

Introduction

GlobeScan and the Union of International Associations (UIA) together undertook a piece of research designed to gauge the opinions of a large number of civil society organizations (CSOs) that are members of the UIA on a number of issues. Particularly, the aim of the study was to analyze the current status of civil society organizations, their level of influence relative to the recent past, their performance in a number of areas as well as some of the constraints and barriers they face in achieving their goals¹.

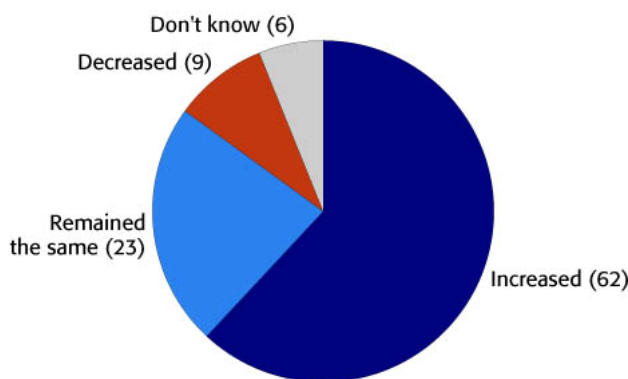
The following details and discusses the key findings from the research.

Detailed findings

Global civil society is seen as increasing its impact on the world, with 62 percent of respondents saying that its impact has increased in the last 5 years. Regarding the effects of civil society, a slim majority (51%) of respondents were positive about its contribution to society, with 16 percent rating its overall contribution as 'very good' and 35 percent rating it as 'good'.

Impact of Global Civil Society over the Last Five Years

All Respondents, 2008



Q13. Thinking of global civil society as a whole, would you say that its impact on the world has increased, decreased or remained the same compared to 5 years ago?

Looking at the implications of this trend, we are able to undertake an evaluation of civil society's current performance, as perceived by organizations that compose civil society itself.

¹ 593 organizations from across the globe completed an online questionnaire between mid-2007 and mid-2008.

Weak areas

Civil society organizations perceive room for improvement in partnering and working effectively with companies. Only five percent of respondents believe that civil society organizations are currently performing very well in this area. Another related area of weakness concerns the ability to form issue-specific multi-stakeholder alliances, as 30 percent rate civil society organizations as performing poorly on this.

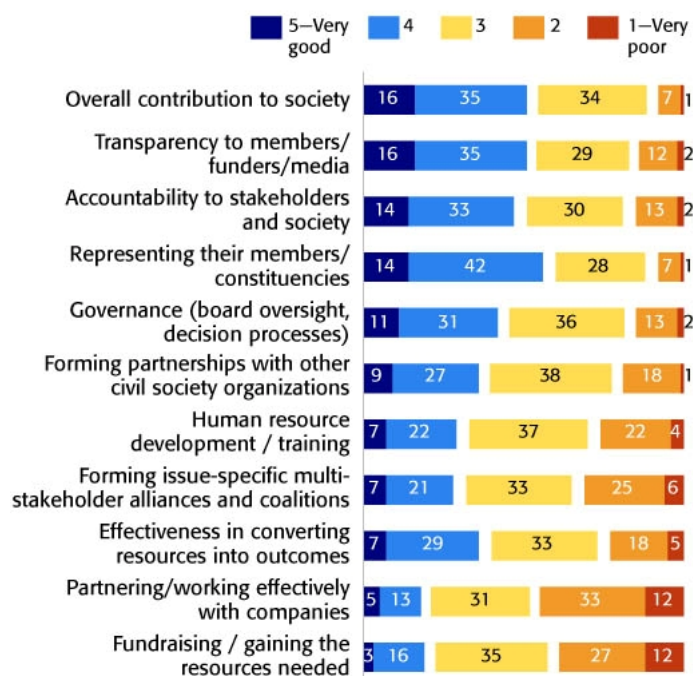
Fundraising appears frequently throughout the research as a significant problem area. Only 19 percent of respondents claim that civil society is performing well in this area, and 12 percent rate it as 'very poor'.

Strong areas

Nevertheless, civil society organizations rate themselves as performing relatively well on areas related to governance and accountability, as well as on their overall contribution to society. A majority rate both transparency (51%) and representation of members (56%) positively and these organizations also perform relatively well on accountability to stakeholders and society. However the large proportion of respondents rating civil society organizations the middling mark of 3, or responding 'don't know,' suggests that few are able to comment on organizations other than their own, or are unsure of overall performance.

Performance of Civil Society Organizations

All Respondents, 2008



The white space in this chart represents "DK/NA."

Q3. Thinking of civil society organizations similar to your own, please rate how well they are performing on each of the following. For each, please rate performance (compared to what you think it should be) on a 5-point scale where 1 means "Very poor" and 5 means "Very good."

Priorities and barriers for civil society organizations

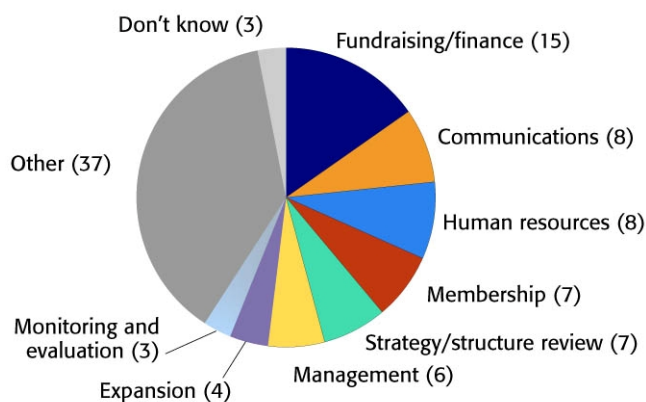
The top 3 internal issues facing civil society organizations:

1. Fundraising/Finance (15%)
2. Communications and Human Resources (both 8%)
3. Issues relating to membership and Strategy/structure review (both 7%)

Again fundraising emerges as an important issue facing civil society organizations: it is the top single priority in terms of organizational/internal issues to address. Whilst there is great diversity of challenges facing these organizations – suggested by the large proportion of other mentions – fundraising and finances are clearly top of mind. Communications, including campaigns, are another priority, as are retaining, training and acquiring quality staff and issues related to human resources.

Organizational Issues as Priorities for Global Civil Society Organizations

All Respondents, 2008



Q2. Please name the particular *internal* or organizational issues that your organization considers its most important priorities over the coming year. Please list only the most important (maximum of 3) using a series of specific key words for each going from general to specific.

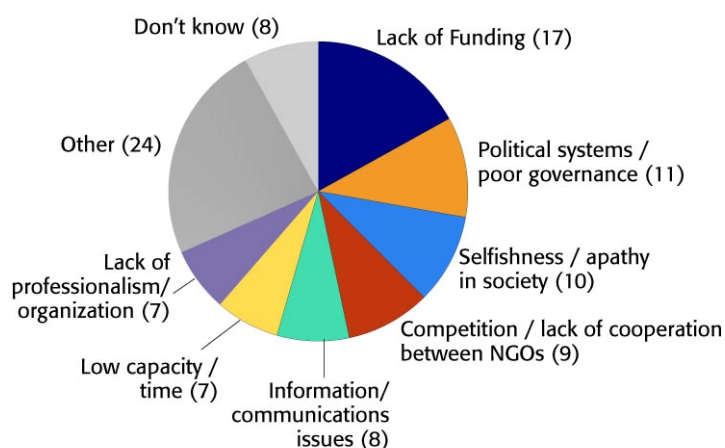
The top 3 barriers holding civil society back from making a bigger contribution to global society:

1. Lack of Funding (17%)
2. Political systems/Poor governance (11%)
3. Selfishness/Apathy in society (10%)

Funding is again the key issue when considering barriers to civil society organizations making a bigger contribution to society as a whole. More interestingly however, is that political systems and politics generally are seen as a major barrier to organizations playing a bigger role. A similar number of respondents noted that the lack of support or concern for the organization's issue of focus among the general public is holding them back.

Factors Holding Civil Society Back from Making a Better Contribution to Global Society

All Respondents, 2008



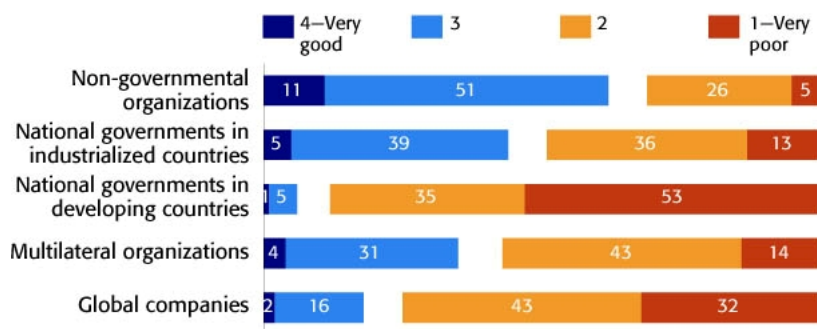
Q4. What do you think is the single biggest factor holding civil society back from making a better contribution to global society?

Standards of transparency and accountability

The sentiment that civil society is generally performing well when it comes to operating with transparency and accountability is backed up when we compare its perceived performance to that of other organizations.

Standards of Transparency and Accountability of Various Institutions

All Respondents, 2008



The white space in this chart represents "DK/NA."

Q12. How would you rate the standards of transparency and accountability of the following? Please answer using a scale of 1 to 4, where 1 means "Very poor" and 4 means "Very good."

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are clearly seen as performing best on standards of transparency and accountability, as rated by civil society organizations. Nevertheless there is still room for improvement as only 11% believe that NGO's standards in this area are 'very good.' A solid majority (61%) perceive NGO standards as good or very good.

No other organization are seen in such positive terms. Almost half of all respondents give national governments in industrialized countries a negative rating (1 – 'very poor' - or 2) on standards of transparency and accountability. National governments in developing countries are felt to be the least transparent and the least accountable with a majority of respondents giving them the lowest possible rating.

The standards of global companies are also viewed negatively by respondents: only 18 percent give global companies a positive rating. Multilateral organizations score little better with only 35 percent rating their standards positively and 14 percent giving the lowest rating.

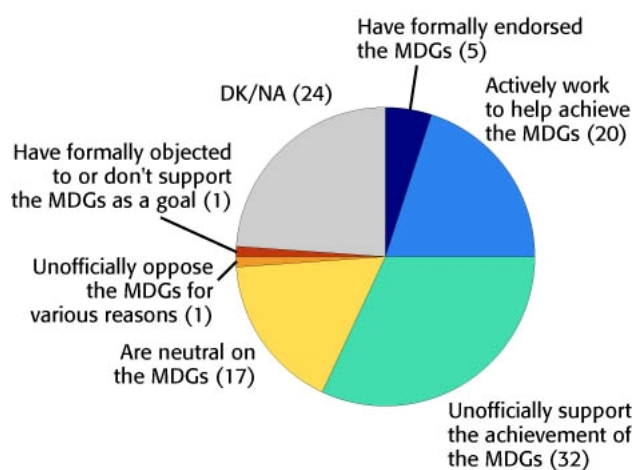
Millenium development goals

Respondents were asked about their level of awareness of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) - a series of goals to improve the lives of people living in poverty around the world, agreed by over 170 national governments. The results show the level of awareness among civil society organizations to be mixed. More than a third had heard 'a lot' about them, whereas a significant proportion (17%) had heard 'nothing at all'. This variance might be explained by the vastly differing mission statements of the civil society organizations surveyed.

Considering both those who had heard nothing at all about the MDGs as well as those who had heard only a little – which account for more than a third of all respondents (35%) – it is clear that the Millennium Development Goals have not permeated all areas of civil society.

Level of Support for the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) among Civil Society Organizations

All Respondents, 2008



Q11. To what extent does your organization support or not support the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)? Please choose one of...

Support and endorsement of the MDGs was similarly mixed, although this time only a small number (5%) were able to say that their organization actively endorses the MDGs. However a majority either officially or unofficially support the objectives outlined in the MDGs.

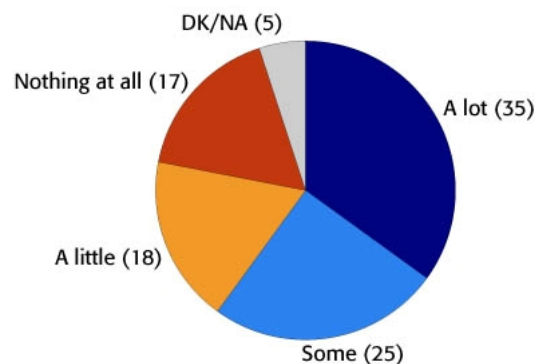
Almost a quarter of all respondents were not aware of their organization's position on the MDGs.

Sixteen percent were neutral on the MDGs – clearly many of the CSOs surveyed prefer to remain neutral in their support of the goals.

One percent unofficially oppose the MDGs and 0.5 percent (rounded to 1% in the chart below) have ...formally objected to or don't support MDGs as a goal. Evidence from The UN Millenium Project shows that some CSOs feel that they have been excluded from the decision-making processes associated with the MDGs, which could explain this opposition².

**Level of Awareness of the Millennium
Development Goals (MDGs) among Civil Society
Organizations**

All Respondents, 2008



Q10. In the year 2000, leaders of 189 countries meeting at the United Nations agreed on a series of goals to improve the lives of people living in poverty around the world, known as the Millenium Development Goals. Before this survey, how much had you seen, heard, or read about the Millenium Development Goals?

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² <http://www.unmillenniumproject.org/documents/MainReportChapter8-lowres.pdf>