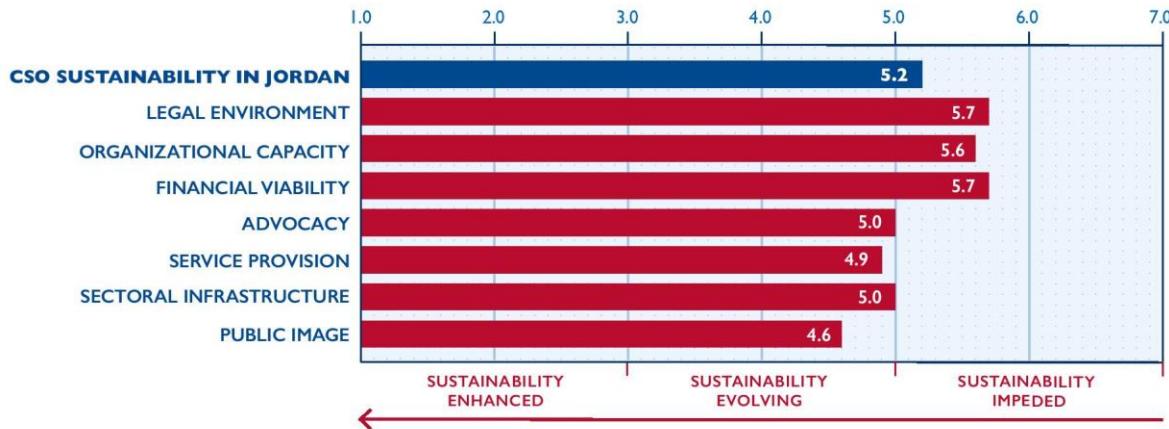


OVERALL CSO SUSTAINABILITY: 5.2



In 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic shaped social, political, and economic events in Jordan with the virus claiming over 3,000 lives during the year. The government issued numerous decrees and restrictions to mitigate the health risks associated with the virus and manage the crisis. These decisions negatively impacted both the economy and human rights, in particular the freedoms of expression and association.

The country registered its first case of COVID-19 in March. On March 17, 2020, the government declared an official state of emergency, thereby activating Defense Law 13 of 1992 for the first time. Defense Law 13 provided the government with sweeping powers to pass further measures (known as Defense Orders) to address the growing COVID-19 crisis. For example, Defense Order No. 2 prohibited movement and travel in all regions and cities of the country, while Defense Order No. 16 banned all social gatherings that exceeded twenty people. Defense Order No. 8 made it illegal to spread any news or information about the pandemic that would “cause panic.” Defense Order No. 6 regulated labor rights during the pandemic and allowed employers to reduce their employees’ full-time salaries by up to 20 percent for July and August 2020 to help keep key businesses and organizations open. This multitude of laws and orders gave the authorities the pretext to further crack down on CSOs, even in cases where such restrictions were not mandated by law.

Restrictions were slowly eased by late August. However, after the country faced a sharp uptick in new cases in October 2020, the government once again instituted nightly and weekend curfews and strengthened the penalties, including fines and imprisonment, for refusing to abide by the ban on social gatherings.

The government provided cash and in-kind assistance to families impacted by the crisis. As part of these efforts, the government launched the Himmat Watan Fund (A Nation’s Effort) to receive donations from the private sector and individuals to support the country’s efforts to combat the COVID-19 crisis and mitigate its repercussions. Some of the collected funds were used to provide cash assistance to day laborers affected by the lockdown. The Central Bank also provided funding to cover operating costs for small and medium-sized companies most impacted by the crisis.

Public freedoms and civil liberties, including the freedoms of expression and assembly, declined significantly in 2020, as the government used the pandemic as an excuse to crack down on these rights. The Secretary General of the Jordanian Democratic Popular Unity Party, Saeed Thyab, was detained for seven days following the publication of his article about Jordan’s alleged political and economic dependency on the West. In July, the Court of Cassation, the highest judicial authority in Jordan, legally dissolved the Muslim Brotherhood for failing to rectify its legal status under Jordanian law. Jordanian cartoonist Emad Hajjaj was arrested but later released on bail after the State Security Court charged him with “disturbing relations with a friendly state” for publishing a cartoon critical of the Israel-United Arab Emirates (UAE) normalization agreement. In a similar case, the government arrested the executive director of the Islamic Action Front Party’s central election committee, Badi al-Rafiah, on charges of “insulting the president of a friendly state” (i.e., Egyptian President Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi) for a post he had published

years ago on social media. In an unprecedented move, the Amman Magistrates Court issued a decision dissolving the Teachers' Syndicate and imprisoning its council members for a year. The court's decision followed the Syndicate's demand for a pay hike that was agreed upon with the government in October 2019 but had remained unfulfilled.

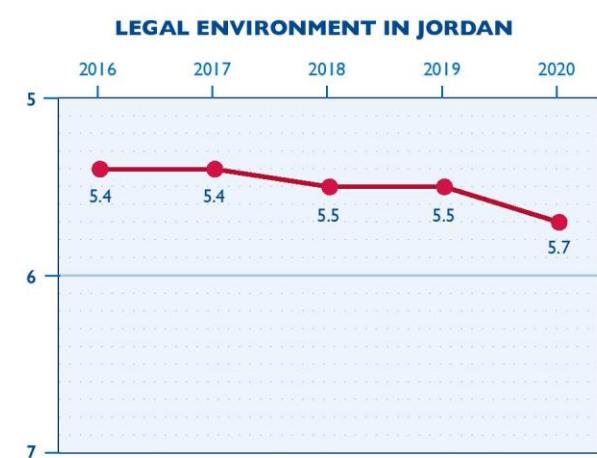
Jordan faced an economic crisis in 2020, with public debt exceeding the country's gross domestic product. As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, unemployment rates reached a record high, spiking to 23 percent by the second quarter of 2020. The rising unemployment rates encouraged the government of Prime Minister Omar Al Razzaz to reactivate mandatory military service. However, the conscription was rescinded in October, when King Abdullah II appointed his advisor, Bisher Al Khasawneh, to form a new government in order to tackle the growing challenges facing the country.

The parliamentary elections in November were controversial given that the government offered no options for early or remote voting despite the health risks posed by the pandemic. The Washington Post described the election as "one of the least democratic in the country's recent history." According to the Civil Coalition for Monitoring Elections and the Performance of Elected Councils (Rased), fifty-one cases of corruption and vote buying were reported to the government security services and the prosecutor's office. Voter turnout was a dismal 29 percent and some of the country's political parties failed to reach the minimum threshold needed to maintain their positions in parliament. The minister of the interior resigned out of "moral responsibility" after the King admonished people for gathering to celebrate and protest the election results in violation of the government-imposed lockdown.

In this context, overall CSO sustainability deteriorated moderately, with decreases recorded in all dimensions.

As of the end of 2020, there were a total of 6,808 societies registered with the Ministry of Social Development (MoSD) under the Law on Societies 51 of 2008. During 2020, 174 societies were newly registered, while 166 were dissolved. Some organizations registered as civil, non-profit companies with the Company Control Department of the Ministry of Industry Trade and Supplies (MOITS) to avoid the countless government approvals that societies must seek to register and operate. According to data from 2015, there were around 600 civil, non-profit companies registered at MOITS. There are also approximately ten Royal Non-Governmental Organizations (RNGOs) that were established based on royal decrees and parliamentary endorsement, rather than through the standard registration procedures. RNGOs tend to have strong organizational capacities. Some RNGOs enjoy direct budget allocations from the government for their operations. In addition, some RNGOs receive funds from ministries to implement specific government projects. For example, the Noor Al Hussein Foundation, the Jordan River Foundation, and the Jordanian Hashemite Fund received funding from the Ministry of Planning to implement the Poverty Pockets Program through 2015. RNGOs are generally subjected to less government control and scrutiny than other CSOs.

LEGAL ENVIRONMENT: 5.7



The legal environment governing the CSO sector deteriorated moderately in 2020 as CSOs and activists faced increased harassment and setbacks to the freedoms of association and expression as a result of restrictions imposed by the government to curb the spread of COVID-19.

The Law on Societies 51 of 2008 continues to be the primary law governing the registration and operation of local and foreign organizations in Jordan. Both the law itself and the way it is implemented impose a number of restrictions on the work of most CSOs, including the need to register and seek approval to receive foreign funding. Societies are also not allowed to engage in political or religious activities. Other CSOs register under Labor Law 8 of 1996, which along with union-

specific laws regulates the work of trade unions and employers' associations, or as civil companies under the Companies Law 22 of 1997 and the Regulation for Non-Profit Companies 73 of 2010.

In 2020, the government prepared a new version of the Law on Societies aimed at targeting money laundering and addressing corruption by improving governance provisions. However, it did not effectively address issues such as criteria for rejecting registration applications, overlapping supervision between different government agencies, and improving the mechanism for receiving foreign funding. Public consultations with societies on the draft law began in 2021.

Registration procedures did not change in 2020. All local CSOs are required by law to register, although some of the actual processes and mechanisms for doing so are still unclear and not mandated in the law. Fewer CSOs were able to register in 2020 due to the COVID-19 lockdown and the government's preoccupation with managing its response to the crisis. Foreign CSOs are not required to register; they simply notify the government that they operate on the ground.

MoSD continued to actively monitor the work of CSOs through "verification committees" that were first established in 2019 to confirm the legal existence of all registered societies and monitor their financial and administrative performance. Based on such monitoring, in 2020, MoSD dissolved 166 CSOs for violating laws, regulations, and instructions, or failing to comply with their statutes and achieving the goals for which they were established.

CSOs must receive government approval in order to receive foreign funding. In December 2019, the government approved new approval procedures for local CSOs to receive foreign funding that are more detailed. According to the procedures, all requests for foreign funding are considered approved if the CSO does not receive any response from the government within thirty days. However, the government constantly violates this deadline and banks require written approval to make transfers. As a result, CSOs are left with no way to access funds if they have not received a formal response. Although the government promised to create a new electronic platform that would help resolve this problem by the beginning of 2020, this system had still not been created by the end of the year.

CSOs claim that the decision-making procedures for foreign funding are opaque and lack transparency, making it difficult for many to access foreign funding. Although the law states that the government should always provide an explanation when a request for foreign funding is denied, the ministry's funding committee failed to fulfill this obligation in 2020. There also appeared to be a number of arbitrary rejections in 2020 related to women's empowerment, human rights, and media projects.

Signs of a new crisis between the Teachers' Syndicate, which represents over 140,000 teachers in the country, and the government began to appear when the union announced its plan to demand the wage increases that the government had committed to in 2019 but were frozen due to the pandemic. The Teachers' Syndicate organized a demonstration in front of its office where its vice president criticized the government for refusing to honor the agreement. On July 25, 2020, police raided and shut down the Teachers' Syndicate headquarters in Amman and eleven of its branches across the country and arrested a number of the syndicate's board members for violating restrictions on the right to assembly. The Attorney General then issued an order to close down the independent union for a period of two years. According to Human Rights Watch, "there appears to be no basis in Jordanian law for him to issue the closure order." Since the Syndicate was formed by the National Assembly, legally, it can only be shut down by a vote from both chambers of that legislative body. Although the arrested board members were released from jail, the government has since replaced the entire board with a temporary acting committee, in what many argue is simply a government attempt to take over the organization.

Freedom of assembly was limited during the year. Defense Order No. 16 prohibited gatherings of more than twenty people. The government used this restriction to forcefully disperse nationwide public protests against the arbitrary closure of the Teachers' Syndicate, arrest its leaders, and detain a number of teachers involved in the protests. This harsh reaction dissuaded others from organizing protests during the year.

Freedom of expression was also restricted in Jordan in 2020. On April 15, 2020, the government issued Defense Order No. 8, which made it illegal to spread any news or information about the pandemic that would "cause panic." This restricted the ability of both private and public media to report on the government's response to the pandemic. Since the state of emergency was declared on March 17, Jordanian police have detained two prominent media executives, a foreign journalist, and a former member of parliament, apparently due to their public criticism of the government's response to COVID-19. The general manager and the new director of Roya TV were also

arrested after the channel aired a news report depicting Jordanian day laborers' dissatisfaction with working conditions. In addition, Amman's Magistrate Court ruled that the publication of any details related to the closure or court case of the Teachers' Syndicate was prohibited, citing Article 255 of the Penal Code along with Article 39B of the Press and Publications Law.

The government also used the Cybercrime Law to limit criticism of its handling of the crisis. That law called for an immediate mandatory three-month sentencing of anyone accused of defamation, slander, or libel, which is harsher than similar provisions in the country's Penal Code. As a result, CSOs were afraid to criticize the government because of concerns that their criticism could be interpreted as "threatening national security."

There were no changes regarding the taxation of CSOs in 2020. Tax exemptions are still limited and only granted to orphanages, associations for people with disabilities, and "public interest" organizations. However, even these CSOs sometimes have problems obtaining the exemptions. Societies with religious, charitable, humanitarian, scientific, cultural, sports, or professional purposes are eligible to apply for charitable status. Donations made to societies with charitable status are exempted from income tax; the exempted income, however, should not exceed one-quarter of the taxable income of the donor. There is no legal framework regulating social entrepreneurship institutions.

The Justice Center for Legal Aid (JCLA) offers CSOs some legal services; however, its mandate is to provide legal services more broadly to those who cannot afford them in order to ensure that the poor and vulnerable receive access to justice in Jordan. Not all CSOs are able to hire and pay for lawyers directly. Some CSOs prefer to remedy their legal problems by means of personal relationships rather than going through the proper legal channels. Jordan lacks appropriate legal awareness-raising programs.

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY: 5.6

The organizational capacity of the CSO sector deteriorated moderately in 2020, as many CSOs were unable to make full use of new technologies to implement programs during the lockdown.

Many CSOs attempted to extend their outreach efforts to the broader population during the crisis. CSOs monitored how their constituents were being affected by the pandemic, and where possible, developed appropriate interventions. Although restrictions on movement limited outreach, a number of organizations were able to successfully tailor their programs to work with vulnerable populations during the pandemic. For example, Sana for People with Mental Disabilities was able to offer online psychological and social support to families of the disabled and teach them how to use Zoom and Facebook Live.

CSOs are required to have strategic plans in order to register and obtain foreign funding. They have varying abilities to follow their strategic plans and to measure their level of achievement and impact. Generally speaking, large organizations with boards of trustees have more capacity to do so. Large and small CSOs alike generally depend on donors to allow them to change their strategies. In 2020, some R NGOs and other large organizations revised their strategic plans in light of the pandemic. Some donors allowed R NGOs and other CSOs to modify how they implemented their projects or extended deadlines, while others cut funding quite drastically.

By law, a society is required to have a governing board, while a non-profit company is required to have an executive board. There is a great disparity between large, medium, and small organizations in terms of their abilities to define appropriate roles, responsibilities, and job titles. Moreover, CSOs of all types and sizes often operate as "one man/woman shows."

When the lockdown began on March 21, 2020, many CSOs stopped operating, even though they are generally expected to be on the front line during humanitarian crises. Unlike other sectors, CSOs were not allowed to apply

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY IN JORDAN



for or receive special movement permits during the initial months of the crisis, greatly restricting their activities and operations. These limitations, in turn, reduced some CSOs' ability to retain their employees or forced them to reduce salaries. Defense Order No. 6 also affected CSOs' staffing situations. For example, revisions to Defense Order No. 6 allowed employers to negotiate with workers on their hours of work, salaries (i.e., whether they agreed to salary reductions of 20 percent for July and August), and means of working (i.e., remotely or in the office). Other provisions in Decree No. 6 required CSOs to extend contracts to all existing temporary staff, even in cases where the projects or grants had ended. This had a devastating blow on many CSOs that were struggling to cover costs just to survive. Despite the importance of using volunteers to assist in their efforts, CSOs' engagement of volunteers was very limited in 2020.

With a few limited exceptions, CSOs were unable to effectively harness the full potential of the digital and technical tools needed to adjust to the new working conditions during the pandemic's lockdown period. Some CSOs lacked the financial resources to upgrade their information and communications technology (ICT), while others lacked the technical expertise to use this technology. In other cases, using technology proved to be less effective. For example, the use of Zoom and other technologies was not as effective as face-to-face learning. In addition, some potential beneficiaries did not have the ability to access these online services.

FINANCIAL VIABILITY: 5.7



they were requesting permission to retain to implement projects. The Funding Committee ultimately prioritized funding for projects that were expected to have a significant positive impact on addressing the pandemic and its health, economic, social, and cultural consequences, while postponing decision making on other projects. As a result, many organizations were left without any funding. The government also made unrealistic demands on foreign NGOs operating in the country. For example, the Canadian organization Journalists for Human Rights (JHR) was forced to close its office in Jordan when it was unable to access foreign funds because of government interference in its work, including demands to reduce its budget.

Much of the funding allocated by the government via the Himmat Watan Fund to address the economic and health-care needs resulting from the pandemic was provided to state institutions. This negatively affected CSOs' opportunities to obtain support from the government.

Overall, corporate funding for CSOs declined significantly over the course of the year due to the private sector's economic struggles. An assessment conducted by the International Labor Organization (ILO), in cooperation with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Norwegian Fafo Institute for Labor and Social Research, showed that half of all businesses were confident they would weather the current crisis. However, a number of enterprises were facing difficulties before the crisis began; one-quarter of them mentioned that they were already losing money, and over half indicated that they were barely covering their expenses. Some larger companies contributed to the Himmat Watan Fund, which further reduced private sector funding that might otherwise have been available to CSOs.

CSOs' financial viability deteriorated moderately in 2020 due to the scarcity of foreign funding, complications in seeking government approval for foreign grants, and newly imposed pandemic-related funding guidelines. The private sector faced economic setbacks as a result of the pandemic that limited its role in supporting civil society. In this context, competition between CSOs intensified, as they vied for the limited available funding.

At the end of April 2020, the Cabinet of Ministers directed the Committee for Studying Foreign Funding Requests to resume its work following a month-long suspension resulting from the lockdown. In the month prior, all CSOs were required to submit their partnership agreements as well as project implementation plans, including lists of the key staff that

Almost no CSOs were able to generate income through the provision of products and services during the pandemic, which had a major impact on the work of community-based organizations that often relied on this funding to survive. In addition, income from renting facilities was lost as activities such as training or conferences were shifted to electronic platforms.

During 2020, there was no change in CSOs' financial management systems, operations, or procedures. Large and medium organizations have computerized financial systems that are linked to other systems, such as human resources. However, most smaller organizations use manual systems to manage their funding.

ADVOCACY: 5.0

CSO advocacy deteriorated moderately in 2020, largely because the pandemic limited advocacy opportunities and CSOs were generally unable to use unconventional methods, such as mobilization campaigns and digital tools, to influence decision-makers and reach grassroots constituencies. In general, most CSOs, as well as the government, were too preoccupied with responding to the pandemic to engage effectively in broader legislative reform efforts.

Most CSOs felt that the government marginalized their role during the pandemic. The National Center for Security and Crisis Management's Crisis Response Unit was in charge of making decisions and issuing declarations related to the pandemic, such as mandating full or partial lockdowns and updating statistics about the number of COVID-19 cases and vaccinations. Several organizations called on the government to involve them in the unit to ensure that the needs of CSOs, their employees, and grassroots organizations were considered. However, these efforts were not successful.

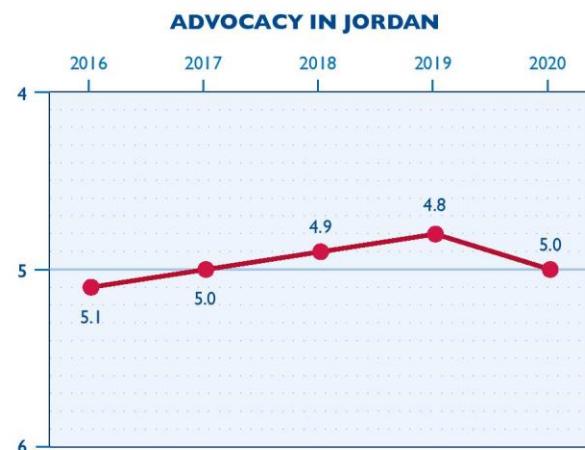
The government's responses to CSO advocacy campaigns varied. For example, the government took CSOs' recommendations into consideration when deciding to reopen daycare centers. The government also responded favorably to the recommendation of Rasheed Jordan, a CSO focused on transparency, on the importance of establishing the Himmat Watan Fund to coordinate and finance the crisis response. However, the government virtually ignored advocacy campaigns related to the Teachers' Syndicate and combating femicide, which increased in 2020.

Informal coalitions of CSOs also played an active role during the pandemic. For example, at the end of the year, the Sadaqa Coalition Towards a Safe Return to Our Schools called for the reopening of schools and kindergartens, while adopting the necessary procedures to ensure physical distancing and public safety to give parents the choice whether to send their children to kindergartens and schools. Some in-person learning resumed in February 2021.

CSOs played an important role in the parliamentary elections in November. For example, before the election, a series of training workshops were held that targeted women who were seeking to run for office. CSOs working with disabled people were able to ensure that people with disabilities could observe the electoral process in twenty-six polling stations throughout the country.

Tamkeen for Legal Aid and Human Rights, a Jordanian CSO that promotes and protects the rights of the country's more vulnerable populations, provided a forum on its website for Jordanian and migrant workers to post complaints about infringements of their labor rights, while offering resources and tools for them to seek legal redress. Tamkeen issued a report on the conditions of workers during the COVID-19 pandemic and the abuses of their rights. Moreover, Tamkeen began sending the complaints it received to the Ministry of Labor, which initially responded but stopped doing so as the crisis worsened. Tamkeen, also, assisted workers in registering with the appropriate government platforms to receive the services that they needed.

Many CSOs working with disabled people collaborated with educational institutions in 2020 to ensure that distance-learning resources were adapted and made available to people with disabilities, especially those with

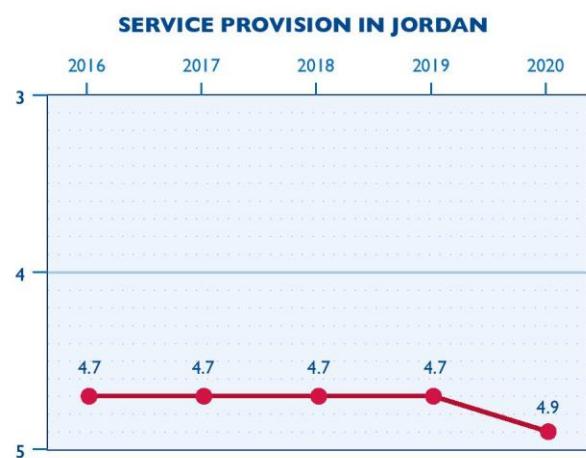


hearing and visual impairments. They, also, conducted advocacy efforts to ensure that the rights of the disabled were considered in the development of the Darsak Platform, a distance learning resource that was made available to primary and secondary school students. Despite these efforts, students with visual and hearing disabilities were generally unable to access or use the online learning platform, even if they had good internet connections.

Concerns over the lack of accountability for gender-based violence in the form of “honor killings” and other incidents of domestic violence and murder were brought to center stage following a string of killings that rocked the country over the course of the year. The circulation of a video showing the murder of a woman by her father spiked a sit-in by human rights and women’s rights organizations, including Solidarity is Global Institute (SIGI) and the Jordanian National Commission for Women (JNCW), demanding that the perpetrators of all violent crimes against women be held accountable and that laws be enacted to increase penalties for such crimes. To date, however, the government has not responded to these calls or calls to amend the Law Regarding Protection from Domestic Violence (Law No. 6/2008), which does not provide adequate protection or recourse for victims of domestic violence.

There were no advocacy efforts during 2020 to amend Law 51 or the other laws and regulations governing the sector.

SERVICE PROVISION: 4.9



CSOs, stipulating that the organizations should be allowed to receive social security benefits and obtain approval to receive foreign funding and other approvals necessary to conduct their projects, while complying with the appropriate health standards to prevent the transmission of COVID-19 among their workers. A maximum of 30 percent of CSOs’ employees were allowed to work and obtain movement permits within the framework of the organization’s and respective project’s workplans. The circular further stated that international organizations and branches of foreign institutions operating in Jordan should obtain movement permits from the relevant ministry.

The lengthy and cumbersome procedures needed to resume physical operations forced many CSOs to continue to provide their services via online communication channels. For example, during the COVID-19 pandemic, the Institute for Family Health – Noor Al Hussein Foundation, created an online service to report cases of domestic violence and offer psychological counseling to victims of abuse, thereby eliminating the need to obtain movement permits for their employees and beneficiaries.

The Jordanian Women’s Union (JWU), which operates the only physical shelter for female victims of violence in the country, was unable to receive abused women during the first three months of the lockdown. While it continued to operate a hotline instead, it received fewer domestic violence claims as many victims noted that they did not feel safe calling the hotline, because they were in the same premises as their abusers. Once the lockdown ended and women were able to physically visit the centers, the number of cases increased again.

Some organizations provided training for their constituents through Zoom or Microsoft Teams. This was successful for some types of training but less so in areas that required on-site work, such as training focused on

CSOs offer a wide variety of services in areas including charity, education, health, culture, children, women’s rights, orphans, people with disabilities, and Syrian refugees. However, CSO service provision suffered a moderate deterioration in 2020 as the lockdown and lack of mobility caused by the pandemic, combined with CSOs’ lack of technical **prowess**, severely limited CSOs’ ability to reach out to their beneficiaries.

In mid-May, the Committee for the Sustainability of Work, Production, and Supply Chains authorized CSOs to resume their physical operations in authorized sectors under certain conditions, although many organizations continued to employ hybrid modes of work. MoSD’s Registry Council sent the Committee’s circular to all ministries and governmental institutions overseeing

cell phone and computer repair and food production. CSOs faced setbacks in working in rural communities or with vulnerable groups, which often lacked access to the internet, either because they were unable to pay for it or did not have smartphones or computers.

In light of these circumstances, it was difficult for CSOs to recover costs or to have the ability to generate revenue through service provision.

The government did little to acknowledge the services provided by CSOs during the year.

SECTORAL INFRASTRUCTURE: 5.0

The infrastructure supporting the CSO sector deteriorated slightly in 2020. Due to the decrease in the availability of foreign funding, the ability of intermediary support organizations (ISOs) to provide grants to small CSOs decreased. The ability of large organizations to provide technical support to other CSOs was also limited due to the suspension of activities and the temporary closure of their offices.

ISOs provide a range of technical, financial, training, evaluation, and consultancy services to CSOs throughout the country. Most ISOs are RNGOs, such as the King Hussein Foundation (which the Noor Al Hussein Foundation falls under), King Abdullah Fund for Development, and the Jordanian Hashemite Fund for Human Development (JOHUD). In general, ISO services are available in all governorates. However, the level of technical and financial support offered by ISOs to CSOs was much lower in 2020 than in previous years.

At the same time, there was an increase in the number of CSOs that came together to work on joint projects. For example, the Arab Local Development Corporation formed a partnership with a number of trade unions to help them develop strategic plans and mechanisms to monitor their implementation. SIGI established the Hayat (Life) Coalition to reduce and ultimately end the use of the death penalty by applying alternative penalties. Partnerships with the private sector, however, were negatively affected due to the limited opportunities available to work with large private enterprises.

Numerous efforts aimed to coordinate CSOs' humanitarian responses to the pandemic and provide additional support to the government. For example, the Jordanian National NGO Forum (JONAF), a coalition of over forty local organizations from around Jordan, came up with a plan to respond to the second wave of COVID-19, which allowed them to provide aid to over 100,000 people from the most vulnerable groups, including women, children, people with disabilities, the elderly, day laborers, migrants, refugees, and immigrants.

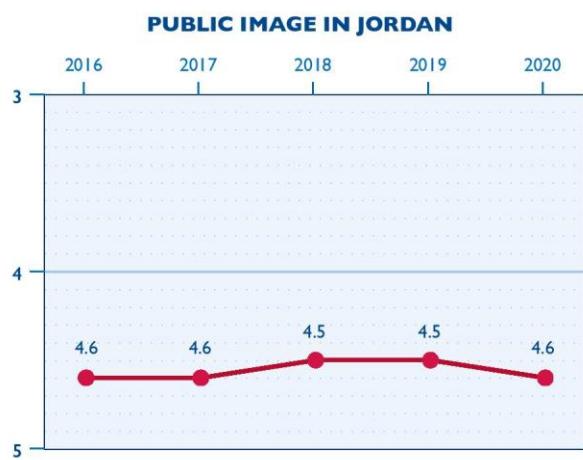
CSOs also established several partnerships at the local level over the course of the year. For example, the Mubaderoon (Entrepreneurs) Project, implemented by Ruwwad Al-Tanmeya Organization, Plan International, and Alfanar Organization and funded by the European Union, funded social entrepreneurial initiatives in Ajloun.

CSOs had access to training opportunities through Zoom and other technologies on topics ranging from project development, monitoring and evaluation, grants management, and strategic planning. However, most CSOs noted that both the number and effectiveness of online training decreased significantly in comparison to the in-house training provided in 2019.

SECTORAL INFRASTRUCTURE IN JORDAN



PUBLIC IMAGE: 4.6



The public image of the CSO sector deteriorated slightly in 2020. The government did not acknowledge the role of CSOs during the pandemic, and some government officials attempted to distort the image of CSOs. This negatively affected the public's perception of CSOs, since they expected civil society to play a more proactive role in responding to the pandemic and were unaware of the restrictions the government imposed upon them. At the same time, both private and public media coverage focused largely on the government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic, rather than the work CSOs were doing.

Only a few CSOs continued to maintain some level of public support. For example, the public appeared to appreciate the efforts of organizations defending labor rights, advocating for the reopening of daycare centers, and promoting the return to face-to-face education in elementary schools. However, CSOs' reputation overall declined owing to government restrictions that impeded their access to constituents and vulnerable populations.

As noted above, the government did not acknowledge the important role that CSOs play within society. The government neutralized the role of the sector by virtually cutting off its own funding to CSOs, while controlling their access to foreign funding and other means of support. In addition, the government did not engage CSOs as equal and effective partners in responding to the pandemic, excluding them, for example, from the Crisis Response Unit.

The private sector's perception of CSOs did not differ significantly in 2020 from the previous year. Private sector institutions, especially large ones, such as telecommunications companies, banks, and many factories, consider CSOs as partners, particularly in helping them to identify the needs of local communities while planning their corporate social responsibility programs. At the same time, partnerships between the two sectors suffered as a result of the economic setbacks faced by the business community in 2020. Businesses also failed to acknowledge publicly the role that CSOs played during the crisis.

CSOs continue to depend on social media platforms to publicize their activities, given that these platforms are free of charge. Most CSOs publish annual programmatic and financial reports, but they could be more proactive in sharing the results of their work with the public.

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.