

## FACT SHEET

### *The Effect of International Funds on the Development Process in the WANA Region*

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#### Civil Society Development: Goals and Challenges

Every society has its own distinct forms of social organisation, cultural and political traditions, as well as contemporary state and economic structures. All of these are central to the development of civil society and shape its specific features. Most broadly understood, civil society refers to the web of social relations that exist in the realm between the government, the market (activities with the aim of extracting profit), and the private lives of families and individuals. Interlinked with the concept of civil society, is the idea of social capital: values, traditions, and networks that enable coordination and cooperation between people. Civil society, therefore, involves qualities associated with relationships, values, and organisational forms.

Civil society takes form through various types of association. Ranging from officially constituted institutions to small, informal community groups, these associations give expression and direction to the social, political, spiritual and cultural needs of members. By reflecting diverse interests and values, they enable the articulation and pursuit of aspirations of different constituent elements within a society.

Community Based Organisations (CBOs) and Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) are the main players in the development process, along with governmental institutions and organisations. CSOs are created to present the local communities' needs and address their issues. Development projects and programmes should then be designed as a response to these local needs, and not as a response to an international donor's goals and visions for any region.

However, most CSOs do not receive annual or regular funds from their government to support their work on social, economical and/or political development, forcing them to invest their resources in pursuing international development grants. A number of study groups and surveys conducted with different local CSOs in Jordan as a part of the WANA Institute's Civil Society project, show that most of them identify the "lack of funds" as the primary obstacle to their effectiveness.

Most CSOs in the Arab region indicated that they are not sufficiently involved in the annual funding plans for the governmental institutions they operate under. As a result, their focus is on increasing their opportunities to attract additional funds to implement short-term projects addressing local problems. In doing so, they are not developing and designing their own programmes and interventions, yet responding to the donors' strategies without sustainability or impact strategies.

This is why the goals and visions of international donors are often adopted by CSOs to sustain their work and existence, whether they meet the real needs of the communities they are representing or not. In areas facing a tough economic situation, for example, people's priority is to secure food for their families. They might not be interested in capacity building projects for youth or women at that stage.

#### How Does that Affect the Development Process?

In order to measure the impact of development projects, we need to look at the needs they were designed to meet. Often, projects are not making an impact because of the following reasons:

- The development projects are not a result of local communities' needs.
- Some projects are copied from other regions and implemented identically, without adapting the project design to differences in culture, infrastructure, needs, the economic situation, and community structure. This can lead to the project's failure to meet the goals, and sometimes the early termination of the project.
- Certain development projects do not take the strengths and capacities of the local people into consideration, yet focus on their weaknesses.
- CSOs are often excluded from the decision making process, and there is a lack of clear communication channels between CSOs, donors, and government. As a result, CSOs fail to push for the inclusion of the local community's needs in the design of future projects.

#### What Makes a Win-Win Situation?

As agreed in [The Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness \(2005\)](#):

- Donors should make financial and technical resources available to CSOs to campaign, mobilise, network, and develop locally envisioned development programmes.
- Donors should align their aid with national priorities in consultation with CSOs.
- Government, donors and CSOs should cooperate on strengthening the institutional communication mechanisms between them.
- Donors should respect the partner countries' leadership and help strengthen their capacity to exercise it.
- Donors should commit to basing their overall support (country strategies, policy dialogues and development cooperation programmes) on partners' national development strategies and periodic progress reviews.
- Donors should link funding to a single framework of conditions and/or a manageable set of indicators derived from the national development strategy. This does not mean that all donors have identical conditions, but that each donor's conditions should be derived from a common streamlined framework aimed at achieving lasting results.
- CSOs along with the government should integrate specific capacity strengthening objectives with national development strategies, and pursue their implementation through country-led capacity development strategies where needed.
- Donors should align their analytic and financial support with partners' capacity development objectives and strategies, make effective use of existing capacities and harmonise support for capacity development accordingly.
- Governments should intensify efforts to mobilise domestic resources, strengthen fiscal sustainability, and create an enabling environment for public and private investments. They should also publish timely, transparent and reliable reports on budget execution, and lead the public financial management reform process.
- Donors should harmonise their activities. Harmonisation is all the more crucial in the absence of strong government leadership. There should be a focus on upstream analysis, joint assessments, joint strategies, coordination of political engagement, and practical initiatives such as the establishment of joint donor offices.