

Building Knowledge About Civil Society Bridging the Gap Between Research & Action

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Knowledge is power. Today this well-known maxim is more relevant than ever before. At the turn of the 21st century access to information and knowledge has become a crucial human and social resource, determining the opportunities available to individuals, communities and whole societies alike.

Knowledge is essential for civil society. We use it to advocate for progressive policy changes and involve citizens in public life. However, as much as we in civil society need to know about the crucial challenges facing our societies today, we also need to understand what factors affect our ability to accomplish our agenda.

The past years have seen a considerable growth in research projects, university courses and institutions all dealing with civil society and its related topics, including the non-profit sector, the third sector, voluntary organizations and social capital. For example, in 1992 The International Society for Third Sector Research was set up as an academic organization focusing specifically on the third sector. Its goal was to promote the exchange of

research and knowledge among scholars from all over the world. More generally, research on civil society has become increasingly international in perspective through widely known comparative research projects, such as the Civil Society & Governance Programme at the University of Sussex and the Johns Hopkins Comparative Nonprofit Sector Project.

Like many scholarly endeavours, research projects on civil society face the challenge of marrying rigorous academic research with action-oriented information for civil society practitioners. Many critics argue that these research projects, especially the ones based in the positivist tradition of Western social science, are falling short of meeting the needs of the individuals who should be benefiting from the actions of civil society the most.

From its inception, CIVICUS was expected to put this critique into action and confront the gap between research-based knowledge and the

practical guidance and tools civil society practitioners were looking for. Two of CIVICUS' current activities are tackling this challenge.

The first is CIVICUS' involvement as a partner in an initiative led by the Hauser Center for Non-Profit Organizations at Harvard University, and funded by the Ford Foundation, on building Civil Society Action

Learning Networks.

These networks are based on the notion of learning through knowledge sharing. As the issues civil society deals with, both locally and globally, are growing in complexity, civil society organizations are finding it more and more difficult to keep up with the ever-changing internal and external challenges. This not only requires an expanding knowledge base but also knowledge from a variety of sources.

Embedded in the tradition of participatory action research, the Civil Society Action Networks bring civil society researchers and practitioners together to understand the core issues facing civil society. While these Action Learning

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Secretary General's Corner

The CIVICUS Index on Civil Society is a timely and important initiative relevant to many civil society organizations.

Please note...

The ability to share information on our members is an important part of the mission of CIVICUS. Please send us news of your activities and events to the address listed on the back page.

At the beginning of a century in which knowledge and information are becoming the most important assets for human development, many organizations are collecting information on issues related to civil society. During the last five years, efforts to measure and assess features of civil society have multiplied and several comparative international projects have been conducted.

Strengthening the information base on civil society issues has been one of the main pillars of CIVICUS' work since its inception. In 1997, CIVICUS published *The New Civic Atlas*, a compilation on the state of civil society in 60 countries. This document aimed to heighten the public visibility and recognition of citizens' collective efforts for the common good. Two years later, when the issue of producing an updated version of *The New Civic Atlas* was on the agenda, CIVICUS' members wanted a stronger comparative framework of the country profiles. Hence, the idea of the CIVICUS Index on Civil Society came into being.

CIVICUS has been working on the project for about a year and a half. I have to confess that the initial thinking and design is almost unrecognizable in the current CIVICUS

Index on Civil Society. At the outset, the project was seen as a simple and straightforward Index, similar to the Human Development Index. The project, however, went through several stages that refined the methodology and implementation plan. It is now a flexible, participatory and innovative tool to assess the complex issues of the health of civil society at various levels.

We paid particular attention to the validity of country-specific instruments, as the 'one-size-

We have set ambitious goals for ourselves: to increase the knowledge and understanding of civil society by reflecting on and assessing its strength, health and impact.

fits-all' approach of some other international projects often made their findings less useful. The refinements and changes were based on consultations with CIVICUS members and other civil society stakeholders held in approximately 40 countries around the world. These included sessions at Regional Assemblies of CIVICUS members and a session at the CIVICUS World Assembly in Manila in late September 1999. We also benefited from input by the Index on Civil Society's global project advisory group, which consists of more than 40 distinguished members, civil society practitioners and academics from all parts of the world.

What struck me most in these consultations was the vibrancy of each discussion and the extremely high intellectual quality of individual contributions. It indicated to me that the CIVICUS Index on Civil Society is a timely and important initiative relevant to many civil society organizations. The responses to our attempt to assess the strength and health of civil society were varied and made for interesting reading. Some said that it is an "exercise in madness" given the challenges of cultural relativity as well as the lack of data on civil society in many countries. Others said that the time

is right for an exercise like this, notwithstanding the numerous challenges. To quote one commentator, "the Index idea is ambitious, conceptually fraught and methodologically a nightmare. This is no reason not to start on such a path — in fact it is a good reason — but it must be approached incrementally."

In her article in this issue, Nilda Bullain reports on applying the tool at a regional level. Her experiences and interest, as well of others, in the project proved to me that the Index is on the right track. We have set ambitious goals for ourselves: to increase the knowledge and understanding

Secretary General's Corner

of civil society by reflecting on and assessing its strength, health and impact. This will be achieved through a research process relying on a comprehensive stakeholder survey, aided by data yielded from quantitative research. We also want to empower civil society stakeholders by:

- 1) promoting dialogue, alliances and networks among them;
- 2) developing a vision of and mechanisms to achieve a stronger civil society;
- 3) developing an agenda and goal-setting tool to foster positive change

The three objectives will be met by convening national stakeholders to talk about the research findings and then set goals for the following two years. In taking forward this project we have considered concerns about costs, ownership and the practical use and values of this project. In the end, this is not a conventional research exercise. It seeks to be an action research initiative that is actively linked from the outset towards developing an engaging and dynamic advocacy agenda to strengthen civil society.

In November 2000, a workshop I ran together with Richard Holloway of UNDP in Indonesia piloted the use of the Civil Society

Index/Diamond Tool and was wonderfully inspiring. We took some 40 civil society leaders from all over Indonesia through an exercise where they first selected those indicators they believed would be most useful in assessing the current strength of civil society in their country. We then had them work in groups to do assessments based on the indicators they selected. We then constructed a visual picture of their assessment and then worked with them to set goals for strengthening civil society.

This project has many risks and we hope to learn much from the pilot work we are beginning. We hope to share some of the early results with you all at the World Assembly in Vancouver from 19-23 August 2001. If CIVICUS can achieve these goals - even partially - we hope to make a significant contribution to putting the idea of civil society on the public agenda and strengthening civil society worldwide.

Un mensaje de la Secretaria General

Al comienzo de un siglo en el que el conocimiento y la información se han convertido en dos de los aspectos más importantes del desarrollo humano, existen muchas orga-

nizaciones dedicadas a recolectar datos pertinentes a la sociedad civil. Durante los últimos cinco años, se han multiplicado los esfuerzos para medir y evaluar los rasgos de la sociedad civil, y se han llevado a cabo varios proyectos internacionales comparativos en busca de estos datos.

Desde el comienzo de CIVICUS, nuestra labor principal nuestro ha sido el de analizar y dar a conocer información sobre la sociedad civil. En 1997, CIVICUS publicó el Nuevo Atlas Cívico, una compilación sobre el estado de la sociedad civil en sesenta países. Este documento pretende alabar los esfuerzos de los pueblos para mejorar el estado de la sociedad civil en el mundo. Dos años más tarde,

surgió la idea de producir una versión actualizada del Nuevo Atlas Cívico.

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CIVICUS ha trabajado en este proyecto durante un año y medio. El Índice actual ha cambiado mucho desde su comienzo en cuanto a su plan y diseño. El proyecto pasó

por varias etapas a través de las cuales se refinó la metodología y el plan de implementación. Ahora es un documento flexible, participativo e innovador.

El Índice enfoca la validez de los instrumentos específicos utilizados por cada país. Todos los cambios al Índice se hicieron con la consulta previa de los miembros de CIVICUS y otras entidades dedicadas a promover la sociedad civil en más de cuarenta países del mundo.

Una vez concluido el Índice, se celebraron asambleas regionales de CIVICUS así como una sesión de la asamblea mundial de CIVICUS en Manila. También se realizaron aportes informativos del proyecto por más de cuarenta distinguidos miembros, académicos y otros individuos que se dedican a fomentar la sociedad civil en todo el mundo.

El Índice de la Sociedad Civil forma parte de una iniciativa muy importante que puede afectar a muchas organizaciones dentro de las ramas de la sociedad civil. Las respuestas que se dieron para evaluar la posición actual de la sociedad civil fueron muy variadas e interesantes.

Algunos observadores opinaron que El Índice era *cóntinua en página 4*



Kumi Naidoo

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El índice de la Sociedad Civil de CIVICUS forma parte de una iniciativa muy relevante e importante que puede afectar a muchas organizaciones dentro de las ramas de la sociedad civil.

“ejercicio de la locura” por motivo del relativismo cultural y la falta de datos sobre la sociedad civil en muchos países. Alguien comentó que “la idea del Índice abarca demasiado y sufre de problemas metodológicos, por lo cual es necesario llevar a cabo el proyecto en diferentes etapas. Otro crítico enojado sugirió que intentar definir lo que constituye una sociedad civil saludable es como intentar definir la pornografía. Es posible que no se sepa la definición técnica pero la reconocemos cuando la presenciamos.”

En su artículo dentro de esta edición Nilda Bullain nos indica cómo aplicar el Índice a nivel regional. Sus experiencias a y su interés, así como la opinión de otras personas, me convencieron que el Índice va por buen camino. Tenemos metas ambiciosas para mejorar el conocimiento y el entendimiento de la sociedad civil por medio de reflexionar y evaluar su posición en la sociedad, su salud y su impacto. Esto se alcanzará por medio de un proceso de investigación que consiste en una encuesta comprensiva de las personas interesadas respaldadas, con el apoyo de datos cuantitativos. También queremos apoyar a individuos

interesados en la sociedad civil por medio de:

- 1) promocionar el dialogo, las alianzas y las redes entre si;
- 2) desarrollar una visión así como mecanismos para realizar una sociedad civil mas fuerte;
- 3) desarrollar una agenda para

Hemos fijado unas metas altas: mejorar el conocimiento y el entendimiento de la sociedad civil por medio de reflexionar y evaluar su posición e impacto dentro de la sociedad.

fijar metas que aseguren cambios positivos

Los tres objetivos se cumplen una vez que se juntan personas con interes a nivel nacional para hablar de los resultados de la investigación y fijar metas para los próximos dos años.

Hemos considerado cuestiones relacionadas al costo y valor de este proyecto. Descubrimos que el proyecto no es un ejercicio normal de investigación. Es una iniciativa activa de investigación que incluye a todos para reforzar la sociedad civil.

En noviembre de 2000, realicé un taller con Richard Holloway de UNDP en Indonesia para comenzar el

uso del Índice de la Sociedad Civil. Fue una inspiración reunirnos con cuarenta líderes de la sociedad civil en Indonesia. En el primer ejercicio, se seleccionaron los rasgos que mejor describen la cada fuerza de la sociedad civil en país. Después se definieron indicadores específicos. Finalmente creamos una representación visual de sus opiniones y reflexionamos con ellos para definir como mejorar el estado de la sociedad civil.

Tomamos muchos riesgos en este proyecto y esperamos aprender mucho de la obra que comenzamos. Esperamos compartir algunos resultados provisionales con ustedes en el Asamblea Mundial que tendra lugar en Vancouver del 19 al 23 de agosto 2001. Si CIVICUS puede cumplir con estas metas, aunque sea parcialmente, creemos que sera posible podemos destacar la importancia y fortalecer el concepto de la sociedad civil dentro de la vida cotidiana de todo el mundo.

Kumi Naidoo

Secretary General's Corner

Coin du Secrétaire Général

L'orée d'un siècle où la connaissance et l'information deviennent les biens les plus importants pour le développement humain, beaucoup d'organisations travaillent à recueillir des renseignements sur les questions relative à la société civile. Durant les cinq dernières années, les efforts notable se sont multipliés pour mesurer et évaluer les caractéristiques de la société civile et plusieurs projets comparatifs de dimension internationale ont été mises en oeuvre.

Le renforcement et l'élargissement de la base d'information et de données sur des questions de la société civile a été un des plus importants aspects du travail de CIVICUS depuis son début. En 1997, CIVICUS a édité *The New Civic Atlas* (Le nouvel atlas civique), une compilation sur l'état de la société civile dans 60 pays. Le but de ce document était d'accroître la visibilité et la reconnaissance publiques des efforts collectifs des citoyens pour le bien commun. Deux années plus tard, quand la question d'éditer une version nouvelle de *Le nouvel atlas civique* était à l'ordre du jour, les membres ont souhaité une charpente plus comparative des profils de pays. C'est ainsi que l'idée de l'Indice sur la Société Civile

de CIVICUS s'est produite.

CIVICUS a été en train de travailler sur ce projet depuis déjà un an et demi environ. Je dois admettre que la pensée et le plan initiaux ne sont presque plus reconnaissables dans la version actuelle de l'Indice sur la Société Civile de CIVICUS. Au départ le projet a été envisagé en tant qu'une Indice simple et direct, semblable à l'Indice sur le Développement Humain du PNUD. Le projet, cependant, est passé par

L'Indice sur la société civile de CIVICUS est une initiative opportune et importante et qui sied à beaucoup d'organisations de la société civile.

plusieurs étapes qui ont raffiné la méthodologie et le plan d'exécution. C'est maintenant un outil flexible, participatif et innovateur pour évaluer les questions complexes de la vitalité de la société civile à différents niveaux.

Nous avons accordé une attention particulière à la validité des instruments spécifiques à chaque pays, car l'approche "une taille pour tous" de quelques autres projets internationaux ont souvent rendu leurs résultats moins évidents. Les améliorations et les changements ont été basés

sur des consultations tenues dans environ 40 pays autour du monde avec des membres de CIVICUS et d'autres acteurs et parties prenantes de la société civile. Celles-ci ont inclus des sessions aux Assemblées Régionales des membres de CIVICUS et une session à l'Assemblée Mondiale de CIVICUS à Manille en septembre 1999. Nous avons également bénéficié des observations du groupe consultatif à l'échelle mondiale du projet de l'Indice

sur la Société Civile, qui se compose de plus de 40 distingués membres de CIVICUS, praticiens de la société civile et du monde universitaire, de toutes les régions du monde.

Ce qui m'a frappé la plus dans ces consultations était le vitalité de chaque discussion et la qualité intellectuelle extrêmement élevée des contributions individuelles. Pour moi, cela a signifié que l'Indice sur la société civile de CIVICUS est une initiative opportune et importante pour beaucoup d'organisations de la société civile. La diversité des réponses à notre tentative d'évaluer la

force et la vitalité de la société civile en font une lecture intéressante. Certains ont indiqué que c'est un "exercice du fous" étant donnée les défis de la relativité culturelle aussi bien que le manque de données sur la société civile dans beaucoup des pays. D'autres ont indiqué que le moment est bon pour un exercice comme ceci, malgré les nombreux défis. Pour citer un commentateur, "l'idée de l'Indice est ambitieuse, conceptuellement chargée et méthodologiquement un cauchemar. Cela ne doit pas être raison pour ne pas commencer sur une telle voie — en fait c'est une bonne raison — il faut l'approcher par vagues successives." Un critique furieux a même proposé qu'essayant "à définir ce qui constitue une société civile en bonne santé est comme essayant à définir la pornographie. Nous n'en connaissons peut-être pas la définition technique mais quand nous la voyons nous sommes sûrs de l'identifier."

Dans son article dans ce numéro, Nilda Bullain fait un rapport sur l'usage de cet outil au niveau régional. Ses expériences et son intérêt dans le projet, aussi bien que ceux des autres, m'a prouvé que l'Indice est sur la bonne voie. Nous avons fixé des objectifs ambitieux pour nous-mêmes: augmenter la connaissance et la compréhension de la société

Secretary General's Corner

Nous avons fixé des objectifs ambitieux pour nous-mêmes: augmenter la connaissance et la compréhension de la société civile en réfléchissant et évaluant sa force, sa vitalité et son impact.

civile en réfléchissant et évaluant sa force, sa vitalité et son impact. Ceci sera réalisé par un processus de recherche quantitative et qualitative par une enquête aussi complète que possible auprès des acteurs et parties prenante. Nous voulons renforcer le pouvoir ces acteurs de la société civile par:

- 1) la promotion du dialogue, des alliances et des réseaux parmi eux
- 2) le développement d'une vision d'une plus forte société civile, aussi bien que des mécanismes pour la réaliser
- 3) en développant un outil qui mettra en place l'ordre de jour et les buts nécessaires pour stimuler le changement positif

Les trois objectifs seront remplis en rassemblant les différents acteurs nationaux pour discuter les résultats de la recherche et fixer ensuite des objectifs pour les deux années suivantes.

En avançant ce projet nous avons considéré les soucis concernant les frais, la propriété et l'utilisation et les valeurs pratiques de ce projet. En fin de compte, ce n'est pas un exercice conventionnel de recherche. Il cherche à être une initiative de recherche qui est liée activement et dès le début au développement d'un ordre du jour attrayant et dynamique de

plaidoyer pour renforcer la société civile.

En novembre 2000, un atelier que j'ai dirigé avec Richard Holloway du PNUD en Indonésie a permis l'utilisation de l'outil de l'Indice sur la société civile/diamond, et cela était merveilleusement inspirateur. Nous avons facilité l'exercice avec 40 leaders de la société civile venant de différentes parties de l'Indonésie où ils ont choisi premièrement les indicateurs qu'ils leur sembler les plus utiles pour évaluer la force actuelle de la société civile dans leur pays. Ensuite, ils sont travaillé en groupes pour faire des évaluations basées sur les indicateurs qu'ils ont choisis. Puis nous avons construit ensemble une image visuelle de leur évaluation et finalement, nous avons fixé ensemble des objectifs pour renforcer la société civile.

Ce projet est en soi difficile - voire risqué — et nous espérons apprendre beaucoup du travail pilote en cours. Nous espérons partager certains des premiers résultats avec vous à l'Assemblée Mondiale à Vancouver, Canada du 19-23 août 2001. Si CIVICUS parvient à atteindre ces buts - même partiellement — nous aurons apporté une contribution significative vers la mise en place de l'idée que la société civile a un rôle incontournable

dans la définition de l'ordre du jour public et le renforcement de la société civile dans le monde entier. •

Kumi Naidoo

Building Knowledge About Civil Society

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Networks are currently in their infancy, it is expected that researchers and practitioners will learn from each other's perspectives and advance both the theory and practice on civil society and the current challenges it has to deal with.

CIVICUS' second activity aimed at bridging the gap between knowledge and action is the CIVICUS Index on Civil Society Project. This project is designed to assess the health and strength of civil society at various levels, from local, regional and national, and from a single organization, to a particular sub-sector of civil society, to civil society as a whole. This is, however, much more than a research project. The ultimate aim of the Index on Civil Society is to bring a variety of organizations together behind a common self-understanding of civil society, and to create a common agenda on strengthening their role in governance and development.

Mrs. Heidemarie Wieczorek-Zeul, the German minister for economic cooperation and development, spoke at the launch of the Global Development Network in December 1999. She said the generation and dissemination of relevant knowledge is not so much a question of techni-

cal capacities and means, but rather of choosing the right approach. CIVICUS is bearing this in mind in designing its Index Project. Similar to the trend in civil society and civil society research, the approach is both international and comparative in nature. For civil society practitioners and researchers, the results of this comparative research promise to reveal important similarities and differences between countries, as well as the particulars about one's own country. At the same time the findings have the potential to further refine empirically grounded theories on the topic.

In her speech Mrs. Wieczorek-Zeul identified four crucial insights about gathering and transferring knowledge and bridging the gap between that knowledge and action. First, as discussed previously, knowledge is power. Second, local knowledge is at risk of being lost. This insight reflects the current dominance of Northern, particularly Anglo-Saxon, bodies of knowledge. For example, 80% of all internet sites today are in English, even though only 10% of the world's population can understand the language. This, coupled with the reality of economic dependencies, means that many non-OECD countries tend to import

foreign bodies of knowledge, rather than tap into their own vast bodies of indigenous knowledge.

Third, knowledge must be embedded in its socio-cultural context. Many existing international research projects have transferred successful Western concepts and methodological tools to developing countries. But these have often failed to consider the realities of non-Northern countries. The CIVICUS Index on Civil Society adopts a participatory approach to empower local civil society. For example, in the project's pilot phase, the National Lead Organizations (NLOs) implementing the project in their country will convene a workshop of civil society representatives to assess the health of their civil society and set common future goals. This approach ensures local ownership of the implementation process and research findings. Further, CIVICUS puts project findings in their socio-cultural context, by balancing a comparative approach with the unique features of each country. Thus the Index methodology is flexible: while there is a universal framework, it can be adapted to specific national contexts.

The final point made by Mrs. Wieczorek-Zeul is that knowledge is politically explosive. Many authoritarian states

monopolize the production of knowledge. Studies on governance have shown that when a research approach is participatory, empowering and contextualized, the promotion of a progressive agenda is much more powerful. The Index on Civil Society connects knowledge generation with initiatives of civil society practitioners informed by that very knowledge.

This issue of CIVICUS World explores the need to build knowledge about civil society. Specifically we look at what CIVICUS is doing to bring knowledge and action together through its Index on Civil Society Project. We also highlight initiatives and organizations that are building information about civil society and using it to strengthen the voice of citizens. Ela Bhatt, founder of the Self Employed Womens's Association (SEWA) in India, used the old Sanskrit proverb "One that liberates is knowledge" to remind us of the empowering nature of knowledge. She explained that "the people need knowledge which liberates them from bondage of today and of tomorrow." Aren't these the very goals we in civil society should be striving for? •

How to Build a Common Vision

The CIVICUS Index on Civil Society

Civil Society Index in Capacity Building Programmes in Central & Eastern Europe

by *Nilda Bullain*
Executive Director of the
Civil Society Development
Foundation (CSDF)
in Hungary

If you took 25 people working in non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE), locked them into a room and asked them to come up with a definition of what civil society means, one of two things would happen. Either they would start long, intellectual discussions on philosophical, historical and political considerations that would end in boredom and no common definition. Or they would conduct heated debate on concrete and pragmatic considerations of everyone's own experience that would cause offense. At the end there would still be no common definition.

On the other hand, if you asked the same group to come up with a common understanding of civil society based on the CIVICUS Civil Society Diamond, you would get a set of well laid-out and meaningful flipcharts consisting of four different dimensions, providing a common picture of civil society in a given country.

The Civil Society Development Foundation Hungary is building NGO capacity by providing training in nonprofit management and organizational development across Hungary and CEE. We encountered the Civil Society Diamond approach in the 3rd CIVICUS World Assembly in Manila and adopted this model as a tool in our training sessions.

In our experience, people working in NGOs in this region, especially at a grassroots level, have very different levels of understanding about civil society definitions. They differ on what an NGO is, what a foundation or an association is, what words such as nonprofit or third sector mean and how all of these relate to civil society. The Diamond provides a viable framework and reference tool - not oversimplified or too complex - to gather and synthesize people's experience in civil society work. Thus far, we have used it with NGO representatives from Bosnia, Croatia, Macedonia, Romania, Yugoslavia and Hungary, usually in groups where participants come from different countries.

Whether the training is on strategic planning, cooperative planning or organizational development, the Diamond

tool is a good introductory exercise. The exercise helps participants arrive at a common understanding of the context in which they work, rather than trying to provide an accurate picture of civil society in one's country.

The exercise clarified some of the definitions mentioned above, helping to describe the current situation of NGOs and their environment. These all served as reference points for further discussions about strategic planning and resource mobilization. For example, we compared Romania and Hungary, creating Diamonds for each. We saw that the Hungarian Diamond, where the government helps to implement policy and finance the sector, had a larger left side of the Diamond, emphasizing space and structure. This is due to Hungarian legislation and inter-sectoral relations becoming more developed. In Romania, however, where NGOs are much more reliant on foreign funding, the right, or values and impact, side of the Diamond was larger. This demonstrated certain values and impact.

Most importantly, however, the Diamond exercise led people to think about what could and should be improved in the various aspects of civil

society in their countries. Even if these ideas have not yet taken root in concerted actions, the participants of the courses have definitely spread them around. And what else but a vision of a strong, influential, multifunctional, colorful and resourceful civil society can inspire the day-to-day work of all of us involved in the nonprofit sector?•

The Diamond provides a viable framework and reference tool — not oversimplified or too complex — to gather and synthesize people's experience in civil society work.

Resource Center

CURRENT CIVIL SOCIETY ASSESSMENT PROJECTS

The Johns Hopkins Comparative Nonprofit Sector Project

The JHU Comparative Nonprofit Sector Project (CNP) is a systematic effort to analyze the scope, structure, financing and role of the nonprofit sector in a cross-section of countries around the world. This project aims to improve our knowledge and understanding of this sector in order to provide a sounder basis for both public and private action towards it.



The CNP's objectives include:

- documenting the scope, structure, financing and role of the nonprofit sector in empirical terms;
- taking a comparative approach in order to explain the sector's differing character from place to place, and to identify the factors that encourage and/or hinder its development;
- evaluating the contributions and impact of the nonprofit sector on society as a whole;

- increasing the public awareness of the institutions which make up the nonprofit sector in different countries through a variety of publications;
- building local capacity to carry on this work into the future.

The project work began in 1990 in 13 countries. Today, the work extends into over 40 countries in all regions of the world.

CONTACT

Comparative Nonprofit Sector Project
Centre for Civil Society Studies
John Hopkins Institute for Policy Studies
3400 North Charles Street
Baltimore, Maryland
21218 - 2688 U.S.A.
Tel. (410) 516 - 4523
Fax (410) 516 - 7818
E-mail: cnp@jhu.edu
Web: www.jhu.edu/~cnp/

The Civil Society & Governance Programme

Carried out by the Institute for Development Studies at the University of Sussex, this 3 year research programme, which began in 1998, is examining the interplay between civil society and governments in 22 different countries spanning Africa, Asia, Latin America, Eastern Europe, the Middle East and the United States.

The project has 3 main objectives:

- to achieve a clearer understanding of the character and functioning of civil society in both analytical and practical terms;
- to look at the role civil society organizations play in enhancing or detracting from the quality of political life and governance in different societies;
- to develop practical measures which can strengthen civil society and enhance its impact as an agent for improving governance.



The project began by profiling civil society in each country under consideration, including the role it plays in relation to the government and the government's posture towards it. This includes looking at the social, economic and political contexts, and civil society's promise and limitations for fostering improved governance. Specific attention is being given to civil society's present and potential roles in tackling poverty and promoting greater equality.

CONTACT

Diane Mulligan, Coordinator
Institute of Development Studies
University of Sussex
Brighton
BN1 9RE
United Kingdom
Tel. +44(0)1273 - 606261
Fax +44(0)1273 - 621202/691647
E-mail: d.mulligan@ids.ac.uk
Web: www.ids.ac.uk/ids/civsoc/home.html

Civil Society in Central Asia

Since the sudden independence of many Central Asian Republics in the early 1990s, there has been a concerted effort to help emerge and to strengthen civil society structures in these countries.

INTRAC is conducting a 3 year research programme (beginning in late 2000) that hopes to strengthen INTRAC's current efforts of mapping, monitoring and analyzing the emergence of civil society in several Central Asia states, including Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan.



The purpose of the research is four fold:

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CURRENT CIVIL SOCIETY ASSESSMENT PROJECTS

- to map, monitor and analyze the emergence of civil society in Central Asia over time in order to better understand the dynamics of civil society organizations in a series of transitional states;
- to increase INTRAC's understanding of the dynamics of civil society organizations in transitional states;
- to identify those factors that encourage/ constrain the development of civil society organizations in Central Asia;
- to begin the process of developing the institutional capacity of CSOs so that they might undertake policy related research, which would feed into and inform policy making.

The results of this research seek to feed directly and continually into on-going civil society development activities in the region.

CONTACT

Dr. Simon Heap
INTRAC
P.O. Box 563
Oxford
OX2 6RZ
United Kingdom
Tel +44(0)1865 201851
Fax +44(0)1865 201852
E-mail: s.heap@intrac.org
Web: www.intrac.org/fr-civsoc-ca.htm

The Measures Project: Balancing the Scales

In order to measure the impact of the third sector on society, in 1996 Independent Sector began its Measures Project. This project aims to build a body of knowledge about the roles and contributions of nonprofit institutions in the US.



A national panel of organizations was established in 1997-1998 through which changes in the sector will be tracked and measurement techniques evaluated. In 1998, the Measures Survey generated the first set of findings from panel members on the special roles of nonprofit organizations and religious congregations, engagement in civil society activities and accountability and evaluation. The findings from this initial survey will be made available in a forthcoming publication, *Balancing the Scales: The 1998 Measures Survey Final Report*.

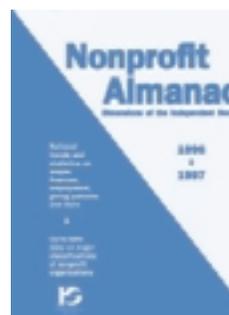
CONTACT

Independent Sector
1200 18th Street, NW, Suite 200
Washington, DC 20036 U.S.A.
Tel. (202) 467-6161
Fax (202) 467-6101
E-mail: info@independentsector.org
Web: www.independentsector.org/programs/research/almanac_overview.html

The Nonprofit Almanac

The Nonprofit Almanac series provides a statistical profile of the nonprofit sector and its place in the economy and society of the United States. The series demonstrates that the nonprofit organizations are a major force in the U.S. economy and illustrates the changes and importance of the sector over time.

The series addresses questions such as: what are the main sources of funding?; what are the average salaries for positions in the nonprofit sector?; what is the total number of nonprofits in the United States?; and how large is each sub-sector within the nonprofit community?.



The 1998 NGO Sustainability Index

Beginning in 1997 with the first edition of the NGO Sustainability Index, this project has annually gauged the strength and overall viability of the NGO sector in the transition countries of Central

and Eastern Europe and the New Independent States.

The Index was developed by USAID's Bureau for Europe and the New Independent States together with the NGO community. The initial purpose of the Index was to meet the field's needs for qualitative indicators captured in a quantitative format in the area of NGO development. These indicators include: donor assistance; the role of government; the legal environment;



people participation; and post-donor presence. The insights gained help USAID staff and implementers make everyday project management decisions and assist them in designing longer term project development strategies.

The Index is a living document that now includes 23 countries and has become an important tool for uncovering areas of unmet needs.

CONTACT

U.S. Agency for International Development Ronald Reagan Building
Washington, D.C.
20523-0016 U.S.A.
Tel. (202) 712-4810
Fax (202) 216-3524 Web:
www.usaid.gov/democracy/ngosust.doc

Resource Center

CURRENT CIVIL SOCIETY ASSESSMENT PROJECTS

Global Civil Society Yearbook

The Center for the Study of Global Governance and the Center for Civil Society at the London School of Economics are embarking on a research project that will produce a Global Civil Society Yearbook in September 2001.



The Yearbook aims to give voice to civil society in the process of globalization, to be a tool for participants in global civil society and to provide assistance in agenda setting.

Each year the Yearbook will contain a section on pertinent civil society issues, a section on where and how global civil society operates and interacts and a closing section containing a data profile, a global civil society index, a discussion of the 'legal year' and a chronology of important global events.

CONTACT

Marlies Glasius, Editor
 Centre for the Study of Global Governance
 London School of Economics
 Houghton Street
 London WC2A 2AE
 United Kingdom
 Tel. +44(0)171 955 7583
 E-mail: m.glasius@lse.ac.uk
 Web: www.lse.ac.uk/Depts/global/Yearbook/default.htm

Citizens & Governance: Civil Society in the New Millennium

The Commonwealth Foundations' project "Citizens and Governance" began in 1997. The project aims to analyze the factors that encourage and hinder citizens to take action on their concerns, to gain insight into the nature of civil society and to uncover the relationships between civil society, the state and the individual. The project hopes to identify ways to strengthen, promote and encourage initiatives undertaken by citizens to address issues and problems in their everyday lives.

Between 1997 and 1999, the study gathered, in 47 countries, the views of some 10,000 citizens (the majority of them 'ordinary' or 'invisible' citizens, whose voices are rarely heard) on the following three questions:

- What is your view of a 'good society'? To what extent does such a society exist today?
- In such a 'good society' what roles are best played by citizens and what roles are best played by state institutions and other sectors?
- What would enable citizens to play their roles more effectively in the

development of such a society?



Ultimately, the project will result in action that includes developing a realistic framework of priorities and recommendations for citizens, their various organizations, governments, the private sector and Commonwealth institutions.

CONTACT

Commonwealth Foundation
 Marlborough House
 Pall Mall
 London SW1Y 5HY
 United Kingdom
 Tel. +44 (0)207 930 3783
 Fax +44 (0)207 839 8157
 Email: geninfo@commonwealth.int
 Web: www.commonwealthfoundation.com

MEASUREMENT TOOLS & RESOURCES

United Way of America's Outcome Measurement Resource Network



The United Way's online Outcome Measurement Resource Network provides organizations with outcome measurement resources and learnings. These include information, downloadable documents and links to other resources related to identification and measurement of programs-level and community-level outcomes.

CONTACT

United Way of America
 701 N. Fairfax St.
 Alexandria, VA 22314 U.S.A.
 Tel. (703) 836-7100
 Web: www.unitedway.org/outcomes

Grantmakers Evaluation Network

The Grantmakers Evaluation Network (GEN) is an organization for foundation staff and trustees who share interest in evaluation and philanthropy. GEN strives to strengthen foundations' ability to achieve desired outcomes by using evaluation to build a culture of

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critical thinking and informed decision making.

Numerous online resources are available through the website, including the GEN newsletter, other useful publications and links to other organizations.

CONTACT

Ralph Culler
Hogg Foundation
P.O. Box 7998
Austin, Texas
78713-7998 U.S.A.
Email: Ralph.Culler@mail.utexas.edu
Web: <http://hogg1.lac.utexas.edu/gen/>

- the think tanks section providing information and links to think tanks associated with evaluation and performance measurement.

CONTACT

1393 Tally Crescent
Orleans, Ontario
K4A 3C4 Canada
Tel. (613) 291-9864
Fax: 613-834-5025
Email: gpic@home.com
Web: members.home.net/gpic/content.htm

PUBLICATIONS on EVALUATION

The following is a brief list of publications. The website offers a downloadable version for most, or provides ordering information.

W.K. Kellogg Foundation Evaluation Handbook

January 1998
www.wkkf.org/resources/evaluation/default.htm

Evaluation in Foundations: The Unrealized Potential

by Patricia Patrizi & Bernard McMullan, December 1998
www.wkkf.org/resources/evaluation/default.htm

Achieving & Measuring Community Outcomes: Challenges, Issues, Some Approaches

www.national.unitedway.org/outcomes/publctns.htm#It0989

The Evaluation Clearinghouse

Put together by Government Performance Information Consultants (GPIC), the Evaluation Clearinghouse is a reference site for performance measurement and program evaluation information available on the internet. There are 3 main sections to this site:

- the evaluation clearinghouse offering evaluation information on a variety of topics including government, education, health, international issues and social services;
- the performance measurement section offering general information, examples of previous work and links to other relevant online documents;

Community Status Reports, Targeted Community Interventions: Drawing a Distinction

www.national.unitedway.org/outcomes/publctns.htm#It0989

Measuring Program Outcomes: A Practical Approach

www.national.unitedway.org/outcomes/publctns.htm#It0989

Using Evaluation to Improve Grantmaker

by Doug Easterling & Nancy Baughman
www.hogg1.lac.utexas.edu/Gen/

A Review of Evaluation Resources For Nonprofit Organizations

By Sandra Bozzo & Michael Hall
www.ccp.ca/information/documents/gd44.htm

Learning What Works: Evaluating Complex Social Interventions

The Brookings Institute
www.brookings.org/gs/learning.htm

RELATED RESOURCES

Richard Holloway's Civil Society Toolbox

This Toolbox is a personal collection of documents and organizations that Richard Holloway has found useful, and a set of concepts that he

hopes will be a useful guide to the public's thinking about civil society.

The inventory provides the most comprehensive bibliography on documents dealing with civil society currently available. The compartments of the toolbox are as follows:

- the evolution of the term civil society;
- understanding civil society;
- understanding civil society organizations (CSOs);
- CSOs and government;
- CSOs and business;
- Financing CSOs;
- Managing CSOs;
- CSOs and the law;
- networking amongst and supporting CSOs;
- advocacy in CSOs;
- assessing CSOs;
- organizational development of CSOs;
- human resource development in CSOs;
- CSOs and participation;
- CSOs and democracy;
- International assistance to civil society

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- Partnerships;
- Assessing the ongoing adventures of civil society.



CONTACT

Web: www.pactworld.org/toolbox.html

Institute for Development Research

The Institute for Development Research (IDR), is a nonprofit research, education and consulting organization dedicated to increasing the capacity of civil society groups to advance just and sustainable development. IDR identifies and documents emerging issues facing NGOs and other civil society organizations, collaborates with the actors involved to identify effective strategies and institutional innovations, and then disseminates knowledge and capacity building programs to advance civil society's impact on complex development problems.



IDR's services include financial stability analysis and action planning, education in the basic concepts, approaches and options for financial sustainability, program design and program implementation support.

The website contains information on their programs and research as well as online reports, publications and resource materials.

CONTACT

44 Farnsworth Street
Boston, Massachusetts 02210-1211
USA
Tel. (617) 422-0422
Fax (617) 482-0617
E-Mail: idr@jsi.com
Web: www.jsi.com/idr

Global Development Network

The Global Development Network (GDN) supports and links research and policy institutes involved in the field of development, and whose work is predicated on the notion that ideas matter. The initiative has proceeded on two fronts: knowledge generation and knowledge sharing.

The GDN offers research and policy institutes and existing networks around the world a series of workshops; networking opportunities; research grant competitions; training opportunities; and other services to improve research

skills, business practices, and improved connectivity with sources of knowledge.

The website offers information on all of the GDN's programs and current activities, and provides a number of online discussion groups as well as an online newsletter.

CONTACT

The World Bank
Lyn Squire, Director Global
Development Network Secretariat
1818 H Street, NW Washington, DC
20433 U.S.A.
Tel. (202) 473-6549
(Carol Aaron)
(202) 458-9891
(Erik Johnson)
Fax: (202) 522-2532
Web: www.gdnet.org/index.htm
E-Mail: info@gdnet.org

International Society for Third Sector Research (ISTR)

ISTR is a major international association promoting research and education in the fields of philanthropy, civil society and the nonprofit sector. ISTR reflects the growing worldwide interest in Third Sector research and provides a permanent forum for international research, while at the same time building a global scholarly community in this field.

The Society's main mission is to promote the study of nonprofit organizations and philanthropy within and across various academic disciplines

and national boundaries, to provide visibility and credibility to this area of study, and to enable scholars in this field to share research and enter into collaborative efforts. ISTR strives to broaden the participation of researchers in all parts of the world and in all disciplines, with special emphasis given to expand the number of Third Sector researchers in developing nations and Central and Eastern Europe.



The website provides information on membership, their international conferences, publications and their electronic discussion group. The site is also searchable on specific topics.

CONTACT

International Society for
Third-Sector Research
The Johns Hopkins University
559 Wyman Park Bldg.
3400 N. Charles Street
Baltimore, Maryland
21218-2688 U.S.A.
Tel. (410) 516-4678
Fax (410) 516-4870
Email: donna.schaub@jhu.edu
(Admin Secretary)
Web: www.jhu.edu/~istr

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Resource Center

PRIA

PRIA promotes people-centred development initiatives within the perspective of participatory research. Its mission is to strengthen a people-centred, holistic and comprehensive evolution of society characterised by freedom, justice, equity, and sustainability by: (1) creating opportunities for sharing, analysing and learning among formations of civil society; (2) engaging in independent and critical analysis of societal trends and issues, development policies and programmes; and (3) enabling dialogue across diverse perspectives, sectors and institutions.

Through its various centers, PRIA offers a range of workshop and training programmes on these issues. More information on workshops, publications, including the PRIA newsletter, can be found on its website.

CONTACT

PRIA
42, Tughlakabad Institutional Area
New Delhi - 110 062
Tel. 011-6081908, 6089559
Fax: 011-6080183
Email: info@pria.org
Web: www.pria.org

Social Watch

Social Watch is an international citizens' coalition monitoring the implementation of the world governments' com-

mitments to eradicate poverty and achieve gender equity.

The website provides news and relevant documents on social development around the world. Also included are reports on social development searchable by theme or country (with information on the evaluation process), reports on how the world is progressing toward social development and a search engine providing scores for social indicators in various countries and for various time periods.



CONTACT

Social Watch-Control Ciudadano
c/o Instituto del Tercer Mundo
Casilla de Correo 1539
Montevideo 11000, Uruguay
Tel. +598 (2) 409 6192
Fax: +598 (2) 401 9222
E-mail: socwatch@chasque.apc.org
Web: www.socialwatch.org

UNDP's Human Development Index

Following the UNDP, the world community uses the Human Development Index (HDI) to assess the level of human development in a variety of countries. The HDI consists of three components defining human development:

long life, educational level and the standard of living. This index enables nations and governments to assess the sta-



tus of human development, the nature of problems in human development, and to determine priorities for policy.

CONTACT

UNDP Spokesperson:
Michael Marek (Washington)
Tel. (202) 331-9130
Web: www.undp.org/hdr2000

Current and past Human Development Reports, which are, in part, generated from the HDI, are available on the website.

Transparency International

Transparency International (TI) is a civil society organization dedicated to curbing both international and national corruption.



Available on the website are links to the "On-line Source for Information and Research of Integrity Systems" (OSIRIS). This is one of the most comprehensive databases on corruption and governance, and will soon be open to the public.

Also available is a link to the SIGMA/TI Anti-Corruption Directory, an in-depth reference guide to multinational programmes supporting anti-corruption efforts in central and eastern European countries.

CONTACT

Transparency International
Otto-Suhr-Allee 97/99
10585 Berlin
Germany
Tel.: (+49.30) 343 8200
Fax: (+49.30) 3470 3912
Email: ti@transparency.org
Web: www.transparency.de

World Audit

World Audit's aim is to provide the public with a truly global geopolitical perspective on issues such as democracy, human rights, press freedom, corruption and the rule of law.

World Audit brings together statistics and reports from highly respected agencies, each with their own developed specialties, e.g. Freedom House, Transparency International, Amnesty International and The International Commission of Jurists. World Audit also creates its own World Democracy Audit, which is available on its website.

CONTACT

Email: editor@worldaudit.org
Web: www.worldaudit.org

Resource Center

International Center for Nonprofit Law

The International Center for Nonprofit Law (ICNL) is an international organization whose mission is to facilitate and support the development of civil society and the freedom of association on a global basis. ICNL, in cooperation with other international, national, and local organizations, provides technical assistance for the creation and improvement of laws and regulatory systems that permit, encourage, and regulate the not-for-profit, nongovernment (NGO) sector in countries around the world.



ICNL maintains a documentation center for laws, regulations, self-regulatory materials, and other relevant documents, it provides relevant training and education, and it conducts research relevant to strengthening and improving laws affecting the NGO sector.

An on-line library is available through the website. Many of their publications are also available online.

CONTACT

International Center For
Not-For-Profit Law
733 15th St. NW, Suite 420
Washington, D.C.
U.S.A. 20005
Tel. (202) 624-0766
Fax: (202) 624-0767
Email: infoicnl@icnl.org
Web: www.icnl.org

LINK Research

LINK Research is a free, easy-to-use Web service that allows community based organizations to post research projects and enables researchers to find meaningful research topics.



Using LINK involves three easy steps:

- Organizations post research projects they would like to have done.
- Researchers search the site for projects that match their interests and skills.
- Researchers apply directly to organizations.

The website contains easy, step by step instructions on searching for and posting research projects.

CONTACT

Link Research
P.O. Box 424459
San Francisco, CA U.S.A. 94142-4459
Tel: (800) 883-7204 vm
Email: Kristin@LinkResearch.org
(President and CEO, Kristin Bosetti)
Web: www.LinkResearch.org

ELECTRONIC DISCUSSION GROUPS

Institute for Development Studies

The Civil Society and Governance Programme hosts a listserv to discuss issues concerning all aspects of civil society and its interplay with government / impact on governance.

If you want to join the listserv, send an email to: civil-society-request@mail-base.ac.uk

ISTR

The ISTR Listserv (ISTR-L) offers an electronic mail network as a great way to communicate with ISTR members and others interested in the Third Sector world, to share news and views, to seek information, and to engage in conversation. To subscribe to the ISTR ListServ (ISTR-L), send a one-line, no subject, e-mail message to: LISTSERV@YORKU.CA.

The one line message should say:
subscribe ISTR-L Firstname
Lastname

Centre for Civil Society International (CCSI)

CCSI maintains CivilSoc, a listserv reaching more than 1,900 subscribers. It covers a range of subjects: upcoming events or conferences, job opportunities and internships,

new organizations or projects, as well as occasional queries for all list members. For more information on how to subscribe, visit the CCSI website at <http://fpmail.friends-partners.org/mailman/listinfo.cgi/civilsoc>

North-South-Institute

As part of its research project "The Rise of Nongovernmental Voices in Multilateral Organizations", the Institute maintains a moderated listserv. It serves not only to share the research findings with others in the global community, but also to generate a broader discussion about the core issues of civil society. To subscribe, please send a blank email to: SUBSCRIBE-Civil_Society@lists.nsi-ins.ca.

Le Group De Discussion de la Sqép

A French speaking open unmoderated list for general discussion on evaluation and associated issues. To subscribe send an e-mail (no subject) to listserv@qsen.meg.gouv.qc.ca

The body of the message should read: SUSCRIBE sqep
your_Firstname
your_LastName.

The CIVICUS Index — strengthening civil society worldwide

In early 2000, CIVICUS installed a global project advisory group to obtain guidance on how to design and implement the CIVICUS Index on Civil Society project. At the moment, the group consists of more than 40 civil society practitioners and researchers from all regions of the world.

Kumi Naidoo interviewed three distinguished members of the advisory group: Elba Luna, Alan Fowler and Bob Bothwell along with Mall Hellam, Director of the Open Estonia Foundation, CIVICUS' national partner in implementing the Index project in Estonia. They spoke on the relevance of the Index project for strengthening civil society worldwide. As a service to our Spanish-speaking members, we print Elba Luna's interview in Spanish.



Elba Luna is the director of the Grupo de Analisis y Desarrollo Institucional y Social (GADIS) in Argentina. In the interview, she reports on a research project on a civil society index she recently conducted in several provinces in Argentina.

Kumi Naidoo: Cuál es la importancia de medir la fortaleza de la sociedad civil?

Elba Luna: En países como Argentina (en el contexto de América Latina y los países menos desarrollados), la importancia de medir la fortaleza de la sociedad civil debe ser considerada en dos sentidos:

- como una herramienta técnica/conceptual (permite acrecentar el conocimiento sobre la iniciativa asociativa y sirve como instrumento para el

diseño y la focalización de políticas);

- como un mecanismo de fortalecimiento institucional (fomenta legitimidad y control social)

En nuestros países, en general, se ha construido una imagen colectiva en relación a las organizaciones de la sociedad basada en la desconfianza, valor que ha moldeado en gran medida el escenario de las relaciones entre las OSC y los distintos actores sociales, especialmente el Estado. El Índice al permitir sobre una base cierta las capacidades y ventajas comparativas instaladas, permite demistificar muchas convicciones y creencias basadas en aquel paradigma de la desconfianza. Esto tiene que ver con mucho de los hallazgos del Índice, como por ejemplo la evidencia del predominio de la iniciati

The CIVICUS Index — strengthening civil society worldwide

va basada en la lógica de la ayuda mutua así como la base importancia de la iniciativa filantrópica, que representa menos del 10% de las organizaciones que existen. El Índice también señala el bajo volumen de los fondos provenientes de donaciones en relación a la altísima significación de los fondos propios aportados por las organizaciones y provenientes en su gran mayoría de aportes de sus miembros.

KN: Qué méritos ves en el Índice de la Sociedad Civil de CIVICUS?

EL:

1. El alcance a nivel mundial;
2. Si en términos generales se toma en consideración los mismos niveles que el Índice de Argentina, la inclusión de la dimensión valorativa es una contribución de gran relevancia.

KN: Qué desafíos?

EL: Estos méritos son también los principales desafíos que deberá enfrentar el Índice.

KN: Qué desafíos encontraste en la fase de investigación? Cómo venciste esos desafíos?

EL: La fase de investigación tuvo dos desafíos principales:

1. Construir el listado con el universo completo de OSC de cada provincia y por ende del país. La información existente estaba dispersa, no había estadísticas y lo que había estaba desactualizado. Tuvimos que construir las bases de datos prácticamente de cero. En la actualidad contamos con una base de datos digitalizada de 85.000 OSC.
2. Lograr un nivel de respuesta adecuado a la encuesta. La experiencia mundial indicaba

niveles de respuesta de alrededor del 10%. En la etapa piloto obtuvimos un nivel de respuesta del 75%.

KN: Cómo venciste estos desafíos?

EL:

1. Trabajando con consultores locales; fue clave lidiar con gente de las mismas provincias. Ellos conocían el terreno y tenían cierto grado de legitimidad. También podían resolver problemas prácticos sobre la marcha.
2. Contando con metodologías muy claras y minuciosamente desarrolladas tanto para la construcción de las bases de datos como para la administración de la encuesta.
3. Desarrollando guías metodológicas para la elaboración de las bases de datos.
4. Desarrollando actividades de capacitación con los consultores que permitieran construir un marco de referencia común.

KN: Cómo te gustaría que tu investigación sea utilizada en Argentina?

EL: Espero que sirva: (1) para la construcción de una nueva agenda en relación a la importancia e impacto de las OSC en el desarrollo, (2) Como insumos e instrumentos de planificación de políticas, (3) Como aportes al conocimiento (de hecho las publicaciones están siendo utilizadas como bibliografía en distintas universidades del país), (4) La tipología de OSC utilizada ya tiene vigencia en Argentina.

The CIVICUS Index — strengthening civil society worldwide



Alan Fowler is an independent development consultant and analyst, currently based in Addis Ababa. A member of the board of directors of the International Society for Third Sector Research

(ISTR), he is very active in bridging the gap between research and practice. He recently published a book called *The Virtuous Spiral: A Guide to Sustainability Thinking and Practice for Non-Governmental Organisations in International Development*, published by Earthscan. He told Kumi about the potential merits of the Index project in the countries of the South.

Kumi Naidoo: Why is it important to assess the strength of civil society?

Alan Fowler: I think that at this moment in time it is more important to understand the configurations and qualities of civil society, rather than assessing the strength per se. Strength implies, strength for what? As there is no commonly accepted agreement on civil society's functions, I think that 'mapping' what civil society means for its diverse occupants - organised citizenry — is the priority.

KN: What information do you think civil society organizations (CSOs) need to be more effective in their work? Do you feel the Index project will provide this information?

AF: Information about each other, especially for poor people — half the world's population. Associational life for them is fragmented and narrow because of information shortcomings about who else is around sharing similar drives to satisfy their 'necessities'. The CIVICUS project might meet this need if it pays as much attention to information dissemination as it does to data collection and analysis.

KN: What potential merits do you see in the CIVICUS Index on Civil Society project? And what are its biggest challenges?

AF: The potential merit is in adopting a process and framework that is not overburdened with western biases and expectations. For example, to look at the shadowy side of civil society in terms of contention and resolution, not simple harmony and collective effort. The biggest challenge is methodological rigour, including the application of socio-anthropological thinking and methods.

KN: What could be the particular relevance of the Index project for civil society in the South?

AF: The greatest relevance would be for citizens in Southern countries to see themselves better in their own terms and values, not those of the ideal types propagated by outsiders and economic and political power holders.

KN: What are the greatest challenges in measuring civil society, especially in the countries of the South?

AF: The major challenge is to provide information about a social phenomenon that is organized informally. And doing this with a very careful use of language to describe what is found.

Mall Hellam, director of the Open Estonia Foundation and a CIVICUS board member, tells Kumi about the promise the Index project holds in the particular context of Estonia.

Kumi Naidoo: Why is it important to assess the strength of civil society?

Mall Hellam: By assessing the health of civil society we can learn how democratic our societies actually are. CSOs are the main tools of a

The greatest relevance of the Index Project would be for citizens in Southern countries to see themselves better in their own terms and values.

The CIVICUS Index — strengthening civil society worldwide



democratic society in representing different values and interests as well as building social capital. By mapping civil society and assessing its health we will be able to raise its awareness among the public and private sector as well as among citi-

zens. This is particularly important for societies in transition where the understanding of the nature and role of civil society is somewhat ambiguous.

KN: What information do you think CSOs need to be more effective in their work? Do you feel the Index will provide this information?

MH: CSOs represent a valuable resource in building and maintaining a democratic order of a society. The Index Project will provide them with information on the structure, size, scope and impact of their civil societies and it will also assess the external environment in which they operate. Supplied with that information CSOs are able to more effectively participate in the public policy process.

KN: What potential merits do you see in the CIVICUS Index on Civil Society project? What are its greatest challenges?

MH: After ten years of re-independence and a remarkable growth of CSOs, hardly any research on civil society has been carried out in Estonia. Therefore we feel that the Index Project will be especially important in the context of current economic, social and administrative reforms. In particular, the CIVICUS Index Project will for the first time give a fresh and well-articulated insight into Estonian society and civil society in particular. It will also

supply scholars and civil society representatives with the data and arguments to help to put the problems of civil society on the public agenda. This would be particularly important in relation to the Estonian parliament and government to promote projects and programs that would contribute to the development of civil society. Another important merit of the Index Project for Estonia is that it will raise the capacity of local scholars to carry out civil society research and provide them with new modern research tools related to the study of civil society.

KN: Why did you decide to participate in the implementation of the CIVICUS Index on Civil Society as the National Lead Organization in Estonia?

MH: The Open Estonia Foundation (OEF) decided to participate in the Index Project as National Lead Organizations because of three reasons: (1) missing or inadequate knowledge on civil society in general, except for a small number of organizations; (2) the good public image and capacity of OEF to carry out nation-wide projects and participate in international programs; and (3) its previous expertise on civil society research and its large network of civil society experts.



Bob Bothwell is the founding director and president emeritus of the National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy, based in Washington, D.C. He developed a highly regarded set of indicators of a healthy civil society, published in the book *Beyond Prince and Merchant. Citizen Participation and the Rise of Civil Society* by

The Index Project will provide them with information on the structure, size, scope and impact of their civil societies and it will also assess the external environment in which they operate.

The CIVICUS Index — strengthening civil society worldwide

the Institute of Cultural Affairs International, Brussels. Bob is among the most active members of the project advisory group, providing valuable inputs as the project unfolds.

Kumi Naidoo: Why is it important to assess the strength of civil society?

Bob Bothwell: Few, if any, individuals, organizations, governments or civil societies are perfect. In a world besieged with injustice, beleaguered with limited vision and courage of our leaders, if not greed and corruption, and beset by scarce resources, it is incumbent on civil societies to assess their strengths and weaknesses in order to become maximally effective in improving both the human condition and civil societies themselves.

KN: What potential merits do you see in the CIVICUS Index on Civil Society project?

BB: Insofar as this project can help discover regional and worldwide standards for a “healthy civil society,” and can develop objective measures of these standards or ways of measuring them that are acceptable to many (though not necessarily to all), CIVICUS will advance the capacity of civil societies to assess themselves, their relationships to their own countries and to their neighbors, and therefore to plan their road-maps to a better, more just world.

KN: What are the greatest challenges of the Index?

BB: I will be blunt. The Index can provide a vision for a desirable future — for each region on the globe. Its development should not be held hostage to a few countries or members of CIVICUS, who do not want to see how they compare with

their neighbors, who are afraid of such comparisons. It will take courage for CIVICUS’ members to identify a healthier future for civil society than the one that exists right now in their own backyards.

The Index should

seek to provide vision for “healthy civil society” on a regional, if not worldwide basis.

On a more technical level, we must not utilize behavior data impacted by government, business and society to suggest that civil society is causative. For example, a society’s trust — truly a crucial variable in social capital — is determined by interaction among families, by how a government interacts with its citizens, by how businesses interact with each other, their suppliers and customers, and by how civil society organizations nurture individual people to learn how to work and play together, even as strangers. To suggest that civil society alone might be responsible for levels of trust in a society, or changes in trust among citizens, is to ignore that the overwhelming majority of activity in a country, whether economic, political or social, is conducted by business, government and the family, not civil society organizations.

KN: What information do you think CSOs need to be more effective in their work? Do you feel the Index project will provide this information?

BB: There are volumes and volumes of practitioner and scholarly literature on what CSOs need to be more effective. They deal with leadership, management,

resource development, board of directors’ responsibilities and much more. The CIVICUS Index will not contribute to this literature. The Index should seek to provide vision for “healthy civil society” on a regional, if not worldwide basis. We need to know the possibilities and aspirations for civil society as seen by our best thinkers and practitioners from around globe. Nelson Mandela did not tell us what individual CSOs in South Africa should be, but what society should become.

KN: How does the Index project relate to other research projects in the field of civil society studies: What is distinct about the Index?

BB: To my knowledge, no one else is close to thinking through the complex possibilities of “healthy civil society.” The Johns Hopkins project measures the economic nature of civil societies; the Ford Foundation project identifies the diversity of civil society within countries and among countries. The CIVICUS Index of Civil Society seeks to construct regional and worldwide theories of healthy civil society and to seek objective measurement of reality against the theories.

Alliance News



Jo Render

A Tribute

by Kumi Naidoo

Recently the CIVICUS Secretariat bid farewell to its longest standing colleague when Jo Render left CIVICUS to join The First Nations Development Institute, an organization working on indigenous rights issues. As one of the first full time staff of CIVICUS, Jo has been key to the development of our Alliance from an idea into a movement that spans more than 100 countries on six continents. Today, amongst our members and supporters all around the world, Jo is fondly known and respected.

One could tell hundreds of stories that illustrate the great contributions Jo has made to CIVICUS, both in terms of intellectual input and workload output. One such episode occurred around the 1999 World Assembly in Manila. After spending the better part of the summer of 1999 working late nights and weekends in the run-up to the Assembly, Jo came to Manila and put in a series of 17 hour days. Most people would have taken a well deserved vacation following days of dawn to dusk plenary and break-out sessions followed by logistical planning meetings late in the evening. Instead, Jo left Manila to fly to Vancouver and begin the process of planning the 2001 World Assembly there.

Jo Render joined CIVICUS in April 1994, when the organization was less than a year old. Jo brought sound skills in management and administration which were complimented by her eagerness to learn and her deep interest in global issues.

In Jo's 6+ years with CIVICUS, she contributed mightily to CIVICUS' overall performance and substantial growth. She helped develop systems, programs, services, and relationships that strengthened the organization's ability to meet its goals and objectives.

Whether lending support to the CIVICUS board and tending to the governance structures and policies, managing relationships with outside consultants and vendors, managing the information systems, establishing and implementing membership services, or coordinating World Assembly activities, Jo inevitably brought the highest level of professionalism, integrity, commitment, and enthusiasm to her work. CIVICUS has benefitted tremendously from the many contributions Jo made during her tenure.

Alliance News

Jo's work at CIVICUS was much like the foundation of a house — not as visible to the public, but you'd miss it if it wasn't there.

Jo became CIVICUS' senior program manager in 1999 and maintained a fast and productive pace tending to a broad array of programs and opportunities. Jo represented CIVICUS as a co-convenor in the Knowledge Resource Group of the Business Partners for Development. She worked closely with counterparts in the Philippines to coordinate the myriad details involved in the 1999 World Assembly. Jo worked with me to plan and conduct a specialized UNDP-sponsored workshop on governance that was held in the Philippines in June 1999. In addition, she worked tirelessly to advance the CIVICUS corporate engagement project, to craft the partnership with other organizations and a program to engage youth in civil society, and to begin the process of building programs addressing women's leadership in civil society and civil society's role in poverty eradication.

In the midst of all of her program responsibilities, CIVICUS continued to rely on Jo's institutional knowledge, experience, and involvement in board relations, membership services, and communications. She oversaw the production of CIVICUS World and the annual reports for much of her tenure, up through the 1999 editions of these communications tools.

CIVICUS board and staff colleagues alike miss Jo's quick wit, indefatigable spirit, efficient and effective work ethic, and the thousands of questions she raised, causing one and all to think. Jo's legacy at CIVICUS is that of an exemplary professional who has left "huge shoes to fill," as the American saying goes.

In August 2000, Jo left CIVICUS to become Program Officer at First Peoples Worldwide, an initiative of the First Nations Development Institute. In her new position, Jo is travelling the world, building support for more effective

and sustainable development opportunities for indigenous communities. Her portfolio includes advancing the corporate engagement strategy of First Peoples, so her work has the potential to continue to benefit CIVICUS constituencies.

The depth and breadth of CIVICUS achievements from 1994-2000 are due in large part to the incredible energy, intellect, talent, and dedicated service Jo Render contributed throughout that critical period of CIVICUS' development and growth.

It is most appropriate that we include some reflections on Jo's contributions to CIVICUS from Miklos Marschall and Teri Siegel, who spent so much time and effort building this organization with Jo during its first few years:

**Teri Siegel
former Chief Operating Officer:**

Jo's work at CIVICUS was much like the foundation of a house — not as visible to the public, but you'd miss it if it wasn't there. I had known her for a long time prior to her joining CIVICUS, and I was thrilled to have a chance to work with her. I could depend on her absolutely. She could take projects and run with them with minimal supervision. If there was something she was unsure about, she asked. If she didn't agree with an approach, she voiced her objections and suggested alternatives. If something wasn't being done, she did it or made sure it got done.

Many parts of CIVICUS are there because of Jo. She was the one who researched and recommended the best computer software and hardware for CIVICUS' needs and resources. She was the one who designed the membership support systems and made recommendations

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to the Board on membership structures. She was the one who developed the first communication vehicles for CIVICUS. In fact, it is thanks to Jo's management and guidance that there is a CIVICUS World.

A particular event stands out in my mind that exemplifies Jo's character, work ethic and talent. Most CIVICUS members probably know that Jo was the key coordinator for the Manila World Assembly (1999). But many may not realize that the first World Assembly, in Mexico, ran so smoothly because of Jo. I had done the pre-event coordination, but three days before I was due to leave for Mexico City, I was diagnosed with pneumonia and forbidden by my doctor to travel. Jo never blinked. (She may have had plenty to say at home, but I never heard it!). She dove right in, picking up my responsibilities in addition to her already heavy workload for the event. She was an island of calm in a sea of conference insanity.

I owe a debt of gratitude to Jo, not only for the Mexico assembly, but for always being there when I and CIVICUS needed her. She poured her heart, soul and mind into CIVICUS, often

at the expense of her health and personal life. She was truly an invaluable asset to the organization.

Miklos Marschall former Secretary General of CIVICUS

Besides Teri and myself, Jo was the third employee of CIVICUS in its early days. She joined CIVICUS, supposedly as my temporary secretary – just for the first weeks, until I settle down, and find someone else.... Well, she spent the following 6 years of her career at CIVICUS. It was her quiet professionalism that made her the indispensable “unseen eminence” of CIVICUS.

We could always rely on her in every situation. She was our computer expert, our web-page guru, publication manager, membership officer, just to name a few of her many responsibilities at CIVICUS. Throughout the years we worked together, I have learned to respect her very much. Her contribution to CIVICUS' success has indeed been invaluable. •

NEW MEMBERS

Association for Civil Society Development – SMART
Croatia

Center for Development of NonProfit Organizations
Yugoslavia

Civil Society Development Foundation
Romania

Education for a Civil Society – IPSA
Latvia

Forum for Parliamentary Dialogue
Lebanon

Friends of the Nation
Ghana

Ghana Adult Learners Association
Ghana

International Youth Foundation
USA

Laurie Regelbrugge, Treasurer and Director, ICP, Inc.
USA

Milano Graduate School
USA

Network of Estonian Nonprofit Organizations
Estonia

Plan Institute for Citizenship and Democracy
Canada

Socio-Economic Development Society
Bangladesh

Sourcenet 2000 Plus Development Initiative Abroad
Egypt

St. George of Sofia Civil Society
Bulgaria

Sudanese Development Initiative Abroad
Egypt

The International Award Association
England

Vicente Garcia-Delgado Segues
Spain/USA

Volunteer Development Agency
Northern Ireland

Volunteer Vancouver
Canada

World Alliance of YMCAs
Switzerland

Zhuravlick, Inc.
USA

Calendar of Events

August 19–23, 2001

CIVICUS Fourth World Assembly. 19–23 August, 2001, Vancouver, Canada “Putting the Citizen at the Center: Strengthening Volunteerism and Participatory Democracy.” **Contact:** Shabna Ali, 2001 World Assembly Conference Manager, *E-mail:* assembly@civicus.org. *Web:* www.civicus.org.

March 15–16, 2001

Independent Sector, Spring Research Forum 2001 “Impact of Information Technology on Civil Society” Washington DC, USA. **Contact:** *E-mail:* khume@independentsector.org. *Web:* www.independentsector.org.

April 4–7, 2001

The National Service-Learning Conference, “Partnerships for a Civil Society,” Denver, Colorado. The conference will focus on eight pathways: Education and Literacy, Social Justice and Global Citizenship, Community Development, Youth Leadership, Diversity, The Environment, Research and Policy, and Spirituality. **Contact:** *E-mail:* conference@nylc.org, *Web:* www.nylc.org.

April 30–May 2, 2001

Council on Foundations, 52nd Annual Conference, Philadelphia, USA. **Contact:** Angeliq Wilkins, *E-mail:* wilka@cof.org.

May 2–4, 2001

Global Meeting of Generations Partnership Conference, Washington, DC. “Focus on generational inclusion for equitable development.” **Contact:** Kirsten Gelinas, *E-Mail:* kgelinas@idc.org.

May 14–20, 2001

Third United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries, Brussels, May 14–20 2001, Venue: European Parliament. *Web:* www.unctad.org/en/subsites/ldcs/3-review.htm.

August 31–September 7, 2001

World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, South Africa. *Web:* www.un.org/rights/racism/.

CIVICUS: World Alliance for Citizen Participation is an international alliance dedicated to strengthening citizen action and civil society throughout the world. Its members include nongovernmental and voluntary organizations, donor/corporate organizations, and interested individuals from more than 100 countries. Through its international Board of Directors, staff, regional conveners, and Task Forces, CIVICUS works with its members to increase and strengthen the lines of communication among its constituency using its newsletter and other publications, a growing database of information on civil society organizations around the world, representation at international, regional, and national meetings, and other forms of communication.

CIVICUS World is the newsletter of CIVICUS and is published six times a year. It is posted free to all members. Contributions of news, reports, publications, or other subjects of interest to our members are welcome. Please send all contributions, questions and/or comments to:

Editor, **CIVICUS World**
 CIVICUS: World Alliance for Citizen Participation
 919 18th Street, NW, 3rd Floor
 Washington, DC 20006, USA
 Tel.: 1-202-331-8518
 Fax: 1-202-331-8774
 Email: info@civicus.org
 Web site: www.civicus.org

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