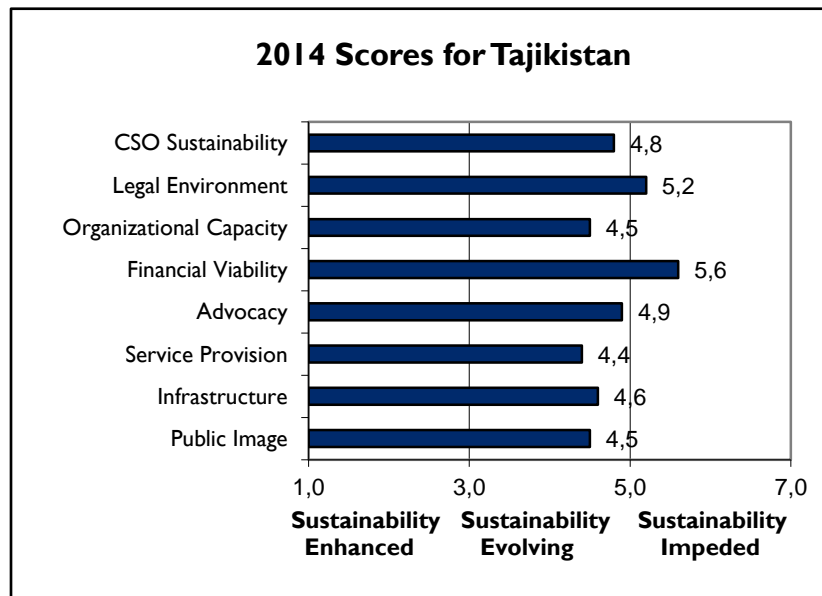


TAJIKISTAN



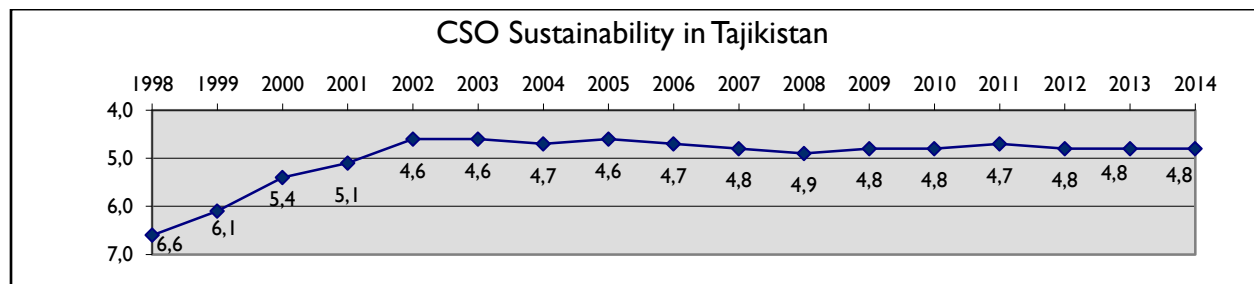
Capital: Dushanbe

Population: 8,051,512

GDP per capita (PPP):
\$2,700

Human Development Index:
133

CSO SUSTAINABILITY: 4.8



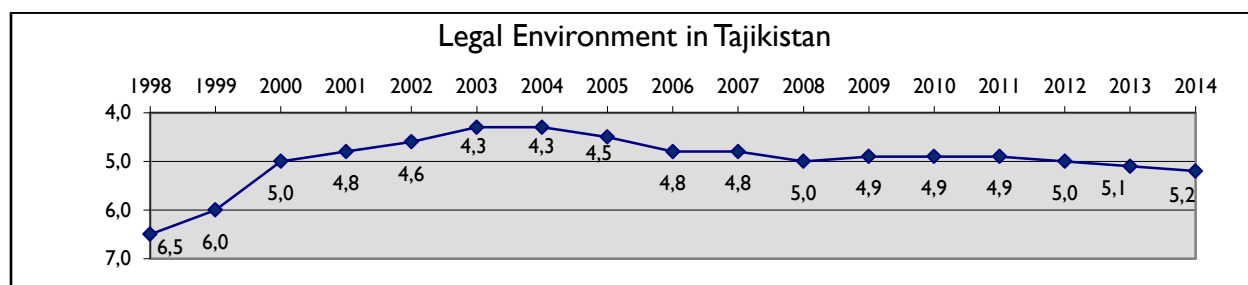
The environment for CSO advocacy in Tajikistan worsened in 2014, although overall CSO sustainability remains the same. Following the violent political crisis in Ukraine, the Tajik authorities clamped down on public gatherings, indicating mounting suspicion of Western engagement with local civil society. In May 2014, mass anti-government protests were held in Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast (GBAO), prompted by a gunfight between police and alleged drug traffickers that killed four people. The protests, which involved some violence, disbanded after a few days when civil society activists and authorities agreed to investigate the deadly shooting.

The legal environment remains challenging for CSOs. Complex bureaucratic procedures for registration require significant documentation and multiple visits to Ministry of Justice (MOJ) offices. The state's pressure on civil society, particularly on CSOs that receive direct foreign funding, has increased in the run-up to the February 2015 parliamentary elections. In early November, a draft law was prepared without CSO involvement that would require local non-profit organizations to obtain the government's approval before accepting funds from foreign donors. In June 2014, the government issued the Resolution on Coordination of all Gatherings, which requires every international and local CSO receiving foreign funding to notify the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) of planned gatherings. Financial viability also remains a pressing issue, and the lack of long-term funding discourages CSOs from engaging in long-term strategic planning.

Public awareness of CSO activities remains low, as CSOs prefer not to widely inform the public about their activities due to the increased pressure on them during 2014. CSOs are recognized by their target groups and stakeholders, while the wider public does not know much about their activities.

Eighty percent of CSOs in Tajikistan operate as public associations. According to the MOJ, which maintains a centralized registry of public associations, as of October 2014 there were 2,788 registered public associations, an increase of 133 in 2014, in contrast to the 50 percent decline in registered public associations in 2013. Approximately 1,000 of these are estimated to be active. According to the Aga Khan Development Network’s Mountain Societies Development Support Program (MSDSP), the number of community-based organizations increases every year. By the end of 2014, there were over 1,623 legally registered Public Self-Initiative Bodies (PSIBs), also known as Mahalla Councils or Village Organizations; 105 Social Unions for Development of PSIBs; eleven associations of PSIBs; over 112 Water Users Associations (WUAs); and more than 2,600 community-based saving groups supported by the Aga Khan Foundation (AKF) in Khatlon, Sughd, Badakhshon Provinces, and Rasht Valley.

LEGAL ENVIRONMENT: 5.2



The legal environment governing CSOs in Tajikistan worsened in 2014, as the government initiated restrictive changes in legislation in the second half of the year. Beginning in June 2014, the government began requiring international and local CSOs receiving foreign funding to notify the MFA before meeting with state officials or organizing certain kinds of events with foreign funding. In early November, the MOJ proposed amendments to the Law on Public Associations that increase the control and inspection of CSO activities. The first amendment gives the MOJ the authority to adopt new procedures for auditing CSOs’ charter activities, which CSOs fear would allow for greater MOJ interference in their activities. The second amendment proposes to create a registry of all grant programs, projects, humanitarian aid, and other funds received by public associations from foreign donors and legal entities. Public associations will also require approval from the registry to launch projects, increasing potential for bureaucratic delays and corruption. In addition, a new Law on Meetings and Demonstrations was adopted in late 2014, which was published only after its adoption.

Most CSOs in Tajikistan are registered under the Law on Public Associations with the MOJ or its provincial departments. Relations between public associations and the MOJ improved in 2014. During the year, the MOJ worked closely with CSOs to disseminate new annual reporting forms first introduced in 2013. For the first time ever, the MOJ also conducted roundtables throughout the country about registration and reporting procedures, demonstrating greater openness. Amendments introduced in 2014 to the Law on State Dues raised the registration fee for subsidiaries of international CSOs (which must also register with the MOJ) and local CSOs trying to change their status to international organizations from 400 somoni (\$80) to 4,000 somoni (\$800).

Professional membership associations, public funds, unions, cooperatives, and business entities register under the Law on Registration of Legal Entities and Individual Entrepreneurs. These organizations are supposed to register through one-stop shops within the local tax structures, but in 2014 many—particularly those that

were pursuing social benefit status or were focused on politically sensitive activities—were redirected to the MOJ to register as public associations, presumably in order to give the MOJ more control over such groups. Community-based organizations, mostly called Mahalla Councils, register under the Law on Public Self-Initiative Bodies with local governments.

Although the registration process for public associations is straightforward on paper, complex bureaucratic procedures require significant documentation and multiple visits to MOJ offices. Registration is often denied due to minor, technical errors in documents, and is often significantly delayed beyond the statutory limit of one month for a response to an application. Although not a legal requirement, to obtain national status and work throughout the country in practice, the MOJ asks a public association to name all the regions in which it will operate and submit documentation of local representatives with whom it will work.

A CSO’s statute governs its structure and operations. According to the Law on Public Associations, an organization must reregister when it makes even minor changes to the statute, including changing an organization’s official address. Many public associations rent office space and thus must reregister every time they change their office location. A number of local public associations applied to reregister their statutes in mid-2014, and had not received responses by the end of year.

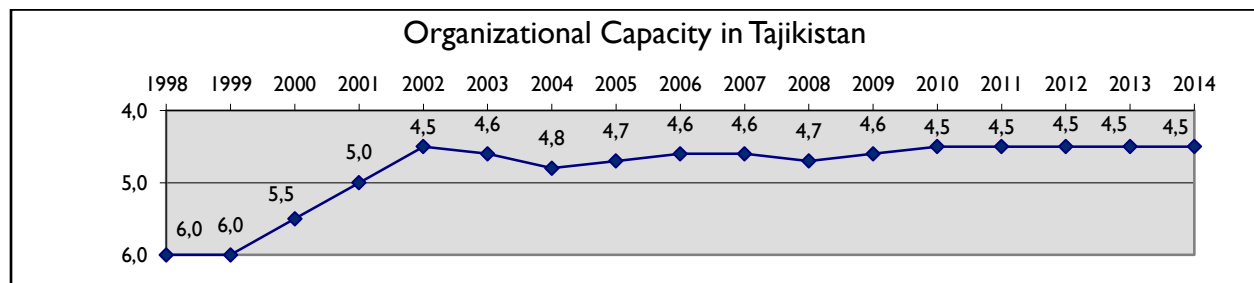
The procedures for dissolving a CSO are more complicated and time-consuming than the registration process. A CSO must collect numerous documents to prove that it has no debts to government institutions or commercial banks in the country. The entire process can take one to two years.

There were instances of administrative impediments and state harassment in the second half of 2014 in response to the violent political crisis in Ukraine. For example, CSOs in Badakhshan Province were subjected to a wide range of inspections, including from national security personnel. Throughout the country, the Ministry of Education continues to prohibit students from attending events organized by local and international CSOs without prior MOE approval.

CSOs pay regular employment taxes, but do not pay taxes on grants. CSOs must pay a 6 percent simplified tax for any commercial activity, including paid services.

Local legal capacity remains weak, but CSOs can obtain legal advice in the capital and almost all provincial centers. Most CSOs refer to the International Center for Not-for-Profit Law (ICNL) for legal information and advice.

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY: 4.5



CSOs’ organizational capacity did not change significantly in 2014. The scope and accessibility of international donor funds continue to have great influence on the scale and programmatic focus of local CSOs.

The majority of CSOs still do not seek to build their constituencies. CSOs work with their project beneficiaries, but hesitate to expand to other constituencies either because they do not see the benefits in doing so or lack the necessary skills. Women’s organizations are the leaders in terms of developing constituencies. For instance, the Coalition of Women’s CSOs works closely with local women’s activists and leaders, as well as women in government and public positions.

The lack of reliable funding discourages CSOs from engaging in long-term strategic planning. CSOs tend to target their funding towards the achievement of short-term results, and invest few if any resources in organizational development.

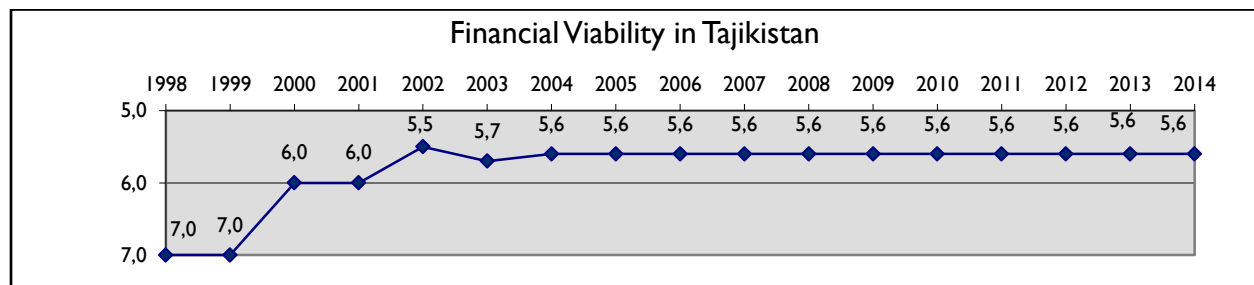
Only larger CSOs can maintain highly qualified personnel. Smaller CSOs generally have difficulty competing with government and sometimes the private sector for qualified staff. CSOs mainly hire staff based on project needs, as they cannot maintain full-time employees without consistent funding.

Most medium and large CSOs have boards of directors according to their statutes, but they often play either a nominal role or operate as executive staff. Only professional membership associations, business associations, coalitions, and networks have recognized divisions of responsibility between the boards of directors and staff members. However, boards of directors often do not operate in a transparent manner that would enable contributors and supporters to verify appropriate use of funds.

Many youth organizations utilize social media to organize their activities. Such organizations tend to have very flexible organizational structures, rely on volunteers, and focus on specific causes, rather than planning long-term initiatives.

Donor funding limitations do not usually allow CSOs to purchase new equipment, so most CSOs have basic office equipment. Internet access is adequate in urban areas, but still modest in rural areas, where electricity outages are frequent. In many cases, CSOs use mobile Internet services to stay in touch with each other and the rest of world.

FINANCIAL VIABILITY: 5.6



Financial viability remains the most difficult issue facing CSOs in Tajikistan. Most CSO funding—approximately 90 percent—continues to come from foreign donors, including government entities such as USAID and the EU. Donors like the Open Society Institute, UNDP, UN Global Fund, the World Bank, and the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) provide small grants or service contracts to CSOs for policy-related work, development activities, and service provision. CSOs struggle to meet the co-financing and pre-financing requirements of the EU and other donors.

Domestic funding alternatives are not yet sufficient to finance the sector. In 2014, the government Committee on Women and Family Affairs and the Committee on Youth, Sports, and Tourism continued to offer \$230,000 in support for small-scale CSO projects benefiting women entrepreneurs and youth, the same level as the last four years. The Youth Committee provided seventeen grants ranging from \$1,500 to \$5,000.

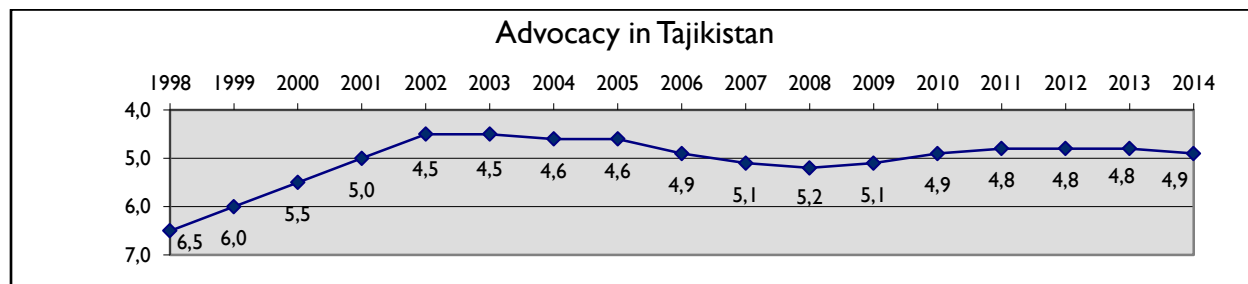
In addition, a few Badakhshan CSOs received grants of \$3,000 to \$28,000 from the Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast (GBAO) government to rebuild local infrastructure for youth engagement. No other regional government provided financial support to CSOs in 2014. State social contracting is currently only practiced by the Ministry of Health and Social Protection, which inherited the social contracting procedures for operation and maintenance of some elderly and disability houses from the Ministry of Labor in late 2013.

Most CSOs have difficulty raising funds from local resources, including businesses and the public, though CSOs in rural areas are able to attract in-kind and volunteer support from communities to address local problems. Individual and corporate philanthropy are still uncommon, although there are some isolated examples of charity initiatives gathering small contributions from individuals. Many CSOs, however, still do not even attempt to seek local resources and instead only pursue donor grant opportunities.

Very few CSOs earn income by selling their services and products. Paid services are limited to consulting and training. Most CSOs lack the capacity to plan and market their services.

CSOs that receive international donor funding typically have financial management procedures in place. However, most CSOs still practice project-based financial planning rather than medium or long-term financial planning for the organization as a whole. Financial transparency is still lacking in the CSO sector. Most CSOs do not disclose their financial statements publicly. Only a few leading CSOs, including Eurasia Foundation Central Asia, Fidokor, Kalam, and the Bureau on Human Rights and Rule of Law (BHR), have independent annual audits and publish their financial reports.

ADVOCACY: 4.9



The crackdown on civil society hindered CSO advocacy in 2014. In particular, the government has a cautious attitude toward international CSO projects and CSO gatherings. Since June 2014, the government has required all mass gatherings implemented with foreign funding, including conferences, trainings, and workshops, to be supported by a relevant government body, a process which the MFA facilitates. As a result, public advocacy now requires much more planning and caution. This requirement is currently only enforced in the capital, though enforcement may spread to the regions as well.

CSOs face difficulties interacting with national authorities, but generally have more success working with regional authorities. While national authorities only accept written and formal communications, at the regional level direct lines of communication with government officials are mostly based on personal relationships with decision makers. However, public councils at both the national and regional governments are not considered genuine forums, as CSO recommendations are rarely accepted by government officials.

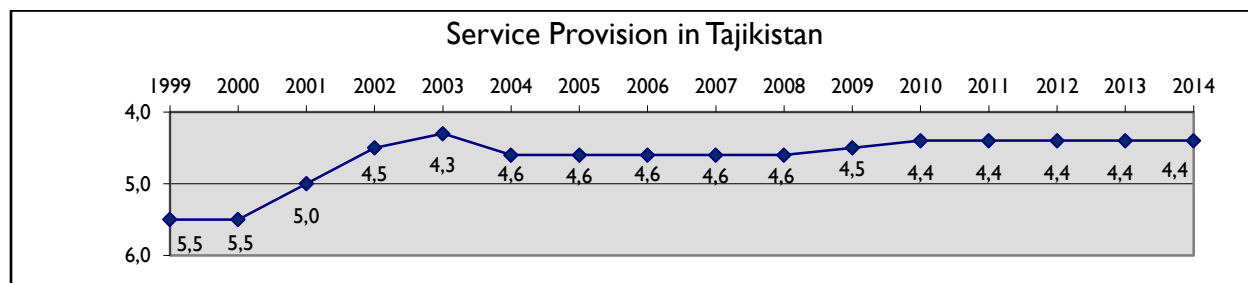
In 2014, MSDSP implemented a series of training workshops for GBAO government officials on how to work with CSOs to enable effective collaboration. The GBAO government invited participants from a Badakhshan CSO coalition to join the Commission on Investigation into the violence in Khorog in May.

CSOs have some capacity to engage in advocacy, but this practice is still underdeveloped. Generally only well-established CSOs and coalitions can garner public and government attention on certain issues. The informal group Amparo attracted public attention to the problems faced by young army recruits in 2014. As a result, the government took measures to improve the quality of medical examinations of young recruits.

Many coalitions continue to operate, but they rarely lobby to advance their agendas; rather, they implement development activities based on foreign donor priorities and government interests. The Development for Transparency CSO Coalition is working closely with the Ministry of Finance to develop a draft law on subsoil usage under the World Bank-funded Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI). The new National Association of Volunteers, comprised of 117 state and non-state organizations, is working with the Youth Committee to promote the state policy on youth development, mobilize efforts to promote volunteerism, and create opportunities for implementing the Law on Volunteerism. Despite these successes, CSOs still struggle to implement effective advocacy campaigns or monitor government performance due to the government’s negative reaction to dissenting views and CSOs’ lack of effective tactics to promote their interests.

CSOs broadly use Internet resources and social networks for their advocacy efforts. An estimated one million Tajikistanis visit social media sites, such as Facebook and Odnoklassniki (Classmates), daily to discuss cultural issues and politics. However, the government continued to block social media and news sites showing criticism of the government for extended periods during 2014.

SERVICE PROVISION: 4.4



CSO service provision remained the same as in 2013. CSOs continue to offer mostly social and educational services, while only a few engage in services related to energy, water, and economic development. Although some CSOs design their programs based on assessments of their constituents’ needs, this practice is not yet common.

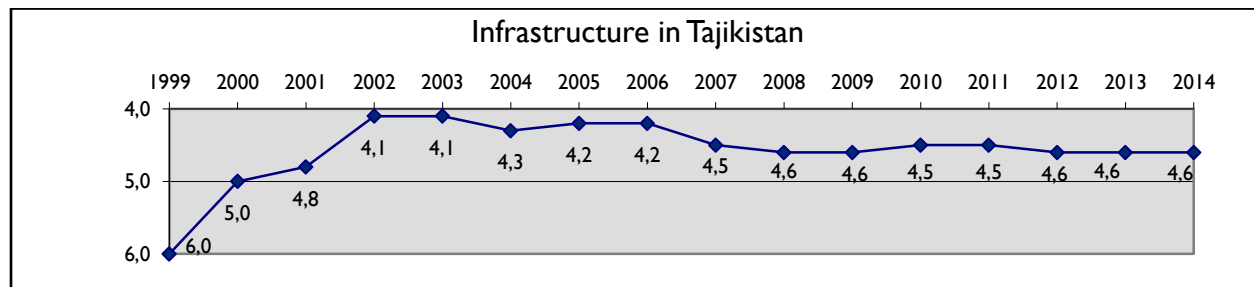
CSOs provide services mostly to vulnerable groups, such as victims of violence, unemployed women, drug users, and persons with disabilities, but these services are still not sustainable. The cost of providing these services is high, and donors are the only clear sources of funding. Provision of services is often interrupted when project funding comes to an end. The level and availability of services varies across the country, and services are scarce in certain districts. The AKF-supported Village Organizations (VOs) and Social Unions for Development of VOs (SUDVOs) serve community members to address local problems.

The public expects CSO services to be free and is generally unwilling to pay for them. Only a few CSOs charge for services like consulting, training, strategic and business planning, and language and computer classes. Only membership-based business associations, such as the American Chamber of Commerce, National Association of Small and Medium Business, and Association of Microfinance Organizations of Tajikistan, regularly offer capacity building and other services to their members.

Government contracting remains unavailable to most organizations, and many CSOs prefer not to receive government grants to avoid further invasive inspections. Public authorities generally contract only for

capacity building, evaluation, studies, and other services provided by CSOs as part of projects funded by international financial institutions that require such contracting.

INFRASTRUCTURE: 4.6



Five out of the seven civil society support centers (CSSCs) previously funded by USAID still exist. Fidokor and Kalam have large project-based resources that allow them to provide regular institutional development and technical assistance to new and experienced CSOs. The other three CSSCs in Rasht, Kulob, and Panjakent have small project-based resources and thus can only offer small-scale services, including access to information and technology, basic consultations, and trainings to new CSOs. Other large leading organizations, such as ASTI, Bonuvoni Fardo, Chashma, Manizha, Rushd, and Eurasia Foundation Central Asia, also serve as resource centers.

There are capable trainers, but CSOs cannot afford them. Experienced CSOs continue to need assistance with strategic planning, financial management, fundraising, intersectoral partnerships, advocacy, and communication. New CSOs recognize the need for continued trainings, specialized consultations with experts, and information on funding resources.

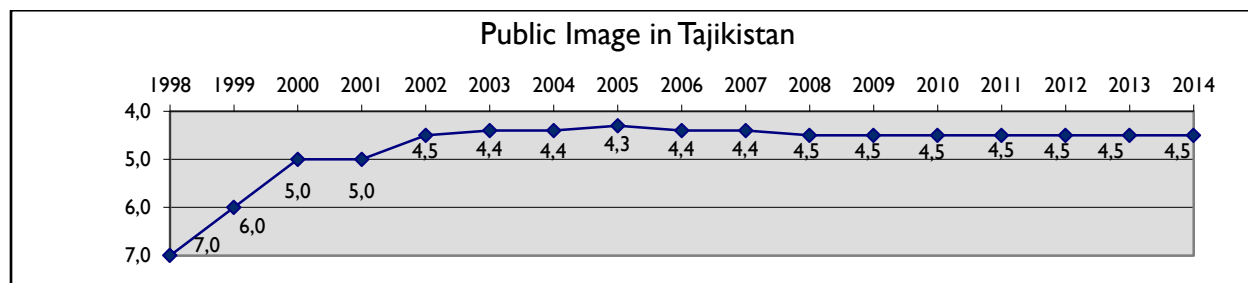
A number of organizations implement organizational capacity building programs. These include Fidokor in the Khatlon region; Counterpart International in the rural mountainous regions; and MSDSP in GBAO, the Rasht valley districts, seven districts in the Khatlon region, and eight districts in the Sughd region. For example, in the Khatlon region, eighteen public organizations participated in capacity strengthening programs offered by Fidokor under a USAID-funded project. They conducted legal audits and organizational development assessments to address major shortcomings within their organizations. Overall, however, the coverage and funding of existing programs are limited and cannot meet the rising demand of youth and other CSOs for capacity building trainings, technical assistance, and grants. Furthermore, new grassroots Tajik-speaking public associations and community-based organizations are emerging, but lack decent CSO management manuals and operational guides in the Tajik language.

The number of domestic grantmaking organizations is limited. Only a few leading organizations, such as Fidokor, Eurasia Foundation, and MSDSP, regrant funds from USAID, EU, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of New Zealand, UNDEF, World Justice Project, and AKF. About ten leading grassroots CSOs regrant small-scale financial support of up to \$1,500 to other CSOs.

CSOs continue to work in coalitions and associations and tend to increase networks through social media, though social media sites were shut down frequently in 2014. Many capital-based CSO coalitions working on gender, media, children's rights, human rights, ecological issues, adult education, youth, microfinance, business development, and transparency issues facilitate the exchange of information between rural and national CSOs through listservs. The most active network organization in 2014 was the National Association of Volunteers, which mobilized its 117 member organizations to conduct the Seventh Forum of Youth NGOs and to promote youth volunteerism.

Intersectoral partnerships are slowly growing. The CSO Coalition Transparency for Development continues to work with the Ministry of Finance and private mining businesses to draft the new Law on Subsoil Usage within EITI. The Tajikistan National Association of NGOs conducted a series of roundtables with eight registered political parties to discuss priority areas for social partnerships.

PUBLIC IMAGE: 4.5



Following the political crisis in Ukraine, CSOs were seen by the government as politically biased and a possible driving force of revolution. In the aftermath of the May 2014 violence and massive protests in GBAO, authorities acted with force and increased their control over CSOs, especially in the run-up to the 2015 parliamentary elections, indicating a decrease in government perception of CSOs.

The media’s attention to CSOs decreased due to strong government control and influence on the media. Moreover, the media’s lack of investigative journalism and experience with reporting on CSO activities complicates CSOs’ efforts to attract coverage.

Several CSO sector-focused newspapers and bulletins continue to operate. Hamkori (Partnership) bulletin (launched in 2013 by Fidokor) and the newspaper Impulse (published by Kalam) continue to publicize CSO activities and promote the sector’s image.

Large businesses do not notice CSOs and therefore do not consider them as partners or potential recipients of donations. Small and medium businesses lack significant incentives to develop more positive relationships with CSOs.

Public awareness of civil society remains low. Target groups and stakeholders appreciate CSOs, while the wider public does not have sufficient information about their activities. Rural communities still have only vague ideas about CSOs’ role in society, despite the fact that CSO leaders are well-respected and community members enjoy free services offered by CSOs. Urban communities consider CSOs as “grant-eaters,” as they do not operate transparently. Due to the clampdown on CSO activity in 2014, most CSOs were not involved in public campaigns, reducing their visibility in society.

Only a few leading CSOs publish annual reports, but CSOs often employ social networks to post news and updates on their accomplishments. For example, over 900 CSO leaders exchange information, post news and advertisements, and participate in discussions on a Facebook page (www.facebook.com/groups/tajikngo/). The Tajik CSO portal (www.tajikngo.tj) and TNNGOA website (www.cso.tj) are also information sources for Tajik CSOs.

The NGO Ethics Code has not acquired much local or international support since it was created in 2008. The Code provides basic principles for the operations of mainly public associations. It has not been updated and does not cover other types of CSOs.