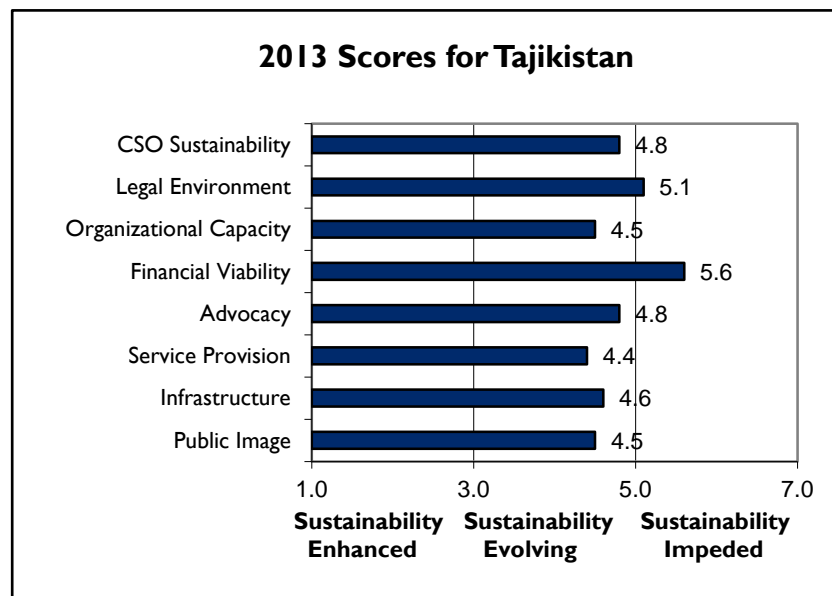


TAJIKISTAN



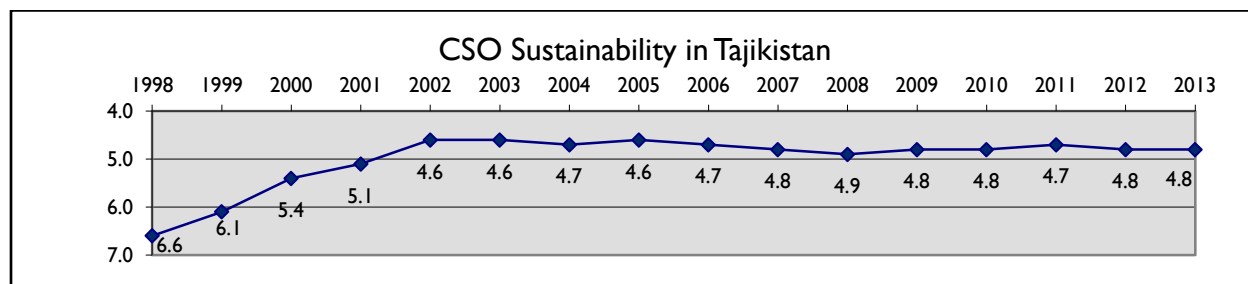
Capital: Dushanbe

Population: 8,051,512

GDP per capita (PPP): \$2,300

Human Development Index: 125

CSO SUSTAINABILITY INDEX: 4.8

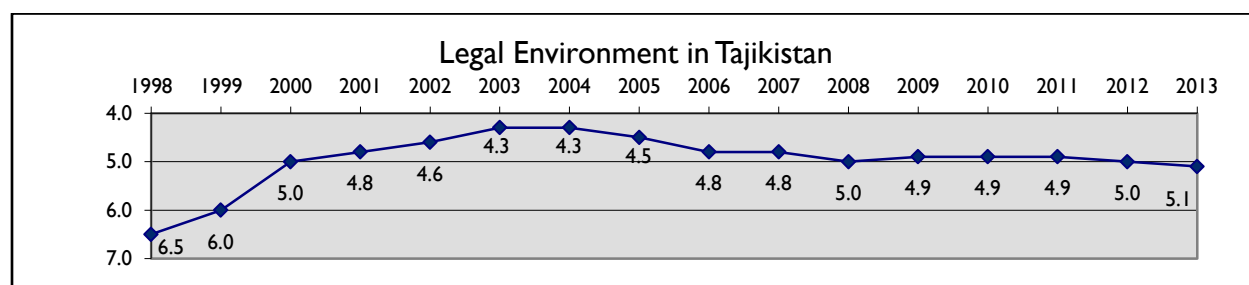


CSO sustainability in Tajikistan did not change significantly in 2013. The legal environment remains the most challenging dimension for CSOs. The number of newly registered public associations dropped in 2013 due to the political tensions in the country in advance of the November presidential elections, in which the incumbent was easily re-elected. During the year, Tajik authorities widened their crackdown on the political opposition and activists. The government increased inspections of leading CSOs, particularly those working on politically sensitive issues, and prohibited mass gatherings by independent CSOs. The state media perpetuated a positive view of the current president, while providing virtually no coverage of opposition candidates or other critical views. Civil society was silent during this period as it feared government reprisal.

Most CSOs are service providers that depend on foreign donor funding. Approximately 90 percent of the sector's funding comes from foreign donors. The level of activism, dialogue, and cooperation between CSOs and public authorities decreased slightly in 2013. In urban areas, the public perceives CSOs as grant-dependent, donor-driven organizations, while rural communities still have only vague ideas of CSOs' role in society. CSOs formed new coalitions in 2013, but they are institutionally weak and lack the necessary tools, resources, and capacities to engage in advocacy and lobbying efforts. Nevertheless, CSO advocacy led to the enactment in September of a new Law on Volunteerism, which is expected to promote volunteerism in Tajikistan.

Eighty percent of CSOs in Tajikistan operate as public associations. According to the Ministry of Justice (MOJ), which maintains a centralized registry of public associations, as of October 2013 there were 2,655 registered public associations, an increase of just fifty-five since the end of 2012. 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 2013, there were over 1,600 Public Self-Initiative Bodies (PSIBs), also known as Mahalla Councils or Village Organizations; about 105 Social Unions for Development of PSIBs; eleven associations of PSIBs; over seventy 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: 5.1



Three laws regulate a wide range of civil society groups. The Law on Public Associations regulates public associations, which register with local justice departments. The Law on Registration of Legal Entities and Individual Entrepreneurs regulates professional membership associations, public funds, unions, cooperatives, and business entities. These types of CSOs register through one-stop shops within the local tax structures. Finally, the Law on Public Self-Initiative Bodies regulates community-based organizations and village organizations, which register with local municipalities. International CSOs must register with the MOJ.

CSOs continue to face significant bureaucratic barriers when registering, including artificial obstacles imposed by the MOJ and its regional departments. Registration is often denied due to minor, technical errors in registration documents. According to the Law on Public Associations, a public association should be registered within one month of submitting all required documents. However, registration is often significantly delayed. For example, the Center for Youth Initiatives was registered only after five months. Even leading CSOs faced complications. For example, Civil Society Support Center (CSSC) Fidokor encountered problems while changing its status from a local public association to an international public association. Public associations must re-register whenever they make any changes to their charters, no matter how minor.

The number of newly registered public associations dropped by almost 50 percent in 2013 due to the control measures placed on CSOs in the run-up to the November elections. Other types of CSOs, like public foundations, institutions, and unions (associations) of legal entities, were unable to register through one-stop shops at the Tax Committee this year. CSOs were redirected to the MOJ to register as public associations if they were pursuing social benefit status or focused on politically sensitive activities, presumably in order to give the MOJ more control over such groups. For example, a group of CSOs headed by the women's organization Parastor registered as an association of legal entities through a one-stop shop. Five months later, it was forced to close and was redirected to the MOJ to register as a public association.

Beginning in the summer of 2013, government officials began prohibiting mass gatherings by independent CSOs, although no official laws or decrees were passed. The ban also led to the postponement of other CSO events. For example, the Eurasia Foundation had to delay implementation of its budgeting survey.

In 2013, the MOJ, the tax agency, and other government agencies increasingly monitored CSOs' activities and inspected them for compliance with relevant laws. Some leading CSOs were inspected four or five times by various state bodies in 2013. MOJ inspections often find that CSO documentation is not in the official state language and require CSOs to translate the relevant documents.

The Ministry of Education (MOE) continued to prohibit students from attending events organized by international CSOs in 2013. The MOE must authorize all CSO activities involving youth, and local governments must approve any mass meetings in advance.

The Law on Volunteerism was adopted in September 2013. It is expected to promote volunteerism in Tajikistan by protecting the rights of volunteers in relation to their host organizations.

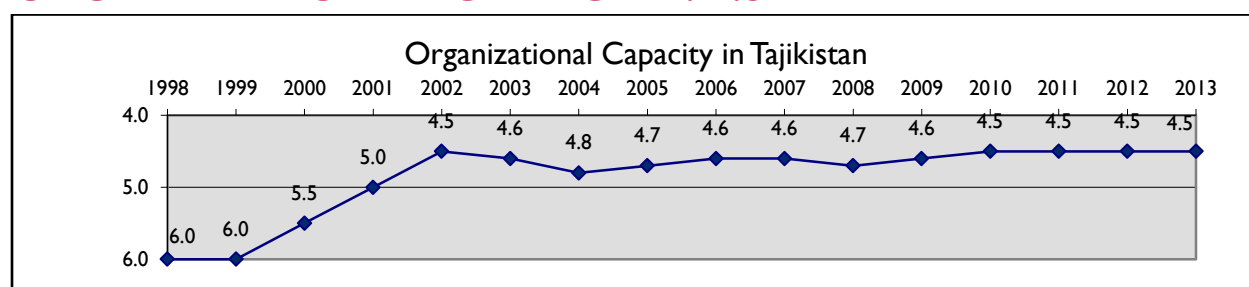
CSOs can engage in commercial activities, although the income is taxed at the same rate as other commercial organizations. CSOs can compete for government contracts at the local and central levels. Only three government agencies—the Youth Committee, the Women's Committee, and the Ministry of Labor—have introduced and implemented procurement procedures to award social contracts to CSOs under the 2008 Law on Social Contracts.

The Tax Committee Programming Center designed a new online tax reporting system in 2012 and piloted it in the capital and provincial cities in 2013. Local tax inspectors oppose the new system for fear that it will eliminate their jobs. A few CSOs purchased the online program but still had to provide monthly reports in hard copy due to technical problems or local tax authorities' resistance to the online forms.

The new Tax Code that went into effect in January 2013 has improved the tax treatment of CSOs. The old Tax Code contained a provision requiring CSOs to calculate income and social taxes based on either the average monthly salary (which is determined periodically by the government based on survey data from various regions) or the actual salary, whichever is higher. The new Tax Code eliminates the use of average monthly salary, which was often higher than real CSO salaries, thereby reducing taxes for many CSOs.

Local legal capacity is weak. CSOs typically cannot afford to pay for legal counsel. An existing network of over eighty lawyers provides free legal consultations to CSOs. However, these lawyers are located only in the capital and provincial cities. No online services are available. To address this issue, the Tajik National NGO Association (TNNGOA) in collaboration with the MOJ developed and published a guidebook to help CSOs improve their internal legal and regulatory documentation.

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY: 4.5



CSOs continue to struggle to fund their institutional development costs, such as equipment upgrades and staff training, which has decreased motivation and organizational capacity within the sector.

New grassroots public associations are emerging. These CSOs are mainly Tajik speaking, and never benefited from the donor-funded capacity building projects implemented in the late 1990s and early 2000s.

The majority of CSOs in Tajikistan still do not seek to build strong constituencies, instead focusing on external donors. Most CSOs have clearly defined missions to which they adhere. CSOs generally only engage in strategic planning when required to by donors.

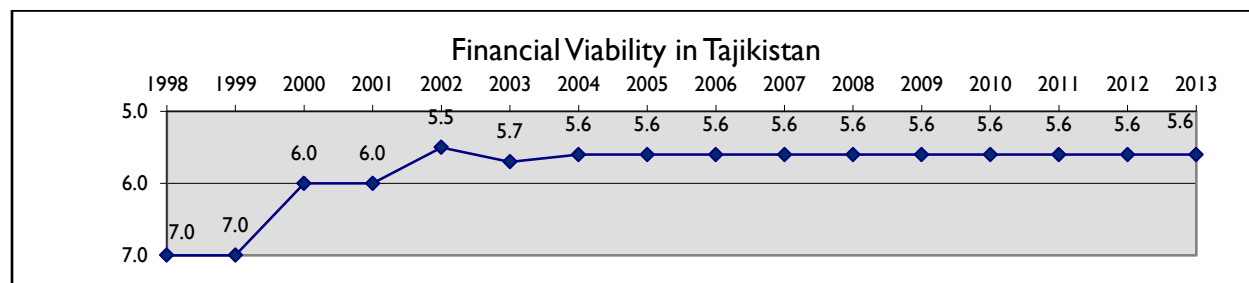
CSOs have charters that clearly describe organizational structures, but many do not implement them. Capacity is often concentrated in one person, generally the director or the chairperson. Boards of directors often either exist only on paper or act as executive staff rather than fulfilling their governance responsibilities. Some business associations, CSO coalitions, and associations of legal entities such as TNNGOA, the Adult Education Association of Tajikistan, and the Association of Microfinance Organizations of Tajikistan actively involve their boards in governance.

The lack of funding makes it difficult for CSOs to hire and retain professional staff. Only leading CSOs have the resources to employ permanent paid staff. Instead, staff is paid on a project basis. Some professionals thus seek part-time jobs in other sectors.

Youth volunteerism is increasing. The MOE's ban on students attending CSO events prompted active and progressive youth groups to mobilize through social networks. The youth population in urban areas uses mobile phones to access social media and receive information on youth initiatives.

Although most CSOs have computers and Internet access, the quality of equipment and communications infrastructure is still poor, particularly in remote regions. Donors tend to earmark their funds for program activities instead of institutional costs, forcing CSOs to rely on outdated equipment. Most CSOs lack the licensed software they need to conduct their work. Internet access is adequate in urban areas, but still modest in rural areas, where electricity outages are frequent.

FINANCIAL VIABILITY: 5.6



Financial sustainability continues to be a significant challenge for Tajik CSOs. Most CSOs are service providers and depend completely on external donor funding. Approximately 90 percent of funding comes from foreign donors. Local funding sources are still limited.

Only a few leading CSOs are able to secure long-term support. They have experienced program staff, strong financial management systems, and competent English-speaking support staff, enabling them to develop strong proposals.

Communities readily contribute non-monetary support, including labor, to CSO initiatives, but corporate and individual philanthropy are still not widespread. CSOs lack fundraising experience, and citizens are unaware of opportunities to donate to CSOs. In 2013, only a few mobile companies and commercial banks supported CSO projects, mostly youth activities. However, new charity initiatives by grassroots CSOs have been more successful in mobilizing community resources. For instance, Dasti Yori—considered the first local charity organization in Tajikistan—collects small contributions from individuals through eighty donation boxes in Dushanbe.

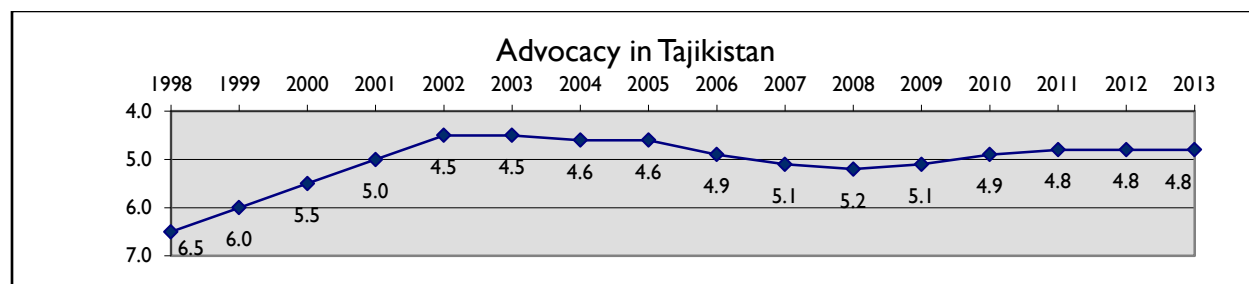
The state social contracting process is not transparent. In many cases, only government-organized NGOs (GONGOs) receive state social contracts. Social contracting provided a total of \$230,000 to the sector, focusing on small-scale projects benefiting women and youth. This amount has not increased for the last three years. Only a few rural CSOs, like Sapeda in Rumi and the children’s group Olami Kudakon in Rudaki, receive free office space from local governments.

Project Implementation Units (PIUs) within different ministries manage development grants from large financial institutions, like the World Bank, Asia Development Bank, and European Bank for Reconstruction and Development. The PIUs follow donor requirements and have relevant procedures to contract CSOs for specific assignments or services. However, CSOs consider their practices corrupt and unfair. For example, though the bidding process is ostensibly open, CSOs are requested to pay 10 percent or more of the grant amount to the PIUs before the final selection. GONGOs frequently win the grants.

The market for paid services is undeveloped. Consulting and training are among the most recognized income-generating services. Except for business associations, CSOs rarely collect membership or other fees because members and clients cannot afford them.

Most leading CSOs have financial management procedures in place. However, some CSOs still only have project-based financial planning and reporting systems. Only a few leading CSOs like Fidokor and CSSC Kalam undergo independent annual audits and publish financial reports. CSOs do not typically implement the internal auditing procedures described in their charters.

ADVOCACY: 4.8



The level of activism, dialogue, and cooperation between CSOs and public authorities decreased slightly in 2013. CSOs can consult with the government through public councils at the national and regional levels, but these councils are little more than formalities and do not influence decision making significantly. Direct communication with local governments in some regions is better than with the central government. Local authorities view CSOs as a tool to access external grants, information, and external contacts.

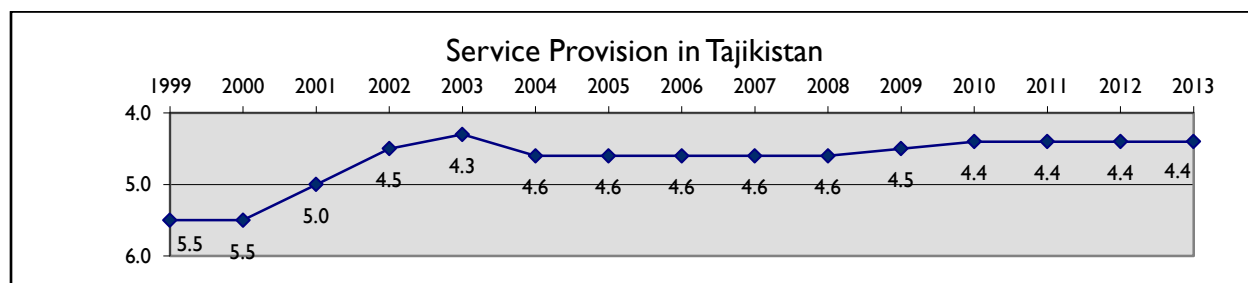
CSOs advocated for several legislative initiatives during the year. The Adult Education Association of Tajikistan participated in amending the Law on Education but could only introduce draft amendments related to adult education to two articles. It continues to advocate for a new draft law to expand and formalize professional training and educational opportunities for adults. CSOs also successfully pushed to enact the new Law on Volunteerism. Despite these successes, CSOs still struggle to implement effective advocacy campaigns due to the government’s negative reaction to dissenting views and CSOs’ lack of effective tactics to promote their interests.

Leading CSOs increasingly monitor public services and promote accountable and transparent governance at the national and local levels. For instance, TNNGOA has been instrumental in facilitating a dialogue between the World Bank and civil society in Tajikistan. It arranged a series of roundtables to promote active CSO involvement in monitoring World Bank-financed operations in the country.

CSOs broadly use Internet resources and social networks for their advocacy efforts. For example, the Coalition of NGOs against Torture in Tajikistan, which unites thirteen human rights organizations, uses its website and Facebook page to promote a zero tolerance policy for torture in Tajikistan and improvements to Tajik legislation and law enforcement practices.

CSOs lack trust in politicians and the election process. Except for a few organizations involved in voter education, CSOs did not play a substantial role in the 2013 elections. Fearful of the government’s response in the run-up to the elections, watchdog CSOs were reluctant to comment on or engage in activism around important developments, such as the high profile arrests of former officials.

SERVICE PROVISION: 4.4

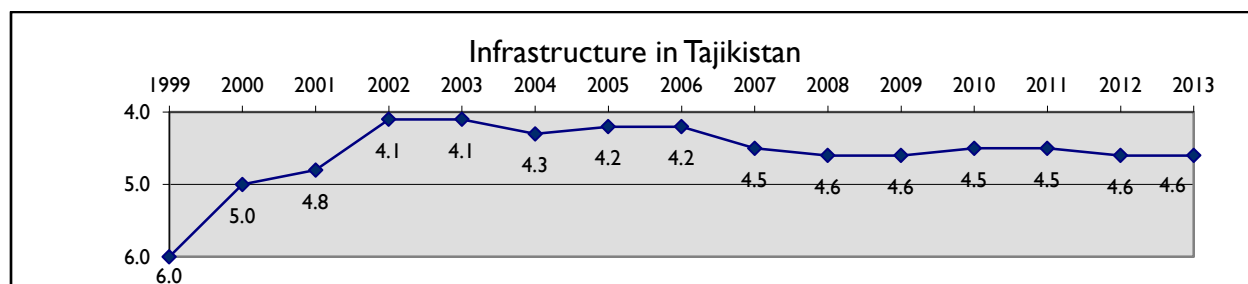


Most CSOs provide social and empowerment services, while only a few engage in advocacy, human rights promotion, or work on governance, energy, water, and economic development. CSO services are often developed in response to donor priorities, though they mostly reflect the needs of local communities.

CSOs prefer to provide goods and services using grant funds and distribute their products free of charge. Only a few CSOs charge fees for services, such as consultations and training, strategic and business planning, and language and computer classes, and in most cases they fail to recover the costs of delivering services. The public expects CSO services to be free and is generally unwilling to pay for them.

Three national agencies provide CSOs with social contracts and grants to serve youth, women, and the elderly. Government contracting is still unattainable for the majority of CSOs, and many prefer not to receive government grants to avoid further invasive inspections. Local governments recognize the value that CSOs can add in the provision of basic social services; however, they are reluctant to have CSOs monitor basic public services provided by state-owned institutions.

INFRASTRUCTURE: 4.6



Seven civil society support centers (CSSCs) and other intermediary support organizations (ISOs) continue to operate in the country. ISOs offer small-scale services to CSOs, including information, access to technology, and basic training in strategic planning, volunteer development, and fundraising. ISOs face a shortage of materials in the Tajik language, as well as local experts in specific areas, such as monitoring and evaluation,

research, proposal development, advocacy, and good governance. In the regions, large leading organizations serve as resource centers. Coalitions also provide some training, whereby experienced CSOs train less experienced partners.

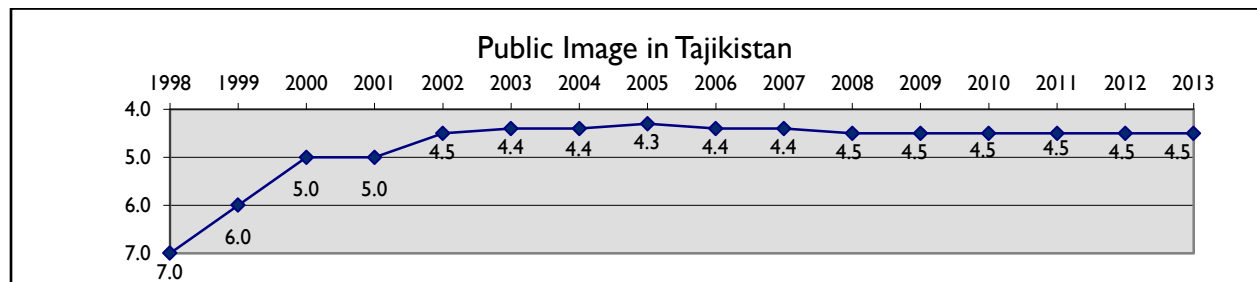
This year, CSOs in the Khatlon region received support to increase their organizational capacities. Through a USAID-funded subgrant, Fidokor provided training and technical assistance to twenty public associations. TNNGOA provided training and organizational development consultations to another thirty CSOs in the Khatlon region through the Aga Khan Foundation (AKF)-funded Legal and Capacity Building Support to NGOs Project. TNNGOA plans to expand this project to other regions of the country.

The number of local grantmaking organizations is limited. Only a few leading organizations, such as Fidokor, Eurasia Foundation, and Zerkalo, provide small grants totaling about \$140,000.

CSO coalitions continue to exist, but they have a limited membership base and do not represent the entire sector. TNNGOA, which has 238 members, continues to lobby to promote civil society development, government support to the CSO sector, and social partnerships. CSOs established three new coalitions this year: the Association of Youth NGOs, Coalition on Donor Aid Efficiency, and Coalition on Democratic Reforms. The Coalition on Democratic Reforms aims to develop and introduce implementation mechanisms for the 2012 Law on Domestic Violence Prevention. In addition, political party leaders, political scientists, CSOs, and independent media coalition representatives established the online Coalition for Democracy and Civil Society to promote citizen participation in public affairs. Over 1,500 Facebook users have joined this group.

Intersectoral partnerships are slowly growing, although partnerships with local businesses and media are sporadic. The CSO Coalition Transparency for Development continues to work with the Ministry of Finance and private mining businesses within the World Bank-funded Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative.

PUBLIC IMAGE: 4.5



CSO do not regularly inform the wider public about their work because they lack the necessary resources or fear it would prompt government inspection and scrutiny. Collaboration with journalists has declined as media charges CSOs for coverage at the same rate as corporate advertisements. In contrast to 2012, newspapers did not print scandalous stories about CSOs in 2013. However, the number of CSO sector-focused newspapers and bulletins is increasing. A new bulletin, Hamkori (Partnership), was founded by Fidokor. For several years, the CSO Kalam has published the newspaper Impulse, which publicizes CSO activities and promotes the public image of the sector.

CSOs do not have professional public relations staff. In 2013, CSOs actively used social media to promote their work and enhance their image among the limited number of Internet users in the country.

The government's perception of the sector did not change in 2013. CSOs sense that the government simulates rather than embraces a participatory approach to meet donor requirements. Local businesses are largely unaware of CSOs and therefore do not consider them as partners or potential recipients of donations.

Public perception of CSOs also remains unchanged. In urban areas, CSOs are perceived as grant-dependent and donor-driven because they do not operate transparently. Rural communities still have only vague ideas about CSOs' role in society.

Only a few leading CSOs publish annual reports. In 2013, only seventy-eight CSOs published information about their accomplishments on the Tajik CSO portal, www.tajikngo.tj, administered by the ICT Center. No CSOs uploaded annual reports this year. Many CSOs found the portal to be slow and cumbersome and instead relied on social networks to share information. For example, over 550 CSO leaders exchange information, post news and advertisements, and participate in discussions on a Facebook page.

Some leading CSOs and coalitions have developed codes of ethics. TNNGOA developed a code of ethics, which was adopted at the 2008 National Forum of NGOs. This code is meant to apply to the whole sector, but many CSOs are unaware of it.