



# 2020 CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATION SUSTAINABILITY INDEX

SOUTH AFRICA  
SEPTEMBER 2021



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# 2020 CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATION SUSTAINABILITY INDEX

For South Africa  
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## LOCAL PARTNER

### FOUNDATION FOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Lindsey de Vos  
Sunet Jordaan, Sustainable Social Solutions

## PROJECT MANAGERS

### FHI 360

Michael Kott  
Eka Imerlishvili  
Alex Nejadian

### INTERNATIONAL CENTER FOR NOT-FOR-PROFIT LAW (ICNL)

Catherine Shea  
Jennifer Stuart  
Marilyn Wyatt

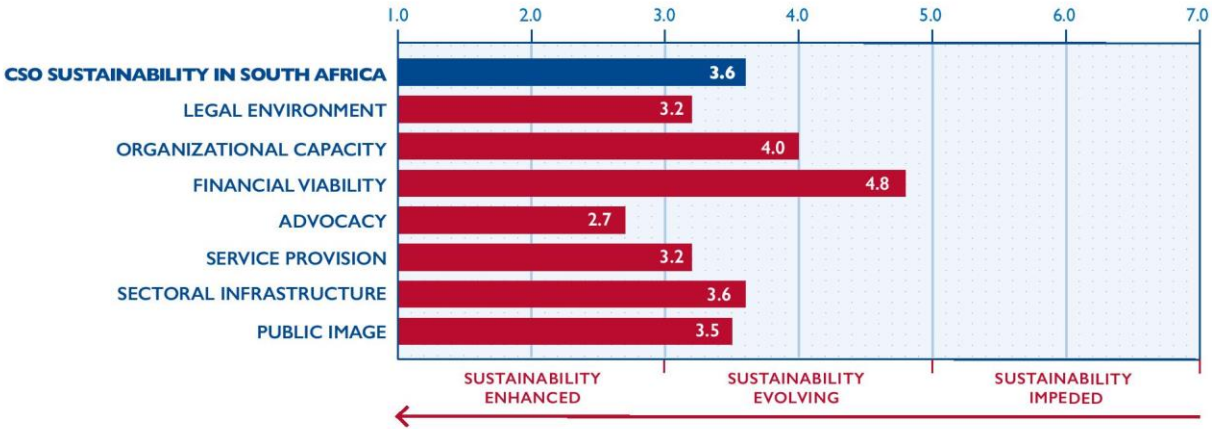
## EDITORIAL COMMITTEE

Xoliswa Keke, Irene Petras, Kellie Burk, Christina Del Castillo, Julie Snyder, and Lynn Fredriksson

# SOUTH AFRICA

**Capital:** Cape Town, Pretoria, and Bloemfontein  
**Population:** 56,978,635  
**GDP per capita (PPP):** \$12,482  
**Human Development Index:** High (0.709)  
**Freedom in the World:** Free (79/100)

## OVERALL CSO SUSTAINABILITY: 3.6



On March 15, 2020, after the first cases of the COVID-19 virus were reported in South Africa, the government declared a state of national disaster and, twelve days later, instituted a hard lockdown. Non-essential travel was curtailed, schools were closed, gatherings were restricted, and social distancing and hygienic measure were promoted to prevent the spread of the disease. The government also deployed more than 28,000 community health workers to conduct door-to-door visits in high-risk communities, according to the Department of Health. Both the public and private health-care systems delivered urgently needed services but were stretched to their limits, especially after private hospitals opened beds to patients without private medical insurance. A number of businesses assisted by manufacturing ventilators or donating personal protective equipment (PPE). Access to education was a major concern as South African school children lost 40 percent of classroom days during the lockdown, the 2020 Dialogue Business Handbook reported. With only 10 percent of households having access to fixed broadband internet providers, according to Project Isizwe, few pupils could learn online at home. Efforts to offset this digital gap included television and radio educational channels and e-school platforms supported by telecommunications companies.

The pandemic was a significant setback for the country's economic and social development. The World Bank estimates that the South African economy contracted by 7 percent in 2020 and that an additional 2 million people were pushed under the poverty line. During the second half of the year, 2.2 million jobs were lost, resulting in an unemployment rate of 43.1 percent. The economic impact of the pandemic is expected to be worse than that of the financial crisis of 2008–09. The lockdown had an especially devastating effect on households sustained by the informal sector, as well as the tourism and hospitality industries.

The pandemic also drastically increased food insecurity. The National Income Dynamics Study–Coronavirus Rapid Mobile Survey reported that the number of South African households without money for food increased from 21 percent in 2018 to 47 percent in April 2020. Contributing to the problem was the temporary closure of the National School Nutrition Program, which normally feeds 9 million children.

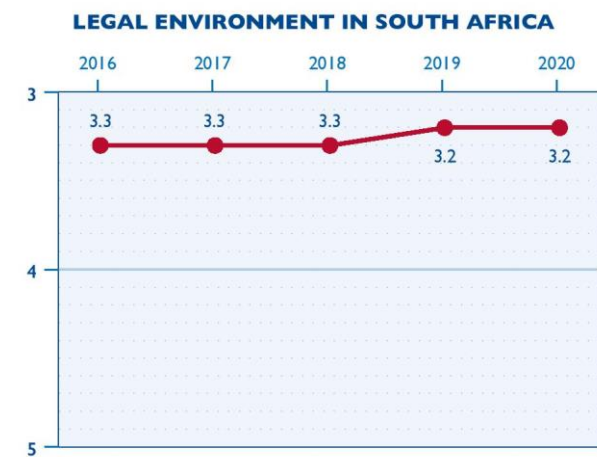
Faced with South Africa's growing economic insecurity, the government increased social security payments and other support to citizens in 2020. In April, President Cyril Ramaphosa announced the appropriation of ZAR 500 billion (approximately \$28.8 billion) to assist with tax relief, wage support, and funding for small businesses and the cultural and creative industries. Additional allocations were made to child support recipients, pensioners, and the Social Relief Distress Grant program.

However, the government's pandemic response was criticized for overlooking the needs of refugees, asylum seekers, sex workers, and people with disabilities and for excluding the CSO sector. Fortunately, the pandemic resulted in an extraordinary outpouring of public support for vulnerable populations, and many CSOs became involved in distributing food to families in need.

Although the overall sustainability of CSOs in South Africa was unchanged in 2020, several dimensions recorded change. Advocacy improved slightly as CSOs adapted to the pandemic environment to achieve several significant goals. The sectoral infrastructure was slightly stronger as local grantmaking increased and the new Solidarity Fund helped CSOs with pandemic-specific interventions. The sector's public image was boosted slightly by positive media coverage of CSOs' pandemic-related contributions. At the same time, CSOs' organizational capacity declined moderately because of staffing losses during the pandemic, and CSOs' financial viability deteriorated slightly because of the reorganization of international and government funding streams. CSOs' legal environment and service provision were unchanged.

South Africa continues to have a large and vibrant civil society. As of October 2020, nearly 230,000 CSOs were registered with the Nonprofit Organizations (NPO) Directorate in the Department of Social Development (DSD), up from 221,000 organizations in October 2019. As of March 2021, nearly 25,700 public benefit organizations (PBOs) were listed on the South African Revenue Service (SARS) website, representing an increase of just over 1,500 organizations since March 2020. The sector employs almost 1 million people, according to the 2020 Trialogue Business Handbook.

## LEGAL ENVIRONMENT: 3.2



The legal environment for CSOs in South Africa did not change in 2020. The 1997 NPO Act provides a stable legal framework for the sector. Most CSOs register as voluntary associations under the NPO Act or as nonprofit companies under the Companies Act. CSOs may register either online or at DSD offices at no cost. Registration usually takes about two months. In a somewhat more complex process, CSOs may also register as nonprofit trusts with the master of the Supreme Court under the Trust Property Control Act. The NPO Act requires registered organizations to submit audited financial reports to the NPO Directorate annually.

CSOs in South Africa normally operate freely, but they faced several restrictions under the pandemic lockdown

in 2020. Despite a 2018 Constitutional Court ruling affirming citizens' right to protest, the government imposed a ban on political gatherings that remained in effect throughout the year. Nevertheless, during the lockdown, an average of two protests took place daily to urge government action on issues such as lockdown regulations, gender-based violence (GBV), and poor service delivery. The policing of the protests was inconsistent, with police either remaining on the sidelines to observe activities or arresting protesters and using water cannons on peaceful demonstrations. In addition, early in the initial hard lockdown, DSD requested CSOs to work through its offices to distribute food parcels and other assistance. Many CSOs saw this as an effort to exert control, and the Democratic Alliance and 1000 Women Trust took DSD to court to ensure that soup kitchens and other interventions could continue to provide food services. The case was decided in the CSOs' favor in June 2020, thus allowing them to re-assume control of the distribution process. Finally, restrictions on movement prevented many CSO from operating if they did not deliver essential services. The South African National Defence Force was deployed to ensure that South Africans adhered to lockdown restrictions, including curfews and limits on travel. In March 2020, newly published regulations criminalized the production and dissemination of misinformation about COVID-19. Civil society cautioned that overly broad or unclear restrictive laws should not limit freedom of expression and other rights and proposed rewording the new regulations to prevent their abuse.

There was no follow up to DSD's draft amendments to reform the NPO Act in 2020. The proposed amendments would, among other things, simplify the registration process for CSOs, make registration with DSD compulsory to reduce the possibility of financing of terrorist activities, and introduce a regulatory body to oversee the sector.

Although CSOs may register with SARS for refunds of value-added tax paid on goods and services, many CSOs report that they struggle to get the refunds. CSOs registered as PBOs receive preferential tax treatment and are

allowed to accept tax-deductible donations if the donations are used for specified public benefit activities. PBOs must submit annual financial reports to SARS to maintain their tax-exempt status. Individuals donating to PBOs may apply for tax deductions on a percentage of their donations.

CSOs are allowed to accept funds from foreign donors except for entities and persons identified in the United National Security Council resolutions as engaged in money laundering and terrorist activities. CSO may engage in income-generating activities as long as they are in line with their main operating objectives.

CSO have access to a range of legal services. The Legal Resources Center (LRC) remains a major source of help to CSOs seeking to comply with legal and administrative requirements, although in recent years the center has shifted its focus to the educational and land sectors. Several corporate law firms provide free legal services to CSOs. Lawyers Against Abuse, the DG Murray Trust, National Organization of Democratic Lawyers, South African Society for Labor Law, ProBono.org.za, and TrustLaw offer CSOs legal support and information about registration and compliance. CSOs sometimes report that pro bono legal services are unreliable or slow.

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## ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY: 4.0

The organizational capacity of CSOs declined moderately in 2020, as the pandemic forced organizations to decrease their activities and reduce staff.

CSOs typically have strong relationships with their constituencies. During the lockdown in 2020, CSOs were able to maintain and build these relationships provided they had access to the internet. The Networking HIV and AIDS Community of Southern Africa (NACOSA), for example, moved a number of its training programs and conferences online. The Cape of Good Hope Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals used email to solicit donations from past supporters, and the Seriti Institute increased the frequency of its newsletters and replaced its annual conference with a virtual event. An advisory board known as the Community Constituency COVID-19 Front was formed to enhance networking among CSOs, provide information, and promote collaborative efforts to better address community needs.

A Trialogue survey on the COVID-19 response showed that approximately 38 percent of CSOs had to adjust their interventions to accommodate the pandemic in 2020. For example, Afrika Tikkun normally works on youth empowerment but refocused its work to include awareness-raising about the pandemic in the communities in which it operates. About 25 percent of respondents reported a decrease in the overall volume of their activities. Larger organizations, such as the Open Society Foundation for South Africa, held strategic planning sessions to plan their path forward in the changed circumstances.

All CSO board members serve on a voluntary basis. Some CSOs report that their board members are willing to serve but lack experience with CSOs and do not contribute consistently to organizational oversight. Many organizations find that identifying board members who have expertise in relevant areas and are not related to other board members is a difficult task.

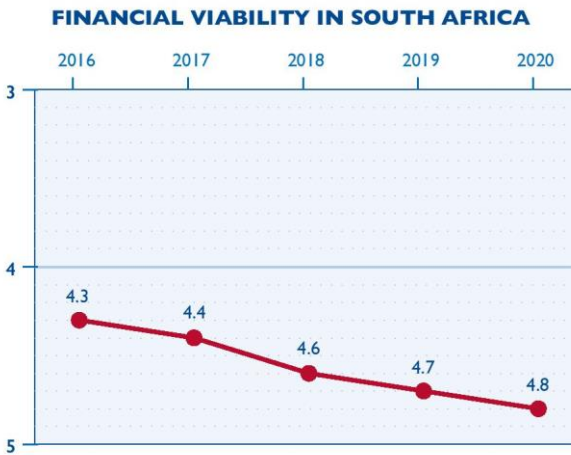
Staffing has been a major concern at many CSOs for several years and, in 2020, was compounded by the pandemic. A July 2020 survey by Nation Builder showed that 61 percent of CSOs decreased their staff in 2020, mainly because of reduced funding. On the other hand, 25 percent of organizations increased their staff in response to a rise in demand for their services. Staff training was also a challenge, especially as most donors restrict the amount of funding that can be used for this purpose. Many businesses supply employee volunteers to CSOs, especially on Mandela Day on July 18. CSOs sometimes report that these external volunteers impede their service delivery, especially in areas demanding confidentiality, such as GBV and HIV counselling and testing. Although 77 percent of companies have employee volunteer programs, only 18 percent of CSOs have budgets and plans to manage volunteers at their organizations, according to the 2020 Trialogue Business Handbook.

**ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY IN SOUTH AFRICA**



The pandemic highlighted the technological inequality between well- and under-resourced CSOs. Larger organizations could adapt easily to lockdown restrictions, as staff usually had access to technology and data from home. Smaller CSOs tend to lack technological infrastructure and thus found it difficult to move their operations online. In addition, many CSO employees are still unskilled at using software data storage facilities and performing other computer-based tasks. Afrobarometer reports that all employees in peri-urban and rural areas struggled more than employees in urban areas to work from home. Many CSOs reported that the lockdown and working from home had a negative effect on the mental health of staff, who often lack sufficient psychosocial support.

## FINANCIAL VIABILITY: 4.8



CSOs' financial viability declined for the fourth year in a row in 2020, largely because of the redirection of funding and South Africa's general decline in prosperity. According to the 2020 Trialogue Business in Society Handbook, nearly 72 percent of CSOs reported a decrease in income in 2020, in contrast to 33 percent in 2019. One-third of CSOs had no cash reserves, and 34 percent had less than six months' operating costs in reserve. While no official statistics are available, up to 25 percent of CSOs are estimated to have closed in 2020 or to be planning to close in early 2021. One of the biggest CSOs, World Vision SA, had to close its one of its offices, located in Greytown, when its funding from World Vision Canada was cancelled.

Foreign funding for CSOs decreased in 2020, continuing a trend of previous years. For example, the overall budget of UK Aid for South Africa decreased from GBP 13.7 million (approximately \$17.8 million) in 2019–20 to GBP 12.4 million (approximately \$15.4 million) in 2020–21. USAID funding for South Africa decreased from \$392 million in 2019 to \$263 million in 2020. Some foreign funding was allocated for the pandemic response. The Charities Aid Foundation Southern Africa established an emergency fund for CSOs struggling to survive under the lockdown and provided emergency funding to small CSOs delivering food to vulnerable groups, with funding from the Oppenheimer Generations Foundation. Partners such as Anova Health Institute, BroadReach Corporation, and Right to Care received \$535 million for HIV/AIDS response from the United States, including for the distribution of PPE and to ensure the continuation of treatment during the pandemic.

Businesses increased their corporate social investment (CSI) in CSOs by 4.9 percent to ZAR 10.7 billion (approximately \$616 million) in 2020, with the mining and resources sector contributing the largest amount, according to the 2020 Trialogue Business Handbook. As in 2019, approximately 50 percent of CSI support went to education and 15 percent to social and community development. Corporate giving to CSOs working in health care increased, mainly so that they could respond to the pandemic. Corporate entities also made a number of non-cash contributions to CSOs. For example, businesses reported that up to 16 percent of their CSI expenditures were in the form of volunteer time, services, and products. However, some CSOs reported that certain donated goods, such as expired food, could not be used.

While government spending on social and community development increased because of the pandemic, overall government funding for CSOs decreased in 2020. More than 60 percent of CSOs reported that they received no government funding during the year. The 40 percent of organizations receiving government funding mainly obtained support to cover staff salaries from the Unemployment Insurance Fund COVID-19 Temporary Employer/Employee Relief Scheme. While there were widespread reports of such funding not being applied to its stated purpose, this was not a charge commonly leveled against CSOs. It was a major surprise when the CSO sector was not mentioned in the government's bailout of the corporate sector during the pandemic. However, the National Lotteries Commission agreed to make an additional ZAR 150 billion (approximately \$8.6 billion) available to CSOs.

Individuals contribute regularly to CSOs, and 14 percent of the sector’s total funding in 2020 was from private individuals, according to the 2020 Trialogue Business Handbook. CSOs reported that after an increase in individual support at the start of lockdown, giving declined as the lockdown continued and donor fatigue set in.

South African CSOs are innovative in diversifying their funding sources, and almost half of CSOs engage in some type of income-generating activity. Many CSOs adjusted their approach to income generation in 2020 as funding from outside donors decreased. For example, the Community Chest created a virtual charity event in which people could walk, run, or swim to raise money. The Cape of Good Hope SPCA increased its annual income with innovative fundraising initiatives such as a virtual marathon and the manufacture of unique face masks. Crowdfunding is also taking off in South Africa. For example, the BackaBuddy crowdfunding platform hosted 500 more fundraising campaigns in April 2020 than in April 2019. Quicket, a ticket-selling platform for the entertainment industry, created a low-cost fundraising platform for CSOs with various payment options. Smaller organizations lacking access to the internet were largely unable to engage in fundraising activities in 2020.

All registered NPOs must submit annual audited financial reports to the NPO Directorate. About 80,000 organizations are not compliant with this requirement, according to the 2020 Trialogue Business Handbook. The South African Institute for Business Accountants and the South African Institute for Tax Professionals worked with DSD to help CSOs file financial reports and tax returns so that they were financially compliant in 2020. Other CSOs are not required to conduct annual audits, but many organizations do so to meet funding requirements. External financial audits are very expensive for smaller CSOs.

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## ADVOCACY: 2.7

CSO advocacy improved for the third year in a row in 2020. The pandemic lockdown and emergency response created a unique advocacy environment for CSOs, and they served as the voice of the people in many situations. For example, when DSD withheld monthly Social Relief of Distress grants from asylum seekers, the Scalabrini Center in Cape Town brought the matter to the High Court in Pretoria, which declared DSD’s withholding unconstitutional. After the Department of Basic Education stopped providing meals at schools because of the lockdown, Equal Education, Equal Education Law Center, Section 27, and two school governing bodies went to court to force the government to provide meals to children covered by the National School Nutrition Program. Although the High Court ruled in their favor in July, by the end of the year, many eligible children had yet to receive meals. In April 2020, after DSD gazetted new regulations for food distribution during the lockdown that drastically limited CSOs’ ability to distribute food, the Democratic Alliance and the 1000 Women Trust successfully sued DSD to ensure that soup kitchens and similar interventions could keep operating.



The Interim GBV and Femicide Steering Committee, established in 2019 and co-chaired by representatives of the president and civil society, produced a national strategic plan to strengthen the response to GBV and femicide in 2020. Civil society played a key role in developing the plan. In addition, after the president proposed amending three laws—the Criminal Law, Criminal and Related Matters Act, and Domestic Violence Act—to strengthen the rights of women and children, Sonke Gender Justice submitted written comments to the amendments in cooperation with other CSOs.

Environmental advocacy increased in South Africa in 2020. The Vaal Environmental Justice Alliance successfully sued ArcelorMittal South Africa to obtain the release of information about the effect of its activities on the environment. GroundWork and the Center for Environmental Rights relied on the North Gauteng High Court to force the minister of mineral resources and energy and the National Energy Regulator to provide information related to the Integrated Resource Plan for Electricity of 2019. The international Black Lives Matter movement also had a strong presence in South Africa, especially since many people were abused by soldiers and police during

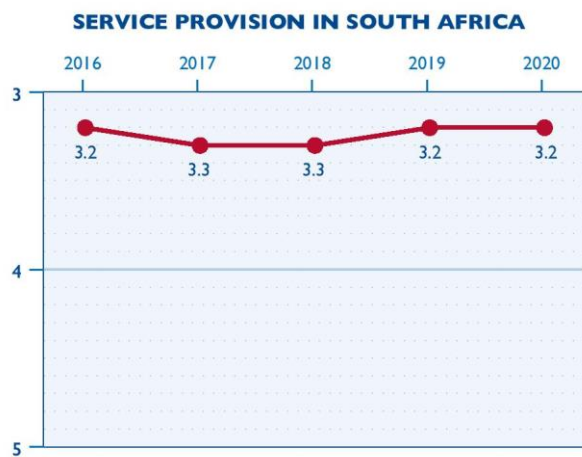


the pandemic. CSOs expressed considerable outrage after a young man was killed by law enforcement officers for violating lockdown regulations. On June 9, 2020, many South Africans attended Black Lives Matter protests in the country's main cities.

Policy makers request and accept inputs from CSOs on pending legislation. For example, Scalabrini Center and other CSOs commented on the draft South African Citizenship Act, which will allow children born in South Africa to parents who are not citizens or permanent residents to apply for South African citizenship when they are eighteen years old. Organizations such as Gift of the Givers, FoodForward South Africa, and the Red Cross Society made recommendations to the Parliamentary Portfolio Committee on future engagement with the CSO sector and food provision to the vulnerable.

CSOs made little effort to reform the legal framework governing their work in 2020. No activity was reported on recognizing the role of social enterprises, which was the focus of a draft green paper on the social economy developed with CSOs' input in 2019.

## SERVICE PROVISION: 3.2



CSO service provision was stable in 2020. The CSO sector played a major role in pandemic-related service delivery, including raising awareness, ensuring food security, and distributing PPE, soap, and sanitizers. The Center of Social Research at the University of Cape Town reported that most food parcels and other support for the vulnerable during the lockdown were supplied by CSOs, including FoodForward SA, Afrika Tikkun, Islamic Relief, and the Lunchbox Fund. FoodForward SA reached more than 400,000 people with funding, services, and goods from corporate funders such as Standard Bank, Old Mutual, Engen, and some retailers. Afrika Awake worked with the Angel Network and Gift of the Givers to provide hand sanitizer to the homeless. Imbumba Foundation created two campaigns, Soap4Hope and Each I Feed I, in partnership with Old

Mutual, Nelson Mandela Foundation, and Kolisi Foundation.

In 2020, CSOs continued to provide services in education, health care, social welfare, GBV, early childhood development, emergency support, and other areas in which the government does not provide services or government services are inadequate. Seventy-two percent of CSOs reported to Nation Builder that the demand for their services increased in 2020. Afrika Tikkun, which usually focuses on youth empowerment, employed nurses to conduct COVID-19 tests, promote the use of face masks, and assist with food distribution. A number of organizations such as Boost Africa Foundation and Umgibe used their community kitchens and food gardens to assist with food relief. Community action networks were established to respond to the pandemic with feeding schemes, sewing groups, and childcare services on the local level. However, some CSOs struggled to deliver their day-to-day services in 2020. For example, some GBV-related services were allowed, but the lockdown prevented many victims of sexual assault from accessing these services within the critical seventy-two-hour timeframe. In accordance with lockdown regulations, CSOs had to register as emergency service providers before they could deliver their services in person. Several organizations shifted to virtual platforms to provide services such as psycho-social support. Some services in non-emergency areas such as art, culture, and sport were not delivered until early July or at all in 2020.

During the year, many organizations responded to pandemic-related community needs. For example, the Zero2Five Trust, which provides nutritional and educational support to children, opened new early childhood development centers in the Eastern Cape in early 2020 in cooperation with Impande SA. When its centers closed temporarily during the lockdown in March, Zero2Five provided a month's supply of fortified porridge per child to vulnerable households. Zero2Five also provided households with soap and food parcels and worked with local primary school facilities to ensure that its response was in line with government priorities. Another intervention

focused on community needs was the CoCare voucher created by the DG Murray Trust, Grow Great, and other CSOs, which allowed vulnerable households to purchase food at spaza shops (informal convenience stores) and other local businesses. Monitoring and evaluation capacity is increasing in the CSO sector, and 73 percent of CSO report that they measure not only activity outputs but also longer-term outcomes, according to the 2020 Trialogue Business Handbook. This is an increase from 60 percent of CSOs that reported measuring outcomes in 2018.

Although externally funded CSOs generally struggle to charge for their services, some manage to do so. For example, Lesedi la Batho established the Ratanang Day Care Center to enable teenage mothers to return to school. The center charges a small fee to create a sense of responsibility among mothers while ensuring its own sustainability. However, the ability of many CSOs to recover costs for their services declined in 2020 as household incomes declined. For example, a report on early childhood development centers, many of which are run by CSOs, found that caregivers and parents were either unwilling or unable to pay for their services during the lockdown, and many centers operated at a fraction of normal capacity after they resumed operations in July. As a result, many centers could not pay staff salaries or overhead, and between 20,000 and 30,000 centers faced closure by the end of the year.

The government recognized the value of CSOs' work during the pandemic. For example, DSD invited CSOs to recommend future responses to the pandemic and thanked CSOs for their work. The government also recognized the efforts of environmental CSOs by admitting that an integrated approach is needed to reduce rhinoceros poaching in South Africa. As a result, CSOs and their work were included in the National Integrated Strategy to Combat Wildlife Trafficking in 2020. The National Development Plan 2030 recognizes CSOs not just as stakeholders, but as development partners. The president mentioned the joint efforts of the government and CSOs in areas such as GBV and corruption in his state-of-the-nation address in February 2020.

## SECTORAL INFRASTRUCTURE: 3.6

The infrastructure supporting the CSO sector was slightly stronger in 2020 as local grantmaking increased and the new Solidarity Fund helped CSOs with pandemic-specific interventions.

The number of resource centers providing services to CSOs increased in 2020. As the pandemic forced CSOs to join the digital economy and remote working became the norm, some organizations partnered with technology companies to make their platforms available to CSOs. Youth Empowerment Services, a business-led NPO funded by the private sector, partnered with Microsoft to ensure that community hubs had access to cloud services. The resource center Inyathelo: The South African Institute for Advancement in Cape Town provided advisory services, training, and other support in areas such as financial management and fundraising.

Several local grantmaking organizations, which raise funds from both local and international sources, increased their activities in response to the pandemic in 2020. For example, Ilifa Labantwana, the implementing partner for the Early Childhood Development Funders Consortium, raised funds for early childhood development centers struggling to keep open during the lockdown. The Mergon Early Childhood Development Foundation created a gap fund to help CSOs in financial crisis. The Joint Gender Fund of the Hlanganisa Institute for Development created a funding mechanism for the GBV sector. A new nonprofit organization, the Solidarity Fund, was established just after the start of the lockdown with contributions from corporations, individuals, and other groups. While its focus was originally on health, the fund expanded its programs to offer ZAR 2.76 billion (approximately \$160 million) in support to individual CSOs. By the end of the year, 5 percent of CSOs responding to the Business Trialogue survey had received funding from the Solidarity Fund for pandemic-specific interventions and related areas, such as GBV.

SECTORAL INFRASTRUCTURE IN SOUTH AFRICA



Although the CSO sector in South Africa is fragmented, the pandemic forced CSOs to work together in 2020. For example, the C19 People's Coalition was formed by 250 CSOs with the aim of keeping the government responsible for its activities during the pandemic. This was the largest coalition formed in South Africa since 1983. NACOSA, one of the largest networks of CSOs in South Africa, continued to coordinate 1,800 organizations working on HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, and GBV. NACOSA changed its training to an online format in 2020, which allowed CSOs to take part despite the lockdown. The Southern African Non-Governmental Organizations Network continued to provide networking and training, especially in computers and internet usage.

CSOs enjoyed a number of other training opportunities in 2020, despite reduced funding and regulations on social distancing. The Hlanganisa Institute for Social Development in Southern Africa and the Ubuntu Community Chest Durban provided mentorship, training, and guidance to ensure that grantees can implement projects in a transparent manner and are compliant with donor reporting requirements. The Community Chest Western Cape trained CSOs on grantmaking, project management, and governance, with courses adjusted to account for changes in organizations' operations during the pandemic. The independent Zenex Foundation, in conjunction with the National Association of Social Change Entities in Education, helped build the monitoring and evaluations skills of CSOs working in education. A few funders, such as Adoptionscentrum Sweden, continued to support organizational development as part of a four-year program to address GBV in schools. Lesedi la Batho in Mabopane, Pretoria, improved its human resource management, monitoring and evaluation, and general management capacities with funding from this program.

The private sector was also involved in training and mentoring CSO staff. For example, the Social Enterprise Academy and Distell, an alcohol beverage company, created a capacity-development program to build the leadership, fundraising, and monitoring abilities of grantees of the Distell CSI program. Investec helped create the Coaches Who Care initiative to provide CSOs with virtual capacity building in executive management.

Collaboration between CSOs and the private sector increased in 2020, mainly because of the pandemic. For example, Investec partnered with the Kutlwano Maths, Sciences, and Technology Center to create a virtual classroom for math education during lockdown. The Telkom Foundation funded the Mzali App in collaboration with the Department of Basic Education to improve the educational outcomes of children during the lockdown.

CSOs have good relationships with the media. For instance, GroundUp is a project of the Community Media Trust that acts as a news agency publishing social justice and human rights news, particularly on housing, health care, sanitation, education, immigration, policing, labor, and social security. GroundUp works closely with CSOs to report on news that matters to vulnerable communities and is underreported by mainstream media.

A large number of CSOs partner with government departments to implement their interventions. MIET Africa, for examples, focuses on improving basic education in sub-Saharan Africa and implements projects in cooperation with the Department of Basic Education. JET Education Services and the University of the Witwatersrand, a public university, created an online training course to help new teachers in 2020.

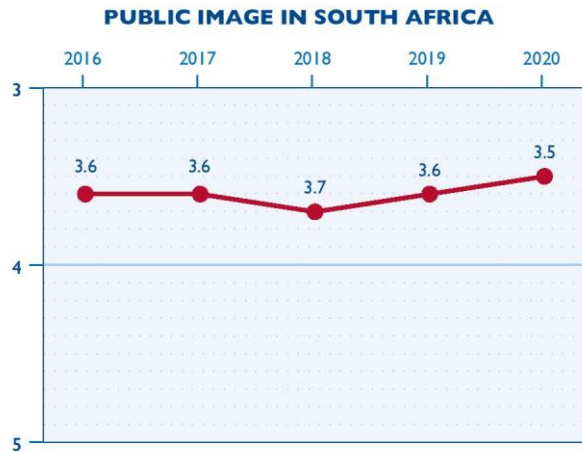
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## **PUBLIC IMAGE: 3.5**

CSOs' public image improved slightly in 2020. The media reported positively on CSOs' work during the pandemic, especially their assistance to vulnerable populations. CSOs' financial difficulties were also covered, and some media urged businesses and individuals to support CSOs' work. DST, a private broadcaster, dedicated airtime and social media channels to CSOs working on GBV.

CSOs reported an improvement in their working relationship with government officials at the start of the pandemic. But the relationship grew strained as the pandemic continued, such as when many CSOs successfully resisted DSD's request that they work through its offices to distribute food parcels and other assistance.

Public perceptions of CSOs are positive. The 2021 Edelman Trust Barometer indicated that public trust in the CSO sector remained stable at 60 percent in 2020. CSOs are most appreciated for their contributions to early childhood development, agriculture, and especially health care. CSOs are also recognized for holding public institutions accountable. Brand South Africa, a government-funded agency focused on marketing South Africa, highlighted the work of several organizations, including Gift of the Givers and Imbumba Foundation, because of high trust in their services.



CSOs increasingly use social media such as Facebook and Twitter to promote their work, engage with stakeholders, and share information about their projects. They take into account the various settings for their work, such as rural or urban communities, and adjust their public relations efforts accordingly. For instance, organizations with poor internet access often do not have websites but maintain Facebook pages. CSOs often hire interns to help with public relations and promotion.

In 1997, the South African National NGO Coalition (SANGOCO) developed a code of conduct for CSOs to regulate their self-governance and ethical roles and responsibilities. However, SANGOCO is no longer functional, and the extent to which CSOs continue to use the SANGOCO code is unknown. More recently, a

group of CSOs created the Independent Code of Governance and Values for NPOs, which serves as a major source of ethical guidance. CSOs often publish their annual reports on their websites, if they maintain one, and organizations registered with DSD must submit their reports to DSD to maintain their registration.

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

**U.S. Agency for International Development**

1300 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW

Washington, DC 20523

Tel: (202) 712-0000

Fax: (202) 216-3524

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