

Call for expressions of interest – the new CIVICUS Civil Society Index Rapid Assessment tool (CSI-RA)

About the CSI-RA

Civil society self-assessment contributes to strengthening the evidence base for civil society advocacy; providing a platform for civil society to identify shared needs; and assisting the planning and strategising of civil society around common challenges and opportunities.

Since 1997 CIVICUS: World Alliance for Citizen Participation, has pioneered the field of civil society self-assessment with its Civil Society Index, which has supported comprehensive self-assessments on the conditions for civil society in 75 countries to date.

Building on the track record of the CSI, CIVICUS now offers an additional and new civil society rapid assessment (CSI-RA) tool, which offers a more flexible and adaptable methodology to help civil society better assess its own strengths, challenges, potentials and needs in a range of different situations and contexts.

The CSI-RA is particularly aimed at those contexts where it is neither possible nor desirable, whether that be due to reasons of resources, time, conflict and dramatic political change or a wish to take a focussed rather than a comprehensive perspective, to implement the full CSI.

Some of the major distinctions of CSI-RA as compared to the CSI is that it will be cheaper and quicker to implement, and will be highly adaptable to local contexts. A further key distinction is that the CSI-RA does not aim to enable international comparisons between civil societies of different countries, but rather emphasises the support, through the application of the tool and its processes, to the strengthening of civil society and an analysis of its situation in a particular context.

Differences between CSI and CSI-RA at a glance

CSI	CSI-RA
Standardised	Highly adaptable
Comprehensive, broad-ranging	Focussed - narrower but deeper
Inclusive – wide-range of stakeholders	Can be applied to one group of stakeholders or one sector only
Internationally comparable	Locally relevant – international comparability is not essential
Standardised final outputs are a key	More focus on process than outputs – outputs are flexible according to

part of the process	context and objectives
Usually costs at least US\$ 80,000	Expected to cost from US\$ 20,000
Takes 1 to 2 years to implement	Quicker – implementable within six months
Works best in situations of relatively high social and political consensus	Could work in difficult and diverse contexts, including conflict and post-conflict contexts

What the CSI-RA covers

Among the aspects of civil society that the CSI-RA can be adapted to assess are:

- Intersections, collaborations and power relations between civil society, layers of government, private sector and other social actors.
- The enabling environment for civil society.
- Connections and networks between different aspects of civil society.
- The institutional health and capacities of organised civil society, including financial and human resourcing.
- The extent to which organised civil society models progressive values.
- The impact civil society perceives it is making.
- Levels of participation and activism in society.

Some but not all of the potential questions and potential indicators are based on existing CSI indicators, so that an element of ability to compare against earlier data is available for partners in countries which have previously implemented the full CSI and wish to examine what has changed for civil society since.

CSI-RA process

The CSI-RA package consists of a series of guidelines on the following components to be applied in the adaptation and implementation of the tool:

- Clear criteria for partner selection and fundraising requirements
- A commitment on what support CIVICUS can give in the adaptation and application of the CSI-RA, and what is expected of partners
- A set of core principles to guide the CSI-RA's application, consistent with the Oslo Principles on Democratic Governance Assessments¹
- A number of sets of possible questions and indicators
- Guidance on the various options for how the gathering of data in response to the questions and indicators could be undertaken
- Models of processes that could be followed

¹ See <http://www.oslogovernanceforum.org/images/stories/PDFs/oslo-principles.pdf>.

- A model budget for the CSI-RA

CIVICUS will work with partners once selected to develop and adapt the methodology to their particular context, such that each CSI-RA will be a tailored project, and will provide technical support throughout the process. CSI-RA will typically consist of four phases: firstly, where required, an initial mapping and scoping of civil society, and convening of a broad range of civil society to build consensus around the proposal; second, a design phase where CIVICUS works with the partner to design and write the guidelines for the implementation of the CSI-RA project in the particular context; third, an implementation phase in which the partner, guided by a broad-based project advisory group and with technical support from CIVICUS, carries out the assessment; and fourth, a follow-up phase in which the recommendations generated by the assessment are taken forward.

In order to better connect these phases, and to ensure that the project is truly an action-research project, at an early stage in the design process CIVICUS will consult with the partner on their motivations for carrying out the CSI-RA and the change they hope to advance by doing it, and then seek to customise the design to deliver actionable recommendations that address the desired area of change. Once adapted for a particular context, it will also be possible to apply the tool periodically, for example, annually, to gather information on emerging trends in civil society.

Next steps

In 2012 CIVICUS is piloting the CSI-RA methodology by working with partners to apply and adapt it in different contexts. CIVICUS seeks to work with partners to fundraise, apply, monitor and evaluate the methodology. It is estimated that to apply the tool within one country would cost from US\$20,000.

CIVICUS is seeking in particular to pilot the CSI-RA in the following regions: Balkans and former Soviet Union, Central America and Caribbean, Middle East and North Africa, Southern and East Africa, West and Central Africa. CIVICUS will however accept expressions of interest additionally from countries outside those regions if there is strong interest in and rationale for adapting and applying the CSI-RA.

To express an interest in applying the CSI-RA, please contact index@civicus.org by 9 December 2011.