues for government-civil society relations.

There is evidence of value added to coalition advocacy on the environment for civil society from the CSW programme, through supportive analysis and international comparison on the NGO Amendment Act.

There is evidence that the LTA programme is contributing to the thinking behind the development and implementation of a new NGO Charter in Uganda.

There is evidence that those who have attended the World Assembly have made good use of networking opportunities, which has materially benefited the quality of their work and their fundraising opportunities.

Challenges

The CIVICUS Secretariat's approach to membership recruitment has resulted in an ineffective mix. Key organisations are not members of CIVICUS, while those that are members are a somewhat random mix across several sub-sectors.

In a national environment in which umbrella organisations compete over space, as well as collaborate in key areas of CIVICUS interest, it is unclear that the one-member-per-country rule of AGNA is in the interests of either Uganda or CIVICUS.

An eagerness for national and regional convening space under the CIVICUS umbrella is not matched by the Secretariat's current modes of operation. There is unfulfilled potential for convening to happen; and for it to be linked to the processes of the World Assembly.

Recommendations

- Consider revitalising membership recruitment strategies. Significant gains from little investment would be the result in Uganda.

- Consider changing the one-member-per-country rule for AGNA.

- Consider appointing national organisations as CIVICUS convenors, and linking their role to the World Assembly through a series of national and/or regional meetings prior to the World Assembly.

- Strengthen distribution and publicity when the new Uganda CSI is produced.

- Explore improvements to international communications related to CSW national cases such as Uganda.