SNAPSHOT OF CIVIL SOCIETY IN MEXICO

QUESTIONNAIRE TO MEMBERS OF THE AFFINITY GROUP OF NATIONAL ASSOCIATIONS (AGNA)

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AGNA

Who We Are

The Affinity Group of National Associations (AGNA) brings together national associations from around the world. Created in 2004, it aims at strengthening national umbrella organisations, fostering greater co-operation across national and regional boundaries to pursue mutual interests.

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THE CONDITIONS OF CIVIL SOCIETY IN MEXICO

WHAT WAS THE MOST IMPORTANT CHALLENGE FACED BY CIVIL SOCIETY IN YOUR COUNTRY IN 2014/2015?

One of the most challenging matters for civil society in Mexico right now is to have a real and comprehensive dialogue and work with government at national and local level. We are living a complex situation where more and more cases of corruption and violation of human rights are taking place and there isn’t a clear institutional mechanism for citizens to counterbalance the governmental power. Related to that, we are also facing the challenge of organizing a common agenda and invite more citizens to participate in non-profit organizations to canalize their interest and not only participate in one-time demonstrations but to be co-responsible of the improvement of social, political and social conditions in the country.

WHAT WAS THE MOST SIGNIFICANT IMPACT ACHIEVED BY CIVIL SOCIETY IN YOUR COUNTRY IN 2014/2015?

The most significant impact was the possibility of demonstrate the importance of the opinion and analysis of civil society organizations in social and political matters. For example, there was a strong presence of CSO’s in the debates concerning mayor political reforms, such as the educational and energetic reform. We were also able to have the presence of main political figures in important events of civil society organizations. Cemefi, for example, organized the Iberoamerican Meeting of civil society where we counted with the presence of the President Enrique Peña Nieto, as well as state governors. We also participated in the second citizen´s summit, organized by more than 15 organizations, where we had the presence of the Ministry of Interior Affairs.

WHAT IS THE MOST SIGNIFICANT OPPORTUNITY OR CHALLENGE FOR CIVIL SOCIETY IN YOUR COUNTRY THAT YOU FORSEE IN THE NEAR FUTURE?

The main challenge that civil society is facing in our country is to encourage citizens to participate and be proactive in the social and political decisions of the country. In the near future we are facing local elections but citizens feel disappointed about the political parties and we will probably face a very poor participation. It is important also to create call to actions that can go beyond public demonstrations in order to have the strength enough to face social and political issues in the long run.
THE SITUATION OF CIVIL SOCIETY’S RESOURCING

ARE RESOURCING CONDITIONS FOR CIVIL SOCIETY GETTING BETTER OR WORSE?

In general terms the resourcing conditions for civil society in Mexico are getting better because of the strong participation of private actors, such as corporations committed with corporate social responsibility, and many citizens are now increasing their trust and participation in CSO. Nevertheless, the private participation is still not enough and a lot of organizations depend on government funds, but these haven’t increase in time, on the contrary, in real terms (comparing them with the federal budget) they are diminishing.

In terms of human and technical resources, there are interesting initiatives towards the professionalization of the sector, some of them come from Universities and others from recognized organizations. Furthermore, there’s an increasing interest among undergraduate students on civil society organizations as a possible way to contribute to social change and having a professional development. Yet, there are still a big number of organizations that have very limited human and technical resources and are struggling to survive.

IS CIVIL SOCIETY EXPLORING NEW STRATEGIES TO DIVERSIFY RESOURCING AND ARE ANY OF THESE PROVING SUCCESSFUL?

For the last 5 years we have been working in expanding some of our most important services to corporations and organizations through the country with the help or regional allies. This business model pretends to increase the number of corporations with the CSR seal and CSOs with our transparency and efficiency standards and increase and diversify our incomes both for Cemefi as well as for the allies. This model has also been exported to Peru.

ARE YOU SEEING A MOVE AWAY FROM GRANT FUNDING (AS PROVIDED BY DONORS AND GOVERNMENTS) TO OTHER METHODS OF SUPPORTING CIVIL SOCIETY?

Crowdfunding is now a very popular method to generate grants by civil society in Mexico. At Cemefi, we also encourage organizations to offer services at a convenient fee both for the possible consumer or beneficiary and for the organization to have a secure source of income.
Snapshot of civil society in Mexico: Questionnaire to AGNA members