



2019 CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATION SUSTAINABILITY INDEX

Middle East and North Africa Region: Egypt Country Report
August 2020

Cover Photo: As part of the USAID-supported Iraq Governance and Performance Accountability (IGPA) project, known locally as Takamul or Integration, the Iraqi Development Association organized a solid waste management awareness campaign in the Ali bin Yakteen area and souq al-Basrah al-Qadeema (Basrah Old Market), the largest market in Basrah, which is visited by thousands each day. The media, local government, and volunteers helped the campaign give away calendars with educational messages on July 1, 2019.

Photo Credit: USAID IGPA/Takamul project

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For Egypt
August 2020

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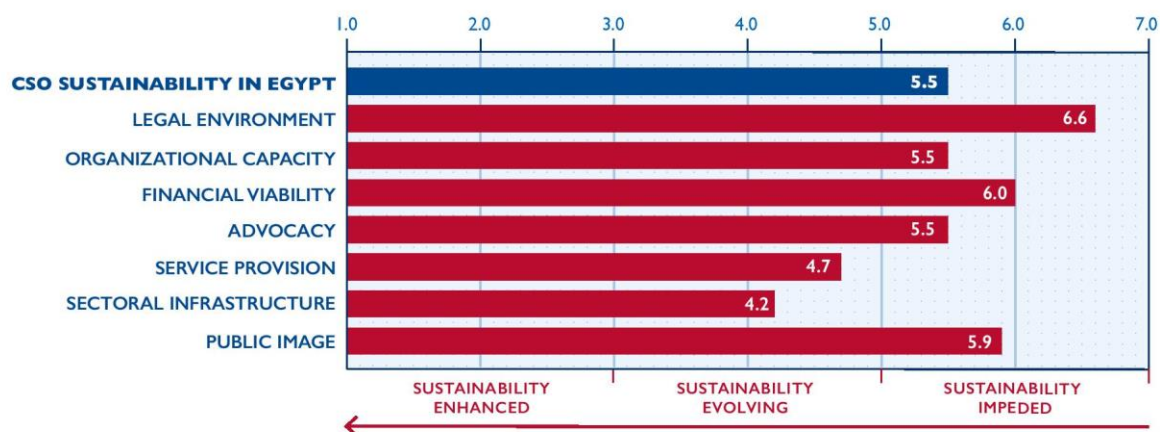
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EGYPT

Capital: Cairo
Population: 104,124,440
GDP per capita (PPP): \$12,700
Human Development Index: High (0.700)
Freedom in the World: Not Free (21/100)

OVERALL CSO SUSTAINABILITY: 5.5



Several noteworthy events took place in Egypt in 2019. The parliament approved four extensions of the state of emergency on the grounds that the country needed a stable climate to fight terrorism and carry out investment and development programs in key sectors, including transportation and infrastructure, tourism, telecommunications, and renewable energy. The state of emergency, which was still in place at the end of 2019, gave the authorities greater power to censor the press and impose curfews in certain areas.

In April, the parliament passed amendments to the country's 2014 Constitution, which the public approved in a national referendum two weeks later. The amendments extend presidential terms—including the president's current term—to six years and allow President Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi to contest an additional term in 2024. The amendments broaden the role of the armed forces to include "safeguarding the Constitution and democracy, maintaining the foundations of the state and its civilian nature, the gains of the people, and the rights and freedoms of the individuals." The amendments also expand the jurisdiction of military courts by allowing the trial of civilians who commit any "attacks" against the armed forces, rather than only "direct attacks" as per the previous wording.

In August, President Sisi ratified Law 149 of 2019 Regulating the Exercise of Civil Work (commonly referred to as the Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO) Law). The new law replaced Law 70 of 2017, which was widely criticized for being draconian. While the government claimed that the new law responded to about 80 percent of CSOs' demands, some human rights organizations have objected to the new law because it retained many of Law 70's restrictions on CSO formation, funding, and activities.

In September, a businessman and self-proclaimed whistleblower released a series of videos on YouTube and Facebook that alleged corruption in the military establishment. The videos prompted rare anti-government protests in several Egyptian cities, which in turn provoked a crackdown by security services. Egypt's public prosecutor claimed that the authorities detained 1,000 people following the protests. However, the Egyptian Commission for Rights and Freedoms, a Cairo-based CSO, cited at least 4,433 arrests. Those arrested were charged with aiding a terrorist group, protesting illegally, misusing the internet, undermining national security, and using social media to spread false news. Most of those arrested were released a few weeks later.

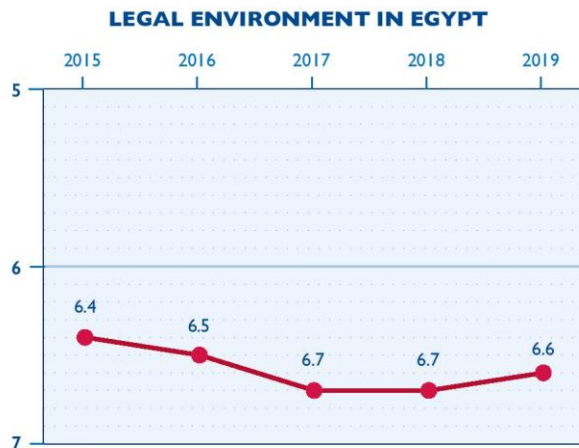
Egypt's economy continued to struggle in 2019 despite improvements in macroeconomic indicators. For example, gross domestic product (GDP) grew at 5.6 percent compared to 5.3 percent in 2018. The International Monetary Fund stated that Egypt's unemployment rate declined to 8 percent in late 2019, down from 9.9 in 2018. However, this growth was not felt throughout society. According to a 2019 study by Egypt's Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics (CAPMAS), 32.5 percent of Egyptians lived below the poverty line, defined as less than EGP 735 (approximately \$47) per month, and 6.2 percent of the population lived in extreme poverty.

Overall CSO sustainability in Egypt improved in 2019. Despite continued challenges, CSOs reported slight improvements across most dimensions. The legal environment improved with the adoption of Law 149. While Law 149 continues to prohibit engagement in certain "political" activities, CSOs aligned with the government's agenda

on the environment and climate change, rights of people with disabilities, women’s economic empowerment, and capacity building enjoyed greater space in which to advocate, driving an improvement in this dimension. By removing certain restrictive barriers, Law 149 also allows the government and CSOs to develop a more cooperative relationship, leading to improvements in service provision and sectoral infrastructure. Public image improved as media coverage of CSOs was more positive and both the public and the government perceived CSOs and their impact on society more positively. CSOs’ organizational capacity improved in 2019 as CSOs developed stronger relationships with their constituents and their ability to reach their targeted goals and successfully implement activities. Financial viability was the only dimension that remained unchanged.

As of the end of 2019, a total of 57,214 associations were registered with the Ministry of Social Solidarity (MoSS), including 65 international CSOs. Of these, 3,007 associations and foundations were registered in 2019, primarily after the new NGO Law was ratified. As in prior years, the vast majority of registered organizations are believed to be inactive or to exist on paper only. MoSS data indicates that only about 2,500 registered associations, or less than 5 percent, are considered active. Data is not available about the size or focus of these organizations.

LEGAL ENVIRONMENT: 6.6¹



The legal environment for CSOs improved slightly in 2019 with the ratification of a new law governing CSOs. Law 149 of 2019 Regulating the Exercise of Civil Work (commonly known as the NGO Law) replaced Law 70 of 2017 on Associations and Other Foundations Working in the Area of Civil Work. The new law was published in the official gazette on August 19, 2019. According to the Law, executive regulations to guide its implementation were to be issued within six months. By year’s end, executive regulations for Law 149 had yet to be issued. In the interim, some regulations related to the operations and day-to-day work of CSOs from an earlier CSO law (Law 84 of 2002) apply, as the executive regulations for Law 70 were never issued.

CSO registration was slightly easier after the passage of the new law, leading to an increase in the number of CSOs registered during the last few months of the year. The new law allows CSOs to be established through a notification process. However, the process requires the submission of extensive documentation, including the registration document, organizational bylaws, personal information and criminal records of all board members, property contracts, receipt of registration payment, and policies and procedures related to volunteers. In addition, the law gives MoSS broad discretion to reject registration during a sixty-day waiting period.

Although the vast majority of registered CSOs continue to be associations, more foundations were registered in 2019 than associations. While the fees to register a foundation are higher than those for an association, the administrative procedures governing a foundation’s establishment are less complex. For example, a foundation does not need a separate general assembly; instead a Board of Trustees governs the organization. In addition, foundations require fewer members to register. While registration under the new NGO Law was easier, some CSOs with a prominent presence in the media were prevented from registering based on the Media and Press Law of 2018. For example, Radio Online for Divorced Women was denied registration as a CSO, and its website was blocked because it was considered a radio program and not a CSO.

A foreign or international CSO must additionally apply for and obtain an operating permit from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which authorizes its activities. Operating permits are valid for a “limited term,” determined by the minister in each permit according to the executive regulations to be issued. The maximum initial registration fee

¹ Parts of the legal environment section were not authored by the implementing partner and contain text inserted by other contributors during the editing process.

for a foreign or international CSO is EGP 50,000 (approximately \$3,078), and it will increase 20 percent each time the license is renewed, up to a maximum of EGP 200,000 (approximately \$12,312).

Law 149 requires all organizations doing “civil work” to register. According to Article 94, any individual who establishes or works with an unregistered or unauthorized organization is subject to a fine of no less than EGP 100,000 and no more than EGP 1 million (roughly \$6,000-\$61,500).

CSOs faced many operational hurdles under the new NGO Law in 2019, particularly as executive regulations had not yet been released. The law conceives of a narrow role for civil society, relegating it to the fields of “societal development” that consider “the development plans of the state and needs of the community.” As was the case with Law 84 of 2002 and Law 70 of 2017, domestic and foreign CSOs are still prohibited from pursuing “political activities” and activities that “harm” vaguely defined interests such as “national security,” “public order,” and “public morals.” Domestic CSOs are barred from conducting opinion polls and must obtain approval before carrying out field research. Prior MoSS approval is also required before CSOs may enter into any agreement or otherwise “join, affiliate, participate, or cooperate in any way” with a foreign organization or entity.

Like Law 70, the new law enables government oversight of and intervention in CSOs’ internal governance. For instance, the law requires CSOs to submit to MoSS the minutes of all board meetings and provides that MoSS may order the withdrawal of board decisions and disqualification of board member candidates. Article 30 of Law 149 also gives MoSS officials the right to inspect an association’s premises. While the officials must notify the association beforehand, if MoSS receives an “official complaint,” the officials may enter without prior notice. At the same time, however, Law 149 softens some of the stark restrictions in Law 70. For example, the law allows up to 25 percent—rather than 10 percent—of CSOs’ board of directors to be foreign residents. The law also prohibits board members from working as staff and regulates volunteer activity to ensure their compliance and protection.

With very few independent CSOs still operating, state harassment eased slightly in 2019. Law 149 dispensed with prison sentences that were provided for in Law 70, but maintains harsh penalties in the form of fines for various violations, which range from EGP 50,000 to EGP 1 million (approximately \$3,000 to \$60,000), and organizational leaders that fail to pay their fines are still subject to imprisonment according to the Penal Code. The new law also provides for numerous acts and omissions upon which the MoSS may suspend an organization’s activities or seek the court-ordered dissolution of the board or the whole organization. The new law replaced the security-heavy National Regulatory Agency for the Work of NGOs with a Central Unit of Civil Society Associations and Work. The Central Unit is responsible for monitoring funding from both local and foreign sources, and supervising all activities pertaining to CSOs.

Some prominent rights lawyers and activists were arrested in 2019, while others remained imprisoned or detained throughout the year. (See Advocacy section for more details.) Old charges also were used to harass CSO workers in 2019. For example, the Cairo Criminal Court postponed the hearing of three separate appeals by fourteen Egyptian human rights activists challenging travel bans against them. The cases began almost nine years ago and, as the activists’ lawyers pointed out, travel bans are legal for a maximum period of two years, so legally, the travel bans have expired.

The new NGO law retains very restrictive regulations regarding domestic and foreign funding. The law still provides the government with the right to block foreign or local CSOs from receiving or using funds, and still permits the government to dismiss CSOs’ boards and fine individuals for violating funding rules. Like Law 70, the law requires CSOs receiving foreign funding to inform the authorities in advance and wait sixty days for MoSS to approve the transaction, during which time they may not spend the funds. In contrast to Law 70, the new law states that the lack of a response during the sixty-day period may be considered approval, rather than a rejection. However, anecdotal evidence indicates that MoSS rejected some CSO funding requests beyond the sixty-day window in 2019, generally for activities in controversial areas such as human rights and advocacy. These rejections cited the absence of executive regulations as a justification. CSOs are also required to notify MoSS when receiving or collecting donations from domestic sources. CSOs must obtain a license from MoSS to engage in fundraising activities by submitting a written request; such licenses are fairly easy to obtain.

The tax framework for CSOs remained unchanged in 2019. CSOs are exempt from certain taxes, including stamp duties on documents, real estate tax, income taxes on donations, and customs taxes. CSOs may claim exemptions for only one piece of property, while any additional premises owned are treated as commercial properties. Corporate donors to CSOs receive deductions of up to 10 percent of their taxable income. When filing lawsuits,

legal and service providers working in the CSO sector must present tax forms in order to be exempted from paying large fees.

In a positive development, the new NGO Law allows CSOs to establish companies and investment funds. CSOs must invest any profits or returns in their social or charitable objectives with the approval of the minister of social solidarity.

Some legal entities provide legal assistance to CSOs, and CSOs specializing in legal matters conduct awareness-raising activities on legal issues affecting the sector. However, lawyers working in MoSS and with CSOs were unequipped to provide advice on the new law in 2019 because of the lack of executive regulations.

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY: 5.5

CSOs slightly improved their organizational capacity in 2019 as they developed stronger relationships with their constituents and their ability to reach their targeted goals and successfully implement activities increased. For the most part, the CSOs that exhibited increased capacity had missions aligned with the government's agenda.

CSOs' outreach to marginalized communities, including women, youth, and people with disabilities, improved in 2019. For example, some CSOs conducted extensive outreach activities that targeted women's economic empowerment in several governorates and helped disadvantaged women to obtain IDs in collaboration with the National Council for Women. CSOs also reached out to women with disabilities, including through awareness-raising activities on their rights and protection strategies, and educated mothers on how to raise their children with different disabilities.

In 2019, CSOs had clearer missions and goals, which tended to be more aligned with the government's agenda due to their inclusion in plenary sessions around development issues. CSOs' strategic plans and management policies are now largely in line with the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Egypt's Vision 2030. Tanmiyet Watan Association, for example, added new programs in its strategy to address environmental issues and raise awareness on the protection of the environment in line with Egypt's Vision 2030. Large, better-established organizations are more likely to have stronger management policies and procedures with clear hierarchies of staff and divisions of labor than smaller organizations.

The nature of staffing within CSOs continued to depend on CSOs' areas of work in 2019. CSOs focused on development projects are more likely to hire staff for the duration of funded projects, while those focused on basic service delivery have more stable staffing patterns. The time and effort that CSOs allocate to training and recruitment varies based on the expertise required. As in 2018, some CSOs continue to train volunteers and recruit them to implement their projects. According to the 2018 State of the World's Volunteerism Report published by United Nations Volunteers, in 2016, the volunteer workforce in Egypt was 1,729,734 workers on a full-time equivalent basis. Of these, 55.3 percent were women and 44.7 percent were men. This figure appears to be modest in comparison to other countries included in the study, including other Arab countries. The numbers reveal that volunteers represent only 2.85 percent of the total population above fifteen years old, and that men's participation has declined in relation to that of women. However, according to some official estimates, the number of volunteers in Egypt is over 3 million based on criteria given by a representative at the Ministry of Youth and Sports. The Charities Aid Foundation's 2019 World Giving Index indicates that an average of just 6 percent of Egyptian respondents reported volunteering in CSOs in the last ten years, placing Egypt at 121st place out of 125 countries.

In 2019, CSOs used digital technology to access information, target their outreach, and recruit employees. CSOs frequently use apps such as LinkedIn and Facebook and websites such as Wuzzuf to post job openings and screen



applicants. CSOs also use Facebook, the Al-Mahrousa Portal to Support Civil Society, and other sites to exchange information and communicate with their constituencies.

FINANCIAL VIABILITY: 6.0



CSO financial viability did not change in 2019. Although the new NGO Law theoretically eases CSOs' access to financial resources, CSOs feel that the government used the absence of executive regulations as an excuse to stall and restrict funding to CSOs. This was particularly a problem for CSOs working in areas outside of the government's national agenda and on religious, ethnic or controversial human rights agendas topics.

An online survey of approximately twenty-nine CSOs that was conducted to collect information for the *CSO Sustainability Index* presented mixed results about CSO funding in 2019. Approximately one-third (32 percent) of respondents reported increases in domestic funding, while 26 percent of respondents reported that domestic funding had declined and 42 percent reported seeing no

change. In contrast, 42 percent of respondents reported declines in foreign funding, while 32 percent reported increases, and 26 percent reported no change. Approximately one-third (32 percent) of respondents viewed their access to multiple funding sources as having improved, while 37 percent reported that access to multiple funding sources had become more difficult, and 31 percent reported no change. The survey also indicated that 37 percent of respondents believed that their ability to raise funds had worsened, while 26 percent thought that it had improved, and 37 percent saw no change.

According to a July 2020 interview with an official from MoSS, in 2019 a total of 208 CSOs—both international and national—received 517 foreign-funded grants valued at a total value of EGP 1.016 billion (approximately \$63.5 million). To support the government's focus on climate change and youth, the European Union (EU) issued a new call for proposals in March 2019 under its thematic program "Civil Society Organizations and Local Authorities" with a budget of EUR 3 million (approximately \$3.4 million). It aims to fulfill the EU's global objective of helping CSOs engage as actors in governance and development. The Finnish Embassy in Egypt announced a call for proposals under its Local Cooperation Fund (LCF) in 2019. This fund supports civil society's participation in Egypt's development process with a particular focus on women's empowerment and gender equality. Five grants with a total value of approximately EUR 340,000 were awarded in 2019.

The government continues to provide some contracts and grants to CSOs, primarily through MoSS. CSOs, primarily those working closely with the government, conducted limited fundraising activities in 2019. For example, the Dar El Orman Association raised donations for a cancer institute in Cairo after it was damaged in a terrorist attack in 2019. Once rebuilt, the center was able to provide patients with free treatment and transportation. However, CSOs do not view such donations as stable sources of income.

In order to generate steady income, in 2019, several CSOs created tourism companies while other organizations worked in microcredit. Other examples of social enterprises include Wayana for Integration and Awareness; Fambrella, which organizes activities focused on positive parenting and children's edutainment; Edu Foundation; Masr Topia, which works on children's development and soft skills; Smart Careers; and INTApreneur. In addition, many other CSOs work on youth skills development and entrepreneurship.

The new law introduces more stringent financial management requirements for CSOs. For example, CSOs need to keep both electronic and hard copies of financial records, bank books, and registers of revenues and expenses, fixed assets, cash and in-kind donations, and domestic and foreign funds. These registers need to be kept in accordance with the samples to be provided in the executive regulations. However, many CSOs still lack the capacity to meet these new requirements. As was the case under the old NGO Law, CSOs are required to undergo annual external financial audits under the new law.

ADVOCACY: 5.5

CSO advocacy improved slightly in 2019. While Law 149 continues to prohibit engagement in certain “political” activities, CSOs aligned with the government’s agenda on the environment and climate change, rights of people with disabilities, women’s economic empowerment, and capacity building enjoyed greater space in which to advocate.

CSOs were involved in several events focused on national development in 2019. In November 2019, the League of Arab States (LAS) organized Arab Sustainability Development Week in Cairo. The event brought together 1,300 senior officials and decision makers from the government, CSOs, and private sector concerned with sustainable development issues in the Arab region to promote the adoption of the United Nations’ 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its seventeen SDGs as part of national development strategies. Similarly, the Ministry of Planning organized a community dialogue workshop to encourage a “new plan of development” to realize Egypt’s Vision 2030. Participating CSOs were able to gain knowledge and present their perspectives.

CSOs that were not politically affiliated and whose activities aligned with government priorities were successful in reaching policy makers and participating in policy-and decision-making processes in 2019. For example, CSOs such as Rise Egypt that work in the economic sector were able to continue their activities effectively. The government and CSOs carried out numerous joint initiatives to protect the environment and address climate change in 2019. For example, the Ministry of Environment, in collaboration with CSOs such as Nature Conservation Egypt and Tanmiyet Watan Association, implemented awareness-raising activities to preserve biodiversity and reduce pollution and encroachments threatening natural protectorates and the Nile River. Other joint initiatives addressed waste treatment, control of industrial pollution, and alternative uses for agricultural waste.

The National Committee against Female Genital Mutilation, which includes several CSOs working on women’s issues, conducted a campaign called “Protect her from Circumcision.” The campaign involved door-to-door canvassing, training, awareness-raising seminars and meetings, and educational and medical convoys reaching a large number of girls and women across the country. A social leadership program, which prefers to remain unnamed, promoted youth leadership. These efforts reached more than 3,000 young women and men in twenty-three governorates and resulted in the development of a network of more than 170 CSOs to develop simulation games and youth-led initiatives.

The National Coordination Committee for Preventing and Combating Illegal Migration and Trafficking in Persons (NCCPIM&TIP) worked with some CSOs to conduct a number of workshops and events to raise awareness of the problem of human trafficking and smuggling of migrants. Also, in 2019, NCCPIM&TIP launched a national campaign entitled “Together Against Trafficking in Persons” to raise awareness of the dangers of human trafficking, encourage the public to report incidents, and advocate for deterrent legal penalties.

Other CSOs—including those that were politically involved, engaged on issues not aligned with government priorities, or seeking to conduct advocacy activities—were prevented from pursuing their aims in 2019. For example, the Egyptian government blocked some news websites, some of which were affiliated with CSOs, from reporting on the September unrest. In accordance with the new NGO Law, CSOs were required to obtain security clearances from CAPMAS before conducting field research or publishing their results; this required the submission of organizational information, as well as the planned research methodology. It was easier to obtain clearance to conduct online and phone surveys. For example, one CSO conducted an online survey of youth perceptions of community participation, volunteerism, and engagement in the public sphere with around 1,000 respondents from fifteen governorates covering both urban and rural settings.

CSOs’ complaints about Law 70 led to the government’s deliberation and passage of the new NGO Law in 2019. The General Federation of Associations and Foundations, as well as some active CSOs with good connections to



the government, such as Misr El-Kheir, contributed opinions and inputs during the process of drafting Law 149. However, many organizations expressed concerns that CSOs that were politically engaged or not on good terms with the government did not participate in these consultations.

SERVICE PROVISION: 4.7



CSO service provision improved moderately in 2019. According to the online survey conducted for the *CSO Sustainability Index*, 62 percent of respondents believed that CSOs' capacity to provide services had improved over the past year.

CSOs provide services ranging from skill building and education to health care and the care of persons with disabilities and special needs. Educate Me Foundation signed a protocol with the Ministry of Education to support and develop education in Egypt at the national level. This protocol targets public, technical, and community schools as well as students of various backgrounds, school principals, and teachers, aiming to build the capacities of all those involved in the educational process.

The Egyptian government emphasized services to persons with disabilities in 2019. With support from MoSS, in 2019 the Nasser Social Bank created the first charitable investment fund in Egypt called "Atta'a" (Donating or Giving) to support people with disabilities. This fund's profits and returns are invested in social and charitable ventures through a number of entities such as CSOs, government agencies, or affiliated bodies related to charitable activities. The Egyptian Association for the Advancement of Persons with Disabilities and Autism, in partnership with the National Bank of Egypt, implemented "Forsity" (My Chance), which provides autistic and mentally disabled individuals with skills to advance their employment and social integration.

CSOs improved their relationships with local government officials in 2019, thereby allowing them to better identify and serve local needs. The governors of Fayoum and Qena met with a CSO, which prefers to remain unnamed, to discuss the local population's needs. These governors helped the organization provide its services more efficiently by helping it obtain the necessary clearances from the relevant ministries.

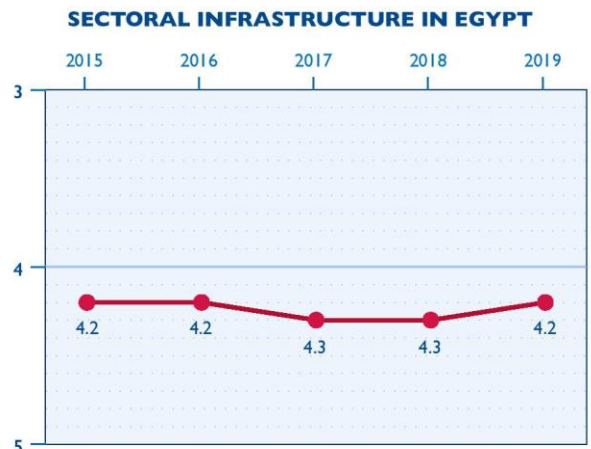
The new NGO Law allows CSOs to invest surplus funding in projects supporting their missions. Many service-providing CSOs now have income-generating activities to help them ensure their financial sustainability. For example, organizations such as Yadaweya train women to make handicrafts and host regular exhibitions at which they sell their work to generate income. In October 2019, the Medium, Small, and Micro Enterprises Development Agency (MSMEDA) hosted the "Our Heritage" exhibition, which featured more than 500 exhibitors, most of which were CSOs working on handicraft production.

The passage of Law 149 indicates the Egyptian government's increased willingness to engage with and aid CSOs with their ventures. By removing certain restrictive barriers, it allows the two sectors to develop a more cooperative relationship. In 2019, MoSS stated that CSOs are their primary partners in all projects and that it seeks to build solid partnerships with active organizations. In 2019, MoSS signed protocols with several CSOs to implement the "Hayah Karima" (Honorable Life) Initiative, which supports people living in low-income areas by bridging the development gap in villages through a number of sectors and investing in human development to bring positive change in the communities' standard of living.

SECTORAL INFRASTRUCTURE: 4.2

The infrastructure supporting the CSO sector in Egypt improved slightly in 2019, driven by increases in partnerships between the government and CSOs. In addition, more centers now support CSOs in the implementation of their programs.

The number of resource centers increased during the year. Eleven banks opened centers to assist small and medium-sized projects, including those of CSOs, as part of the Pioneers of the Nile project, which covers fifteen governorates and will eventually open thirty centers for business development. The Professional Development Foundation's (PDF's) Civil Society Support Center offered several training programs to develop the capacity of CSOs in 2019. PDF also hosts the annual NGO Excellence Award, which rewards innovative Egyptian NGOs that work in human and community development. Winners receive cash prizes ranging from EGP 50,000 to 150,000 (approximately \$3,000 to \$9,000).



A few local grant-making organizations exist. For example, Sawiris Foundation for Social Development in partnership with Al Ahram Beverages Company and Shorouk Misr Foundation provided a combined grant of approximately EGP 6 million (approximately \$371,000) to Siwa Society for Community Development and Environmental Protection to provide healthcare services, water improvement, and economic empowerment services to residents in Siwa.

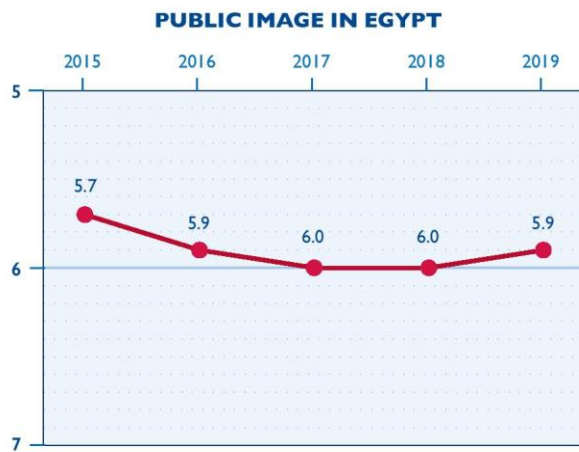
Cooperation within the CSO sector increased in 2019, as organizations from different governorates with common aims joined forces and helped one another. For instance, around 300 CSOs focused on women's rights worked together to improve women's livelihoods and protection in accordance with the National Strategy for the Empowerment of Egyptian Women 2030, also known as the National Women's Strategy (NWS). At one of their meetings, they reviewed the report submitted by Egypt as part of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) process and stressed the importance of this process.

Large international CSOs, such as Save the Children and Plan International, continued to offer workshops to build the capacity of small local CSOs. The EU-funded program Support Civil Society Organizations, Egypt supported capacity building initiatives aimed at increasing the participation of CSOs in mitigating climate change. GIZ, the German development agency, provided local CSOs with training in project planning in the context of its Participatory Infrastructure Project (PIP). MoSS has discussed the possibility of starting an academy to increase the managerial expertise of CSOs.

The Ministry of Youth and Sports started a training program in 2019 called Your Hands Are With Us that stresses the inclusion of youth in civil society activities. This initiative aims to engage youth in planning and decision making by strengthening their leadership and project management skills, developing their planning capabilities, and enhancing their ability to monitor and innovate. By doing so, CSOs will have access to a stronger caliber of youth participants to support their initiatives.

Intersectoral partnerships increased in 2019. Most CSO projects are required to have a governmental affiliation, and the government is starting to recognize the importance of collaborating with local CSOs. In 2019, MoSS emphasized that CSOs are now seen as its primary partners and formed several partnerships with local CSOs to help them carry out their work. CSOs worked with the National Bank of Egypt on the economic empowerment of the disabled through a project called My Chance. Large businesses such as Vodafone, CIB, Itisalat, and Orange have nonprofit foundations that emphasize partnerships with other local and national CSOs. For example, Vodafone worked with the Egyptian National Food Bank to pack more than 5,000 food boxes and distribute them in Badrashin district in Giza governorate.

PUBLIC IMAGE: 5.9



The public image of CSOs improved slightly in 2019. Media coverage of CSOs was more positive in 2019 than in previous years, and both the public and the government perceived CSOs and their impact on society more positively.

Many observers noted that the media lessened their attacks on CSOs and increased their coverage of CSOs' events in 2019. Several articles in local online newspapers also highlighted the benefits of CSO projects. For example, an article in the national newspaper Al Ahram stressed that cooperation between government institutions and CSOs is the only way to eliminate female genital mutilation in Egypt. Media also provided extensive positive coverage of CSOs as the new NGO Law was under development. At the same time, CSOs that were

not working towards the national agenda generally did not receive media coverage.

The government's perceptions of CSOs improved in 2019 as it began to see the potential for mutually beneficial collaborations, particularly in terms of service provision and implementing Egypt's Vision 2030. In addition to MoSS stressing the importance of partnerships with CSOs, the Ministry of Local Development also acknowledged the importance of working with CSOs to develop the first phase of the Needy Villages Reconstruction Initiative. The improved government perceptions of CSOs was reflected in the creation of Law 149.

The government's acknowledgement of the importance of CSOs' role helped improve public perceptions of CSOs in 2019. Sixty percent of respondents in the online survey reported that public perceptions of CSOs were better in 2019. This high level of public approval represents a turn-around from CSOs' negative image in 2018, when the 57357 Children's Cancer Hospital Foundation was alleged to mismanage funds and engage in corrupt practices. However, after MoSS issued a press release in December 2018 stating that the allegations against the hospital were invalid, public opinion of CSOs recovered. The public also increasingly acknowledged the positive outcomes of CSO' work and sought CSOs' help in implementing projects in their communities.

CSOs improved their efforts to promote their organizational image in 2019. For example, CSOs increasingly promoted their image through large media campaigns during the holy month of Ramadan and Eid Al-Adha (the feast of sacrifice). Article 67 of Law 149 requires CSOs to publish databases about their activities. This increased CSOs' transparency and allowed the public and media to learn about their work.

According to more than 50 percent of the online survey respondents, CSOs' efforts to self-regulate were stronger in 2019. Once the executive regulations are issued, all CSOs will be obligated to adhere to rules and regulations, including a code of ethics, and to develop policies and procedures for combating terrorism and anti-money laundering. To prepare for the release of these regulations, in 2019 CSOs took steps to develop policies and procedures and complete external financial audits.

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.

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