

MAPPING AND NEEDS ASSESSMENT OF NGOS/CSOs in AZERBAIJAN REPORT

Presented to Azerbaijani National Platform, Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum for
“Strengthening mechanisms to achieve the sustainability of CSOs in Azerbaijan (SMART CSOs in
Azerbaijan)” project

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ABBREVIATIONS

AZNP	Azerbaijan National Platform
AZSTAT	Azerbaijan State Statistical Committee
CBO	Community-based organization
CSSN	Council on State Support to Non-Governmental Organizations under the Auspices of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan
CSO	Civil Society Organization
EaP CSP	Eastern Partnership Civil Society
GoA	Government of Azerbaijan
IDP	Internally Displaced Persons
NGO	Non –governmental organization
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
OGP	Open Government Partnership
PWYP	Publish What You Pay
UN	United Nations

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1. Executive Summary

The purpose of this mapping, capacity and needs assessments was to get an overview of civil society organizations/ NGOs in Azerbaijan. The report provides the findings of the assessments and recommendations for capacity development of the NGOs/ CSOs. The mapping, capacity and needs assessments covered different target groups of key informants and used various research methods such as desk research, mapping exercise, semi-structured interviews, site visits and observation.

The reports presents a comprehensive picture of organizational conditions of the context, development needs, issues and functional capacities of the organizations. Following the independence of Azerbaijan in 1991, civil society sector in Azerbaijan has been developing dynamically. The Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan on Non-Governmental Organizations (public unions and funds) was adopted in 2000. Currently, there are more than 4500 NGOs registered in the country, and over 300 unregistered groups carrying out activities. In 2007 the Government of Azerbaijan established the Council on State Support to NGOs (CSSN) which goal was to provide financial and informational support to Azerbaijani NGOs, and to facilitate NGO/government cooperation. On April 19, 2021 President Aliyev signed a Decree on establishing a public legal entity "Agency for State Support to NGOs of the Republic of Azerbaijan" ('Agency'). The rights and obligations, as well as property of the Council on State Support of Non-Governmental Organizations under the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan were transferred to the Agency for State Support of Non-Governmental Organizations.

At the end of 2013, several decisions were made that undermined the sustainability of CSOs in Azerbaijan, including the laws governing the registration, operation and financing of civil society - the Law on Grants, the Law on Non-Governmental Organizations, the Law on Registration of Legal Entities and the State Numerous restrictive amendments were made to the Law on Registry, the Law on Donations and the Code of Administrative Offenses.

As a result of mapping assessment 243 organizations have completed the mapping assessment tool and all findings were entered into specially prepared database. Selection of NGOs/ CSOs for capacity and needs assessment from total number (243) has used purposive non-probability sampling method ensuring that organizations represent various fields of activities and target groups / beneficiaries. 17 relevant NGOs were interviewed for capacity and needs assessment task.

Both assessments provided the most updated information on participating NGOs/ CSOs working in the country, and revealed the following gaps and issues in functioning of the organizations:

- a) Since 2014 when changes were made to the Law of Grants and the Law on State registration of Legal Entities , both registered and non - registered NGOs started facing difficulties in registering and receiving grants and donations from foreign donor organizations
- b) The challenges during the registration process of foreign grants and financial shortcomings negatively impacted civil society environment and have led to closing several NGOs in the country and termination of their activities
- c) NGOs/ CSOs are mainly based in the capital than in regions
- d) NGOs/ CSOs especially in rural area lack financial and technical support and skills, and have weak organizational management system
- e) Dependency of NGOs only on 1 or 2 funding sources negatively impact the organizations' financial sustainability and development

- f) Due to lack of continuous funding some organizations cannot afford to cover salaries to core staff members and to pay a membership fee and be a member of professional associations, and maintain their organizations' websites
- g) Some NGOs are in need of solid human resources capacity
- h) Some organizations lack communication techniques, skills and branding policy, and weak in provision of information about themselves and promoting their activities and efforts
- i) Registration of NGO/ CSOs operating in the field of human rights and democracy might not be possible in some cases
- j) Many NGOs/ CSOs do not have financial management plans in place and they depend entirely on grants
- k) Many interviewed organizations cannot afford to keep a separate staff responsible for PR, monitoring and evaluation
- l) Lack of office facilities, lack of human and financial resources, lack of projects, lack of capacity building events, lack of equipment are most significant challenges with respect to organizational management of NGOs/ CSOs
- m) About half of NGOs/ CSOs have adequate technology capacity to use computers, office software, communications software and data storage
- n) General environment of relationships among CSOs/ NGOs is competitive
- o) Lack of financial and human resources hamper the operation and sustainability of the coalitions and associations
- p) The general nature of the relationship between civil society and the state is satisfactory.
- q) NGOs/ CSOs expect from engagement with the government the various forms of support, creation of a favourable legal environment, increased trust, and more participation
- r) COVID-19, the Second Garabakh war and war in Ukraine had also impacted the operations of NGOs/ CSOs
- s) Among the priority needs for organizational learning and development are: studying the relevant international experience, improving the skills of personnel on project management, PR, monitoring and evaluation, applying digital technology, developing strategic programs of the organization, international advocacy skills, skills in applying for financing programs and fundraising, acquisition of technical skills and constant awareness of the innovations happening in the world.

Finally, the report provides the infographics depicting visual mapping of NGOs/CSOs, the summary on the organizations' needs and trainings' priorities, and recommendations on process of overall capacity building of the organizations.

2. Introduction and Background

Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), including non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and community-based organizations (CBOs), foundations, civic movements and advocacy groups, trade unions, faith-based

organizations and professional voluntary associations, think tanks and academic and research institutions, are considered as key stakeholders in supporting social and economic development globally.

The establishment of a modern civil society organization (CSO) sector in Azerbaijan began in late of eighties, and after the registration of 109 new local CSOs in 2019, the official number of CSOs in Azerbaijan reached more than 4,500¹.

However, at the end of 2013, several decisions were made that undermined the sustainability of CSOs in Azerbaijan, including the laws governing the registration, operation and financing of civil society - the Law on Grants, the Law on Non-Governmental Organizations, the Law on Registration of Legal Entities and the State Numerous restrictive amendments were made to the Law on Registry, the Law on Donations and the Code of Administrative Offenses.

These decisions significantly limited the space for CSOs, resulting in the suspension of hundreds of local and international CSOs in Azerbaijan and even their complete departure from the country. Currently, due to the lack of a favourable legal environment and financial sustainability for CSOs in Azerbaijan, most Azerbaijani CSOs operating in the country and abroad are unable to manage their organizations and programs / projects in accordance with international standards. There is a need to strengthen the country's CSOs, especially regional organizations, on a number of important issues, including organizational management rules, strategic planning, human resource management, financial management, project management, monitoring and evaluation.

3. Aims and Objectives of the assignment

The overall objective of this assignment was to support the Azerbaijani National Platform (AZNP) of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum (EaP CSF) in developing and implementing of mapping and needs assessment of NGOs/ CSOs in Azerbaijan. The assessment and overview of the NGOs/CSOs should help the AZNP and its partners to achieve the following strategic goals of the project:

1. Strengthening the capacity of civil society in Azerbaijan to improve the sustainability and performance of CSOs.
2. Contribute to the reconstruction of a favorable environment for CSOs and donors in Azerbaijan.
3. Improving dialogue and advocacy mechanisms to support the European integration process in Azerbaijan.

According to the ToR, the activities and expected outputs of this assignment were:

1. Intermediate outputs/ deliverables:
 - 1.1. Conceptual framework for CSOs mapping
 - 1.2. Methodological framework for mapping of CSOs
 - 1.3. Questions about CSOs profile

¹ 2020 CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATION SUSTAINABILITY INDEX, USAID 2021

1.4. Database of CSOs

2. Final outputs/ deliverables

- 2.1. Infographics depicting visual mapping of CSOs
- 2.2. Report reflecting the descriptive mapping of CSOs
- 2.3. Final report on the process and results of this assignment

In addition to the activities described in the ToR the capacity and needs assessment has been carried out to supplement and enhance the findings received from the mapping activity with more in-depth information.

4. Methodology and limitations

The methodological strategy of the mapping and need assessment was developed based on triangulation – using a range of methodologies and data sources, both in the research and interpretation of local conditions. By applying a mix of methodologies (desktop review, mapping exercise, interviews, site visits, etc.) and collecting data from a variety of sources (government authorities, local organizations and international donors reports), the mapping and needs assessment built a comprehensive picture of organizational conditions of the context, development needs, issues, etc.

This mapping activity entailed a desk study and empirical field survey. The specific goals for doing such mapping were (1) to identify the number of NGOs/ CSOs working in the country, (2) to map out the geographical coverage of these NGOs services delivery and identify prevalent gaps, (3) to gauge the level of needs, capacities and knowledge of NGOs in relation to their work area, (4) to capture good practices, challenges and lessons learnt, and (5) assess existing and potential internal and cross NGOs initiatives and networks in the country.

The methodological strategy of the assessment was based on the following specific points:

- ❑ **Review, analysis and assessment** of the current legislative, regulatory and institutional framework and other material on NGOs/ CSOs made available by the ANP and other sources. In addition the impact of state policy on the number of CSOs and their activities in the country, the changes in laws on grant registration and receiving grants from foreign donors/ organizations was investigated;
- ❑ **Identify a list of active NGOs/CSOs** in Azerbaijan with basic information about the organizations. For this purpose mapping tool was created (Annex 1). The mapping tool consisted of 15 main questions and number of sub questions. Outreach and data collection using the mapping tool included face to face interviews, phone, skype and zoom calls, site visits, emails and other mean of communication. In addition online databases (i.e. Azerweb, QHT.az database, UN portal, etc.) were used for identification of potential NGOs. The invitation email to participate in the mapping

assessment that included a link² to online version of the mapping tool as well as offline version in word format was sent to all identified NGOs/ CSOs. The invitation and the link repeatedly was sent during three months. In addition the consultant and ANP representative sent the invitation to all NGOs of AZNP EaP CSF (about 71) in its database, to all NGOs of Agency for State Support to NGOs of the Republic of Azerbaijan database (about 410), and invited relevant NGOs to take part in mapping assessment. In total the invitation with the link to the questionnaire was sent to about 1000 identified organizations.

- ❑ As a **result of mapping assessment 243** organizations have completed the mapping assessment tool and all findings/ results were entered into specially prepared **database** in excel file (Annex 3).
- ❑ **Selection of NGOs/ CSOs for capacity and needs assessment from total number (243) has used purposive non random sampling method** ensuring that organizations represent various fields of activities and target groups / beneficiaries. As a result **17** relevant NGOs were selected and interviewed for capacity and needs assessment task (Annex 5). Initially it was planned to interview at least 20 organizations (2 organizations in each area) however some organizations have refused to participate in the interviews.
- ❑ **Identification of CSOs profile, financial and development needs** on core issues and functional capacities including governance, leadership, knowledge, accountability as well as human resources, project management (planning, implementation, monitoring and reporting), financial management, communication and public relation, issues and challenges, etc. was carried out. The capacity and needs assessment tool (the questionnaire is presented in Annex 2) was designed to assess needs of NGOs. Data collection involved face to face meetings, interviews, emails, calls, etc. The strategic focus was placed on assessing organizational capacities including the various sub-systems of human resources, operational and financial resources, external relations, and strategic planning and project management, cooperation between NGOs/ CSOs and government, etc. The senior managerial staff was responsible to answer the most part of the questions in the questionnaire.
- ❑ **Preparation of final summarized report** for Mapping and needs Assessment and infographics (Annex 4) depicting visual mapping of CSOs³.
- ❑ **Provision of recommendations**

The following group of stakeholders was met and interviewed during the assessment:

- Local community based organizations/ NGOs, international NGOs, NGO coalitions including but not limited to: Agency for State Support to NGOs of the Republic of Azerbaijan, ANP, NAYORA, Open Government Platform, EITI, Women Crisis Group, etc.

²https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSed7dQK4lCSBABg5-hHfZdtldtRNGD_odFA2FcSLyrm2kfx3w/viewform

³ The final deliverables will be provided in both languages (English and Azerbaijani)

- Others identified during the project.

Limitations

There were some limitations during data collection for mapping and needs assessments including: refusal of some respondents to participate in the assessment due to lack of time and no interest in the survey, challenge to find NGOs/ CSOs contacts due to lack of a single platform/ database for them, many contacts/ emails were outdated and didn't work.

5. Current Country and NGOs Context and Desk research Findings

Following the independence of Azerbaijan in 1991, civil society sector in Azerbaijan has been developing dynamically⁴. The Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan on Non-Governmental Organizations (public unions and funds) was adopted in 2000⁵, and it established the national NGO platform, the National NGO Forum (NNF).

In 2007 the adoption of Conception on state support to non-governmental organizations of the Republic of Azerbaijan was approved by the Order N 2288 of President of the Republic of Azerbaijan. Following the adoption of this conception in the same year (2007), the Government of Azerbaijan established the Council on State Support to NGOs (CSSN) which goal was to provide financial and informational support to Azerbaijani NGOs, and to facilitate NGO/government cooperation⁶. The Council engaged NGOs in the process of improving the regulatory environment and provided financial assistance to hundreds of local NGOs, based on transparent and competitive grant procedures. Furthermore, the Council provided support to NGOs in advisory, information, methodical, organizational, technical, financial and other issues, and assistance in developing proposals.

On April 19, 2021 President Aliyev signed a Decree on establishing a public legal entity "Agency for State Support to NGOs of the Republic of Azerbaijan" ('Agency'). The rights and obligations, as well as property of the Council on State Support of Non-Governmental Organizations under the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan were transferred to the Agency for State Support of Non-Governmental Organizations. According to the decree, the new agency is being created with the aim of increasing the role of non-governmental organizations in the life of the state and society, organizing their activities in accordance with the challenges of the new time, improving the organizational and legal framework and mechanisms of state support carried out in this area⁷.

Currently, there are about 4 500 CSOs/ NGOs registered in the country, and over 300 unregistered groups carrying out activities⁹. CSOs/NGOs are engaged in diverse spheres of activity, including human rights, education, culture, health, social protection, environmental protection, etc. Most of the NGOs operate in

⁴ Civil society briefs, Azerbaijan, ADB, 2011, <https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/publication/29441/csb-aze.pdf>

⁵ <https://e-qanun.az/framework/511>

⁶ <http://www.cssn.gov.az/news.php?id=2222&lang=en>

⁷ <http://www.turan.az/ext/news/2021/4/free/Social/en/3272.htm>

⁸ <https://ann.az/en/agency-of-state-support-to-non-governmental-organizations-of-the-republic-of-azerbaijan-public-legal-entity-established/>

⁹ Civil Freedom Monitor, 2019, <http://www.icnl.org/research/monitor/azerbaijan.html>

Baku. Majority of the non-registered NGOs are located in the rural areas. One of the reasons for being non-registered is low capacity of NGO. NGOs in rural area lack financial and technical support and skills, and have weak organizational management system. Another reason for being non-registered or potential being closed is difficulty for NGOs to comply with reporting requirements.

The civil society in Azerbaijan started discussions with the government in 2012 about a variety of topics, including the registration and funding of CSOs/NGOs. The government promised to ease registration requirements, remove limitations on CSOs/NGOs holding events across Azerbaijan, and lower taxes. But those amendments were never formally made.¹⁰

Since 2014 when changes were made to the Law of Grants and the Law on State registration of Legal Entities , both registered and non - registered NGOs started facing difficulties in registering and receiving grants and donations from foreign donors/ organizations.

The crackdown on civil society peaked in 2014, when changes to the law governing NGOs placed restrictions on them (also when it comes to using foreign grants). Many NGOs were compelled to shut down and leave the state. In the case of others, who managed to keep going, their activities were limited (e.g. Eurasia Foundation was prohibited to conduct the annual Caucasus Barometer Survey).

After talks with the government a few years later, some international organizations (including the EU Commission, the EU delegation, USAID, the Japan Embassy, and a few others) resumed their collaboration with NGOs in Azerbaijan. It was revealed that grants could be registered through the Ministry of Justice, but only carefully vetted organizations were permitted to do so.

“A foreign entity can provide grants to local NGOs and FNGOs with registered offices in Azerbaijan only if it has a registered branch or representative office in Azerbaijan and has signed an Agreement with MoJ”¹¹. Additionally, NGOs and activists had to submit a permit application in order to host any activity (seminar, training, conference).

In 2016 the decree on Simplification of Registration of Foreign Grants in Azerbaijan was signed by the President of the Azerbaijan Republic. According to the decree, a “one-stop-shop” approach is applied to the procedure for registering foreign grants in the country. However the Rules on Obtaining the Right to Provide Grants in the Republic of Azerbaijan by Foreign Donors that were adopted by the Cabinet of Ministers in 2015 still hamper the process of grant registration and grant receiving.

According to USAID report on CSO Sustainability Index (CSOSI) for Central and Eastern Europe and Eurasia¹² the overall CSO sustainability indicator in Azerbaijan in 2020 was 5.9¹³. According to official statistics from MoJ, 571 foreign grants, 65 foreign service contracts, and 501 foreign donations were

¹⁰ <https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1863/AZE.pdf>

¹¹ <https://www.mgc.az/faq-on-registration-of-grant-in-azerbaijan-2/>

¹² 2020 Civil society organization sustainability index, USAID, 2021

¹³ Index ranges from 1 (the most enhanced level of sustainability) to 7 (the most impeded); for comparison in 2017 this index in Azerbaijan was 6.

registered during 2020, a decrease from a total of 1,955 registered grants, service contracts, and donations in 2019.

One of the most common ways of cooperation between CSOs/NGOs is creation of coalitions. There are 17 coalitions in the country. One of the largest and most active NGO coalitions is the National NGO Forum (Milli QHT Forumu)¹⁴. This forum was formed in 1999 and coordinates about 533 local NGOs including number of women's NGOs. The forum has regional offices in 5 regions of the country. The NGO Forum provides training to local NGOs on all aspects of organizational development skills, as well as assisting to link local NGOs with government, national and international donors, technical institutions, and private agencies.

In accordance with the implementation of the National Action Plan for 2016-2018 on Promoting Open Government, NGOs and government agencies established the Government and Civil Society Dialogue Platform on promoting Open Government (Azerbaijan OGP Platform) in Azerbaijan on September 9, 2016. Platform was represented by 10 officials from government organizations, 38 NGOs, and the parliament.¹⁵ Azerbaijan is currently suspended from OGP pursuant to the Response Policy. But the government of Azerbaijan in cooperation with 31 CSOs initiated creation of "Open Government partnership, Government-Civil Society dialogue platform" in 2016. It is expected that this initiative will serve to regulate the relations of state institutions with civil society.¹⁶

Another national coalition of NGOs is the Azerbaijani NGO Alliance for Children Rights that works on child rights protection, child rights education, social and cultural rights of children, and other issues.

NGO Alliance has a long history of development starting in 2000 when many local NGOs and children's groups came together to get prepared for the participation at the UN General Assembly's Special Session for Children. NGO Alliance has 59 members - NGOs and children/youth groups working with children. Through its programs and activities, Alliance covers almost all regions of country.

Since its founding in 2004, the Publish What You Pay affiliate "NGOs for Improving Transparency in Extractive Industries" has grown to include more than 80 members in Baku and throughout the rest of Azerbaijan. In order to support credible and effective EITI implementation and increase civil society participation, the coalition has concentrated its efforts in these areas. Additionally, it has pushed for the disclosure of beneficial ownership and fought for greater transparency in state-owned businesses. However, the climate for civil society in Azerbaijan is rapidly deteriorating, and the coalition and its allies currently face difficult times due to restrictions on freedom.¹⁷

¹⁴ <http://aznnf.org/>

¹⁵ http://www.antikorrupsiya.gov.az/print_preview.php?id=477

¹⁶ <https://report.az/daxili-siyaset/azerbaycanda-aciq-hokumet-terefdasligi-hokumet-vetendas-cemiyyeti-dialog-platformasii-tesis-edili/>

¹⁷ https://www.pwyp.org/pwyp_members/azerbaijan/

The National Assembly of Youth Organizations of the Republic of Azerbaijan (NAYORA) is a major youth related NGO and the only coordinating body of Azerbaijani youth¹⁸. NAYORA was created by 12 youth organizations in 1995. At the present there are 125 youth organizations are members of the Assembly. The main goals of the Assembly include coordination of work of youth organizations; assistance in the creation and development of the youth NGOs; solutions of problems of young people and protection of their rights; promotion of cooperation with international youth structures and other organizations and other activities.

Furthermore, the EaP CSF Azerbaijan National Platform was established in November 2009 and it has currently 71 members. The work of the NGOs within the National Platform is organized along the topics of the Working Groups existent at the Forum level. The supreme management body of the Platform is the General Assembly and its execution body is the Board of Governance. This Board consists of the WG coordinators and the coordinator of the whole Platform, who also acts as Country Facilitator and represents the National Platform in the Steering Committee. The mission of the Azerbaijan National Platform of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum is:

1. "To ensure the effective participation of Azerbaijani civil society organizations in the process of developing, implementing and monitoring the European Union's Eastern Partnership policy;
2. To ensure the participation of Azerbaijani civil society organizations in the work of the European Union Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum;
3. To expand Azerbaijan's cooperation with the European Union and contribute to the development of bilateral relations;
4. To contribute to enhancing opportunities for dialogue and effective co-operation between the EU and the Government of Azerbaijan;
5. To support for strengthening civil society in Azerbaijan;
6. To contribute to the protection and promotion of human rights and freedoms by increasing public participation".¹⁹

Some of above mentioned coalitions were among the main stakeholders for the given assessment. During the mapping assessment process these coalitions distributed the mapping tool through their internal communication channels (list serve, emails, etc.) to members of their coalitions. However the response rate was not high and only few organizations responded back.

Overall, this mapping, capacity and needs assessments provided the most updated information on local NGOs/ CSOs working in the country and helped to identify needs on core issues and functional capacities of these organizations.

¹⁸ NAYORA, <https://nayora.org/>

¹⁹ <https://eap-csf.az/detail/en/58>

6. Mapping categories and key findings

Summary

The purpose of Mapping assessment was to identify a list of NGOs/CSOs working in Azerbaijan with basic information about the organizations. Various research methods were used for identification of relevant organizations and collection information on them. As a result 243 organizations have completed the mapping assessment tool and all results were entered into specially designed database in excel file. Therefore, the below statistics and analysis is made based on data from 243 responded organizations.

88.9 % organizations identified their legal status as public unions. More than half of the organizations were established in the period 1995-2009 which was the more favourable period in terms of registration of organization and receiving of foreign grants. 56.3 % of organizations have either website or social media account (mainly on Facebook) with information about their organization.

The majority of responded organizations specialise in awareness raising, communication and social behaviour change, youth participation and development, and educational services (trainings, extracurricular activities). Among the most commonly served target groups of beneficiaries are children, families, youth/ adolescents and women.

Geographical coverage of organizations is wide and 72 % of organizations implement projects in whole country.

On average 16 persons work in an organization with minimum 1 and maximum 419 people. More males than females work in NGO/CSO sector.

Majority of organizations are either financed entirely by the state or co-financed by the state, other organizations receive funds from different sources including international and national donors organizations. Among the state organizations the main donor of NGOs is the Agency for State Support to Non-Governmental Organizations of the Republic of Azerbaijan. More than half of the organizations are members of some professional local or overseas group, coalition, association or union.

Overall, NGOs face difficulties in registering grants, donations and service contracts from foreign donors. Only foreign donors that have an office in Azerbaijan, signed an agreement with Ministry of Justice and have the Ministry of Finance's opinion on financial-economic expediency of a grant can give grants to NGOs in Azerbaijan. Therefore, financial viability of organizations has been affected by the changes in grant legislation and reliance of organizations on limited funding sources. Due to lack of continuous funding some organizations cannot afford to pay a membership fee and be a member of professional associations or network, cannot rent the office and buy the equipment.

Finally, the mapping assessment revealed the main training/capacity development needs of the organizations. The majority of organizations expressed interest to receive trainings on project management, including monitoring and evaluation, proposal writing, fundraising, organizational development, communication, etc.

1. Legal status

The legislation of Azerbaijan uses both the terms “non-governmental organization” (NGO) and “non-commercial organization” (NCO). The Civil Code defines a non-commercial legal entity as one whose main purpose is not generating profit and which does not distribute profit among its members. Such entities include public unions, foundations, and unions of legal entities. The Law on Non-Governmental Organizations sets out the legal framework for public unions and foundations²⁰.

The available forms of NCOs are defined as follows:

- A public union is a voluntary, self-governed, non-governmental organization, established on the initiative of several physical and/or legal persons, joined on the basis of common interests. The purposes, as defined in the constituent documents, should not be aimed primarily at gaining profit and profit shall not be distributed among its members. (Article 2.1 of NGO Law)
- A foundation is a non-governmental organization without members, established by one or several physical and/or legal persons through the contribution of property, and aimed at social, charitable, cultural, educational or other public interest work. (Article 2.2 of NGO Law)
- Unions of legal entities are associations of legal entities, where the founding legal entities may either be commercial organizations or NCOs. Such unions may be formed in order to coordinate activities and to represent and protect (e.g., before state and other bodies, international organizations) their common interests (including property interests). (Articles 117.1, 117.2 of Civil Code). The vast majority of the more than 3000 registered NGOs in Azerbaijan are public unions.

Majority of organizations that participated in mapping assessment identified their legal status as public unions.

Table 1:

	Frequency	%
Public Union	216	88.9
Foundation	9	3.7
INGO	1	0.4
closed organization	1	0.4
Non registered initiative	5	2.1
NGOs/ CSOs	8	3.3

²⁰ <http://www.icnl.org/research/monitor/azerbaijan.html>

	Research center (profit)	1	0.4
	Think tank	2	0.8
	Total	243	100.0

2. Year of establishment

Majority of surveyed organizations have been registered during period 1995-2009 which was the more favorable period in terms of registration of organization and receiving of foreign grants.

Table 2:

Years _groups		Frequency	%
	1994-less (28 years ago and older)	13	5.3
	1995- 1999 (27- 23 years ago)	26	10.7
	2000-2004 (22-18 years ago)	42	17.3
	2005-2009 (17-13 years ago)	65	26.7
	2010-2014 (12-8 years ago)	44	18.1
	2015- 2019 (7-3 years ago)	39	16.0
	2020 – to present (2 years less)	14	5.8
	Total	243	100.0

3. Website and social media account

137 out of 243 organizations have either website or social media account (mainly in Facebook).

The website helps organizations to look more professional to donors and partners when applying for donations, grants, tenders, and at the same time gives donors and partners a place where they can find more information about organization. The website provides with up-to-date contact details and address of organization, as well as provides information on mission and objectives of organization. However from the interviewed organizations not all organizations either can afford cost of creating, hosting or maintaining of website or don't think a website or social media account as an important tool / feature for an organization.

4. Types of services provided (based on multiple responses from organizations)

Three top services that majority organizations provide are: awareness raising, communication and social behaviour change, youth participation and development, and educational services (*trainings, extracurricular activities*). Only 27 organizations provide financial services and aid goods. 33 organizations work only in 1 area (provide 1 service) and the remaining part of organizations work in more than 2 areas of services.

Table 3:

		Frequency/ Number of responses	% of responses	Percent of organizations ²¹
1	Financial services and/or provision of aid goods	27	2.5%	11.2%
2	Legal services	81	7.5%	33.6%
3	Educational services (<i>trainings, extracurricular activities</i>)	127	11.7%	52.7%
4	Health services (<i>medical consultations, medical supplies, rehabilitation services</i>)	46	4.3%	19.1%
5	Social and psychosocial services (<i>individual/group/family counselling/ parenting education</i>)	106	9.8%	44.0%
6	Inclusion and participation-oriented services (<i>cultural and/or sport activities</i>)	51	4.7%	21.2%
7	Youth participation and development	132	12.2%	54.8%
8	Vocational training and entrepreneurship	69	6.4%	28.6%
9	Awareness raising, communication and social behaviour change	139	12.9%	57.7%
10	Social innovation	71	6.6%	29.5%

²¹ Based on total number (243) organizations ; Frequencies are calculated based on number/ % of responses

11	Gender and women empowerment	86	8.0%	35.7%
12	Environment protection and climate change	52	4.8%	21.6%
13	Technical consultation (Research, study, capacity building, monitoring & evaluation, etc.)	73	6.8%	30.3%
14	Other	21	1.9%	8.7%

5 . Aim/mission of organization

241 (99%) organizations have clearly indicated the organization's aim and mission. If NGO is registered then it usually has a mission as it requires to present within the registration process. It is important to set a clear mission or goal of an organization that reflect the idea and work of organization.

6. Beneficiaries/target groups

Among the most commonly served target groups/ beneficiaries are children, families, youth/adolescents and women. 30 organizations work only with one group of beneficiaries, 23 organizations work with 2 groups, another 26 organizations work with 3 groups and the rest of organizations work with more than 3 groups of beneficiaries.

Table 4:

		Frequency/ Number of responses	% of responses	Percent of organizations
1	Children	138	11.9%	57.0%
2	Families	138	11.9%	57.0%
3	Youth/adolescents	189	16.4%	78.1%
4	Women	133	11.5%	55.0%
5	People/Children with physical disabilities	117	10.1%	48.3%
6	People/Children with mental health challenges	46	4.0%	19.0%

7	Legal offenders or children/youth at risk of offending the law	44	3.8%	18.2%
8	People (including youth) addicted to drugs, alcohol or chemical substances	43	3.7%	17.8%
9	Victims of violence, domestic violence, trafficking or other related issues	70	6.1%	28.9%
10	Refugees or children of IDP families	85	7.4%	35.1%
11	Minorities	38	3.3%	15.7%
12	Unemployed persons (including young people) or job-seeking persons	75	6.5%	31.0%
13	Other	39	3.4%	16.1%

7. Geographical coverage

172 (72 %) organizations mentioned they implement projects in whole country, while only few organizations specifically focused their activities in Mountainous Shirvan, East Zangazur and Nakhchivan regions.

Table 5:

		Frequency/ Number of responses	% of responses	Percent of organizations
1	Whole country	172	50.9%	72.0%
2	Baku city	34	10.1%	14.2%
3	Absheron- Khizi	15	4.4%	6.3%
4	Mountainous Shirvan	3	0.9%	1.3%
5	Ganja-Dashkesan	21	6.2%	8.8%
6	Garabakh	7	2.1%	2.9%
7	Gazakh-Tovuz	8	2.4%	3.3%

8	Guba-Khachmaz	9	2.7%	3.8%
9	Lankaran – Astara	11	3.3%	4.6%
10	Central Aran	16	4.7%	6.7%
11	Mil-Mugan	6	1.8%	2.5%
12	Sheki-Zagatala	11	3.3%	4.6%
13	East Zangazur	2	0.6%	0.8%
14	Shirvan-Salyan	9	2.7%	3.8%
15	Nakhchivan	1	0.3%	0.4%
16	In specific community/ies or districts	13	3.8%	5.4%

8. Type and number of staff within the organization at present

On average there are 16 persons/personnel in an organization with minimum 1 and maximum 419 people in each organization.

Table 6

N	Valid	241
	Missing	2
Mean		15.79
Median		7.00
Minimum		0
Maximum		419
Sum		3805

Number of male personnel prevails in the organizations compared to female personnel. There are total 2002 male and 1766²² female personnel in the responded organizations with the sex ratio at 113²³, demonstrated that more males are working in NGO/CSO sector than females.

Table 7

²² Some organizations didn't indicate exact number of male or female personnel

²³ Number of male personnel/ Number of female personnel * 100

		Number of Male personnel	Number of female personnel
N	Valid	238	238
	Missing	5	5
Mean		8.41	7.42
Median		3.00	3.00
Minimum		0	0
Maximum		341	120
Sum		2002	1766

On average there are 3 managerial personnel including members of Board of Directors with minimum 0 and maximum 31 people in each organization

Table 8

N	Valid	240
	Missing	3
Mean		3.36
Median		2.00
Minimum		0
Maximum		31
Sum		806

On average there are 7 experts/ professionals with minimum 0 and maximum 303 people in each organization.

Table 9

N	Valid	236
	Missing	7
Mean		6.56
Median		3.50
Minimum		0
Maximum		303
Sum		1547

On average there are 8 administrative or support personnel including volunteers with minimum 0 and maximum 410 people in each organization.

Table 10

N	Valid	234
	Missing	9
Mean		7.84
Median		2.00
Minimum		0
Maximum		410
Sum		1834

Type of staff

There are 21 % managerial personnel including members of Board of Directors, 41 % of experts/ professionals and 48% administrative or support personnel including volunteers.

9. Main donor(s)/partner(s) of the organization

171 organizations are either financed entirely by the state or co-financed by the state, other organizations receive funds from different sources including international and national donors organizations. Among the state organizations the main donor of NGOs is the Agency for State Support to Non-Governmental Organizations of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

Table 11

		Frequency/ Number of responses	% of responses	Percent of organizatio ns
1	Financed entirely by the state	72	19.0%	30.0%
2	Co-financed by the state	99	26.1%	41.3%
3	Religious organizations	2	0.5%	0.8%
4	Other national donors	51	13.5%	21.3%
5	International donors	102	26.9%	42.5%

6	Individual donors	35	9.2%	14.6%
7	Other	18	4.7%	7.5%
	Total	379 ²⁴	100.0%	157.9%

NGOs face difficulties in registering grants, donations and service contracts from foreign donors. Only foreign donors that have an office in Azerbaijan, signed an agreement with Ministry of Justice, have local registration and have the Ministry of Finance's opinion on financial-economic expediency of a grant can give grants to NGOs in Azerbaijan. Failure to apply to the MoJ may subject an NGO to administrative penalties in accordance with Article 432 of the Administrative Code. In regards to local donors, the list of local public donors was extended²⁵. Many respondents / employees of the NGOs mentioned about individual service contracts as a way of getting budget from some foreign donors and working on the projects.

10. Which are the main training/capacity development needs of the organization to provide more effective target services?

The majority of organizations expressed interest to receive trainings on following topics: Organizational development (119), Project management (planning, budgeting, monitoring and evaluation, proposal and donor report writing) (95) and Public relations and external communication (88).

Table 12

		Frequency/ Number of responses	Percent of organizations
1	Human rights and children rights (including gender)	76	31.5%
2	Principles of social welfare/Human Rights Based Programming Approach	74	30.7%
3	Organizational development	119	49.4%

²⁴ Multiple responses, some organizations receive funding from multiple sources

²⁵ <http://www.icnl.org/research/monitor/azerbaijan.html>

4	Project management (planning, budgeting, monitoring and evaluation, proposal and donor report writing)	95	39.4%
5	Public relations and external communication	88	36.5%
6	Advocacy and lobbying	66	27.4%
7	Community engagement and communication for social behaviour change	68	28.2%
8	Team building and staff development	63	26.1%
9	Financial management	49	20.3%
10	Knowledge and information management	63	26.1%
11	Other	17	7.1%

Monitoring and Evaluation is one of popular topics and needed to measure organizations' performance and outcomes, in addition to project proposal writing, fundraising and project management.

11. Member of which professional groups, unions or associations in the country or abroad?

More than half of the organizations are members of some professional local or overseas group, coalition, association or union. Among the most mentioned coalitions and associations are NGO Forum (22), EaP CSF ANP (22), NAYORA (11), Union of Disability (7), NGO Alliance for Children Rights (6), "Agency for State Support to NGOs of the Republic of Azerbaijan" ('Agency') (4), OGP and others.

Sometimes a membership of organization in professional group or association may require paying a fee based on the country where they are located or it may be a voluntary / free membership. Due to lack of continuous funding some organizations cannot afford to pay a membership fee and be a member of professional associations.

Table 13

	Frequency	%
Yes	140	57.6

No	103	42.4
Total	243	100.0

12. Recommendations/ suggestions how to improve operation and activities of the organization?

The recommendations stated and included in the mapping survey by the NGOs/ CSOs can be grouped in 3 main categories²⁶:

- Lack of financial support and improving access to international donors and grants
- Lack of technical and material base and improving access to office facilities
- Increase capacity building for NGOs/ CSOs, provision of trainings and improvement skills on project management, project writing, budgeting, fundraising, etc.

7. Capacity and Needs assessment findings

The analysis and conclusions from capacity and needs assessment was made based on the findings/ responses from the selected NGOs rather than separately for each organization.

1. History of civil society and public attitude toward civil society

According to the representatives of interviewed organizations the development of civil society in Azerbaijan started from the years of independence (beginning of nineties) and this sector has been further improved since the beginning of the 2000s. It was a developed and active sector by 2013-2014 in Azerbaijan, and this sector filled gaps in many areas. There were enough sector representatives in all areas, namely social, economic, human rights protection, women, etc. Programs and awareness sessions were regularly held in the field of institutional development and development of human skills.

CSOs/ NGOs history was divided before 2014 and after 2014. Since 2014, there was a process of separation and weakening of the CSOs. This is related to the legislation and restrictions on the activities of NGOs. This led to the fact that independent NGOs could not continue their activities. After 2014, the more active and experienced members of the sector left the sector in various ways. Some left the country, some moved to another sector. The CSO/ NGO sector was dependent on foreign grants, as they did not have their own funding. After the laws changes in 2014, the development of the sector both slowed down and began to step back.

In 2009, the State Support Council for NGOs was established, and before that, the Concept of State Support for NGOs was adopted. Both the adoption of the concept and the creation of an institutionalized body of the Council under the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan opened a new stage in the development of NGOs, which made it possible for NGOs from the regions to access grants and at the same

²⁶ The extracts from the mapping assessment's interviews are included in Annex 6

time for non-skilled NGOs to access financial resources for cooperation with international organizations or participation in grant competitions. The adoption of the concept and the creation of the Council also had a stimulating effect, and there were especially areas that international donors had not paid attention to.

NGO Support Council and Youth Fund continue to be important funding sources for most active CSOs. In 2020, the NGO Support Council has financed 505 projects (a decline from 568 in 2019) valued at nearly AZN 3.6 million (approximately \$2.1 million). Grant competitions were held in areas including patriotism, civic activism and human rights, as well as COVID-19 prevention measures. New agencies awarding funding to CSOs included the State Service for Mobilization and Conscription and the State Agency for Mandatory Medical Insurance.²⁷

The years 2015-2016 were very difficult and it was a year of lost opportunities. The existing networking of the civil society was greatly damaged, there was a flow of personnel in the civil society. The CSOs were forced to close their offices. Active members and staff had left. The largest organizations of Azerbaijan were forced to stop their activities. Coalitions remained inactive for some time.

At the beginning of 2017, the government made some amendments to the legislation on NGOs. Thus, it has facilitated the registration of service contracts of NGOs with international donors or individuals financed by foreign funding. One-window system has already been created under the Ministry of Justice, service contracts were registered through that one-window system. Besides, the state funding was also increased. In some years, the budget of the NGO Support Council exceeded 6 million AZN. From this point of view, these efforts made possible the revival of NGOs to a certain extent.

Currently, there are more than 4000 organizations registered in the Ministry of Justice in Azerbaijan, though only 300-400 of them are experienced and capable organizations as well as their members.

The following comments illustrate the respondents' opinion on the above statements:

"The international humanitarian organizations working in Azerbaijan played a very important role in the formation of the NGO movement in Azerbaijan at that time. The creation of NGOs related to community development, work with vulnerable sections of the population, work with people with disabilities, health protection of the population, protection in emergency situations became possible with the help of those international humanitarian organizations. There were stable and continuous grant programs, and at least social activists formed NGOs to take advantage of the grant programs. At that time, the legal environment in Azerbaijan was also favorable for NGOs"

"According to the international rankings of civil society, especially indexes published by USAID every year regarding sustainability, Azerbaijan's average indicators were almost equal to those of Eastern European countries during period before 2014. However changes to NGO legislation in 2014 limited NGOs' access to foreign grants and limited NGO fundraising issues. Moreover, it made the activity of international

²⁷ <https://surdo.az/Uploads/3e5d1ac9f3f94e4c8ae59fe816ad1bff14920213056540.pdf>

donors and organizations in Azerbaijan practically impossible, as no donor or organization wanted to perform those complex legal procedures”.

According to the respondents the public attitude toward civil society is *“ambiguous, and the reason is that the CSO sector has little influence on political decision-making”*. Sometimes these organizations are seen as anti-government organizations. Based on the propaganda carried out by various media, the image of the NGO is not very good among the population. Due to some organizations, NGOs are increasingly recognized as a *“grant-wasting sector”* or *“grant-misusing organizations”*.

Previously, the attitude was better because these organizations interacted with target groups in need in different strata of society, directly providing good services. NGOs were able to give recommendations on the development of society, provide services, and this helped to form a more positive opinion. But since their activities have been restricted after 2014, they stopped their activities due to the lack of finance, lack of knowledge in regions which were in need, lack of development of CSOs and gaps.

After the establishment of the NGO council, the attitude has changed. Although the development of the third sector is very weak, the relations between the state and NGOs are improving, but despite this, the laws do not change. Furthermore, the 44-day civil war and victory of Azerbaijan in this war also helped to change attitude toward CSOs. Donation campaigns, participation of social activists in the information war, participation in the defence of national interests and interests of the population have positively changed the attitude of the population toward NGOs/CSOs.

Some sample responses from the interviewees are the following:

“It is very interesting that there is a one-sided approach. Public attitudes depend on information, and even when many NGOs had websites, they lacked transparency. You could find reports of few NGOs on their pages. For example, report related with finance, software, etc. There is a weakness in media and public relations. Therefore, they don't know who we are.”

“This attitude can be divided into two parts. The period up to 2013-2014, when this attitude was very good. We have worked in the regions; we were highly respected. People appealed to the state, but it did not work, they appealed to us so that maybe we could help. Because NGOs like us implemented various projects and solved their problems in some way. But in 2014, the legislation changed, inspections began. We had projects in the region. For example, in Barda-Tartar-Aghjabadi, they started checking the local NGO, then they started calling the people served by the NGO to the prosecutor's office. This issue created dissatisfaction among people, and relatively damaged the trust towards NGOs. After that, the attitude towards NGOs is not good at all. It is somewhat discredited. But I think that if the legislation changes, if NGOs start working, they will be able to restore their previous reputation”.

“The government tried to show public sector more in 3 levels. They were portrayed as a sector that attacks political stability, brings some instability to the country, and supports certain revolutionary currents. Secondly, it was a phase of the conflict with Armenians, where cooperation with Armenians in that status quo was perceived very negatively. That is why the state tried to show the public sector in a negative image, considering the many projects of peace building, and they were referred to as friends with

Armenians, they were shown as if they support Armenians. And thirdly, public sector was portrayed as misusing the grants, that is, they were spending the allocated grants for their benefit. Thus, these 3 portraits seriously damaged the image of the public sector”.

2. Registration process of CSOs/ NGOs

Half of the respondents stated that CSO/ NGO registration is not mandatory. However, Azerbaijani legislation does not support activities carried out without registration. The legal entity status is important for financial transactions. The organizations must be registered according to the law on public associations, and this registration is carried out by the Ministry of Justice.

When that legislative change took place in 2014, there were approximately 4,100 registered and approximately 2,000 unregistered organizations for the same period, which reduced the working environment for NGOs.

“Previously there were NGOs operating unofficially, they were allowed, and the international funds financed them. Currently there is none. They can operate, but they cannot get funding. They can hold an event, promote themselves, but they cannot get funding”

“Registration is mandatory. However, there are also those who perform unofficial activities. For example, there are currently feminist groups that have funding but are not officially registered”

“When NGOs started their new activities, we were acting as initiative groups, and as initiative groups we could even receive funding, and it was kind of overlooked. But at present, the approach to this is worse, and in order to act, receive grants, hold events, etc. we must do registration”

“It is not allowed. You can create an initiative group. You must submit documents to the Ministry of Justice within 30 days after creating the group, they may or may not register it. You can then act on behalf of the initiative group, no one forbids you. Let's say you have created a public association “X”, you even use the name of the public association, but you cannot do banking transactions. You cannot attract funding from anywhere. Nevertheless, it is not mandatory if you don't do banking and financial transactions”

Majority of respondents confirmed there are not penalties for carrying out activities prior to registration.

“Currently, the Ministry of Justice does not use this practice in Azerbaijan's experience. To pay a fine before registration, you have to make a financial transaction, even if you make a financial transaction, it is out of the competence of the Ministry of Justice, it is already the subject of an investigation by the tax authorities or the prosecutor's office. This practice does not exist in Azerbaijan”

The initial capitalization is not required for non-commercial organizations, as a minimum it is set at 10 AZN only for commercial organizations. According to the respondents the fee for state registration of a NGO is 11 AZN and paid when the necessary documents are submitted for registration.

The review period of documents is 1 month (30 days), but depending on the case, the Ministry of Justice can extend it for an additional 20-30 days. There is an appeal process. Within 15 days to a month, a confirmation or rejection response should be given.

“Before it was very bad, there was no response at all. But now as it has been switched to an electronic system, as far as I know, the response comes within a month. They give recommendations, what changes should be made to the documents we provide. Unfortunately, the main complaints I have heard are that they say a different problem every time. They do not say everything at once. They say one issue, you change and submit, and then they say another problem”

“They review for 30 days. They can extend it for an additional 10 days to do edition. We have estimated that this process will keep an application under consideration for approximately 70 days. Our legislation allows this, and we believe that the longest time among the countries of the Eastern Partnership is in Azerbaijan”.

On the question “if laws and regulations evenly applied to all CSOs, or certain types of CSOs (e.g., human rights organizations or advocacy groups) subject to stricter or different treatment” more than half of the respondents noted that the laws are applied differently and there is a discriminatory approach based on political decision. In many cases, registration of NGO/ CSOs operating in the field of human rights and democracy is not possible.

“For example, there are organizations that register their grants, and there are organizations that cannot. Here it seems that there is a different approach. There are organizations that have been applying for organization registration for years, they are unable to register, but there are organizations that can apply and get registered right away”

“Maybe around 10-20% of NGOs are active, the rest have stopped their activities. Inspections also showed that there was not same approach. For example, inspections against independent organizations were harsh, decisions related to them were unfair, but government-oriented NGOs were given a soft position or were left out of inspections”.

In general NGOs are simplified taxpayers. Certain taxes are levied on the costs of grants to NGOs, for example, SSDF, insurance, etc. Those tax deductions in the legislation are applied. However, there are some cases where some organizations can be exempted from taxes. This does not apply to the entire NGO sector. NGOs are exempted from VAT and other taxes for carrying out certain activities.

“The grant is VAT tax-free, but many NGOs do not know this. For example, when we buy equipment, we send the notice we received from the Ministry of Justice to the seller with whom we have a contract and write a letter that it is a grant, exempt from VAT according to some article of the tax code”.

“NGOs are exempted from tax in operations related to grant funds for the duration of the grant agreement. For this, they should apply to the Ministry of Taxes, and sometimes contractors or entrepreneurs do not understand this. When they apply to the Ministry of Taxes, the ministry issues a letter, interprets the tax code, and based on that letter, you are exempt from VAT. The next issue is that if you receive a grant from

an international organization, such as USAID, you are exempt from paying SSDF. I think this is a good practice. Donations are not taxed, but the donation registration procedure is complicated”.

A donation is a general fund given to an organization to do their activity. There is also an issue that donations over 200 AZN must be registered. Donors sometimes do not want to be registered. And in this case donors should pay 199 AZN a day so that they are not registered.

3. Capacity of NGOs/ CSOs

Governance and organizational management

The assessment revealed that majority of surveyed organizations functioned in compliance with relevant legislation, their statutes and mission. They regularly review the vision and mission statements of their organizations (either once in a year or 2 years). Some NGOs operating in the country submit quarterly and annual reports. These reports are published on their social network accounts and official websites.

“Our organization does a SWOT analysis. But for a stable operating plan, there must be stable financial opportunities to draw up those work plans. Our organization prepares an annual plan. We hung it on the wall of the office. We have a mission statement. We inform about this in the speeches in the press”

However there are still many NGOs that are currently in a situation where they do not need or are not able to prepare a strategic plan. They see that they are not able to execute what is envisaged in the strategic plan. The reason is that access to grants and receiving grants from international organizations is important for the functioning of the organization.

“Every organization has a mission and purpose in a certain format. However, there are no many organizations that have the ability to prepare documents such as a long-term action plan, strategic plan, tactical plan, and goals.”

“There is a need to hold an event related to the strategic plan. The organization should know its situation today and where it is going in 10 years. In general, mission sustainability is something that follows from NGO sustainability”.

According to the respondents, previously there were NGO development or international organizations working in Azerbaijan that conducted such trainings for NGO workers. It was support for strengthening the capacity of NGOs. They conducted trainings in different formats so that people could return to their organizations and apply what they had learned. Unfortunately, since 2012, these activities have decreased, and since 2014 international organizations and donors have stopped their work and left the country which led to the weakening of the NGO sector.

“It was possible in the past when there was a lot of development, when the staff was large, and there were financial opportunities. We were doing strategic planning, we had all our missions and so on, and they were being updated. But there is none now. Organizations mainly consist of 1-2 people, and they write drafts if possible”.

“Before everyone had a website and an office. Right now, there are 4,000 NGOs in the country, 5% of those 4,000 NGOs will tell you what the NGOs has communication, strategy document, etc. Most of them have no idea, they think that NGO is to write a project and send it somewhere”.

“I can say that in general, the issues you mentioned and listed can be divided into 7 levels, i.e., 7 categories. If the mission, vision, etc. you mentioned belongs to the first part, the plans, action plan, etc. belongs somewhere to the 6-7 categories. And most of them do not currently exist in Azerbaijani NGOs. That is, for example, mission, vision, etc. should of course be established when the organization is founded, but is it in a form that meets the standards, is it formed, and does it really sound like a mission? Or are the goals set correctly, are they compatible with each other? This is a big question.”

On the question “what are the most significant challenges with respect to organizational management of CSOs/ NGOs” the respondents mentioned lack of office facilities, lack of human and financial resources, lack of projects, lack of capacity building events, lack of equipment, etc.

“Today, NGOs cannot form new personnel. An organization is on the shoulders of old personnel. This again depends on the finances. There must be good money to attract experts, attract employees and train them. Thirdly, NGO structures cannot function normally. In other words, funds are needed to maintain the chairperson, deputy chairperson, separate departments, employees in the organization, but the NGO cannot form such a structure due to the lack of funds”.

Human Resources Management

According to the respondents the human resource practice exists in some NGOs and may depend on existing program. It can also be mostly in NGOs working with international organizations such as the European Union and USAID. There is no sustainable and long-term strategy in this regard. The number and continuity of staff varies depending on the term of the projects or the size of the budget. Majority of NGOs don't have capacity to have full time paid employees. In the period when organizations don't have any projects, frequently their employees work voluntarily and don't get paid. Usually organizations prefer to conclude services contracts (agreements) with project employees only for duration of the project and those agreements don't define benefit.

“Human resource practice, retaining paid staff, this all depends on grants. The strongest organization can have 2-3 projects every year. The average organization has 1-2-3 grants. But normally there are organizations with grants every 1 or 2 years. Therefore, in such a situation, it is impossible to have a human resource policy or to keep a regular paid employee”

“It was quite good until 2014, it was growing. By 2014, there were more than 35,000 contract workers in the NGO sector. There were over 120,000 employees with service contracts. And there were numerous human resource development programs that increased their quality work quotient. But unfortunately, after 2014, they all collapsed, because legislative changes directly affected legislative issues, that is, reduced financial access. Even in the absence of funds, the organizations could not retain employees, even professional employees. Therefore, human resource has dropped seriously”.

Financial Management

Many NGOs/ CSOs do not have financial management plans in place and they depend entirely on grants. Transactions are usually carried out in the form of simple accounting, and a special budget is not considered. Budget of organizations mainly formed on projects funds. Majority of organizations have 1 or 2 external donors that has negatively impact their financial sustainability. Lack of process for assessing financial risks limits organizations to ensure accurate and reliable financial accounting and reporting.

IT skills and social media

The respondents stated that about 50 % of NGOs/ CSOs have adequate technology capacity to use computers, office software, communication software and data storage. Some of the organizations still work using the old/ outdated technologies. Many organizations don't have servers or databanks where the database information is stored. In the future, if the funding issue is resolved, the organizations can apply for more advanced programs and maintain their websites. Youth organizations are more advanced using the digital technologies. According to the respondents many organizations have a social media strategy and accounts mainly in Facebook and Instagram. Very few NGOs have websites as the organizations cannot afford extra payment every year to keep the site working. Due to pandemic more organizations have started using Zoom and Google meet platforms for online communication.

"Today, the 4th industrial revolution is underway, digitization is one of the main issues of today. It is an era that every office has a computer, but having a computer is not essential. The main thing is that using this new IT, they should be able to prepare their own website, give their reports, show on their website what work they have done and how many beneficiaries they have had. IT is a tool not a purpose, you must use it and contact with the community, you must ensure the transparent construction of the activity. If there are 40 organizations in Ganja, probably 10 of them have websites. Having a computer, writing a project, and sending it to the donor is only 10 percent of the work. 90 percent is using that tool in a different way"

"The public sector is considered an aging sector. It is not very popular for young people to come here, as, it is not considered a very promising sector for young people. It has no prospects as a sector in general and the situation has not changed over the years. We should admit that it is the younger generation who are better at using information technology. The older generation does not use it much"

"Today to create a website requires about 3,000 AZN. After it is established, there is a need for employee potential to transfer the institutional memory there, to present the existing work, to put it in the appropriate form, which is not possible in most organizations".

Program management

According to the respondents less than half of the organizations have monitoring, evaluation and learning plans in place. Due to limited financial resources, organizations cannot afford to keep a separate staff responsible for monitoring and evaluation. M & E system in organizations requires more improvement and capacity building.

“The value of monitoring assessment, why it is generally needed, etc. is also an important issue. Monitoring and evaluation occurs when you have an activity and an action plan. When you implement them you can directly monitor and evaluate them. Without these, there is no need for monitoring and evaluation”

“In the past organizations realized that if they incorporated self-evaluation tools into their work, they would have better performance and be more visible to different communities, including the donor community. But unfortunately, after 2014 the issue completely lost its relevance, because the reporting requires visibility, and because organizations work in a risky environment, they often reduce their visibility at an artificial speed not to be noticed and to run their current programs comfortably”.

4. Geographical coverage

NGOs/ CSOs exist throughout the country, except for some regions. However most of the NGOs/ CSOs are based in the capital city due to more opportunities in the capital, and the knowledge and skills of NGOs in the capital are more efficient than regional organizations. According to the respondents there are about 10 % of regional NGOs out of total number of organizations. The number of NGOs in the regions has substantially decreased after 2014.

“Before NGOs in Ganja, our region and Lankaran were more active than now. Now NGOs are more focused in Baku. Baku NGOs are not interested working in the regions”

“There are organizations in the region, but very few. Baku has a lot of information, creates relations, there is communication, they implement many and big projects with donors. Small projects are implemented in the regions. Therefore, it is necessary to contact donors to announce competitions only for regional NGOs”

“There are more initiative groups in the regions. It is very difficult for them to register, and secondly, they have more challenges in terms of capacity building, training, and financing”

“Most of them are in the capital, unfortunately. I will refer to the statistics until 2014, because after 2014 this information was not accessible on the website of the Ministry of Justice. We wanted to find out the number and scale of women's organizations in the NGO sector at the time. While 4100 organizations were registered, there were about 200 women's organizations. This is 5% of the entire sector. 86% of those women's organizations were in Baku, only 14% were scattered across regions”.

5. Funding of NGOs/ CSOs

The sector is funded and resourced mainly by local and international donors. The source of funding for the sector is diverse. There are local sources such as the ministries (Youth Fund, Ministry of Youth and Sports, Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of Population), the State Support Agency for NGOs and other state institutions. For instance, The Youth Fund held several grant competitions for active youth and youth NGOs in 2020. The Youth Fund supported 18 local projects and one foreign project through a grant competition. It did not disclose how many social contracts it awarded to CSOs, but it issued at least three

calls for social contracts.²⁸ At the same time, the finances and funding from the European Union, USAID and UN agencies are also available. Official statistics from the MoJ and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) indicate that 571 foreign grants, 65 foreign service contracts, and 501 foreign donations were registered during 2020. No data is available on the precise sources of this funding or amounts of these awards. According to CSOs, there were fewer direct EU grants in 2020 than in the previous year, as at least two had to be channelled through the UNDP.²⁹ Though only limited number of NGOs receive foreign funding and this happens mainly through the service (individual) contracts or registering their organizations as a LLC (Limited liability company). After the changes in the NGO law in 2013-2014, it is almost impossible to get a grant from a foreign organization and register it. Moreover, this legislative change had a great impact not only on the NGO sector, but also on the donor community. The respondents stated that more than 50 donor organizations were forced to close their activities in Azerbaijan. The biggest problem is that the recipient of a project from international donors has certain obstacles regarding the registration of their grant agreement according to the relevant legislation.

“The NGO sector is currently funded by the Agency and various ministries (75-80%). There are other 20-25% of NGOs that can reach out to foreign donors and receive funding from them”

“Some ministries require a specific name to get funding. For example, the Ministry of Youth and Sports requires that the name of the organization should have the word youth. However, when you say a woman, you can also mean a child, a young girl, and a wise woman”

International donors and organizations have made a positive contribution to the development of NGOs. This contribution has been observed less recently, as the opportunities of these institutions to influence the country's policy have decreased. Currently the donors mostly finance foreign CSOs and prefer the programs of international organizations related to Azerbaijan. In accordance with the legislation, there is no restriction on receiving funding from foreign donors who have registered, have a representative office or its own branch in the country. In order to do that they must sign an agreement with the Republic of Azerbaijan to create a branch and/ or a representative office. However according to the respondents *“this is not enough, in addition you must register the grant agreement signed with the foreign donor at the Ministry of Justice, receive notification and prepare its financial and economic justification. Such complicated procedures resulted in the departure of international donors from Azerbaijan”*. Among foreign donor organizations who have representative offices in the country and eligible to provide grants are the European Union, UN agencies, USAID, etc.

Majority of respondents confirmed that most of the small NGOs receive local funding through the State Support Agency for NGOs and these organizations rarely have other donors. Usually grants from these organizations provide a small amount and activities cover a short period of time therefore they do not create sustainable financial opportunities. In addition there are business organizations that provide various grants within the framework of corporate social responsibility such as BP, Azercell, etc.

²⁸ <https://surdo.az/Uploads/3e5d1ac9f3f94e4c8ae59fe816ad1bff14920213056540.pdf>

²⁹ <https://surdo.az/Uploads/3e5d1ac9f3f94e4c8ae59fe816ad1bff14920213056540.pdf>

“The sector has always been and is financed by grants, but due to the legislative change in 2014, the issue of receiving grants from abroad is limited, so they can get only national funds. National funds are relatively small funds that are only in ministries, and there is also an NGO Agency, which used to be called the Council”.

6. Coalitions, Associations

There are several NGOs/CSOs associations and coalitions including but not limited to National NGO Forum, Publish What You Pay, Azerbaijan National Platform of Eastern Partnership CSO Forum, Azerbaijan Anti-TB NGO Coalition, Union of Disability Organizations, OGP, IRELI movement, National Council of Youth Organizations, etc. The fields of activity of these coalitions and associations are in human rights, democracy, transparency, open government, accountable state institutions, rule of law, judicial reforms, participation of CSOs in local self-government, etc. Some of these coalitions operate independently, while others are more closely related to the government. Some of the coalitions are registered, some of them are not. In some cases, some associations are effective, but they have low impact on decision making. Furthermore, lack of financial and human resources impacts the operation and sustainability of the coalitions.

“Today, the general condition of our coalitions is not good. It cannot maintain the office; they do not receive more than 10,000 AZN a year. There is no sustainability, it cannot retain employees”

“There are institutions that work with some international organizations. Their main offices are abroad, and they have coalitions such as an Azerbaijani representative office. It is more convenient for them. Platforms supported and represented by international organizations can be more sustained as they have international management. Also, if there is financial aid this also contributes to sustainability”

“Currently, one of the largest coalitions is the Azerbaijan Open Government platform. The second is the Eastern Partnership National Platform, we can also mention the Coalition Against Tuberculosis. These coalitions are trying to help. They conduct trainings, seminars, help increase knowledge and skills. Another important issue is that they organize communication with interested parties. There is a resource center of NGOs in the regions, but as we mentioned, their activity has weakened in the last 3-4 years, and they are not able to function according to their mission. Moreover, the State Support Agency for NGOs provides methodical support to them. For example there was an event on capacity building for NGOs on July 31st, 2022 in Mingechevir”.

Almost all respondents confirmed that the general environment of relationships among CSOs/ NGOs is competitive. Where there are limited financial resources, the opportunities for cooperation are not high.

“Unfortunately, competition is one of the problems. There is a difference in approach. But this is also individual. There was no platform or coalition working directly with women's organizations in Azerbaijan. And we proposed the creation of a National Dialogue Process as an initiative on such an issue and we are working on it. The organizations we cover are currently cooperating. We do not have any financial support, and no one has a role in the current administration. It is a platform where everyone is equal. No problem yet. But unfortunately, people still lack the idea that everyone can win”

In general CSOs/ NGOs are active in advocating for the sector. They have advocated for changes in law and regulations impacting on CSOs in particular the laws on grant registration. Propaganda and advocacy work are carried out in this regard both at the local and international level. However according to the respondents more work and activities had been done in this regard before than presently due to lack of financial and human resources, and lack of collaboration between organizations.

“After 2014 I think that the issue of competition has lost some relevance, as there are no resources to compete. The solidarity was considerable in 2014-2015. We saw solidarity because everyone was in the same situation. Government-oriented or opposition-oriented organizations came together to try to change that legislation, but they were unsuccessful”.

“Recently, a certain tradition has emerged, but I do not know if it will be episodic or permanent. Various committees of the Milli Majlis invite NGOs. The main thing is that NGOs go there with a product. They should be able to justify their ideas and be able to analyse and present those proposals well. Otherwise, the attitude towards NGOs becomes weak”

“To be honest, they are tired making proposals for law changes, discussing them, holding advocacy campaigns, collecting signatures. For example, representatives of our network recently met with a representative of the presidential office. Meetings are held with representatives of the Ministry of Justice. Proposals are made to the Parliament. But we are still waiting”

“They tried to defend themselves and fought. Different groups took different approaches. For example, some have thought that this can be achieved by cooperating with the state. Others take stricter steps, holding actions, appealing to international organizations, and different protest-motivated steps. I think that both factors have a role in the existing mitigations, but Azerbaijan's experience shows that change can be achieved by creating an environment of communication with the state, although slowly. However, NGOs follow the changes related to their sector very seriously, make expertise, appreciate the positive changes, and oppose the negative ones. In this regard, CSOs are active and united”.

7. Relationship with the state

The general nature of the relationship between civil society and the state is satisfactory. According to the respondents relationship between these two parties should be changed, more support should be given to each other and obstacles should be removed.

“The state notes that such a relationship is in the form of dialogue, and it has managed to involve several NGOs in the process. However, in terms of the nature of the relationship, the outcome, and its effectiveness, such a relationship still does not seem to be completely beneficial. The general character is that the state wants the role of CSOs to support politics, it wants sensitive issues to be excluded, and to increase relevant programs and activities for the reconstruction of Karabakh”

“In general, NGO philosophy does not separate NGOs and the state. They must cooperate. NGOs should also act as a bridge between their beneficiaries and state agencies. NGOs have a great role in this field. NGOs cooperate with state organizations, but we are not yet satisfied with the efficiency of that activity.

There is an issue of subordination. These cases are reduced to some extent. There are collaborations, but this level is still low in terms of quality and effectiveness”

“Not as good as I know. There is dialogue. Some meetings are held, trying to find common sides. However, there are no concrete results yet. However, both sides are trying to show that there is a public dialogue”

“Much depends on how well the state institutions know the head of the NGO. The better they know the head of the NGO on social networks, the easier it is for them to communicate with state agencies. If the head of the NGO creates a negative image in the society, it arouses certain doubts in the state”

“Today there are many attempts to establish partnership and dialogue. If we look at it and compare it with a few years, we can see the change, but I cannot say for sure that it goes both ways. The main thing is that it should be bilateral. Many NGOs do not trust state institutions and are biased towards their approach. There is a big gap in this process”.

According to the respondents the government views CSOs with suspicion, making it difficult to speak of any general recognition of CSO services by the government and the CSOs/ NGOs are not viewed as potential partners by political leaders.

“Political leaders are unable to use NGOs properly. For example, political parties should benefit from the research of NGOs and consult with them. But they cannot do that”

“In fact, I think they know that the NGO sector should not be a sector that interferes with politics in general and should not be considered a competitor there. The NGO sector is a supportive sector. We build our business in that field. The NGO sector should provide support to the state in areas where state institutions do not deliver and in areas where there is little expertise. This is not a competition; on the contrary, I think that the state should be interested in this.”

There are formal or informal mechanisms that facilitate CSO and public participation in dialogue and government decision-making processes. In 2013, the Law on Public Participation was adopted. The purpose of this law is to ensure the participation of citizens in the decision-making process. In 2020 new public councils³⁰ have been established within both central and local executive power bodies. These councils include CSO members and the role of the CSOs is to participate in decision-making processes through the public councils. However the powers of public councils are still limited and not every state entity are eager to cooperate. Participation in decision-making is not direct, but in the form of advice and recommendations, and participation in the final decision is not effective. Thus, although participation is formally encouraged, it is not allowed or if it is allowed only a limited number of selected CSOs can participate in the process.

“There was an event organized by the Agency about the NGO-Government interaction and Public Participation, establishment of public councils under executive authorities and other relevant state

³⁰ <https://ictimaishura.az/home/en>

institutions. The issue of public participation is very important. The level of competence of the public councils operating under the decision-makers, and the correctness of their intellectual level can impact. These can certainly have a serious impact. The Republic of Azerbaijan has a law on public participation, which states that members of public participation should be the heads of NGOs, media, etc. The issue is if the councils are chosen correctly, then it is possible to influence the decisions of the decision makers”

“NGO Agency was established. This was a step by the state. Some NGOs consider it a means of control and avoid it. Some saw it as creating partnerships and opportunities. I personally believe that NGOs should regularly cooperate with state structures. But depending on the structure, there is a different approach. You know that public councils have been established under all the different ministries and NGOs are represented in these councils. This is a step. This also shows that an interaction between the state authorities and NGOs is emerging. For example, the public council established under the Ministry of Education is very active and does a lot of work. But still, there is a different approach depending on the NGO. If the NGO is perceived as an opponent, of course, the approach against it is not good. If it is neutral or state-oriented, the attitude is different.”

“Relations between NGOs and the state today are not based on trust. In other words, we are talking more about the state. A simple example, if the state saw and trust NGOs as partners, it would change the legislation. At least it would maintain the status quo of 2013. The state does not do it because it does not trust NGOs, it does not want to see them as partners, because NGOs control the government's activities and demand transparency and accountability in their activities. Although the state declares that it is interested in cooperation, this is not true. Therefore, it has limited the activities of NGOs. Although NGOs are interested in working with the state, the essence of their activity is that they identify the problem and present it to the state so that the government can solve the problem. In base case, the state is interested in working with a limited number of NGOs which operate within a certain framework and do not deviate from that framework”

“Parliament is one of the participation mechanisms of NGOs in the decision-making process. For example, during the discussion of the state budget, NGOs should also participate. In international rankings, our position was at the bottom in the indicators related to transparency, the open budget index. I am talking about public participation. We scored 9 out of 100 possible points. However, we scored 63 points out of 100 in terms of state budget control. There is a mechanism, but NGOs are not invited to it. In the best case, two or three NGOs are invited, and they participate as observers. There is no need to discuss or make proposals. I think that although there is a mechanism, they are not used”

“The relationship between the state and NGOs worsened after 2014, because the government directly initiated those legislative changes. It caused the dangers. Moreover, it was a process that was not enough only with legislative changes. In general, in that process, a serious investigation of NGOs was conducted in 2014-15, there were certain arrests, arrests of people, restriction on accounts, and cards. The activities and security of NGOs were seriously harmed. Undoubtedly, relations deteriorated very sharply. The state did not trust the NGOs, and the NGOs saw the state as a predator because it had taken steps to bankrupt and destroy them. Therefore, it can be said that communication between the two sectors stopped, except for personal contacts and relations. A great climate of distrust prevailed and continued for a long time. It

lasted somewhere for 3-4 years. Then, gradually, from the end of 2016, some small-scale initiatives started, and opportunities for dialogue began to be created by third parties at an artificial speed. During that period, the rediscovery phase began. NGOs were identifying separate allies in the state for themselves. The state tried to identify more potential experts among the NGOs, who were constructive enough and identified for themselves organizations that did not insult the state at every step, to involve them in some state programs. Such an ordinary stage began. In 2019, the coolness between them began to be relatively removed. The number of dialogue initiatives has increased a little, but unfortunately, it has not been able to make much progress, because in 2020, COVID hit us, and 20-21 years were the years that passed in the background of COVID. Priorities have changed, the routine has changed. Moreover, there was a second war in 2020, and the war in 2020 slightly tightened the state and the NGO sector, because the struggle and conflict in the information space brought the two sectors quite close"

"I think that the relationship between civil society and the state has softened considerably after the COVID-19 pandemic and the second Karabakh War. Confidence has increased, but it is not the level we wish for. Secondly, compared to 3 years ago, communication has increased strongly. Currently, my organization has held five public hearings, in each of which there was an alternate speaker for state bodies. We have open state debates and 6 of those 10 debates involved government bodies. We did not observe them before. State bodies now easily communicate, answer the requests of NGOs, and participate in their events. In this regard, I consider that communication has increased now. The environment of mistrust which was 3-4 years ago has decreased significantly. The importance of public control and NGOs was emphasized at the level of the head of state. Public councils have been established in nineteen central executive authorities. Public councils have been established in most local executive authorities, which inevitably highlighted the importance of CSOs. We can criticize the negative features of this process, but let's agree that compared to three years ago, this process increases contacts, increases communication, increases mutual relations, that is, it creates a diffusion process"

"The law on public participation in Azerbaijan envisages all these mechanisms, and I think it is one of the most progressive laws even compared to the European experience. The standards, mechanisms, methods, and tools provided for in all international practice related to public participation are reflected in this law. Sure, there are problems with the implementation of the law in practice, and in many cases public authorities take a formal approach to the joint decision-making process. Besides, the Open Government platform operates in Azerbaijan, and government institutions, parliamentary representatives and 42 NGOs are represented there. Public hearings, debates, and discussions are regularly organized on the platform, which has a positive effect on decision-making. Moreover, it organizes the communication of other NGOs with the state. They write letter and involve state bodies in these cases".

According to the respondents the main government's expectations of civil society are:

- CSOs should cooperate with the government on selected topics, including the process of return to Karabakh, demining, prisoners, public participation, etc.
- CSOs should make international advocacy on human rights and democracy softer, criticize not only Azerbaijan, but also Armenia continuously in international institutions

- CSOs should more interested in programs related to local issues, social, economic, environmental and climate change
- CSOs should report issues in the society more quickly and more accessible to the relevant institutions so that the state can make relevant changes
- CSOs should be flexible in solving problems and come up with certain initiatives for the country development
- CSOs should investigate gaps and problems in society and support their solution
- CSO members should protect the interests of the Azerbaijan state in international organizations
- CSOs should ensure transparency and accountability, especially in regional administration, implementation of public control, learning and bringing advanced international experience to Azerbaijan, creating an environment of trust for reforms in certain areas.

NGOs/ CSOs expect from engagement with the government the various forms of support, cooperation and joint action from the state. CSOs wait for the creation of a favorable legal environment, increased trust, and more participation.

“The expectations of the civil society from the government are the relaxation of the legislation, the easier bringing of donors and international organizations to the country, and the allocation of funds.

“The expectation of NGOs is that the state trusts and cooperates with NGOs and that their opinions and proposals are considered”

“The CSO's expectation from the state is that they accept us as partners, change the law for us, so we can work normally. If they do one thing, we will do more so that the state develops. CSOs are not the enemy of the state. We want the development of our country”.

In order for CSOs to be engaged on reforms they should cooperate with each other on certain issues and appeal together to resolve an issue.

“In many cases, one of the reasons for ineffectiveness of CSO engagement on reforms is that our NGOs apply individually to solve a certain problem. They all want their name to be mentioned. But this is not effective. We were also told by the Milli Majlis that why are you writing so many separate letters. Write a letter together. All of them need to be answered. When you get together and write a letter, it is more effective”

“Time passes, neither NGOs are involved in those issues, nor the task of the president is properly fulfilled. For example, when the law on combating human trafficking was adopted, I took the initiative as an NGO for the protection of several human trafficking victims. I went to institutions and spoke with them. The mechanism worked well. I started, then NGOs also joined. There are some laws that are never known when they are adopted. The Ministry of Social Protection has a good practice of sharing everything on the social network. Updates should come to our e-mail. The mechanism comes into play when the law is at hand. And you operate according to that law. When implemented in such a form, action plans are also effective. The law should be monitored. 16 years have passed since the adoption of the law on domestic violence, but no one monitors it. There should have been orders to NGOs in this regard”.

8. Relationship with private sector

NGOs/ CSOs have been able to develop some partnerships and relationships with the private sector. Some private institutions operating in the country implement joint projects with NGOs. According to the respondents at present, the measures are being taken to develop relations between NGO-state-private institutions. However the level of this partnership is not sufficient and funding is also ineffective. The main obstacle is the low interest of the private sector in the public sector and the presence of certain corporate interests in the private sector. In many cases, certain companies, commercial organizations carry out an activity for a charity purpose on the eve of any holiday. They note that they carried out certain activities within the framework of corporate social responsibility.

“The partnership with business institutions is quite new. There is cooperation in this field, but mostly in social and educational projects. As it is known, business has a great role in political processes and policy formation. But we see them mostly in soft areas, where such cooperation has given a successful result”

“The private sector needs to be encouraged. For example, if the private sector participates in an NGO project in Turkey, the private sector is exempt from certain taxes until the project is completed. We do not have it. Here the collaboration is based on a process of personal relationships”

“This culture was absent from the beginning, and even after the grant opportunities were limited, it became somewhat difficult to create this tradition. Due to lack of confidence in the NGO sector in the country it still exists. Therefore, even if a corporate culture is formed in the private sector to cooperate with NGOs, to finance projects arising from social responsibility, the private sector was careful to support NGOs, precisely in the “cool situation” between the NGO and the state. The private sector was afraid that if it gets closer to the NGO, its relations with the state may suffer”.

9. Priority needs and Challenges

In addition to above mentioned challenges and issues that NGOs/ CSOs face in their operation, COVID-19, the Second Qarabakh war and war in Ukraine had also impacted the operations of NGOs/ CSOs recently. Such pressures have caused the organizations to deviate from their fields of activity and programs, and focus more on current events. The range of participation of NGOs in both international and national level events and certain issues has narrowed. The activities of NGOs were limited during the COVID-19 pandemic and quarantine in particular in the regions where access was restricted. As a result of these restrictions, many CSOs faced difficulties implementing their projects and reaching out to their beneficiaries. In addition the COVID-19 state response measures didn't cover interests of NGOs/ CSOs sector.

On another hand there were some positive impact, i.e. the organizations have started using new platforms and programs for online meetings that they had not used before. Many NGOs/ CSOs were active during the war and the war has united NGOs around the national interests. The organizations had to convey their messages both locally and internationally. The public image of NGOs/ CSOs has improved due to these activities as well as organizations' support of vulnerable groups during the pandemic and the Second Qarabakh war.

“New technologies help us. They create great opportunities for NGOs. The war had some impact, but NGOs operated in their own way. The biggest negative impact was caused by COVID including lockdown and quarantine regime. NGOs tried to work in extremely limited conditions, as the quarantine regimes require a lot of legal procedures, and some of the NGOs do not have sustainable salaries “

“Because NGOs work together with communities and civil societies, and in crisis situations (COVID, war), the low-income strata are directly affected, and while working with them, the work of NGOs increases, and many problems are revealed. But at the same time, they find it difficult to solve many problems as they do not have resources. The resource is not only about finance, but also restrictions, access limits and this creates a problem”

“After winning the Qarabakh war, there was a negative attitude towards Azerbaijan and some donors reduced funding to Azerbaijan”

“The war in Ukraine has affected grant allocation as many grants from donor organizations are directed to Ukraine”.

“The war had postponed projects on the frontline. We also had a project during that period, and we had to postpone it for 2 months”

“NGOs were not completely listed among the authorized professions when there was lockdown. Even the organizations related to the protection of rights were not included to the list. This reduced their accessibility to vulnerable groups”

“Virtually no conditions were created for NGOs, and they were forced to work from home, including NGO leaders. This is a format that contradicts the nature of NGO activity. A publicist should communicate with the public, our communication with the public has dropped to 0. Especially since we did not have internet for 2 months during the war, there was a total disconnection”

“The war changed the whole agenda, and there were steps aimed at supporting the state more informationally than working with the population”.

Among the priority needs for organizational and specialist learning in NGOs/ CSOs the respondents mentioned: studying the relevant international experience, improving the skills of personnel on project management, PR, monitoring and evaluation, applying digital technology, developing strategic programs of the organization, international advocacy skills, skills in applying for financing programs and fundraising, acquisition of technical skills and constant awareness of the innovations happening in the world.

“Many organizations are not aware of the extent to which they lack organizational structure and are generally far from organizational management principles. Not only is it not there, but they also do not even realize it. Therefore, we must do a serious ploughing work and take steps to rebuild the organizations. After the legislation changes, I assume that interest in the public sector will increase. After the increase, there will be a need for a project to increase knowledge and skills with a real NGO approach, one of which is the creation of an NGO school”.

At the end of interviews the respondents proposed the following recommendations/ suggestions how to improve operation and management of CSOs/ NGOs:

- To remove certain restrictions within the framework of the legislation including simplification of NGOs registration and registration of grants
- To provide access to local and international donors
- To strengthen activities in new platforms and coalitions
- To increase the knowledge and skills of NGOs in the field of public relations, advocacy, media literacy, literacy in the digital field, project and organizational management, fundraising
- To establish cooperation between the NGO-state-private sector, as well as to promote wider public control
- To create financing opportunities for the implementation of sustainable and institutional programs
- To ensure less intervention of the state in the CSO sector, elimination of unreasonable barriers and requirements
- To ensure transparency and accountability of NGOs for the state and society
- To strengthen government-NGO interaction
- To organize and ensure participation of NGOs/ CSOs in government decisions, in the discussion of laws and in the implementation of state programs
- To open/ organize the NGO center
- To provide opportunities for NGOs to operate in the regions
- To clarify the forms of NGOs by legislation, i.e. charitable societies, NGOs, non-profit organizations should be separated from each other and legislation shall apply a separate legal approach to each of organization form
- To develop and strengthen personnel base, management structure, management standards of organizations
- To launch a program aimed at the recovery of the NGO sector
- To ensure financial diversification, i.e. funding sources of NGOs should be diversified, collection of donations should be simplified, concessional loans should be provided for NGOs to start social business
- To adopt a law on social entrepreneurship or a national strategy on social entrepreneurship
- To consider incentives for private sector financing of NGOs
- To simplify the laws on recruiting volunteers
- To adopt a new state program for the development of CSOs, and provide them institutional assistance.

8. Conclusions and Recommendations

Summary

The Report assesses the civil society environment, challenges and needs, and provides a general framework for the organizations' needs and trainings' priorities.

The assessment revealed that majority of organizations lack public relations a, communication skills and plan. All the public relations (PR) objectives are important for sustainability and work of any NGO. NGOs/ CSOs have to communicate their goals and objectives in order to maintain visibility, credibility, accountability and growth. Good public relations help NGOs not only to get money but also to build trust and communicate effectively between various stakeholders. It is important for organizations to develop and use a communication plan and branding policy. Therefore, one of the recommendations is to enhance public relations and communication abilities of the NGOs, and to guide them on developing of communication plans. A communication plan helps an NGO strategically focus its communication and outreach efforts around a certain set of goals – usually the mission and objectives of an organization, and also helps effectively promote NGO's work in the public and donors eyes. Furthermore, public relations strategies contribute to motivation of volunteers and attract them to work of organization.

The PR and communication priorities interrelate with Advocacy and Lobbying needs and activities of NGOs/ CSOs. Advocacy and lobbying helps NGOs to increase their capacity to influence the public and private sectors for their interest. Along with improvement of public relations, communication and advocacy abilities, fundraising and writing proposals are important skills for long term organizational sustainability. Therefore, increasing capacity of effective fundraising is recommended within the capacity building program of the organizations.

Based on the findings from the assessments, monitoring and evaluation (M&E) system in organizations requires more improvement and capacity building. M&E is important for an organization to assess if a project or a program is achieving set targets as well as for other stakeholders to see performance and accountability of an organization. Hence, it is important for organizations to enhance M&E skills and develop strong M&E plan. Organizational development is a critical process that helps organizations to build their capacity, to change and achieve greater effectiveness by developing, improving, and reinforcing strategies, structures, and processes³¹. Organizational capacity of NGOs also has been affected negatively due to legal restrictions, funding limitations, pandemic and recent wars. NGOs/ CSOs lack sufficient professional staff, offices, equipment and abilities in order to effectively provide services to their beneficiaries. The organizational development of NGOs/ CSOs requires a spectrum of capacity building trainings focused on several major functional systems of an organization, including strategic planning, program management, human and financial resources, governance, external relations, etc. The capacity levels of each NGO may differ from system to system, therefore capacity building and development plan should consider capacity profile and need of an organization. The more attention and activities should be given to regional CSOs.

³¹ <https://www.aihr.com/blog/organizational-development/#:~:text=is%20organizational%20development%3F-A%20definition,strategies%2C%20structures%2C%20and%20processes.>

Finally, for effective development and operation of the NGOs/ CSOs it is important to improve a dialogue between government and civil society sector in general , to find common interest between these stakeholders, to hear voices and ideas from NGOs, and to simplify procedures and for organization and grant registration.

Annex 1: Mapping Tool

Questionnaire

1. Date of completion _____
2. Name of the organization in Azerbaijani _____

2a. Name of the organization in English _____

3. Date, month, year of establishment _____

4. Legal status (please select one option)

1. NGOs/ CSOs
2. INGOs
3. Association
4. Foundation
5. Academia (Research Institute, University)
6. Religious Organization

5. Contact Data

1. Legal address _____
2. Telephone/ Fax _____
3. Email _____
4. Website and social media account _____
5. Contact Person _____

6. Types of services provided (please mark all relevant)

1. Financial services and/or provision of aid goods
2. Legal services
3. Educational services (*trainings, extracurricular activities*)
4. Health services (*medical consultations, medical supplies, rehabilitation services*)
5. Social and psychosocial services (*individual/group/family counselling/ parenting education*)
6. Inclusion and participation-oriented services (*cultural and/or sport activities*)
7. Youth participation and development
8. Vocational training and entrepreneurship
9. Awareness raising, communication and social behaviour change
10. Social innovation
11. Gender and women empowerment
12. Environment protection and climate change
13. Technical consultation (Research, study, capacity building, monitoring & evaluation, etc.)
14. Other (please specify) _____

7. Aim/mission of organization

8. Beneficiaries/target groups (please mark all relevant)

1. Children
2. Families
3. Youth/adolescents
4. Women
5. People/Children with physical disabilities
6. People/Children with mental health challenges
7. Legal offenders or children/youth at risk of offending the law
8. People (including youth) addicted to drugs, alcohol or chemical substances
9. Victims of violence, domestic violence, trafficking or other related issues
10. Refugees or children of IDP families
11. Minorities
12. Unemployed persons (including young people) or job-seeking persons
13. Other (please specify)_____

9. Geographical coverage (please mark all relevant)

1. Whole country
2. Baku city
3. Absheron- Khizi
4. Mountainous Shirvan
5. Ganja-Dashkesan
6. Garabakh
7. Gazakh-Tovuz
8. Guba-Khachmaz
9. Lankaran – Astara
10. Central Aran
11. Mil-Mugan
12. Sheki-Zagatala
13. East Zangazur
14. Shirvan-Salyan
15. Nakhchivan
16. In specific community/ies or districts (please specify)

10. Number of staff within the organization at present (please fill all questions)

1. Total number of personnel _____
2. Number of male personnel _____
3. Number of female personnel _____

4. Number of managerial personnel _____
5. Number of experts/ professionals _____
6. Number of psychologists, social workers, community mobilizers , if any _____
7. Number of other administrative or support personnel _____

12. Main donor(s)/partner(s) of your organization (please mark all relevant)

1. Financed entirely by the state
2. Co-financed by the state
3. Religious organizations (please specify) _____
4. Other national donors (please specify) _____
5. International donors (please specify) _____
6. Individual donors (please specify the top three donors if possible) _____
7. Other (please specify) _____

13. Which are the three main training/capacity development needs of your organization to provide more effective target services?

1. Human rights and child rights (including gender)
2. Principles of social welfare/Human Rights Based Programming Approach
3. Organizational development
4. Project management (planning, budgeting, monitoring and evaluation, proposal and donor report writing)
5. Public relations and external communication
6. Advocacy and lobbying
7. Community engagement and communication for social behaviour change
8. Team building and staff development
9. Financial management
10. Knowledge and information management
11. Other (please specify) _____

14. Is your organization a member of which professional groups, unions or associations in the country or abroad?

1. Yes, which professional group/ association _____
2. No

15. What are your recommendations/ suggestions how to improve operation and activities of your organization?

Annex 2: Capacity and Needs Assessment Tool

CSOs/ NGOs Capacity and Needs Assessment Questionnaire

1. Name of organization: _____
 2. Full names and position of respondent: _____
 3. Contact data (telephone, email, web-page) : _____
 4. Location (address, city) _____
 5. Date of registration _____
 6. Legal form of organization (Public, Union, branch of National or Foreign NGO, Coalition, Fund, other (specify) _____
 7. In which local or international NGO networks is your organization represented? _____
-
1. What is the overall level of experience of CSOs/ NGOs in the country? Is the sector relatively new, or is there a long history of civil society?
 2. How long has there been a civil society sector? What is the public attitude toward civil society? Has this attitude improved or deteriorated over time?
 3. Is registration of CSOs/ NGOs mandatory? Are informal associations/ organizations permitted?
 4. Are CSOs/ NGOs penalized for carrying out activities prior to registration?
 5. Are fees charged to register? Are there initial capitalization requirements?
 6. Is there a time limit within which to approve or deny registration? Is there an appeal process for denial?
 7. Are laws and regulations evenly applied to all CSOs, or are certain types of CSOs (e.g., human rights organizations or advocacy groups) subject to stricter or different treatment?
 8. Are CSOs/ NGOs exempt from VAT or sales tax on purchases? Are donations taxed?
 9. To what extent do CSOs/NGOs have financial management plans in place? Do CSOs overall plan and budget for interventions?
 10. Do most CSOs/ NGOs have mission statements? Do they regularly develop annual or longer term workplans?
 11. How able are CSOs to develop and implement strategic plans? How much participation by members is there with respect to strategic planning?
 12. Are human resources well managed? Are CSOs/NGOs able to maintain permanent, paid staff?
 13. Do CSOs/ NGOs have adequate human resources practices for staff, including contracts, job descriptions, and personnel policies?
 14. Do CSOs/ NGOs generally have monitoring, evaluation, and learning plans in place?
 15. What is the average longevity of CSOs/ NGOs in the country?
 16. Are CSOs/ NGOs based exclusively in the capital, or do they have broader regional or national reach?
 17. What do CSOs/ NGOs view as their most significant challenges with respect to organizational management?
 18. How is the sector funded and resourced?

19. To what extent have international actors (donors, international organizations, international CSOs) contributed to the sector?
20. Have CSOs/ NGOs been able to receive donor funding? If yes, has that been limited to a small group, or is donor funding more widely spread out?
21. Are there restrictions on local CSOs/ NGOs receiving foreign funding?
22. Are international CSOs/ NGOs allowed to register and operate?
23. Does the government fund CSOs/ NGOs? Have CSOs been able to attract diverse sources of funding, including local sources?
24. Are there CSO/ NGO resource centers, innovation hubs, umbrellas, or coalitions that CSOs can turn to for information, training, technical assistance, or other support? If so, are such resources respected and viewed as fair and even-handed, or do they instead serve only specific favored organizations?
25. What are the primary umbrella organizations or coalitions? Are they effective? Representative?
26. What issues do they cover? Are they independent?
27. What is the general nature of relationships among CSOs/ NGOs? Are they mutually supportive, or do they undermine and compete with each other?
28. Are CSOs/ NGOs active in advocating for the sector? For example, have they advocated for changes in law or regulations impacting on CSOs? Have CSOs conducted broad-based advocacy campaigns? If so, to what effect
29. To what extent do or can CSOs/ NGOs use digital technologies? To what extent is technology integrated into the organizations?
30. Do CSOs use social media, and if so, have social media strategies? Do they have websites, blogs, social media accounts (e.g., Twitter, Facebook, Instagram)?
31. Does CSOs/ NGOs staff have adequate technology capacity to use computers, office software, communications software, data storage, etc.?
32. For democracy-oriented CSOs/ NGOs, have they been able to conduct broad-based advocacy campaigns? Have advocacy campaigns been successful?
33. For democracy-oriented CSOs, have they been able to effectively interact with media organizations?
34. Are CSOs/ NGOs able to efficiently provide services that meet the needs of their potential beneficiaries? Do they have the professional skills required for the sector in which they work?
35. What is the general nature of the relationship between civil society and the state?
36. Do political leaders view CSOs/ NGOs as threats or as potential partners?
37. To what extent does the government allow or encourage citizen participation in government decision-making? Do government officials and institutions rely on CSOs/ NGOs as a community resource or a source of expertise or credible information?
38. Are there formal or informal mechanisms that facilitate CSO/public participation in dialogue and government decision-making processes? Are there organized roundtable discussions that include government, CSOs, and members of the public? Are invitations to participate open to all CSOs or only to those seen as favoring government policies?
39. What are government's expectations of civil society?
40. What does civil society expect from engagement with the government?

41. What are the key elements—legally and institutionally—that remain as barriers to CSO engagement on reform?
42. Have CSOs/ NGOs been able to develop partnerships or relationships with the private sector?
Have they been able to mobilize funding from private sources?
43. Are there strong leaders in the CSO community?
44. Are CSO leaders able to articulate needs and represent their constituencies?
45. Do CSOs/ NGOs effectively represent interests, needs, and concerns of all socioeconomic, political, religious, ethnic, gender, or other groups? Are any groups excluded? If so, why?
46. What are the priority needs for organizational learning and specialist learning in CSOs/ NGOs?
47. What new pressures (e.g. COVID, war, refugees, emergent technology, demographic transition, state influence by foreign actors) have come to the force? How do these pressures influence CSOs/ NGOs?
48. What other recommendations/ suggestions how to improve operation and management of CSOs/ NGOs?

Annex 3: Database with results from Mapping Assessment

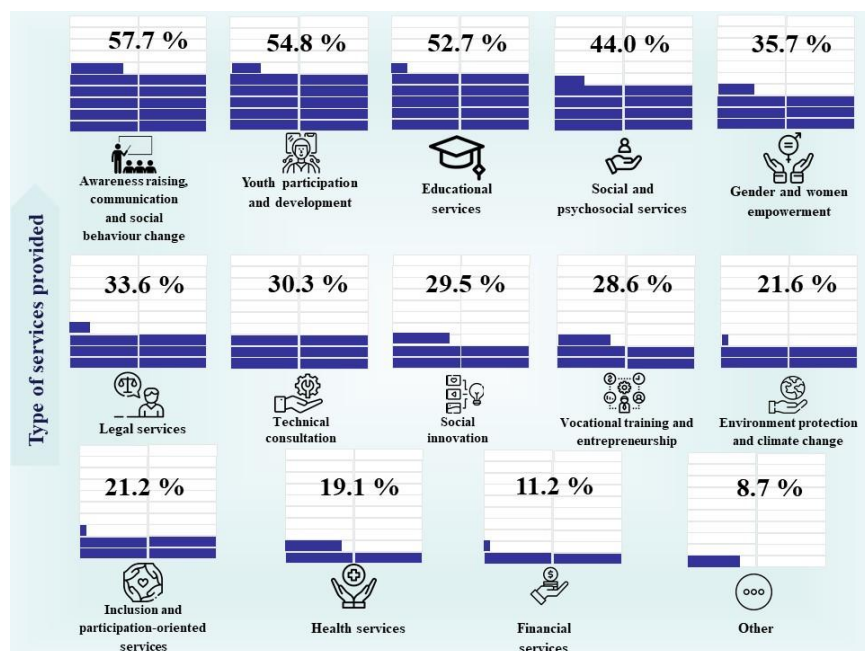
Submitted as Excel File separately due to size and to allow searches.

Annex 4: Infographics



Majority of organizations that participated in mapping assessment identified their legal status as public unions.



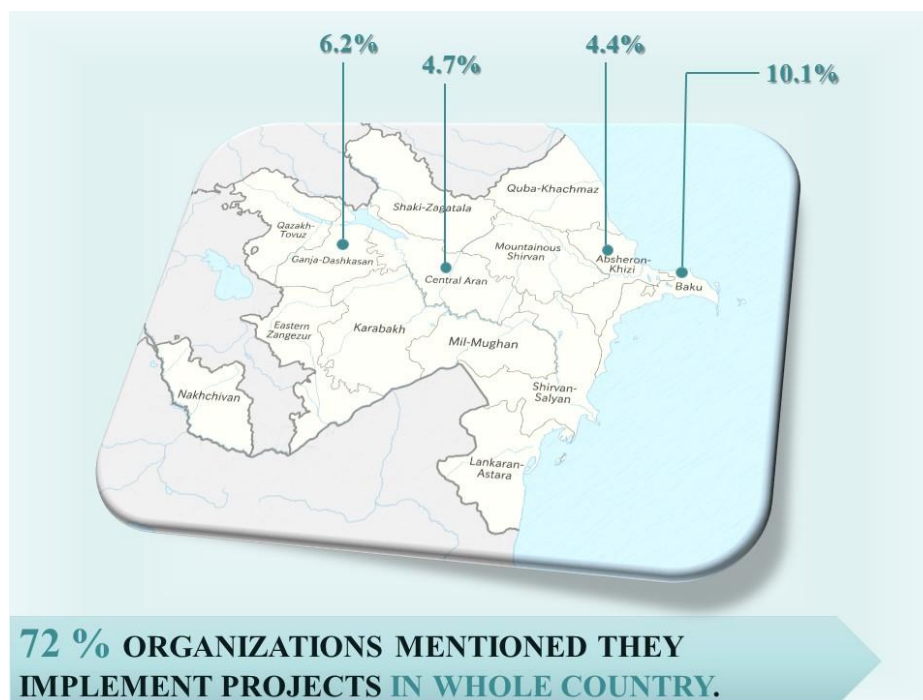
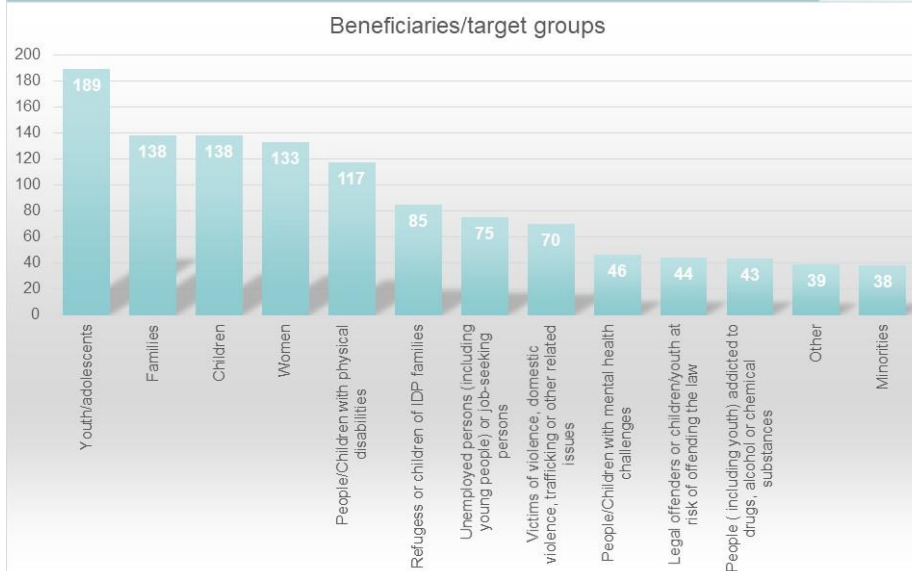


99% ORGANIZATIONS HAVE CLEARLY INDICATED THE ORGANIZATION'S AIM AND MISSION.

AND MISSION

INDICATED THE ORGANIZATION'S AIM

Among the most commonly served target groups/ beneficiaries are children, families, youth/ adolescents and women. 30 organizations work only with one group of beneficiaries, 23 organizations work with 2 groups, another 26 organizations work with 3 groups and the rest of organizations work with more than 3 groups of beneficiaries.



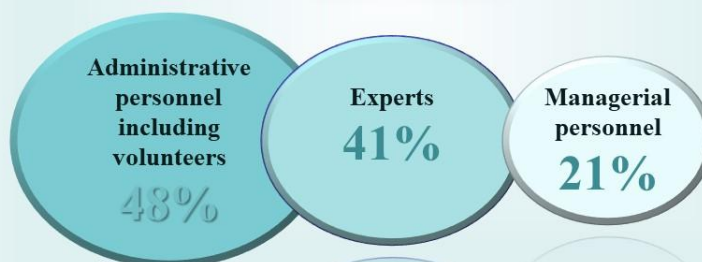
ON AVERAGE THERE ARE **16** PERSONNEL IN AN ORGANIZATION

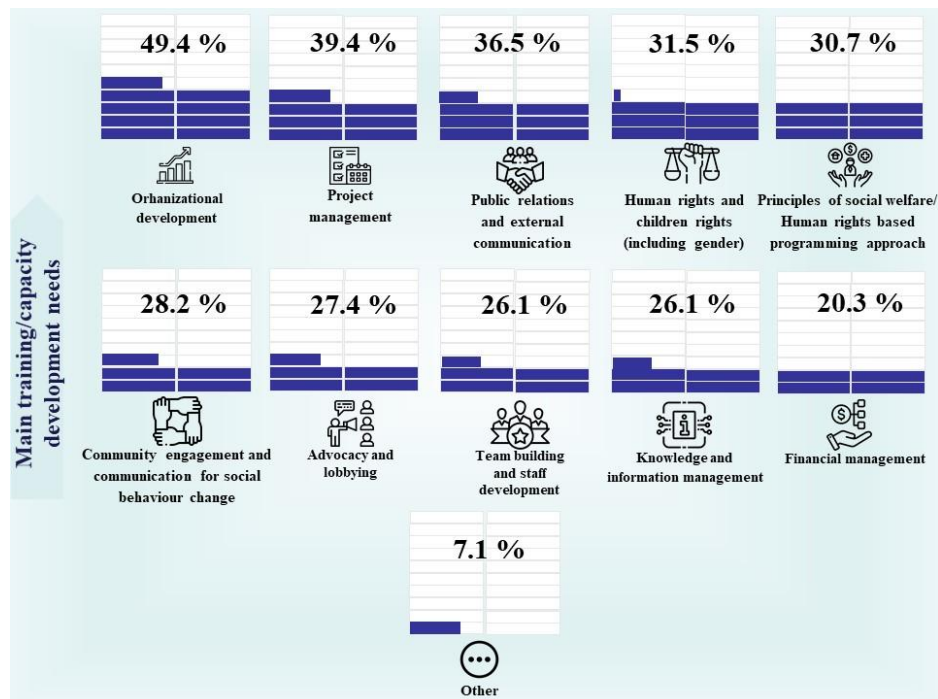
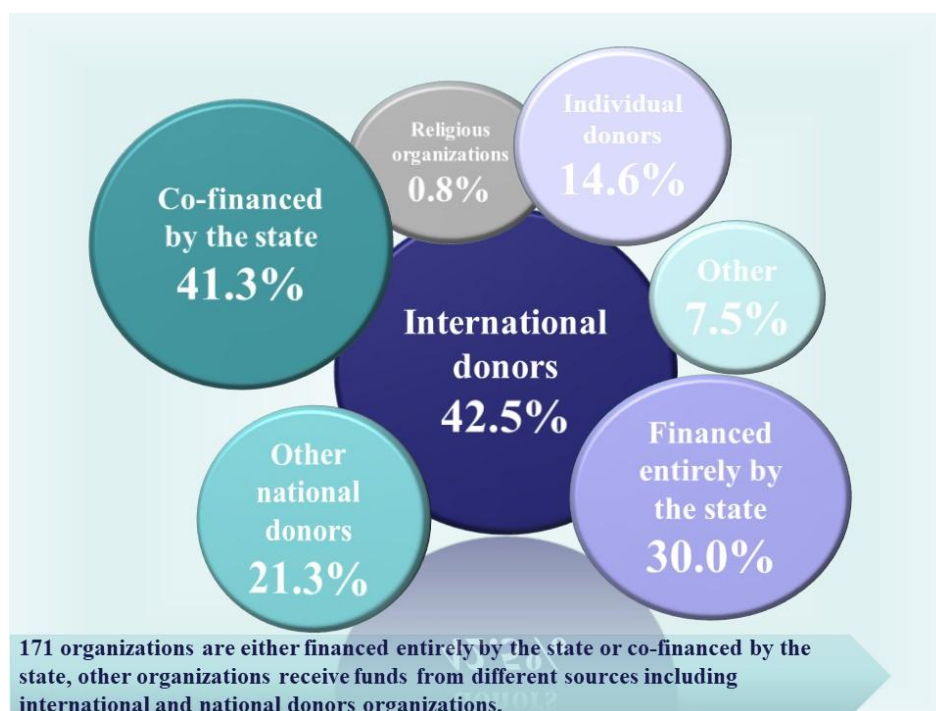


THERE ARE TOTAL **2002** MALE AND **1766** FEMALE PERSONNEL IN THE RESPONDED ORGANIZATIONS WITH THE SEX RATIO AT **113**



ON AVERAGE THERE ARE **3** MANAGERIAL PERSONNEL INCLUDING MEMBERS OF BOARD OF DIRECTORS, **7** EXPERTS, **8** ADMINISTRATIVE PERSONNEL INCLUDING VOLUNTEERS IN AN ORGANIZATION







Annex 5: List of organizations for capacity and needs assessment

N	Name of organization
Women NGOs/ CSOs	
1	"Clean World" Women's Aid Public Union
2	Women and Innovations Public Union
3	"Yuva", "Fem Akt"
Environmental NGOs/CSOs	
4	Beeco Initiative
Human Rights NGOs/ CSOs	
5	Azerbaijan Law Society
Economic NGOs/ CSOs	
6	Assistance to economic initiatives public union
Coalitions, Associations	

7	State Support Agency for Non-Governmental Organizations of the Republic of Azerbaijan
8	EaP CSF AZNP
Youth NGOs/ CSOs	
9	Young Leaders Education-Training public association
Disability NGOs/ CSOs	
10	Azerbaijan Union of Disabled Organizations
11	Society of Disabled Women
Regional NGOs/ CSOs	
12	Ulucay Socio-Economic Innovation Center
13	Ganja Agribusiness Association
14	Ganja Regional Women Organization
Research and Development	
15	"Umid" Support to Social Development Public Union i
16	Priority Socio-Economic Research Center
Social NGOs/ CSOs	
17	Azerbaijan Social Work Public Union

Annex 6: Recommendations in mapping assessment

Recommendations:

1. To provide financial support for the opening of accessible production areas, vocational and language courses for people with visual disabilities in the territories of the NGO
2. Developing design and management skills - both budgeting and problem-oriented project development skills; improving crowdfunding skills
3. Donor presence and office and equipment
4. Changing the state policy on foreign financing of civil society. Changes in the laws regulating the activities of NGOs must be made
5. Innovative training, study of international experience

6. Studying, promoting and applying local and international experience for the integration of people with disabilities into society within the framework of national interests
7. Improvement of legislation for the purpose of normalizing the NGO activity environment
8. Exemption from rent and utilities. Provide an office accessible to people with disabilities
9. Development of strategic planning skills of management team members of the organization's branches
10. Reprint of the book "Basics of consumer rights" and strengthening of mediation center
11. Involvement of professional staff, training of staff with different language skills, organization of PR work, involvement of financial manager
12. Grants from foreign donors should be allowed. The procedure for grants to non-governmental organizations in Azerbaijan should be simplified. A central building should be provided for NGOs
13. For the continuous and high-quality implementation of projects, it is desirable that foreign and local donor organizations are more active in our country
14. Creation of joint cooperation relations, participation in joint programs, organization of additional trainings, meetings
15. Involvement of business companies in financing, opportunities to implement social entrepreneurship to ensure the organization's own financing
16. More transparent operation of the Eastern Partnership platform
17. Cooperation with state institutions should be created
18. Important factors for the successful operation of the organization and maintenance of dynamics are the following: service quality, proper execution of processes, competitiveness, resource management and continuous improvement, technological developments, profitability
19. Return of grant-giving international donor organizations to Azerbaijan, increase in the amount of grants, creation of normal conditions for NGOs
20. Brand recognition, organizational development
21. Conducting trainings for the efficient operation of young personnel
22. Organization of local and international trainings for the purpose of training new personnel, creation of a social-psychological rehabilitation service to serve families living in a socially dangerous situation in the regions, provision of a vehicle for a more operative and flexible organization of mobile service, etc.
23. The environment for the implementation of international projects should be changed, the procedure for registering foreign grants should be simplified
24. To allow regular use of foreign donors for the regular operation of the organization. Donor organization monitoring and reallocation of funding for project sustainability
25. Simplification of procedures related to foreign grant funding, improvement of office activities and technical support, simplification of the notification system, creation of more comfortable conditions for the activities of NGOs in the regions
26. Fundamental changes should be made to the legislation preventing the registration, activity and financing of civil society in Azerbaijan, favorable conditions should be created for the development of organizations, a sustainable financial strategy should be implemented with the participation of foreign donors, comprehensive work and living opportunities should be created in Azerbaijan to prevent labor migration from the country

27. Liberalization of the legislative framework related to NGOs, removal of restrictions, state registration, termination of criminal cases against NGOs
28. Training related to the search for financial resources, exchange of international experience of NGOs, strengthening of cooperation with international organizations
29. International and local cooperation, to unite in associations
30. Establishing relations with international organizations and properly setting up the organization's propaganda
31. Currently, the organization operates within the framework of the project with the financial support of the State Support Agency, the only donor in Azerbaijan. If the foreign donor organizations are restored (if the restriction on grant agreements from the Ministry of Justice is removed), the organization will resume its activities
32. Raising awareness and helping to overcome social problems
33. Assisting NGOs in the regions in their continuous relations with international organizations to increase their financial capacity
34. Regular organization and participation in NGO management, fundraising, project writing, monitoring and evaluation trainings
35. Needs in an office and contacts with more donors to further expand NGOs scope of activities
36. Restoring the activities of international donors, expanding cooperation with international organizations, and ensuring the continuity of projects
37. Improvement of office facilities
38. The provision of more organizational, financial and specialist support by the state to public organizations can, at least partially, affect the change in the state of the CSO in a positive direction
39. It is important to have a permanent office in order to improve the activity of our organization
40. Creation of permanent office of NGOs - NGO House model
41. Creation of international relations for exchange of experience. Presence of Foreign Donors
42. The organization needs an office for its permanent operation
43. Increasing transparency in national communication and accessibility in international communication
44. Organization of foreign trips, involvement in TOT trainings. Foreign NGO work experience
45. Access opportunities for international donors should be eased, support for the creation of local organizations of the organization, and new civilized forms of joint activity with state institutions should be encouraged
46. Solving the problem of access to foreign funding and registration of grant agreements
47. Finding access to more funding sources
48. Finding the necessary financial resources, establishing professional management
49. Since international donors and projects are stopped in the organization, there is funding only at the local level. The expert potential of the organization cannot work sufficiently
50. It would be good if there would be an opportunity to work with international donors along with local donors. At the same time, it would be possible to cooperate with municipalities and local executive authorities
51. Access to International and Local Donor Organizations

52. To cooperate with organizations dealing with family problems in foreign countries, to exchange experience with them
53. In order to improve the activity of our organization, there is a need for further development of employees and international projects
54. When project announcements are made in the direction of economic development of regions, priority should be given to CSOs/NGOs who know the region closely. CSOs/NGOs located in the capital and wishing to implement a project related to the economic development of the regions should be required to cooperate with organizations located in the region
55. Increase financial support
56. Project management and the establishment of fundraising activities and support in learning practical knowledge and skills in this field
57. Closer cooperation with government agencies, development of skills to work with donors
58. In order for the activity of the Union to be effective and large-scale, it is necessary to develop the material and technical base and involve the staff in continuous work.
59. Strengthen the financial situation
60. There is a constant need for the training of high-level professionals
61. Training on improving project management skills
62. Search for alternative funding sources
63. Creating conditions for the creation and development of social entrepreneurship to reduce dependence on donors
64. Changing the legislation on grant and donor registration and thereby facilitating access to international financial resources
65. Preparation of methodical materials for legal education of minors and teaching of children's rights
66. Applying project proposal to national and international donors
67. Availability of suitable offices for NGOs
68. Close cooperation with other NGOs
69. Increasing project budgets and increasing the implementation period
70. Availability of institutional support projects, capacity building for international advocacy, effective media and communication opportunities
71. Development of international relations and work and cooperation with international donors
72. To ensure the stability and continuous operation of the staff, to expand the exchange of experience by developing international relations, as well as to establish cooperation with international donors
73. Get a financial source and increase the activity of the organization
74. Creation of regional divisions
75. Availability of new technical equipment
76. Youth organizations can apply to both the Agency and the Youth Fund. NGOs should be given the opportunity to apply to the Youth Fund too
77. Close support and cooperation of NGOs with each other. Promotion of their activities, organization of experience exchange
78. Administrative support is needed to maintain the team and office in the organization

79. It is necessary to support the participation of active members of the organization in certain conferences and seminars abroad
80. Need a small support for the solution of technical problems and the maintenance of an employee for the continuous operation of the organization's website
81. Restrictions applied to NGOs should be removed, conditions should be created for foreign funds to operate in the country and allocate financial resources
82. There is a serious need to establish cooperation in the direction of studying international experience and finding a donor
83. Continuing the admission of members to the Public Union and the involvement of qualified experts
84. Establishing relations of our organization with public associations operating abroad in the appropriate field and implementing joint projects
85. Providing support in building the material and technical base of the Union, etc.
86. Acquiring advanced experience in the field of NGO management, establishing cooperative relations with the private sector, benefiting from the exemplary experience of advanced countries in the formation of human resources for the NGO sector is considered appropriate
87. In order to create favorable conditions for the sustainable development of NGOs, it is recommended to improve the legal framework, study the experience of state institutions and funds that support NGOs, and create their cooperation network for mutual information and experience exchange
88. Awareness is needed
89. It is important to establish NGO houses in all administrative areas
90. Establishing relations with reputable non-governmental organizations operating in developed countries and studying international experience
91. It is more important to organize educational seminars and to be equipped with informative materials
92. Special training on project writing and budgeting, increasing the opportunities of NGO members in Exchange programs, special educational programs
93. Elimination of the provisions limiting the activities of NGO legislation
94. To increase the financial capabilities of the organization, to establish regional centers for managing cooperation and providing services
95. International experience, creating opportunities to work with national and international donors
96. Since our organization is related to people from a sensitive group, the organization of psychological projects, professions and courses for children with disabilities, creation of conditions for their involvement in sports, cooperation and joint projects with foreign countries, increasing experiences
97. Building good internal and external relationships. Improving the environment of trust. Finding suitable donors
98. Provision of financial resources and establishment of cooperation and support by State organizations
99. Mechanisms for the development of social entrepreneurship in the country should be prepared and implemented in a transparent manner

100. Creating opportunities for the organization to access foreign donors. Experienced professionals sharing their knowledge
101. Increasing financial support
102. It would be good if offices for public associations were built in the regions
103. Funding of our organization's projects that will accelerate the integration of rural women into society
104. Creation of opportunities for obtaining legal knowledge and international relations
105. Further expansion of domestic and foreign cooperation
106. Greater expertise and office space is needed to improve organizational performance
107. Conducting donor outreach training
108. In order to ensure and support the activity of the organization throughout the year, it is necessary to provide a budget (annual financial resources) divided by single items
109. Expanding cooperation with local and international donors to expand the scope of the organization
110. To provide training the personnel according to the division of duties
111. Ensure transparency of competitions and tenders announced by individual government agencies
112. As we are a new organization, we need more knowledge, skills and experience
113. Training on project development and fundraising
114. To increase cooperation with state and non-state organizations working in the field