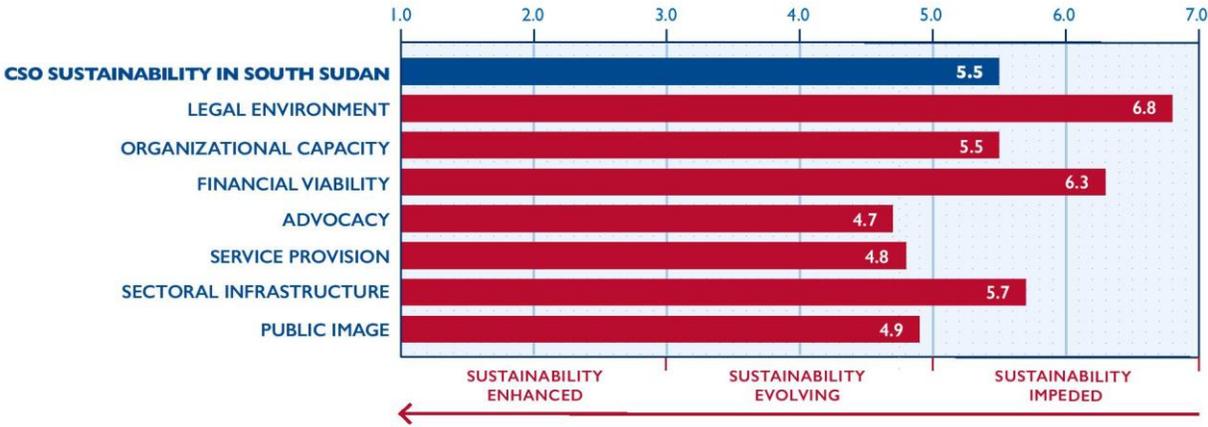


SOUTH SUDAN

Capital: Juba
Population: 10,204,581
GDP per capita (PPP): \$1,600
Human Development Index: Low (0.388)
Freedom in the World: Not Free (2/100)

OVERALL CSO SUSTAINABILITY: 5.5



On September 12, 2018, after five years of civil war, President Salva Kiir signed another power-sharing agreement with opposition leader Riek Machar and other opposition groups in a bid to end the brutal civil war that had engulfed South Sudan since 2013. The Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan (R-ARCSS), along with the December 2017 Agreement on the Final Cessation of Hostilities, led to an overall decline in fighting in the war-torn country. CSOs pushed successfully to be included in peace talks led by the Intergovernmental Authority on Development, the National Dialogue, and other mechanisms established to further peace. Efforts to staunch the flow of arms into South Sudan intensified with the United Nations (UN) Security Council’s vote in July 2018 to impose an arms embargo. However, intermittent political violence continued around Yei, and inter-communal fighting occurred in several areas, including the “legacy” states of Lakes, Western Bahr-el-Ghazal, Unity, Jonglei, and Warrap. Hundreds of lives were lost, livelihoods were destroyed, and many people fled from their homes.

The country’s improved security situation allowed some displaced persons to return home in 2018. According to UN High Commission for Refugees, as of November 2018, about 2.25 million South Sudanese refugees were in neighboring countries, a slight drop from the previous year. The number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in protection of civilian (POC) sites also dropped by about 6 percent to approximately 195,000 people in 2018. However, the combination of newly displaced persons, returnees, and POC residents increased humanitarian requirements, and CSOs were pressured to respond to their needs without significant increases in funding.

The South Sudanese economy continued to suffer in 2018. Inflation remained extremely high at an annual rate of 83.5, according to the International Monetary Fund. The African Development Bank reported that food prices increased nearly six-fold between May 2016 and May 2018. The South Sudanese pound depreciated further, causing severe foreign exchange shortages and an active parallel market. Some CSOs report that they were financially squeezed as they had to exchange foreign currencies at official rates but procure in the parallel market, where prices reflected significantly more favorable exchange rates. The volatile economic situation and fluctuating prices made budgeting and project development challenging for most CSOs. State spending continued to be skewed toward defense, leaving humanitarian assistance, poverty reduction, and other services largely in the hands of foreign donors and CSOs.

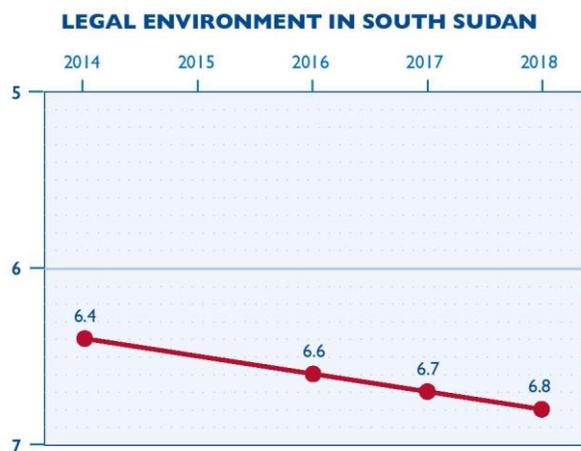
CSOs’ working environment continued to be demanding and at times lethal in 2018. According to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), South Sudan was again the world’s most dangerous country for aid work, with fifty-five major attacks on aid workers and 15 aid workers killed. OCHA also cited interference by national and local authorities and criminals in procurement and staff recruitment, illegal taxation, threats, or intimidation and harassment of aid workers. In February 2018 alone, thirty-seven incidents involved interference by

the authorities in the work of UN agencies and international and domestic CSOs, a number that was more than triple the number of similar incidents in January.

Overall CSO sustainability was stable in 2018. The legal environment deteriorated slightly with the inconsistent application of laws and ongoing harassment by the authorities. However, CSOs' organizational capacity improved as CSOs proved resilient in the difficult environment and volunteers continued to serve as a vital resource. Advocacy was significantly stronger as CSOs made progress on many issues and played an important role in the country's peace process. A waiver of registration fees in 2018 helped boost CSO service provision, particularly their humanitarian work, at a time of great need, and the sectoral infrastructure was strengthened by increasing solidarity among CSOs. Their public image improved slightly as CSOs received more positive attention from private and nonprofit media outlets. CSOs' financial viability was unchanged.

The exact number of CSOs operating in South Sudan is not known. The Relief and Rehabilitation Commission (RRC), the regulatory body overseeing CSOs, keeps track of the number of organizations operating legally in the country but does not publish this information. In 2018, the South Sudan Civil Society Forum (SSCSF), a consortium of mainly advocacy CSOs, reported that it had more than 200 member organizations, and the South Sudan NGO Forum, an umbrella group of both domestic and international CSOs, reported that it had 330 members (up from 320 in 2017), including 214 South Sudanese organizations.

LEGAL ENVIRONMENT: 6.8



The overall legal framework governing CSO operations deteriorated slightly in 2018 as laws were inconsistently applied and harassment of CSOs by the authorities continued.

The main laws governing CSOs are the South Sudan Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO) Act 2016 and the RRC Act 2016. All CSOs must register and re-register annually with the RRC to have legal status to operate. Registration costs and processes are burdensome, particularly for small CSOs. However, in January 2018, the president issued a waiver suspending registration fees for one year, citing the need to boost humanitarian work at a time of dire need. At the same time, CSOs that delayed renewing their registration certificates were subject to fines. The Youth

Development Foundation (YDF), for instance, was fined \$50 for a delayed application to re-register. The authorities generally scrutinize the registrations of CSOs working on advocacy or human rights more closely than those of organizations engaged in service provision. CSOs must submit annual plans, budgets, and information about funding to the RRC.

In 2018, local authorities opportunistically requested several CSOs to register at the state level, even though they had already registered at the national level and there is no law requiring double registration. Incidents of this nature were reported in Bentiu, Bieh, Sobat, and elsewhere. In Akobo, after a local CSO registered at the state level, the county commissioner demanded an additional payment from the organization to operate freely at the county level. However, when the CSO threatened to take the case up with the RRC at a higher level, the commissioner dropped the demand. The South Sudan Media Authority continued to require media-related organizations to register with it despite the absence of a clear legal requirement that they do so. As a result, some media organizations, such as the Association for Media Development in South Sudan (AMDISS), have had to register with both the RRC and the Media Authority. In 2018, the Gurtong Trust, an organization that maintains a news website, was banned from covering live events in the country because of its failure to register with the Media Authority.

Local authorities in both government- and non-government-controlled areas have demanded that CSOs recruit employees locally for certain positions, which can make it difficult to find qualified staff. For instance, in Ulang County, after Nile Hope hired a program officer, the Relief Organization for South Sudan (the equivalent of the

RRC in areas controlled by the Sudan Peoples' Liberation Movement In Opposition, or SPLM-IO, the major opposition group) demanded that the organization recruit locally to fill all positions from the project officer level and below. Nile Hope reclassified the position as project manager so that the hired employee could continue in the job.

The National Security Service (NSS) and Media Authority continued to restrict freedoms of assembly and expression in 2018. The authorities continued to enforce the unwritten requirement that the NSS authorize all public events, with any unauthorized public event risking immediate closure. The NSS demanded details about events in advance, such as their objectives and agendas, as well as information that was sometimes impossible to provide, such as lists of participants. For example, in December 2018, the organizers of an open-air event under the South Sudan We Want campaign were asked to provide the names of participants, although it had issued an open public invitation. The event took place as planned. South Sudanese CSOs operating outside of South Sudan also became targets of state pressure in 2018. In Uganda, a CSO organizing a discussion for South Sudanese university students about the recently signed peace agreement was told by university administrators, reportedly under pressure from officials from the South Sudanese embassy, that it needed embassy permission to arrange the event. Similar statements were made to groups in Kenya.

In July 2018, the NSS arrested and detained Peter Biar, a Harvard-educated activist and co-organizer of the South Sudan Young Leaders Forum, a group that mobilizes youth for peace. Biar was held at the notorious Blue House detention center without being charged beyond the constitutional limit of forty-eight hours. He was later charged with treason and was still in detention awaiting trial at the end of the year. The NSS also arrested and detained a businessman who organized a regional conference on oil and gas, questioning his motives behind the event. The NSS banned journalists from covering the conference, although one day later it reversed itself and allowed journalists registered with the Media Authority to report on the gathering.

Under the NGO Act 2016, CSOs are entitled to exemptions on customs duties on imports of equipment and goods purchased for their nonprofit work. However, in practice, such exemptions can often be arbitrarily denied without explanation by officials handling the applications. In 2018, CSOs sometimes requested and were denied exemptions. For instance, Crown The Woman was denied an exemption when importing a car, and Upper Nile Youth Development Association was told that an exemption on donated bicycles was possible only if the shipment was valued at less than \$10,000. When Peace and Development Integrated (PIDCO) procured equipment to support women's livelihoods, the county authority said that exemptions had been suspended and they had to pay the full tax. In December 2018, the president issued Republican Order No. 24/2018 suspending exemptions from customs excise taxes and duties on all imported goods and items except those connected with humanitarian relief.

Local authorities sometimes demand tax payments from national staff, even if taxes were already deducted from their salaries at the national level. In 2018, this practice was especially true in areas controlled by the SPLM-IO, such as Fangak, Nasir, Ulang, and Pigi counties. In Pigi, Relief International had to suspend operations because its national staff was asked to pay local taxes.

The law allows CSOs to engage in income-generating activities provided all income is used to further the objectives of the organization rather than benefit individual members, directors, or staff. CSOs do not compete for government contracts.

Several lawyers provide professional legal services to CSOs. However, their services are expensive, especially for small CSOs. In 2018, a lawyer provided pro bono representation to several CSO employees detained by the NSS.

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY: 5.5

The organizational capacity of South Sudanese CSOs was slightly stronger in 2018 as CSOs proved resilient in the difficult environment and volunteer staff continued to serve as a critical resource.

CSOs continued to engage closely with constituencies to establish their needs for services. For instance, OCHA's Education Cluster, led by Save the Children and the UN Children's Fund, conducted a joint assessment with the government, the UN, and domestic and international CSOs in October 2018 to update key indicators on the educational system, support the development of proposals and advocacy documents for financing purposes, and help prioritize needs and risks across geographic and thematic areas. Among the CSOs participating in the assessment were Nile Hope, Christian Mission for Development, Across, South Sudan Development Agency, Save

the Children, World Vision International, and Mercy Corps. In December 2018, Relief International partnered with the Universal Network for Knowledge and Empowerment Agency, Nile Initiative Development Organization, Christian Mission for Development, and other CSOs on a joint rapid needs assessment for spontaneously returning IDPs in Longechuk County. The assessment informed the design and delivery of relief interventions. Some CSOs are able to track the results of their interventions and capture them for reports, while other organizations lack capacity to do so.

Many larger CSOs have strategic plans that spell out their visions, missions, and objectives for the planning period. The Civil Society Coalition on National Resources developed a three-year strategic plan in 2018, and Nile Hope has a five-year strategic plan. However, because of the competition for resources, few CSOs follow their missions and strategic plans closely. AMDISS, for example, usually has a five-year strategic plan in place but reports that only about 20 percent of the plan is followed. CSOs must constantly re-balance their strategic plans against the search for funds, donor requirements, and real community needs, and the risk of duplicate activities can be high as CSOs compete for funding.

Most CSOs have defined internal management structures, including a division of roles between boards of directors and staff. The segregation of duties is usually enshrined in their constitutions or policy documents. Boards' engagement in organizational affairs varies across organizations, with some boards frequently involved and others not taking action for years. Within boards, individual members are often inactive, largely because of poor communication.

Most CSO staff is project-based. CSOs rely mostly on volunteers. For instance, Crown The Woman uses volunteer teachers to raise awareness about child marriage. Nile Hope estimated that it had more than 400 volunteers in 2018. Seventy percent of the UNYDA staff were volunteers during the year, and CRN estimated that 20 percent of its staff members were volunteers. Okay Africa Foundation mobilized several dozen youth volunteers to clean up the streets of the capital city, Juba, through its Nadafa Le Beledna ("Cleaning For Our Country") campaign. In December 2018, The South Sudan We Want campaign drew on volunteers from both the national and state levels to help with events around the campaign's roll-out in Bor and Torit. CSOs also rely on volunteers in emergency situations, as in community sensitization during Ebola preparedness activities in the porous border region near the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Most large CSOs are equipped with modern communications equipment, such as computers, printers, copiers, modems, and telephones. Some organizations use satellite phones and long-range radios for operations in areas that are not covered by regular cellphone networks. To reduce expenses, smaller CSOs often rely on shared communications and office facilities, such as those offered by CSO resource centers. Bigger organizations sometimes provide free office space and access to computers and the internet to emerging CSOs.

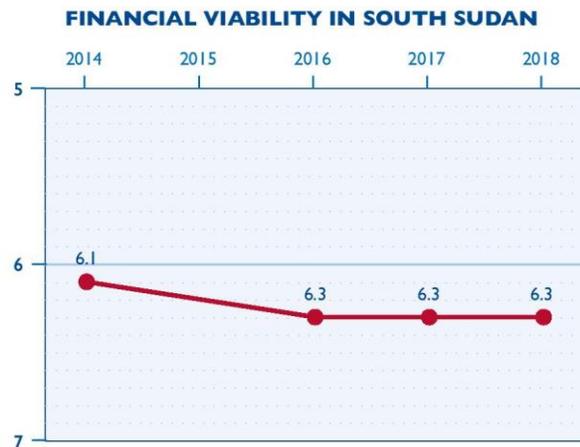
ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY IN SOUTH SUDAN



FINANCIAL VIABILITY: 6.3

CSOs did not experience a notable change in financial viability in 2018. All South Sudanese CSOs depend heavily on foreign donations, which often support advocacy purposes rather than service provision or direct humanitarian aid. When adequate funding is not available, advocacy CSOs are generally able to continue activities such as meetings and press statements, while service-providing CSOs often must end their activities when contracts conclude.

The top dozen recipients of humanitarian aid to South Sudan in 2018 were international CSOs, which frequently outsource tasks or employ domestic CSOs in their programming. According to Financial Tracking Services, of the \$1.39 billion in aid that South Sudan received in 2018, at least \$18.6 million went to national and local CSOs. This sum was more than in 2017, when CSOs received \$15 million of \$1.48 billion in aid. There was a slight increase in funding allocated to CSOs by the UN Humanitarian Fund in 2018, with \$20.6 million or 39 percent earmarked for



national organizations, \$21.5 million or 40 percent for international organizations, and \$11.3 million or 21 percent for the UN.

Donor funding is mostly for project expenses rather than organizational development or operational support. Donors sometimes approve expenditures such as office rent, internet access, and other operational costs in project budgets. However, such funding usually ends with the projects, which tend to be short, ranging in duration from three months to one year. One of the strategies CSOs use to cope with short-term funding is to work with multiple donors having varied rules about allowable expenditures and staggered project start and end dates. To sustain themselves, CSOs spend a considerable time developing funding proposals, the success of which is

never assured.

Some community groups have succeeded in fundraising locally for projects such as school buildings. Donations typically come from community members. Although the potential exists for CSOs to raise both monetary and in-kind resources from local businesses, individuals, and foundations, this possibility is greatly undermined by the economic hardships caused by the civil war.

Some CSOs generate income by offering professional services to other domestic and international CSOs and the UN. Their services include research, surveys, analyses, and workshop facilitation.

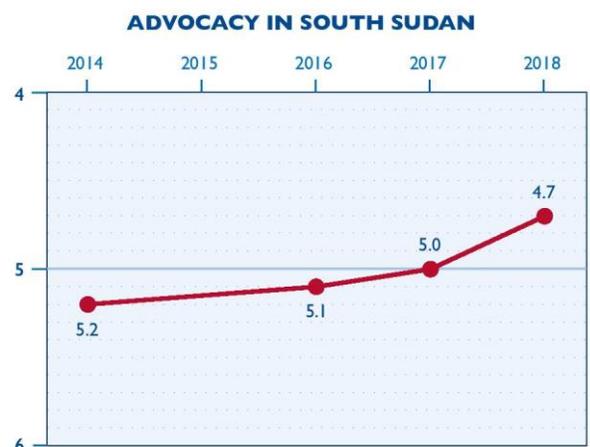
CSOs were able to access banking services at the national level without much trouble in 2018. At the local level, hard currency remained difficult to obtain, since most financial institutions that work best with CSOs do not have branches beyond Juba. As a result, CSO staff members had to carry large sums of project funds in cash when implementing activities in some field locations, which increased the risk of theft and robbery.

Highly competent finance managers are too expensive for most CSOs to hire, and many CSOs lack the core funding needed to put financial management systems in place. However, an increasing number of organizations try to maintain some kind of financial management system, including professional accounting procedures, in part because they are prerequisites for donor funding. Some CSO projects are audited at donors' request, but the audit reports are not made public. CSOs usually do not conduct organizational audits because of their cost.

ADVOCACY: 4.7

Advocacy by South Sudanese CSOs improved significantly in 2018 as they made tremendous progress in their work on a wide range of issues. CSOs' most important achievements included their contributions to the peace talks to resolve the country's crisis and their participation in the National Dialogue on the national, regional, and local levels. CSOs took part in mechanisms established by the peace agreement and successfully advocated for the inclusion in the agreement of a clause requiring 35 percent representation of women at all levels of government.

CSOs have access to policymakers through both official and informal channels. Formally, CSOs work through the parliament, such as by submitting analysis and recommendations to committees such as the Committee on Security, Defense, and Public Order when a piece of legislation is under consideration. All draft legislation should go through public hearings, which give CSOs other opportunities to offer feedback and comments. In



certain cases, CSOs were successful in significantly altering the text of the draft bills before parliamentary hearings. Informally, CSOs have little difficulty meeting with government officials, including ministers at national and state levels, state governors, and county commissioners. CSOs also work with government-allied institutions, such as the South Sudan Human Rights Commission and the Bureau for Community Security and Small Arms Control.

Government institutions sometimes support CSO advocacy. For example, the Ministry of Gender, Child, and Social Welfare endorsed a January 25, 2018, communiqué from the Women's Coalition on the High-Level Revitalization Forum, which demanded that government structures and institutions at all levels include 50 percent women and at least 30 percent youth and that no one tribe or community fill more than 20 percent of government positions. The final text of the peace agreement includes provisions requiring that 35 percent of positions at all levels of government be filled by women and a young person be appointed as minister of culture and youth affairs. The agreement does not address tribal or community representation, but it increases civil society representation in mechanisms established by the agreement, such as the Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission, Security and Defense Review Board, and National Constitutional Amendment Committee.

The SSCSF, a coalition of more than 200 organizations, continued to represent civil society in the peace process and other policy-making platforms in 2018. The SSCSF lobbied government and opposition leaders and made several submissions to the peace talks in Addis Ababa and Khartoum. The SSCSF conducted a public perceptions survey to back up its positions during the peace process and published its findings in its report *Revitalizing Peace in South Sudan: Citizen Perceptions of the Peace Process*. The forum requested in writing that the president pardon political detainees, which led to the release of a number of prisoners, including the former spokesman of the SPLM-IO leader. Representatives of CSOs such as the Sudd Institute and Ebony Center for Strategic Studies worked in the secretariat coordinating the work of the National Dialogue Steering Committee. Youth and women's groups and traditional leaders also participated in the dialogues.

Another coalition of thirty-six CSOs operating in the diaspora, non-government-controlled areas, and camps for refugees and IDPs issued a joint statement in July 2018 calling for the UN, African Union, and Troika (Norway, United Kingdom, and United States) to ensure that punitive measures against "spoilers," or actors seeking to undermine any settlement, were specified in the final peace agreement. The agreement did not include such a provision, but the joint statement highlights CSOs' ability to coalesce around a united agenda.

Following years of advocacy by CSOs, the UN Security Council finally imposed an arms embargo on South Sudan in July 2018. Although the embargo was a win for CSOs, it also raised fears that the government would crack down on CSOs that had advocated for its adoption. In the past, CSOs campaigning for sanctions sometimes experienced difficulties with the RRC when renewing their registrations.

CSOs also engaged with local authorities on peace processes. For example, Assistance Mission for Africa (AMA) worked with local authorities and community leaders to implement a resolution on peaceful coexistence emerging from a peace conference between Panyijar County and the town of Yirol.

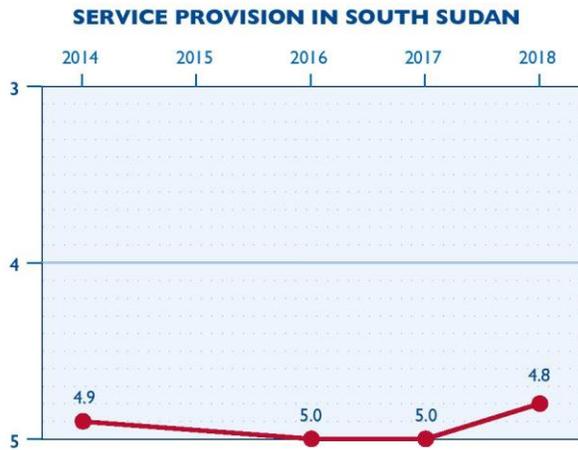
Among other joint initiatives in 2018, the #FreePeterBiar campaign, which was begun by an individual activist via Twitter, was later picked up by national and international groups such as the SSCSF and Amnesty International. The Civil Society Coalition on Natural Resources emerged to coordinate CSOs' advocacy for responsible management of South Sudan's natural resources. To evade the oppressive working environment for advocacy organizations, CSOs sometimes turned to alternative means of claiming public space, ranging from art and music events to mass tea drinking and garbage cleanups. They continued to make good use of social media campaigns. The South Sudan Is Watching campaign, for example, mobilized citizens to keep track of the peace process.

In November, a street march by women's groups protesting the alarming escalation of rape cases prompted the government to form an investigative committee. Women displayed impressive solidarity again in December when they organized a peaceful march to protest reports from Bentiu of the mass rape of dozens of women by government forces. After staff at the Ministry of Gender, Child and Social Welfare asked who had organized the protest, the women submitted a petition to the minister indicating that they had organized it collectively. The minister denied any incidents of rape despite a report on the topic from Médecins sans Frontières. In December, Crown The Woman and Steward Women launched the Maa Mara Sakit ("Not Just A Woman") campaign to advance gender equality with support from Norwegian People's Aid.

In advocacy work related to the legal framework for the CSO sector, Nile Hope led an effort to resist demands by the SPLM-IO authorities that all CSOs operating in its areas register with the Relief Organization for South Sudan.

After Nile Hope and a few other CSOs lobbied the RRC and OCHA about this requirement, it was eventually withdrawn.

SERVICE PROVISION: 4.8



CSO service provision improved moderately in 2018 as CSOs had better access to beneficiaries in a context of reduced hostilities across the country. In addition, the waiver of registration fees in 2018 helped boost humanitarian work at a time of great need.

CSOs continued to provide communities with a wide variety of goods and services, ranging from basic health care and facilities for clean water to food, emergency shelter, and education. For instance, AMDISS provided free training to at least thirty-six journalists in Juba, and Crown The Woman distributed more than 2,600 sanitary napkins to girls and women in Juba and Rejaf. In many instances, international CSOs served as custodians of funding, while South Sudanese CSOs performed most of the practical work of reaching out to beneficiaries.

CSOs provide most services and goods to meet dire needs, which are often identified through needs assessments. Both international and local organizations conduct assessments and sometimes team up to conduct joint assessments, especially when working on clusters such as protection and water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH). The assessments also help confirm that the provided goods and services reflect the priorities of the communities themselves. In 2018, numerous CSOs helped implement the Humanitarian Response Plan for South Sudan, which is coordinated annually by OCHA. The priorities for 2018, reflecting the needs on the ground, included education, food security, livelihoods, nutrition, protection, and WASH.

The vast majority of CSOs provide goods and services to beneficiaries beyond their membership and without notable discrimination. CSOs conduct market assessments to determine the prices of goods as well as business opportunities, which help them support local communities in the area of livelihoods activities.

It is not a widespread practice among CSOs in South Sudan to charge for services to recover costs. However, some CSOs sell products. For example, the Roots Project produces beads and pottery, which it sells to provide women with livelihoods while helping meet its own operational costs. Some CSOs conduct research and analysis to raise flexible funds to support their operations.

Through policy actions and public statements, the government acknowledges the importance of CSOs' work. For instance, in January 2018, the president issued a directive waiving registration fees for all CSOs. In the directive, the government underscored the huge humanitarian burden that South Sudan bears and the important role played by CSOs in meeting the country's needs.

SECTORAL INFRASTRUCTURE: 5.7

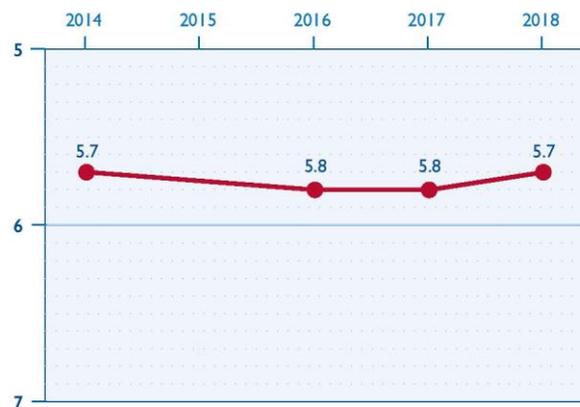
CSOs' infrastructure improved slightly in 2018 as organizations worked together more effectively and began to offer each other solidarity and protection.

CSO resource centers in Juba, Torit, Wau, Rumbek, and elsewhere continued to offer access to electricity, shared workspaces, meeting halls, computers, and the internet. AMDISS continued to operate a resource center with a free library and internet access for freelance journalists, and the South Sudan NGO Forum maintained a center with similar services for its members, who pay annual membership fees. Several new resource centers opened in 2018. Nile Hope, for example, established a youth resource center in Upper Nile offering free access to computers and the internet. The centers serve many beneficiaries but are especially important for emerging CSOs,

unless fees are charged that they cannot afford. However, the need for resource centers continues to dwarf their availability.

Although the practice is uncommon, some fairly well-established CSOs, mostly at the national level, provide sub-grants to community-based organizations and informal community groups. In 2018, AMA and the South Sudan Action Network on Small Arms (SSANSA) provided small grants to community peace and security committees in Panyijaar, Bor, and Yirol counties. The South Sudan Law Society and Community Empowerment for Progress Organization (CEPO) also provided modest funds to CSO networks in Torit, Bor, and Wau. Most donors prefer international CSOs to sub-grant their funds, citing the weak capacity of domestic organizations but without specifying the standards they use to assess organizational capacity.

SECTORAL INFRASTRUCTURE IN SOUTH SUDAN



Several national coalitions founded in 2017, such as the SSCSF and South Sudan Women Coalition For Peace, continued to evolve in 2018. South Sudanese CSOs are still getting used to the idea of working together, but the practice is steadily growing. The idea of being each other's keeper and standing in solidarity with colleagues under threat is still weak and compounded by the mistrust, suspicion, and polarity generated by five years of conflict. Activists have usually fled the country when under immense security threats rather than seeking protection among CSO colleagues. The South Sudan Human Right Defenders network continues to address this trend by developing mechanisms to protect activists, but its services are still largely limited to its membership. Many CSOs recognized the solidarity of women's groups in their advocacy efforts, which reduced threats and boosted the security of individual coalition members.

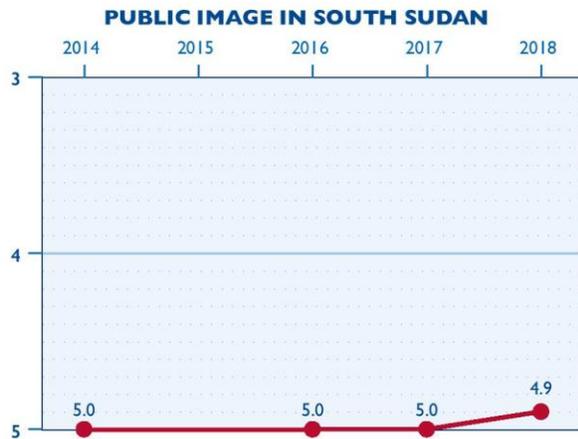
CSOs received a wide range of training from donors, international CSOs, and more established domestic organizations in 2018. For example, the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation provided training in financial management to national organizations that they fund or intend to fund. International CSOs sometimes offer capacity building to domestic partner CSOs in topics such as democratic practices within CSOs, outcome harvesting, and financial management. Other common training topics included project development and management, organizational development, and fundraising. Training is usually free of charge.

CSOs occasionally partner with government agencies to pursue common agendas. CSO-government partnerships are most common in the services sector, such as health care, WASH, education, and the protection of women from sexual and gender-based violence. Partnerships between CSOs and the business community are insignificant at present, although some potential exists. CSO and the media cooperate in various ways and have begun to exchange views of each other's work in various forums. For instance, in October 2018, AMDISS convened a dialogue to discuss areas of cooperation between CSOs and media, including the support that each side seeks from the other. The same month, AMDISS hosted a one-week training for journalists on media law, codes of conduct, the ethics of journalism, and basic journalistic skills.

PUBLIC IMAGE: 4.9

A slight improvement was evident in CSOs' public image in 2018. CSOs generally enjoyed positive attention from private and nonprofit media outlets, especially radio, which have the widest nationwide outreach and regularly highlighted the important role played by CSOs in the peace process and the country's development. The only television station in the country is the state-owned South Sudan Broadcasting Corporation, which mainly broadcasts coverage of government events.

The media generally charges reduced fees for CSOs' public service announcements. Media outlets such as the UN's Radio Miraya often air programming developed by CSOs at no charge. For instance, Radio Miraya aired content developed by The South Sudan We Want campaign urging the president and opposition leader to prioritize the people and the country over their personal interests during the peace talks in Addis Ababa.



The public generally understands the idea of CSOs and is largely supportive of them. However, its views of CSOs are mixed. Some people think that CSOs make an enormous contribution to South Sudan’s development, while others see them as vehicles for the enrichment of their leaders. For instance, on a live program on Radio Bakhita, a caller accused the chair of a major organization of engaging in advocacy that was critical of the government only because it enabled the chair to live off donor funds. Similarly, some portions of the public believe that CSOs worked intensively at the peace talks only because their leaders were lobbying for positions in a future unity government.

Government officials and opposition leaders often applaud CSOs for their contributions to humanitarian

action and the peace process. For example, in his speech at the celebration of the signing of the peace agreement in October 2018, opposition leader Riek Machar acknowledged the importance of CSOs’ work. The Media Authority singled out the work of the Catholic Radio Network, a media project constituted by community-based radio stations, during the 2018 World Press Freedom Day event; the governor of Eastern Lakes highlighted the work on peace and social cohesion of AMA and its partners during his opening speech at a peace and reconciliation conference in Nyang in September; and the minister of humanitarian affairs publicly recognized the valuable contribution of Nile Hope during the launch of its strategic plan. However, government officials sometimes attack advocacy CSOs as agents of regime change. For instance, many CSOs support a proposed hybrid court for South Sudan, which the minister of information labeled as tantamount to advocating for regime change.

CSOs took deliberate actions to raise public awareness on their activities in 2018. Their outreach programs included programming on radio stations, billboards in urban centers, banners during their events and in public spaces, and posting on social media, mainly Facebook and Twitter.

CSOs tend to be more transparent with donors than beneficiaries and may conduct audits if required by donors. They do not usually publish audit and annual reports, although a few organizations have begun to publish annual reports, including Nile Hope, which published a report in 2018. CSOs usually have statements of values in their constitutions. Accountability is sometimes operationalized in practices such as the mandatory signature of at least one board member on all bank withdrawals, as practiced by the South Sudan Law Society and SSANSA.

Disclaimer: The opinions expressed herein are those of the panelists and other project researchers and do not necessarily reflect the views of USAID or FHI 360.