



**USAID**  
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE



Photo Credit: IFES for USAID/Sri Lanka

# **SRI LANKA CIVIL SOCIETY**

## SECTOR FORMATIVE EVALUATION

December 20, 2021

This report is made possible by the support of the American People through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The contents of this report are the sole responsibility of Social Impact and do not necessarily reflect the views of USAID or the United States Government.

# SRI LANKA CIVIL SOCIETY SECTOR FORMATIVE EVALUATION

USAID/Sri Lanka

Contract No: AID-486-I-14-00001 / 72048619F00001

December 20, 2021

Cover Photo: Sri Lankans check out a display of election instructions, part of an awareness campaign that came ahead of 2018 elections that saw record numbers of women elected to local offices.

DISCLAIMER: This report is made possible by the support of the American People through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The contents of this report are the sole responsibility of Social Impact and do not necessarily reflect the views of USAID or the United States Government.

## ABSTRACT

The United States Agency for International Development in Sri Lanka (USAID/Sri Lanka) commissioned this formative evaluation of the civil society sector to inform its new Country Development Cooperation Strategy, which includes a cross-cutting result on civil society. The evaluation questions (EQs) examined (1) civil society organizations' (CSOs) technical strengths and weaknesses; (1a) risks and opportunities; (1b) CSOs' knowledge and attitudes about contributing to higher-level results; (2) CSOs' trust and credibility and the reasons for those perceptions; (2a) how CSO activities have affected perceptions; and (2b) challenges and opportunities to improve civil society credibility. To address these questions, the evaluation used a desk review and primary data collection (online survey with 42 responses, 64 interviews, and 23 focus groups) with CSOs, community-based organizations (CBOs), constituents, local government officials, USAID, and sector experts.

The report found that the main strengths of CSOs are strong grassroots connections, institutional and staff expertise, and networks. Weaknesses included short-term projects and funding, insufficient legal expertise, poor communication and outreach, and integration of younger staff. Space for CSOs is shrinking, and human rights and government accountability CSOs reported greater risks. Higher-level results were seen among larger organizations in democratic development. CSOs based in the North and East have a higher level of trust and credibility than those elsewhere in the country, and achievement of tangible outcomes is a key factor in stakeholder perceptions of CSO effectiveness. The report concludes with eight recommendations for civil society programming in Sri Lanka.

## **CONTENTS**

<b>LIST OF FIGURES AND TABLES</b>	<b>III</b>
<b>ACRONYMS</b>	<b>IV</b>
<b>EXECUTIVE SUMMARY</b>	<b>V</b>
<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>I</b>
<b>METHODOLOGY</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>RECOMMENDATIONS</b>	<b>37</b>
<b>ANNEX A: SCOPE OF WORK</b>	<b>40</b>
<b>ANNEX B: DETAILED METHODOLOGY</b>	<b>44</b>
<b>ANNEX C: DOCUMENTS REVIEWED</b>	<b>55</b>
<b>ANNEX D: DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENTS</b>	<b>57</b>
<b>ANNEX E: DISCLOSURE OF ANY CONFLICTS OF INTEREST</b>	<b>90</b>

## LIST OF FIGURES AND TABLES

Figure 1: CSOs' Self-Reported Technical Areas (Number and Percent)	4
Figure 2: CSOs' Self-Reported Capacity by Technical Area	6
Figure 3: Risks for CSOs	13
Figure 4: CSOs' Contribution to Technical Area	19
Figure 5: Public Trust of CSOs by Region	24
Figure 6: Public Trust of CSOs by Technical Area	25
Table 1: Planned and Actual Data Collection Events by Stakeholder	4

## ACRONYMS

AOR	Agreement Officer’s Representative
CBO	Community-Based Organization
CDCS	Country Development Cooperation Strategy
CES	Co-Existence Societies
CID	Criminal Investigation Department
COP	Chief of Party
CSO	Civil Society Organization
DDL	Development Data Library
DO	Development Objective
DRG	Democracy, Human Rights, and Governance
EPI	Everyday Peace Indicators
EQ	Evaluation Question
EQUI®	Evaluation Quality, Utilization, and Impact
ET	Evaluation Team
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
GESI	Gender, Equity, and Social Inclusion
GoSL	Government of Sri Lanka
GVP	Governance and Vulnerable Population
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
IR	Intermediate Result
IRB	Institution Review Board
KII	Key Informant Interview
LGBTQI	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, and Intersex
LTTE	Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam
MMDA	Muslim Marital and Divorce Act
MSI	Management Systems International
NGO	Nongovernmental Organization
OHCHR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
RTI	Right to Information
SI	Social Impact, Inc.
SPICE	Supporting Professional and Institutional Capacity Enhancement
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VSSO	Voluntary Social Services Organizations

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## INTRODUCTION

USAID has been the lead donor strengthening CSOs to act as drivers of reform, citizen engagement, and advocacy for the rights and needs of marginalized groups in Sri Lanka.

The purpose of this evaluation is to understand the capacity of CSOs to provide evidence for USAID/Sri Lanka in planning future work with civil society, including under its new Country Development and Cooperation Strategy (CDCS). The EQs are:

- I. What are CSOs' strengths/weaknesses in their technical capacity in their area of work?
  - a. Given the prevailing strengths/weaknesses, what are the risks/opportunities for CSOs in operating/functioning in their role of promoting their missions?
  - b. What are CSOs' knowledge and attitudes about their contribution to advancing human rights, gender and social inclusion, promoting peacebuilding, and government accountability?
2. What is the level of trust and credibility of CSOs, and what are these perceptions based on?
  - a. How have CSO activities affected stakeholder perceptions of their effectiveness, contributions, and work?
  - b. What are the challenges and opportunities for improving civil society credibility among the public, including marginalized populations?

## METHODOLOGY

The Evaluation Team (ET) used quantitative and qualitative methods to collect and analyze data on the civil society sector. This included: a desk review; online survey of CSOs (with 42 responses); 68 key informant interviews (KIIs) with CSO leaders, CBO partners of those CSOs, government officials, USAID officials, outside experts, and CSO network leaders; and 22 focus group discussions (FGDs) with CSO staff, CBO staff, and CSO/CBO constituents. Findings were analyzed and triangulated across respondent groups and methods.

## FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

### QUESTION 1: WHAT ARE CSOS' STRENGTHS/WEAKNESSES IN THEIR TECHNICAL CAPACITY IN THEIR AREA OF WORK?

Of survey respondents, 56 percent said their technical capacity in their area of work was “good” or “excellent,” while 40 percent said they have “adequate” capacity. The main strengths noted across technical areas were strong grassroots connections, institutional and staff expertise in their main technical area, and networks. Weaknesses included the short-term nature of projects and funding, insufficient legal expertise, poor communication and outreach, and integration of younger staff.

Many CSOs continued to cite organizational strengths or weaknesses, rather than technical strengths or weaknesses, indicating a continued relevance of organizational capacity support. While CSOs report that they have the technical skills to carry out their mission and strong grassroots connections, a weakness in higher-level, strategic operations remains. Many CSOs said lack of youth engagement—as both staff and volunteers—poses a risk for long-term CSO engagement and support.

### QUESTION 1A: GIVEN THE PREVAILING STRENGTHS/WEAKNESSES, WHAT ARE THE RISKS/OPPORTUNITIES FOR CSOS IN OPERATING/FUNCTIONING IN THEIR ROLE OF PROMOTING THEIR MISSIONS?

A majority (51 percent) of CSOs surveyed reported that they face moderate risks in promoting their missions, while 36 percent said the risks are modest or not significant, and 13 percent face significant risks. Human rights and government accountability CSOs reported greater risks than other technical areas. CSOs also cited a decrease in donor funding and increased competition among CSOs for funding. Accountability is a concern for CSOs, and most do not follow a code of conduct to ensure transparency. Other risks include the short-term nature of funding, which can lead to staff retention issues, and social norms opposed to women’s and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and intersex (LGBTQI) rights.

The COVID-19 pandemic provided an opportunity for CSOs to build relationships with the government in response to the crisis, in turn building credibility with the public through provision of services, such as gender equity and social inclusion (GESI), and mental health provision. CSOs also increasingly adopted communication technology, which increased opportunities to connect remotely with clients.

### QUESTION 1B: WHAT ARE PARTNER/BENEFICIARY CSOS' KNOWLEDGE AND ATTITUDES ABOUT THEIR CONTRIBUTION TO ADVANCING HUMAN RIGHTS, GENDER AND SOCIAL INCLUSION, PROMOTING PEACEBUILDING, AND GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY?

A majority (52 percent) of CSOs surveyed said they make a significant or very significant contribution to their technical area. Another 38 percent said they make a moderate contribution, and 11 percent said their contribution is modest. The desk review found higher-level results were most frequently seen among larger organizations in democratic development, and smaller regional CSOs and CBOs may have less understanding of how they do or could contribute to larger democratic processes.



CSOs believe their contributions come particularly in transmitting knowledge and raising awareness; training and capacity-building; advocacy; changing societal attitudes; and building understanding. While some CSOs are beginning to have an impact at the national level, this is less common.

## **QUESTION 2: WHAT IS THE LEVEL OF TRUST AND CREDIBILITY OF CSOS, AND WHAT ARE THESE PERCEPTIONS BASED ON?**

Forty percent of CSOs surveyed said they have a high or very high level of trust and credibility with the Sri Lankan public; 48 percent enjoy a moderate level, and 12 percent have a modest level or no trust. Multiple stakeholders reported in interviews that CSOs based in the North and East provinces have a higher level of trust and credibility than those elsewhere in the country, because many people there believe that human rights and peacebuilding are important issues and they no longer trust the central government, and trust in civil society is inversely related to public trust in the central government and media. CSOs working in human rights and government accountability are less likely to perceive themselves as trusted than other CSOs.

Among the main factors cited for building public trust and credibility are strong grassroots connections to communities, strong networks that enable CSOs to achieve results, inclusivity in providing CSO support or services across all community groups, and transparency in CSO operations. Networks help facilitate both bonding within a certain demographic and bridging across different groups, particularly in interventions related to livelihoods and economic development. Bonding generally takes place within communities to strengthen advocacy, while bridging is noted in building social cohesion and GESI.

## **QUESTION 2A: HOW HAVE CSO ACTIVITIES AFFECTED STAKEHOLDER PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR EFFECTIVENESS, CONTRIBUTIONS, AND WORK?**

CSO activities have positively affected public perceptions of their effectiveness, contributions, and work. The primary areas in which CSO activities created positive community perceptions of their effectiveness and contributions include service provision, peacebuilding, and other activities at the grassroots level, economic development, effective networks, and implementation of a code of conduct. Achievement of tangible outcomes is a key factor in stakeholder perceptions of CSO effectiveness, and grassroots programs are perceived as effective because communities can see the results.

Activities also had a positive effect on perceptions of CSOs by target groups related to GESI, which were attributed to long-term support, advocacy for marginalized populations, and building community groups. Government officials' perceptions of CSOs improved due to economic development, service provision, collaboration with government activities, and helping build "communal harmony." The improved perception provides an opportunity to embed peacebuilding and reconciliation (and other work) in economic development to increase receptivity by the people and the government.

## **QUESTION 2B: WHAT ARE THE CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPROVING CIVIL SOCIETY CREDIBILITY AMONG THE PUBLIC, INCLUDING MARGINALIZED POPULATIONS?**

The main challenges to improving civil society credibility among the public come from the government, politicians, and the media. CSOs whose activities do not align with government policies face disruption of their activities and "mudslinging" campaigns by politicians. Relatedly, in areas that support the government, the credibility of CSOs is damaged by perceptions that civil society is opposed to Sri

Lankan values. Other challenges to improving civil society credibility are decreased funding from foreign donors, resulting in fewer services to beneficiaries; a decline in voluntarism; and the COVID-19 pandemic. Furthermore, cultural norms stand in the way of progress and trust regarding GESI-related outcomes.

Expanding grassroots engagement, including service provision, is an opportunity to enhance trust and mitigate risks from government and media influence; however, there is tension for civil society to maintain trust by both cooperating with and standing up to the government on behalf of communities.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

USAID should consider the following:

- 1. Support for CSO networks.** USAID should support networks operating in common thematic areas to improve their capacity to build diverse coalitions and the effectiveness of their operations and relationships.
- 2. Encourage civil society contributions to higher-level results through advocacy support for grassroots networks.** To support the new CDCS's commitment to improve government responsiveness and enable active public participation, USAID should support grassroots networks to aggregate public preferences and effectively advocate for policies supported by their communities.
- 3. Support civil society to build trust through partnerships with the government.** Both civil society and government respondents cited an opportunity for civil society to build trust and credibility with the government through partnership and cooperation, and USAID should support such partnerships where they align with CSOs' priorities.
- 4. Help CSOs identify long-term sources of funding.** In light of the reduction in donor interest and funding, USAID should assist CSOs to identify alternative sources of funding.
- 5. Fund civil society activities for a longer term.** USAID should fund future civil society projects for the longest term possible and encourage subgrants of one to three years.
- 6. Increase youth leadership in civil society organizations.** USAID should seek to develop the next generation of civil society leaders by encouraging CSO outreach and training of interested youth and integrating young CSO staff in activities.
- 7. Enhance CSO GESI support and capacity development.** USAID should encourage CSOs to more fully address GESI, in line with the CDCS outcome of advancing inclusivity, and as an area of need.
- 8. Promote a CSO code of conduct.** USAID should support CSOs and CBOs to establish and implement codes of conduct to enable them to operate transparently.
- 9. Mainstream civil society support in other sectors.** As Sri Lanka's civil and political context continues to evolve, and based on USAID/Sri Lanka's risk tolerance, USAID/Sri Lanka should consider a model to partially mainstream civil society support in non-DRG sectors

# INTRODUCTION

## CONTEXT

On January 8, 2015, the Sri Lankan people elected President Maithripala Sirisena. Subsequently, Colombo-based civil society was actively engaged in many of the new reforms and members of civil society were included in the constitutional council, although representation favored national organizations rather than regional or single-issue organizations. During this time the civil society organizations (CSOs) were able to make some significant achievements.

Despite this progress, according to USAID’s civil society and media assessment conducted in March 2016, CSOs continued to face challenges. These challenges included negative public opinion of civil society, limited space for civil society activities, difficulties in engaging communities and government, constant pressure and risk to civil society activists, withdrawal of donor funding, and difficulty retaining staff, which contributed to an erosion of CSO’s capacity across the country.

After the presidential election of 2019, Sri Lanka’s economic and democratic governance priorities shifted from a focus on good governance reform to national security and state sovereignty. With the change of government, space for CSOs started to shrink.

## BACKGROUND

USAID has been the lead donor strengthening CSOs to act as drivers of reform, citizen engagement, and advocacy for the rights and needs of marginalized groups in Sri Lanka.

USAID/Sri Lanka’s current CDCS 2020–2025 lists “Increased Civil Society Engagement and Sustainability” as a cross-cutting sub-IR under Development Objective (DO) I: Effective Democratic Governance Strengthened. The three IRs under DO I are: I.1: Responsiveness of government institutions improved; I.2: More informed and active public participation; and I.3: Rights and tolerance elevated.

The CDCS states: “Under DO I, USAID will seek to preserve space within which civil society operates and strengthen the effectiveness and sustainability of Sri Lanka’s civil society” in order to represent, inform, and serve citizens.

## EVALUATION PURPOSE AND AUDIENCE

The purpose of this evaluation is to understand the capacity of CSOs. As a formative sector evaluation, the primary audience and purpose of this evaluation is to provide evidence for USAID/Sri Lanka in planning future work with civil society, including under its new CDCS that incorporates a cross-cutting sub-IR related to civil society advocacy and sustainability. For more details on the evaluation statement of work, please see Annex A.

## EVALUATION QUESTIONS

The following evaluation questions (EQs) guided the evaluation:

- I. What are CSOs' strengths/weaknesses in their technical capacity in their area of work?
  - a. Given the prevailing strengths/weaknesses, what are the risks/opportunities for CSOs in operating/functioning in their role of promoting their missions.
  - b. What are CSOs' knowledge and attitudes about their contribution to advancing human rights, gender and social inclusion, promoting peacebuilding, and government accountability?
2. What is the level of trust and credibility of CSOs, and what are these perceptions based on?
  - a. How have CSO activities affected stakeholder (communities, target groups related to GESI, government officials, etc.) perceptions of their effectiveness, contributions, and work?
  - b. What are the challenges and opportunities for improving civil society credibility among the public, including marginalized populations?

# METHODOLOGY

## OVERVIEW

The Evaluation Team (ET) used quantitative and qualitative methods to collect valid and reliable data on the USAID/Sri Lanka DRG/civil society sector. This included: a desk review online survey of CSOs; key informant interviews (KIIs); and focus group discussions (FGDs). The ET analyzed the data gathered during fieldwork to produce findings and conclusions that answer USAID's EQs and sub-questions. The team then generated specific, actionable recommendations from this sector evaluation's findings and conclusions for USAID/Sri Lanka's consideration.

As it conducted the evaluation, the ET implemented a utilization-focused approach, based on the principle that a study should be judged on usefulness to intended audiences. Thus, the ET carried out activities (e.g., in-briefs and out-briefs, check-ins with USAID/Sri Lanka key audiences, etc.) that support audience engagement in the evaluation process itself, as well as utilization of findings to improve performance. For more details on methodology, please see Annex B. For a list of document reviews, please see Annex C.

## DATA COLLECTION

Data collection took place remotely due to COVID-19 safety considerations in Sri Lanka from September 27 to November 1, 2021. The Sri Lanka-based ET members divided for data collection based on their native language and the preferred language of their interlocutors: Sinhala, Tamil, or English. The ET initially conducted an online survey distributed to CSOs. Following the survey and initial KIIs and FGDs with CSOs, the team used snowball sampling to identify community-based organizations (CBOs), local government officials, and beneficiaries. The team ensured participation of both men and women, including members of marginalized communities.

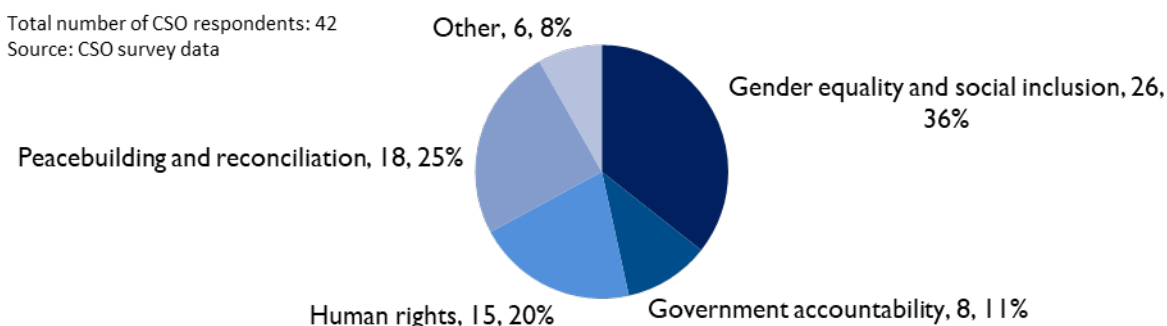
**Online Survey:** The online survey was based on the Survey Monkey platform and sent to leaders of 101 CSOs, with 42 CSO leaders responding (28 male, 14 female).<sup>1</sup> The survey examined CSOs' perceived technical strengths and weaknesses relative to the different technical areas<sup>2</sup> in which the CSO works, risk and opportunities, and CSO perceptions of public trust and credibility. Figure 1 presents CSO's self-allocation to the different technical areas. Most of the "other" category focused on economic or community development.

---

<sup>1</sup> Some CSOs did not respond to all questions. As a result, the denominator varies across questions.

<sup>2</sup> The survey invited survey respondents to select up to two technical areas in which they work (among peacebuilding and reconciliation; government accountability; human rights; and other). CSOs responded to a battery of questions specific to those technical areas, enabling disaggregation presented in the findings below. As some of the 42 CSOs that responded selected two technical areas, the denominator when examining respondents by technical area is up to 73.

Figure 1: CSOs' Self-Reported Technical Areas (Number and Percent)



**KIIs and FGDs:** The ET conducted 64 KIIs with CSO leaders, CBO partners of those CSOs, government officials, USAID officials, outside experts, and CSO network leaders. The ET held 23 FGDs with CSO staff, CBO staff, and CSO/CBO beneficiaries. In total, the ET spoke with 190 people (98 male, 92 female) for KIIs and FGDs. For a more detailed breakdown, see Table 1.

Table 1: Planned and Actual Data Collection Events by Stakeholder

PARTICIPANT CATEGORY	PLANNED DATA COLLECTION		ACTUAL DATA COLLECTION	
	Target # KIIs	Target # FGDs	Actual # KIIs	Actual # FGDs
USAID/Sri Lanka	4	N/A	3	N/A
Independent Civil Society Sector Experts	2	N/A	2	N/A
CSO Leaders and Staff, CSO Network Leaders	38	10	36	10
CBO Partners	16	16	16	13
Government	8	N/A	7	N/A
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>23</b>

## DATA ANALYSIS

Data analysis included comparison and triangulation of desk review, KII, FGD, and survey data. The team conducted trend analysis across stakeholder groups, technical areas (for relevant stakeholders), and region (for relevant stakeholders) using a qualitative tally sheet. The ET briefed the mission on preliminary findings at the completion of the fieldwork, prior to drafting this report.

As gender equality and social inclusion (GESI) are one area of work for CSOs, the ET's analysis of EQs 1, 1a, 1b, and 2 included specific analysis of CSOs working on GESI. The analysis of EQ 2a included specific analysis of target groups related to GESI, and the analysis of EQ 2b included analysis of marginalized populations.

## **PARTICIPANT PROTECTIONS**

Prior to the start of data collection, USAID and Social Impact's (SI) Institutional Review Board (IRB) reviewed and approved all data collection instruments, and all ET members engaged in data collection completed a certificate course on essential elements of ethics for engaging with human subjects.

The ET obtained informed consent from all survey respondents at the start of the survey. The informed consent included measures that the ET would take to keep the information provided confidential. The ET obtained informed consent from all participants before the KII or FGD began to make sure participants were not pressured, were fully informed, and understood and agreed to accept the modest risks that accompany participating in a KII or FGD. All consent forms also contained contact information of an ET member and the IRB, should participants have any follow-up questions or concerns.

## **LIMITATIONS**

This evaluation is subject to several limitations and potential biases, which are discussed in more detail in Annex B. Please see Table A2 in Annex B for more detail on how the ET addressed the limitations and biases. Key limitations included:

**Sampling Biases:** The evaluation interviewed a limited number of CSOs. As such, the findings are representative of those CSOs interviewed and may not be reflective of the experiences of all CSOs in Sri Lanka.

**Respondent Biases:** As with many evaluations, biases in response (including social desirability bias) and recall were present. In all cases, the ET aimed to redirect conversation to key areas of inquiry, probed for relevant details or additional evidence, and triangulated across sources (different data sources and methods) to generate more robust summary findings, conclusions, and recommendations.

**Data Collection Biases, Especially Due to Remote Data Collection:** Remote data collection may have affected access to or willingness to participate. To mitigate this limitation, the ET trained KII facilitators on the use of remote platforms; employed data triangulation so interviews that may have been impacted by a remote platform would not skew study results; and had team members based in Sri Lanka conduct most interviews by telephone, a technology with which most interlocutors are comfortable.

## FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

The following sections present findings and conclusions for each EQ. The team first presents findings based on data collection and analysis, followed by sections summarizing conclusions for each EQ.

### EQ 1: WHAT ARE CSOS' STRENGTHS/WEAKNESSES IN THEIR TECHNICAL CAPACITY IN THEIR AREA OF WORK?

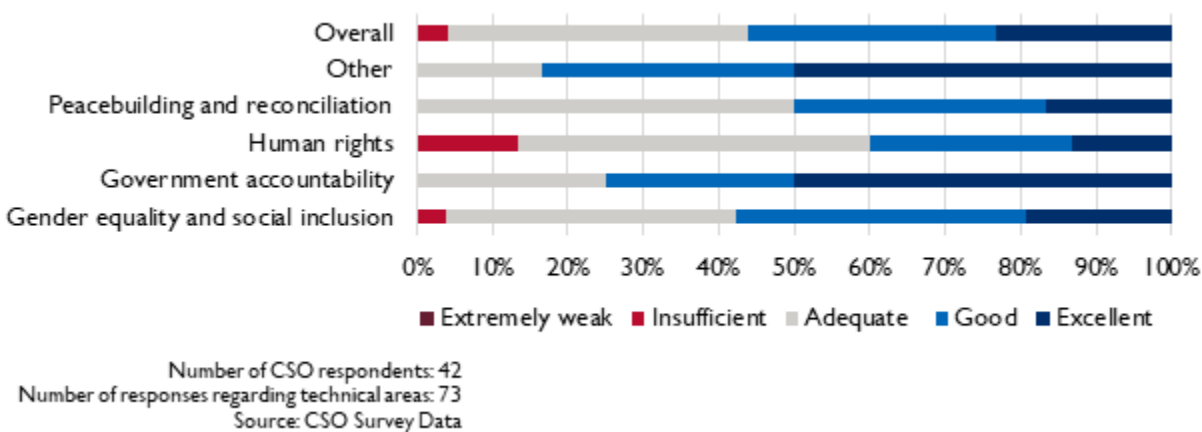
The following sections outline the strengths and weaknesses of CSOs overall and by technical areas (peacebuilding and reconciliation, human rights, GESI, and government accountability).

#### OVERALL

The CSO Sustainability Index, funded by USAID/Sri Lanka and FHI 360, and compiled by Verite Research in Sri Lanka, tracked the sustainability of the civil society sector in Asia between 2014 and 2019.<sup>3</sup> It found that overall CSO sustainability declined slightly between 2014 and 2019, having peaked in 2015 when the Sirisena government came to office, then declining thereafter. The CSO Sustainability Index found persistent organizational capacity gaps,<sup>4</sup> findings that also emerged in this evaluation and are summarized more in the following.

Nearly all of the CSOs responding to the online survey stated that they have at least adequate technical capacity to carry out their work. Fifty-six percent of surveyed CSOs said their technical capacity in their area of work was “good” or “excellent,” while 40 percent said they have “adequate” capacity across the technical areas in which they work (Figure 2). In KIIs and FGDs, organizational issues continued to be the most cited issues raised by CSOs, even when asked specifically about technical capacity.

Figure 2: CSOs' Self-Reported Capacity by Technical Area



<sup>3</sup> FHI 360. 2020. Sri Lanka. *The 2019 CSO Sustainability Index for Asia*. Washington, FHI 360. Retrieved from <https://www.fhi360.org/sites/default/files/media/documents/csosi-asia-2019-report.pdf>.

<sup>4</sup> That CSO Sustainability Index report found that organizational capacity of CSOs improved slightly in 2019 as CSOs increased their use of social media platforms to build constituencies, though most CSOs continued to lack formal structures and governance systems.



## PEACEBUILDING AND RECONCILIATION

### STRENGTHS

Half of the 18 peacebuilding and reconciliation CSOs surveyed self-rated their technical capacity “excellent” or “good,” while the other half reported that they have “adequate” capacity. In 13 KIIs and FGDs with or about CSOs working on peacebuilding and reconciliation, respondents noted several CSO strengths, the most frequent of which were:

**Strong Grassroots Connections:** CSOs credited their grassroots presence with giving them local knowledge, helping them craft locally relevant messages, learning lessons about working with war-affected communities, building cohesion of local communities, developing local capacity, and communicating effectively through local media. CSOs said they work with community-based groups that facilitate communications and cooperation to build peace and unity among inter- and intra-ethnic communities. (Nine CSOs.)

**Institutional Expertise:** CSOs’ institutional expertise was cited as a strength, ranging from knowledge of grassroots communities to technical expertise on peacebuilding efforts at the local and national levels. (Eight KIIs and FGDs.)

**Staff Expertise:** CSOs’ dedicated and technically skilled staff are a strength. (Seven KIIs and FGDs.) In particular, four CSOs cited their diverse and inclusive staff as a strength.

**Strong CSO Networks:** Participation in civil society networks is a strength of their approach. These include an international peacebuilding network, a nationwide reconciliation network, and other regional and local networks. (Six CSOs.)

**Positive CSO Reputation:** Reputation is a strength of civil society; for example, the decades-long legacy of peacebuilding and reconciliation work by Sri Lankan civil society. In particular, several CSOs served as a peace-broker between the government and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), a militant separatist group fighting for an independent homeland for Tamils in the north and east until 2009, and CSOs maintain direct access to policy makers. (Six CSOs.)

**Inclusive Approach:** CSOs that work with all parts of their communities, including ethnic minorities, women, the disabled, and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and intersex (LGBTQI) persons cited this inclusive approach as a strength in peacebuilding and reconciliation work. They said programs and events including two or three communities with different ethnicities resulted in greater success and created an impact for the CSO who are working for peace and reconciliation. (Five CSOs.)

### WEAKNESSES

Among the 13 KIIs and FGDs with or about peacebuilding and reconciliation CSOs, the most frequently cited weaknesses were:

**Short-term Projects and Funding:** Respondents noted the short-term (two to 12 months) nature of donor-funded projects as a weakness. They said it is difficult to realize output-level change in a short-term project, which makes it difficult for them to show results to the communities they serve. Data sources added that short-term funding has a negative impact on their organizational stability because staff depart if there is a gap in funding between short-term projects. (Seven KIIs and FGDs.)

**Government Restrictions:** Government limits on CSO peacebuilding and reconciliation activities, including the need to secure implementation approval from regional authorities, is a barrier even when CSOs have funding. (Five CSOs.)

**Weak Networking:** CSOs said that their regional network was not functioning at the same level as under the 2015–2019 government. They added that they find it difficult to connect with people; for example, that they struggle to connect with youth through social media. (Three CSOs.)

**Insufficient Expertise:** Three CSOs cited a lack of general or specific staff skills. For example, one CSO said it lacks expertise to conceptualize peacebuilding programming in Sri Lanka.

*“We lack staff who can conceptualize and write independently. We also lack people who can think/visualize and design new programs in peacebuilding in Sri Lanka.” –CSO Leader*

**Poor Integration of Youth in Staff:** Integrating and training youth in peacebuilding and reconciliation work is a reported challenge as younger staff are not drawn to these types of activities where results take longer to realize, and it is difficult to retain younger staff due to the short-term nature of projects and funding. The latter creates gaps between projects when staff cannot be paid, so they move on to other employment, particularly with the government.

## HUMAN RIGHTS

### STRENGTHS

Forty percent of the 15 human rights CSOs that responded to the online survey said they have “excellent” or “good” technical capacity, and 47 percent reported that they have “adequate” capacity. Within the 14 KIIs and FGDs with or about human rights CSOs, participants raised several strengths:

**Strong Staff Expertise:** Strong field staff, including strong senior researchers and analysts, have the technical skills to enable the CSOs to publish good reports. CSOs also cited human rights lawyers in the field who can handle cases independently, especially those related to disappeared persons. In an FGD with human rights CSOs, they stated that social mobilizers, human rights defenders, and activists who work with marginalized communities are an asset to the sector. (12 CSOs.)

**Grassroots and Community Engagement:** Community engagement is another strength, including grassroots networks, local knowledge, connections to communities, capacity-building in communities, and communication and connectivity, including connections with the LGBTQI community. For example, one grassroots network connects women from families of disappeared persons in the Northern and Eastern provinces, and another community-based network connects female-headed households in the Northern, Eastern, and Central provinces to undertake projects and advocate for the rights of such households. (11 CSOs, one government official.)

**Strong CSO Networks:** Respondents cited national and regional networks as a strength, reporting that island-wide networks enabled CSOs to work in all regions of the country, and a regional lawyers’ network in the North and East enabled them to build cases on behalf of the families of disappeared persons. Among the networks cited were a nationwide network of 28 CSOs working against torture and a network promoting electoral reforms in Sri Lanka. (9 KIIs and FGDs.) **Positive CSO Reputation:** Six CSOs noted their strong reputation among citizens and government officers.

**Effective Use of Evidence:** CSOs said their ability to collect and use evidence is a strength. For example, one CSO cited its strength in litigating for human rights and prisoner rights as well as a complaint mechanism for statutory rape cases. (Three CSOs.)

**Connections with Government and Communities:** Two CSOs cited as a strength their connections to government officials and policy makers at high levels of government and communities.

## WEAKNESSES

Of the 14 KIs and FGDs with or about human rights CSOs, the most common weaknesses were:

**Limited Youth Engagement:** CSOs said they are doing a poor job involving youth in human rights work as there is no mechanism to educate university students about human rights and there is poor cooperation between senior and junior lawyers working on cases, and that youth are reluctant to take on human rights cases because they fear repercussions. One CSO believed youth are numb to human rights violations and not interested in investing time to promoting and defending human rights. (Four CSOs.)

**Issues Addressing Legal Components of Work:** CSOs cited weaknesses in legal aspects of their work. For example, one CSO said human rights CSOs do not coordinate well on cases, a problem compounded by a lack of pro bono representation in Sri Lanka. (Four CSOs.)

**Insufficient Expertise:** CSOs cited differing technical understanding of staff. For example, one CSO said its staff lacks the capacity to conceptualize human rights cases, and a local government official cited an insufficient number of staff and lack of technology as a weakness. (Four CSOs.)

**Short-Term Projects and Funding:** CSOs said the short-term nature of donor-funded projects is a weakness, citing the long-term orientation of human rights work. They noted that short-term funding causes them to lose staff if funding is not secured for subsequent projects, and they are unable to measure output-level changes in projects of six months or less. (Three CSOs.)

**Insufficient Popular Outreach:** CSOs in the technical area tend to focus on individual human rights cases and do a poor job of outreach to the population regarding human rights issues in general. (Two CSOs.)

## GENDER EQUALITY AND SOCIAL INCLUSION

### STRENGTHS

Fifty-seven percent of the 26 surveyed GESI CSOs said they have “excellent” or “good” technical capacity, and 38 percent reported that they have “adequate” capacity. CSO strengths cited in the 23 KIs and FGDs with or about GESI CSOs included:

**Strong Grassroots Connections:** Grassroots connections including community engagement, capacity building, and local knowledge was the most commonly reported strength. CSOs reported they have helped women in communities protest and campaign for their rights and have provided services to communities (e.g., counseling, psychological support, network of shelters for gender-based violence [GBV] victims). Similarly, LGBTQI beneficiaries stated that CSOs provided support after they were driven away from their families and communities. USAID officials noted that CSOs provide these services faster and more efficiently than the government, and that CSOs provide community leadership

and respond to local needs. A respondent said CSOs are filling in gaps in services that the government cannot provide and protecting women's rights. An outside CSO sectoral expert noted that CSOs lead advocacy on behalf of marginalized communities. (16 KIIs and FGDs.)

**Diverse Expertise:** Respondents cited CSOs' experience in advocacy, training, and analysis as a technical strength. They said they know how to work with local women in communities, train them in areas like peacebuilding, provide them with psychosocial services, and advocate for victims of GBV. Mirroring this data, the 2019 CSO Sustainability Index report found that civil society advocacy was stronger in 2019 than in previous years, citing CSOs' effective engagement in legal reform and gender rights.<sup>5</sup> (16 KIIs and FGDs.)

**Effective CSO Networks:** CSOs have strong networks that contribute to their technical capacity and facilitate collective action. They cited a network of more than 400 CSOs, a national GBV forum and regional networks, community groups for women-headed households, and women and youth networks in the fisheries sector. One activity cited was a collective of women's organizations advocating for reform to the Muslim Marital and Divorce Act (MMDA), which regulates familial relations in the Muslim community. A respondent said women from diverse communities can unite around women's rights. CSO networks also provide visibility and a collective voice to engage with government; for example, to address torture of persons in police custody. (11 KIIs and FGDs.)

**Collaboration with Government:** Respondents cited good collaboration with government as a strength. For example, one CSO collaborated with local and university authorities to provide psychosocial counseling to medical students, women, and children. (Eight KIIs and FGDs.)

## **WEAKNESSES**

Of the 23 KIIs and FGDs with or about GESI CSOs, respondents identified the following weaknesses:

**Insufficient Legal Expertise:** Respondents cited a lack of expertise about laws related to women's rights as a weakness among CSOs and among women's development officers in government. Respondents noted that while CSOs and government officials have knowledge of gender sensitivity and women's rights, they have minimal knowledge of laws like the national Domestic Violence Act, MMDA, and amendments to the penal code related to GBV. (Six KIIs and FGDs.)

**Short-term Projects and Funding:** Short-term projects of six months or less are a weakness for GESI CSOs because the period of performance is too short to achieve results and because gaps in funding between projects causes staff to depart for jobs with more consistent pay. For example, a CBO leader said the short-term nature of a gender-sensitization project limited the extent of attitudinal changes because the project ended too soon. (Five KIIs and FGDs.)

**Language Barriers:** Language barriers are a weakness in service delivery; for example, one CSO noted that Tamil-speaking women face difficulties in reporting GBV cases to people who speak Sinhalese, including hospital staff and the police. (Three CSOs.)

---

<sup>5</sup> FHI360, op. cit.

**Insufficient Promotion and Awareness:** Two CSOs said civil society needs to do a better job promoting its work, particularly on social media, to raise societal awareness of gender issues. The divisional level GBV forums are not functioning effectively, and the collaboration and promotion with the government stakeholders and CSO sector participation is weak. (Five CSOs.)

**Limited Youth Engagement:** Two CSOs said their youth engagement is weak. One believed established organizations feel threatened by new initiatives led by youth themselves.

**Limiting Cultural Norms:** Cultural norms regarding gender are a weakness in GESI work. CSOs said principals at Muslim high schools are not gender sensitized and objected to sexual and gender education of Muslim girls, while a respondent said cultural norms make it difficult for LGBTQI organizations to raise funds. (Four KIIs and FGDs.)

## GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

### STRENGTHS

Of the eight CSOs that responded to the online survey and classify themselves as working on government accountability issues, 75 percent said they have “good” or “excellent” capacity, and the remainder said they have “adequate” capacity. Strengths of accountability CSOs cited in 13 KIIs and FGDs with or about these CSOs included:

**Strong Grassroots Connections:** All respondents in this technical area said their strong community-based structure and approach are a strength, including local staff who are well-known in their communities and operate transparently; local advocacy; community-level networks; and consultation with communities to develop plans to address pressing issues. The ET’s desk review found grassroots advocacy to be successful in areas such as land rights, monitoring of small-scale local infrastructure, formation of a social audit committee, creation of community development forums, and social media campaigns to create awareness of issues. (13 KIIs and FGDs.)

**Strong, Diverse Expertise:** Another strength of government accountability CSOs is strong staff with experience and expertise, who are able to disseminate knowledge and conduct training. Specific examples include a dialog with plantation-sector beneficiaries on social reform; citizen movements to hold local officials accountable on development issues; building youth capacity to participate in politics; and providing policy research to policy makers. A respondent noted civil society contributions to constitutional reform. (11 CSOs.)

**Effective CSO Networks:** Six CSOs cited island-wide networks to hold government accountable in areas such as human rights and development as a strength.

**Government Collaboration:** Six CSOs noted they identified ways to increasingly collaborate with government at local, provincial, and national levels.

### WEAKNESSES

KIIs and FGDs with government accountability CSOs cited the following weaknesses in those organizations’ technical capacity:

**Short-Term Projects and Funding:** Short-term funding and short-term project-based staff recruitment are weaknesses of government accountability CSOs, for the same reasons cited by CSOs in other technical areas. (9 CSOs.)

**Insufficient Technical Expertise:** Of CSOs that said they have insufficient human resources, two CSOs said they need training for their staff in advocacy. They said staff lack advocacy skills and lack confidence in advocating with government officials. Another two CSOs said grassroots CBOs need education on the RTI Act to better understand their rights. The ET’s desk review found that CSOs are unable to move forward with evidence-based discussion on policy reforms or advocacy and have minimal research-based data for dialogs with government or citizen outreach. (Six CSOs.)

**Lack of Coordinated Networks:** Respondents in six KIs and FGDs cited a lack of coordination among organizations working on government accountability.

## OTHER<sup>6</sup>

Among the six CSOs working in other technical areas that responded to the survey, 83 percent said they have “good” or “excellent” technical capacity, while 17 percent said they have “adequate” capacity. All of those CSOs cited strong grassroots community engagement as a strength.

## EQ I CONCLUSIONS

**1.1 Many CSOs continued to cite organizational strengths/weaknesses, rather than technical strengths/weaknesses, pointing to the continued relevance of organizational capacity support.** Examples of organizational strengths included grassroots support and developing CSO networks, among others, while weaknesses included short-term or insufficient funding, staff turnover, and others.

**1.2 While CSOs generally report that they have the technical skills needed to carry out their mission and strong grassroots connections, there remains a weakness in higher-level, strategic operations important to today’s closing civil sector space in Sri Lanka.** Civil society still needs support developing nationwide networks for advocacy and developing staff skills/confidence to advocate with high-level officials. CSOs in three technical areas (human rights, GESI, government accountability) cited a lack of in-house legal counsel, which limits CSOs’ ability to effect higher-level changes. While CSOs working in the GESI field have the expertise to provide services to communities and training to government officials, they often lack knowledge of GESI-related laws. The government officers need significant knowledge updates related to gender responsive budgeting. Strengthening of the district and divisional level GBV forums should be carried to provide better and more efficient services for GBV survivors. Multisectoral engagement at all levels is needed.

**1.3 Many CSOs cited that a lack of youth engagement—as both staff and volunteers—poses a risk for long-term CSO engagement and support.** Given Sri Lanka’s large youth population and disappearing civil society activists and volunteers, youth engagement is essential to promote future

---

<sup>6</sup> The six CSOs in the “other” category focus on economic or community development.



change, but effective youth engagement is missing. CSOs themselves are not inclusive spaces for youth, and intergenerational support is lacking.

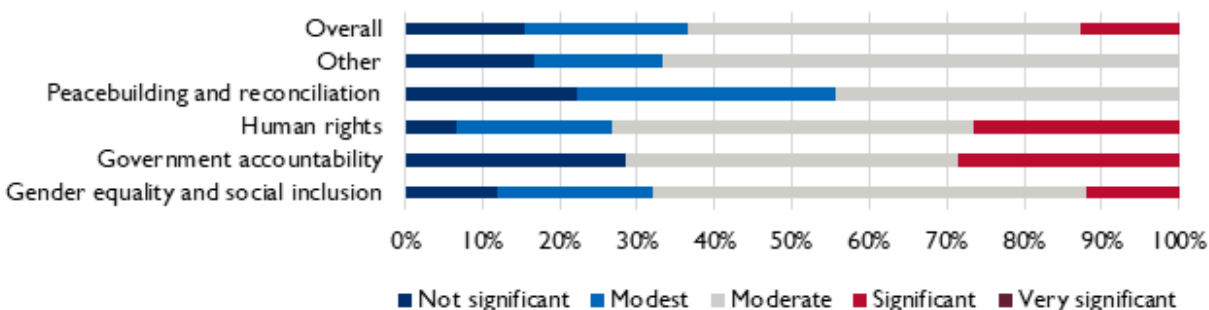
### EQ 1A: GIVEN THE PREVAILING STRENGTHS/WEAKNESSES, WHAT ARE THE RISKS/OPPORTUNITIES FOR CSOS IN OPERATING/FUNCTIONING IN THEIR ROLE OF PROMOTING THEIR MISSIONS?

#### OVERALL

#### RISKS

A majority (51 percent) of the 42 CSOs that responded to the online survey said that they face moderate risks in promoting their missions. Of the remainder, 36 percent said the risks are modest or not significant; at the other end of the spectrum, 13 percent said they face significant risks. No respondents reported they faced very significant risks (Figure 3).

Figure 3: Risks for CSOs



Number of CSO respondents: 42  
 Total number of responses regarding risk: 71  
 Source: CSO Survey Data

**Sri Lankan Government:** CSO concerns centered around government intelligence agents’ surveillance of CSO activities; requirements that the government NGO Secretariat approve CSO activities; and the draft Voluntary Social Services Organizations (VSSO) Act amendments that CSOs fear will further restrict their activities. Human rights and GESI CSOs most frequently cited the threat from the government. CSO officials said state intelligence agents monitor training sessions on peacebuilding and reconciliation and on human rights. They said agents show up at training sessions, particularly those for youths, and scrutinize CSOs working on issues like land rights and disappearances, particularly in the North and East provinces. Marginalized groups, like commercial sex workers and the LGBTQI community, are also subject to government scrutiny. One government official stated, “CSOs can do anything except things that are detrimental to the national security of the country.”

“When we do any programs with [these groups], the intelligence officers visit and monitor. With the present government, the threats are high, and we cannot even keep our documentation safely.” –CSO Leader

Mirroring respondent feedback, the desk review found that CSOs and activists, particularly in the North and East that focus on sensitive topics like military impunity, have been subject to denial of registration,

surveillance, harassment and assaults.<sup>7</sup> The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) also warned that developments in 2020 have changed the environment for advancing reconciliation, accountability, and human rights in Sri Lanka; eroded democratic checks and balances and civic space; and created an exclusionary and majoritarian discourse. These trends threaten to reverse the limited but important gains made in recent years and risk the recurrence of the policies and practices that gave rise to the grave human rights violations of the past.<sup>8</sup>

In KII and FGDs, CSOs also saw the role of the NGO Secretariat as a risk. They noted that all CSO reports need to be submitted to NGO Secretariat, including narrative and financial reports. CSOs view the head of the national NGO Secretariat as “making life more difficult” for them. CSOs reported concern that the NGO Secretariat may not approve donor funding of certain CSOs that the government sees as acting against its interests. A respondent said CSOs are expecting more stringent requirements from the government, such as documentation requirements, particularly for national organizations led by opposition figures. CSOs said the pending VSSO Act amendments are a particular risk, describing them as “destructive” to civil society and restricting the operating space for CSOs.

**Donor Funding:** The second most frequently cited risk in KII and FGDs was decreasing donor funding. They said CSOs are dependent on donors, but Sri Lanka has become less of a priority for foreign donors in recent years. This is due, in part, to the country’s rising gross domestic product, which has led some donors to phase out assistance, and due to the end of the civil war in 2009, leading some donors to redirect aid to countries with ongoing conflicts. As part of the ET’s desk review, the 2019 FHI 360 report found that CSOs depend mainly on foreign donor funding, and their access to domestic sources of funding, including the private sector and government, remain limited.<sup>9</sup>

**Other Risks:** Other overall risks to CSOs include (1) competition among CSOs for limited funding, cited by seven CSOs and one outside expert, and (2) a lack of codes of conduct for CSOs, which creates accountability and transparency concerns and affects public trust in civil society (see EQ 2). For example, one CSO staff member said, “We have to put our homes in order first. We cannot speak of the nepotism, favoritism, and transparency in the government when we’re not [transparent].”

## OPPORTUNITIES

The COVID-19 pandemic provided an opportunity for CSOs to build relationships with the government in responding to the crisis and to establish credibility with the public by providing services where the government failed to do so (though Freedom House analysts expressed concern that the collaboration provided intelligence officials with information on CSO operations and personnel that they could use should they decide to crack down on those groups).<sup>10</sup> These opportunities also apply to issues other than COVID-19 where the government has failed to respond, such as GESI and mental health provisions. (14 CSOs, nine CBOs, and one FGD.)

---

<sup>7</sup> Freedom House, *Freedom in the World 2021*. <https://freedomhouse.org/country/sri-lanka/freedom-world/2021>.

<sup>8</sup> OHCHR. 2020. *Promoting Reconciliation, Accountability and Human Rights in Sri Lanka*. A/HRC/46/20. Human Rights Council. Retrieved from [https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/A\\_HRC\\_43\\_19.pdf](https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/A_HRC_43_19.pdf).

<sup>9</sup> FHI 360, op. cit.

<sup>10</sup> Freedom House, op. cit.



Additionally, the increased adoption of communication technology during the pandemic offers CSOs increased opportunities to connect remotely with clients, particularly youths with smartphones. (Nine CSOs and three CBOs.)

## PEACEBUILDING AND RECONCILIATION

### RISKS

CSOs working on peacebuilding and reconciliation reported fewer perceived risks than their counterparts in other technical areas based on the online survey that included 18 such organizations. Only 44 percent said they face moderate risks, compared to 56 percent that perceive no or modest risks. No CSOs in this area said they face significant or very significant risks.

**Sri Lankan Government:** Peace and reconciliation CSOs said national and North and East provincial governments block peace, reconciliation, and transitional justice activities, so CSOs implement such activities as livelihood or economic development. For example, one CSO leader described, “During the [Criminal Investigation Department (CID)] intervention, some women in a meeting stood up to say that they had left behind everything and now they will stand by us, and this led the CID to question us as to what we were doing with these [beneficiaries].” CSOs said district officials want tangible projects and have been instructed not to give permission for reconciliation projects. (9 KIIs and FGDs.)

**Donor Funding:** Two CSOs cited decreased donor funding as a risk. A respondent noted that with the end of the civil war in 2009, foreign donors have redirected their peacebuilding projects elsewhere.

### OPPORTUNITIES

Of the 13 KIIs and FGDs with peacebuilding and reconciliation CSOs, five CSOs noted opportunities to collaborate with the government, and four CSOs cited opportunities in working with other organizations, such as work with local inter-religious committees, or to incorporate peacebuilding and reconciliation components into programs with youth organizations such as sports groups.

## HUMAN RIGHTS

### RISKS

Human rights CSOs perceive greater risks to promoting their mission than CSOs overall. Forty-seven percent of the 15 organizations surveyed said they face moderate risks, and 27 percent said they face significant risks. A combined 27 percent said they face modest or no risks.

**Sri Lankan Government:** Intelligence surveillance, heightened scrutiny, and document checks from the authorities are a problem particularly in the North and East—where families of the disappeared and former LTTE combatants are under greater scrutiny—and in Muslim majority areas where the Easter 2019 terrorist attacks were planned. Human rights CSOs said they keep a low profile and closely guard the names of those they serve. Similarly, the ET’s desk review found that the operational environment for civil society continues to deteriorate given that limits on freedom of expression and association,

*“We currently don’t do any human rights documentation or advocacy. The most vulnerable organizations in the country right now are primarily human rights organizations. They are the ones that potentially are followed by, you know, [Terrorist Investigation Department] and others and watched in so many ways because the government worries about them.” –CSO Leader*

legislation restricting CSO operations, and increasing surveillance have hindered human rights and governance work. (Five KIs and FGDs.)

## **OPPORTUNITIES**

Of CSO survey respondents that work in human rights, 73 percent said they have the technical capacity to take advantage of opportunities that arise.

**Provision of Legal Services:** CSOs noted that demand for legal services increases when human rights violations increase, as has occurred under the current government, providing an opportunity to human rights CSOs. For example, 28 CSOs have formed a collective to provide services to victims of police torture, families of the disappeared, and the LGBTQI community. “We always use the opportunities,” one CSO leader said, and “In 2018 after good governance government, we got the opportunity to work with families and mothers of enforced disappeared and were able to form them as a group, and we were able to build their capacity.” (Two KIs and FGDs.)

**Learning from Other Organizations and Government Collaboration:** Six human rights CSOs saw opportunities to learn from other organizations, and three noted opportunities to collaborate with local government. Three said recent failures by government in managing the COVID-19 pandemic response provided opportunities for CSOs to fill government service gaps.

## **GENDER AND SOCIAL INCLUSION**

### **RISKS**

GESI CSOs perceive risks to their mission that are comparable to CSOs overall. Of the 26 such organizations that responded to the online survey, 56 percent of CSO respondents perceive risks as moderate risks, versus 32 percent who say they are modest or not significant, and 12 percent who say the risks are significant.

**Sri Lankan Government:** Like others in civil society, GESI CSOs said the government blocks their activities, especially when they advocate for legislative reforms and campaign and advocate for justice for GBV survivors. (Five CSOs.)

**Social Norms:** Social norms on gender and other orientations are a risk. In particular, CSOs providing gender-sensitivity training in Muslim communities are confronted by leaders who say the training is contrary to their culture. Social norms are a challenge in other communities and areas of work; for example, CSOs reported that people seeking psychosocial and mental health services risk being branded as abnormal and isolated. Citing an example of the risk that social norms pose to GESI work, a CSO leader said, “We did gender trainings in Tamil and Muslim schools ... The schools didn’t accept it. So, we didn’t do two activities. They had a perception as to why a Tamil person is coming and teaching about gender. The Muslim principals thought we are trying to destroy their cultural values.” (Four CSOs.)

### **OPPORTUNITIES**

Eighty percent of GESI CSOs said they have the capacity to take advantage of opportunities. Opportunities respondents identified in the 23 KIs and FGDs with GESI CSOs included:

**Collaboration with Government:** Opportunities in working with government entities, particularly local government, include creating awareness of gender-responsive budgeting and providing gender awareness

training to police officers. There is need for safe houses for victims of GBV, especially when they are subjected to domestic violence, and the CSOs have a good opportunity to collaborate with government stakeholders. (Nine CSOs.)

**Network for Inter-CSO Learning:** Partnerships with other organizations are an opportunity to provide services and learn; for example, an existing grassroots women’s civil society network provides a forum for organizations to discuss their issues. (Seven CSOs.)

**Increased Demand for Services Provision:** Service provision to resettled communities and psychosocial services are an opportunity for civil society. For example, one CSO noted an increased demand for services from victims of GBV, which has increased during the COVID-19 pandemic, and that this CSO was setting up infrastructure for online case management and support services in response to the increased demand. (Four CSOs.)

**Legal Reform in Gender Inclusion:** Upcoming reforms to the MMDA as an opportunity for women’s organizations to work with the Ministry of Justice to gain approval for needed revisions, and an opportunity to work with local governments to reform bylaws for gender inclusiveness and responsiveness. (Three KIIs and FGDs.)

## GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

### RISKS

Like human rights CSOs, government accountability CSOs see greater risks to their activities than other technical areas based on the online survey. Of the eight such organizations that responded to the survey, 43 percent of accountability CSOs perceived moderate risks. At one end, 29 percent indicated they face significant risks; at the other, 29 percent indicated their risk is not significant.

**Donor Priorities and Funding:** Decreasing donor emphasis on support to Sri Lanka is a risk to government accountability work (Six KIIs and FGDs), as is the short-term nature of projects and funding. (Four KIIs and FGDs.) CSOs said the knowledge given to a community in a short-term program is minimal that sustainability and follow-up are at risk due to an end in funding. For example, a local government official said CBOs get knowledge on RTI and access to local government services from CSOs, but this knowledge is limited. When the project ends, the CSOs leave, and with limited knowledge the community may not be able to take effective action.

### OPPORTUNITIES

Of the 8 percent of government accountability CSOs surveyed, 57 percent said they have adequate technical capacity to take advantage of opportunities, the lowest of any technical area.

**Government Collaboration:** Respondents saw opportunities to increase government collaboration, particularly with local government. For example, one CSO leader saw an opportunity for service-based interaction with local government: “we were able to offer a tangible benefit through a project to develop livelihoods.” The individual continued, “This increased the members’ interest and motivated them to work actively with us. Government officers and other organizations also showed great interest in supporting us with this. Through this project, we were able to strengthen the relationship with our members, develop their livelihood, and strengthen the links and relationship with the government officers and other organizations.” (9 KIIs and FGDs.)

**Community-Based Networks and Learning:** Eight CSOs saw opportunities for a needs-based approach, and five CSOs identified an opportunity to facilitate community-based networks with other organizations, such as rural development societies, where a CSO provides training and capacity-building through a government-approved module. Seven CSOs saw opportunities to learn from other organizations.

## OTHER

CSOs in other sectors perceived fewer risks to their mission than others. Of the six that responded to the survey, two-thirds saw moderate risks, while the remainder perceived modest or insignificant risks. Regarding opportunities, 83 percent said they had adequate capacity to take advantage of opportunities.

Government officials identified opportunities for CSOs to increase government collaboration in other areas. In particular, officials said CSO activities in areas like nutrition, water and sanitation, and women's and children's well-being are well-regarded and supported by the government. They also saw opportunities for CSOs to intervene with poor people to ensure that microfinance lenders do not take advantage of them and for CSOs to support resettlement areas for displaced women to become proper communities with economic opportunity. Three CSOs in the "other" category agreed that there are opportunities to work with the government.

*"After the pandemic, government finds it difficult to sustain its development activities. NGO and CBO supports are encouraged. There is a new environment being created." –Local Government Official*

## EQ 1A CONCLUSIONS

**1a.1 The closing space for civil society, especially combined with technical weaknesses in advocacy and legal issues, poses the most significant risk to Sri Lankan DRG CSOs.** By far, CSOs noted government as the most common risk they face, particularly for CSOs working on human rights issues. Stronger skills in advocacy have been found to help maintain civil space in backsliding regimes.<sup>11</sup> Similarly, skills regarding legal issues are important to higher-level advocacy and to key services in different technical areas (such as legal services for people affected by human rights violations or MMDA or bylaw reform for social inclusion).

**1a.2 DRG outcomes such as peacebuilding require longer time horizons than are currently possible with the short-term nature of funding.** CSOs frequently cited short-term funding (for example, grants for six-month projects) as a weakness and a risk along with decreased international donor funding coming into Sri Lanka (also under EQ 1).

**1a.3 The COVID-19 pandemic has heightened the need for civil society to supplement the GoSL in providing services, particularly for marginalized populations.** There is already a precedent for civil society beginning to provide more services, sometimes integrated with DRG

---

<sup>11</sup> USAID, [Maintaining Civic Space in Backsliding Regimes](https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1866/Maintaining_Civic_Space_in_Backsliding_Regimes_-_Research_and_Innovation_Grants_Working_Papers_Series.pdf). September, 2017. Retrieved from [https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1866/Maintaining\\_Civic\\_Space\\_in\\_Backsliding\\_Regimes\\_-\\_Research\\_and\\_Innovation\\_Grants\\_Working\\_Papers\\_Series.pdf](https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1866/Maintaining_Civic_Space_in_Backsliding_Regimes_-_Research_and_Innovation_Grants_Working_Papers_Series.pdf).

outcomes. Combined with civil society groups’ robust grassroots networks, this is an opportunity from which civil society can build.

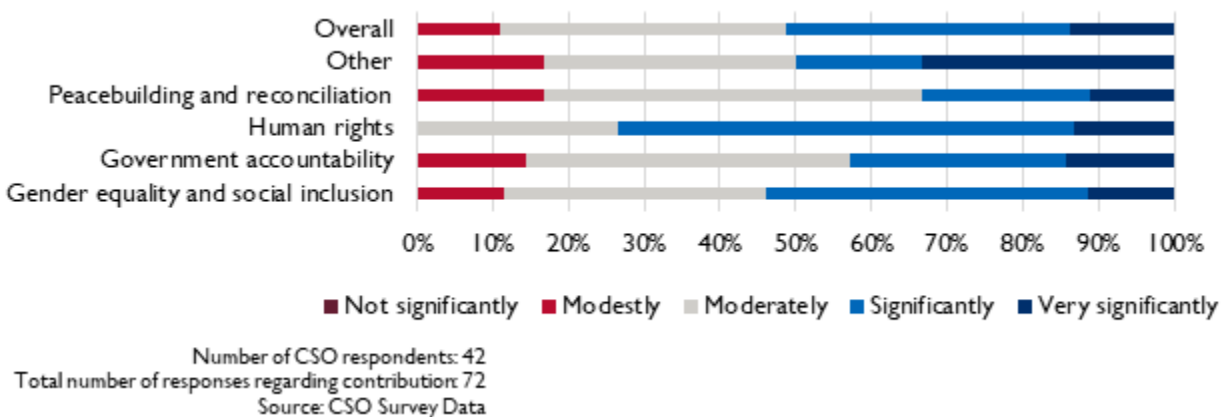
**1a.4 Social norms are a constraint for CSOs working in gender equality and social inclusion, particularly in women’s and LGBTQI rights.** A lack of knowledge around engaging GESI groups among non-expert CSOs (noted in EQ 1) and challenges in addressing social norms would be barriers in building on this work. Making progress on GESI would also require legal and bylaw changes as well as capacity-building for government partners. CSOs can identify opportunities and possibilities to engage with the government stakeholders in strengthening existing safe houses or to build new ones wherever it is necessary. Taking steps to act to strengthen the district and divisional level GBV forums is essential.

**EQ 1B: WHAT ARE CSOS’ KNOWLEDGE AND ATTITUDES ABOUT THEIR CONTRIBUTION TO ADVANCING HUMAN RIGHTS, GENDER AND SOCIAL INCLUSION, PROMOTING PEACEBUILDING, AND GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY?**

A majority (52 percent) of the 42 CSOs surveyed said they make a significant or very significant contribution to their technical area, and another 38 percent said they make a moderate contribution. Only 11 percent said their contribution is modest, and zero responded no significant contribution (Figure 4).

In addition, the desk review found the discussion of higher-level results were most frequently seen among larger organizations in democratic development, and smaller regional CSOs and CBOs may have less understanding of how they do or could contribute to larger democratic processes. Regional CSOs took significant policy-related actions at more local levels.<sup>12</sup>

Figure 4: CSOs’ Contribution to Technical Area



A CSOs expert corroborated this finding about CSOs not contributing to higher-level results, saying, “A typical CSO used to dealing with donors, etc., may not be able to deal with this kind of issue. They’re

<sup>12</sup> USAID/Sri Lanka, *Final Performance Evaluation of SPICE Activity*, April 2017. <https://dec.usaid.gov/dec/GetDoc.axd?ctID=ODVhZjk4NWQ0tM2YyMi00YjRmLTkxNjktZTcxMjM2NDYyY2Uy&plD=NTYw&attchmnt=VHJI ZQ==&rID=MjI3MDY5>

too caught up in their project mindsets. Too apolitical. They're not structured to deal with the bigger issues.”

## PEACEBUILDING AND RECONCILIATION

Of the 18 surveyed peace and reconciliation CSOs, one-third said they make a significant or very significant contribution to peacebuilding and reconciliation, and another half said they make a moderate contribution. The 13 KIs and FGDs with CSOs in this field identified the key areas where they contribute as:

**Awareness Raising:** Six CSOs reported they contributed through raising **awareness** of peace and reconciliation through websites, social media, newspapers in Sinhalese and English, research publications, and street festivals.

**Capacity-Building:** Six CSOs cited said they contributed to capacity-building; for example, in transitional justice and reconciliation.

**Promoting Social Cohesion:** In three KIs with CSOs and two FGDs with beneficiaries, participants cited building social cohesion by bringing together youths and adults from different ethnic or religious communities. Activities included a camp for Buddhist and Muslim youths in Kandy, exchange visits for Sinhalese and Tamil villagers, and talks between Sinhalese and Tamil communities. Also included in this area was an activity to train youth in nonviolence and peacebuilding.

**Advocacy Work:** Four CSOs cited **advocacy and lobbying**, including two CSOs that prepared amendments and recommendations for the government advocating for peacebuilding

## HUMAN RIGHTS

Seventy-three percent of the 15 surveyed human rights CSOs said they make a significant or very significant contribution to human rights, and the remainder said they make a moderate contribution. The 14 KIs and FGDs with CSOs in this field identified the key areas where they contribute as:

**Awareness Raising:** Five CSOs work to educate communities on their rights and to raise awareness of human rights, both generally and in specific areas like police torture and LGBTQI rights.

**Capacity-Building:** Five CSOs provide capacity-building training on human rights issues to human rights defenders, university students, and community-based groups.

**Providing Legal Services:** Four CSOs said they provide legal services to victims of human rights violations, including through a network of “first-aid” centers.

**Advocacy Work:** Four CSOs advocate for the rights of the families of disappeared persons in Tamil areas of the North and East.

## GENDER AND SOCIAL INCLUSION

Of the 26 surveyed GESI CSOs, a majority (54 percent) said they make a significant or very significant contribution to human rights, and another 35 percent said they make a moderate contribution. The 23 KIIs and FGDs with CSOs in this field identified the key areas where they contribute as:

**Awareness Raising:** Ten CSOs cited awareness raising on issues like GBV, division of household labor, and domestic relations court cases.

**Capacity-Building:** Seven CSOs cited capacity-building, such as education of women on feminism, GBV and gender inclusiveness, and of youth on the rights of the disabled. “We train them: It’s an intense 20-day training program which covers psychosocial support related training,” one CSO leader said. “Once they finish the training, they know how to identify, how to approach the people, and to do the initial stage work.”

**Collaborating with Government:** Six CSOs noted their government collaboration on knowledge change, such as gender-responsive budgeting.

**Advocacy Work:** Five CSOs cited their advocacy, such as on women’s issues in Muslim communities and the proposed amendments to the MMDA.

**Inclusivity:** Four CSOs cited their work on inclusion of women and youth in communities.

**Service Provision:** Three CSOs cited service provisions, such as online platforms and helplines for victims of harassment and GBV; counseling and mental health support; and safe houses for GBV victims.

## GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Forty-three percent of eight surveyed CSOs in the field said they make a significant or very significant contribution to government accountability, and another 43 percent said they make a moderate contribution. The desk review found that CSOs and CSO coalitions were active during the 2019 election campaign and were seen as relevant in the elections.<sup>13</sup> However, interaction between members of parliament and civil society takes place outside of official committee meetings, often between individual members of parliament and civil society activists who have personal relationships.<sup>14</sup> The 13 KIIs and FGDs with CSOs in this field identified the key areas where they contribute as:

*“[Our CSO] started to provide awareness and training programs about RTI [...now...] In [a geographic area] all the differently abled persons are receiving the disability allowance; that was done through RTI. That was a huge success for us. We have also helped the community who didn’t have houses and land deeds through RTI.”*  
—CSO Leader

**Education and Awareness Raising:** Eight CSOs said they raise awareness of rights related to government services and RTI. Seven CSOs noted their work on education, such as educating women on

<sup>13</sup> FHI 360, op. cit.

<sup>14</sup> John Lis, et al., Midterm Performance Evaluation of the Strengthening Democratic Governance and Accountability Project, USAID/Sri Lanka, Dec. 20, 2018, p. 8.



their participation in local government, seminars for families of disappeared persons, and promotion of a rights-based approach to government.

**Capacity-Building:** Seven CSOs build capacity, such as training village councils on how to access government services or training court monitors for the justice sector.

**Advocacy Work:** Six CSOs cited their advocacy efforts, like cooperation with the Amara Forum for women-headed households to be included in government livelihood and self-employment programs.

**Collaborating with Government:** Six CSOs cited government collaboration and knowledge building; for example, work with district authorities to ensure postal services for the plantation sector and programs for provincial governments on accountability and transparency.

## OTHER

Half of the six CSOs working in other sectors that responded to the survey said they make a significant or very significant contribution to their technical area, while another one-third said they make a moderate contribution. Among the contributions they cited are:

- Knowledge-based livelihood programs to improve economic status, especially among marginalized groups,
- Research on labor issues that informs government policy making,
- Government engagement on issues like trafficking in persons,
- Environmental sustainability, and
- Nutrition for pregnant women.

## EQ 1B CONCLUSIONS

**1b.1 CSOs believe they make a moderate to significant contribution to advancing their missions, particularly in transmitting knowledge and raising awareness; training and capacity-building; advocacy; changing societal attitudes; and building understanding.** Most CSOs' knowledge of their contributions come at the local level, such as building understanding between neighboring villages, providing legal services to victims, educating individuals about their rights and services, or working with local government units on issues like budgeting and gender sensitivity.

**1b.2 Some CSOs are beginning to have an impact at the national level, but this is less common.** While CSOs understand the need to contribute to higher-level results, they need more support and guidance to understand how they can contribute; that is, connecting with national level forums and participating in wider conceptual discussions. CSOs mainly lack capacity to conceptualize project ideas. However, as a positive example, CSOs are working on amendments to the MMDA and protection mechanisms for increased numbers of women suffering abuse during the pandemic lockdown. This could include meetings or hearings before parliamentary committees. Engagement with the national government has become more difficult since the 2019 elections, and government officials have shown a strong preference for CSOs to focus on service provision. While civil society may seek opportunities to



engage with the national government and parliament, there appears to be little interest at the national level in CSOs' voices being heard in the corridors of power, and CSOs need support to effectively advocate for higher-level change and to change attitudes about their issues of concern.

**Ib.3 It appears CSO contributions to results in democratic governance are limited above the local level.** There is not clear knowledge on this topic as it is not clear if CSOs interviewed are contributing to higher-level, national results as envisioned in USAID/Sri Lanka's CDCS such as parliamentary or judicial effectiveness; national public sector accountability; supporting women; and youth political participation beyond the local level.

## **EQ 2: WHAT IS THE LEVEL OF TRUST AND CREDIBILITY OF CSOS, AND WHAT ARE THESE PERCEPTIONS BASED ON?**

Under this question, the ET summarizes factors that were most likely to come up as affecting trust and credibility. After providing an overview, the discussion examines regional difference and then variations across technical areas in which CSOs work. The findings of EQ 2A build on those of EQ 2 and discuss more about how CSO activities affected perceptions of communities, marginalized populations, and local government officials.

### **OVERALL**

Forty percent of the 42 CSOs surveyed said they have a high or very high level of trust and credibility with the Sri Lankan public. Nearly half of CSOs surveyed (48 percent) said they enjoy a moderate level of trust and credibility, and 12 percent said they have a modest level or no trust from the public.

The desk review found that the public image of civil society experienced a “catastrophic” deterioration in 2019 because of heightened government scrutiny after the Easter 2019 terrorist attacks and an increase in negative rhetoric from key politicians during the presidential elections. Negative media coverage of civil society increased after the attacks, and political actors referred to CSOs as organizations that are purely motivated by dollars, which increased negative public perceptions.<sup>15</sup>

Outside of the CSOs themselves, other stakeholders cited several factors for public trust and credibility in civil society as a whole:

- Level of grassroots engagement;
- Presence in CSO and CBO networks;
- Level of inclusiveness;
- Perceived neutrality;
- Sustained engagement;

---

<sup>15</sup> FHI 360. 2020. Sri Lanka. [The 2019 CSO Sustainability Index for Asia](https://www.fhi360.org/sites/default/files/media/documents/csosi-asia-2019-report.pdf). Washington, FHI 360. Retrieved from <https://www.fhi360.org/sites/default/files/media/documents/csosi-asia-2019-report.pdf>.

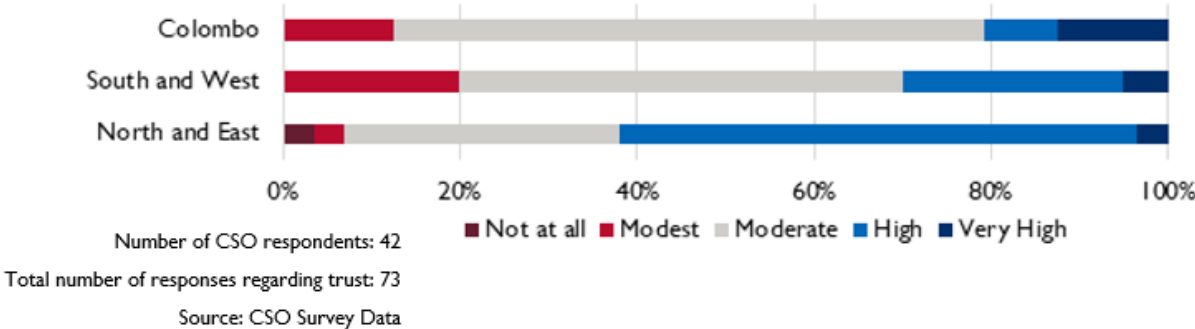
- Level of advocacy work;
- Amount and quality of service provision;
- Transparent operations. For example, a government official noted that one important component was a code of conduct for CSOs and CBOs that promotes good governance and accounting practices (see EQ 2b for more information);
- Level of support provided during COVID-19; and
- Level of government collaboration.

**REGIONAL DIFFERENCES**

Multiple stakeholders reported that CSOs based in the North and East provinces have a higher level of trust and credibility than those elsewhere in the country. A total of 63 percent of the 29 surveyed CSOs with head offices based in Northern or Eastern Provinces believe they enjoy a high or very high level of public trust, compared to 21 percent of Colombo-based CSOs and 30 percent elsewhere (Figure 5).

Interviews with CSOs based in the North and East, and government officials in those provinces, reported that CSOs enjoy higher levels of trust because people there believe that human rights and peacebuilding are important issues, and they no longer trust the central government to resolve issues such as accountability for human rights violators or justice for the families of disappeared persons. Interview participants said the national government enjoys greater credibility in the South, where civil society is seen as acting contrary to the agenda of the government and human rights and reconciliation work are viewed negatively. Furthermore, stakeholders noted some politicians and media figures promote a perception of USAID funding as an imperialist, ideological weapon against Sri Lankan values.

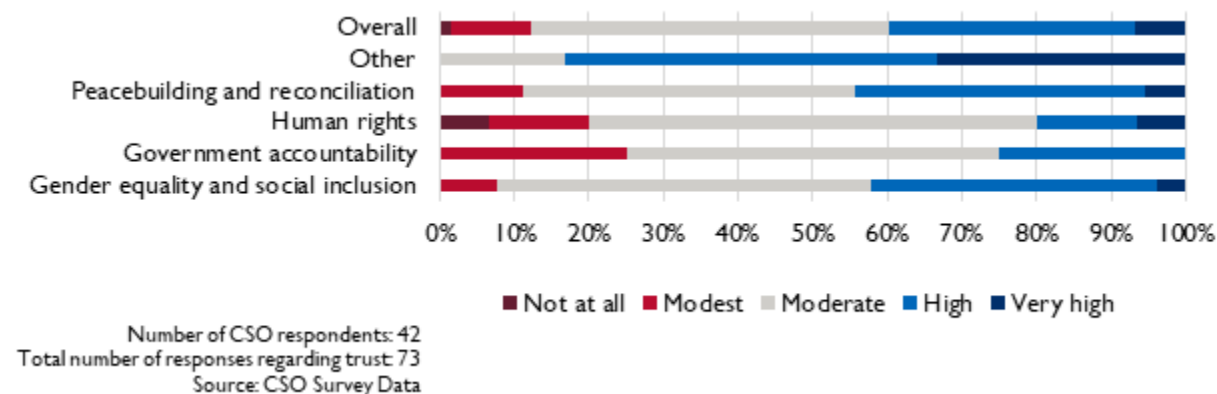
*Figure 5: Public Trust of CSOs by Region*



**PEACEBUILDING AND RECONCILIATION**

The 18 surveyed CSOs working in this technical area reported a comparable level of trust and credibility to CSOs overall, with 45 percent enjoying a high or very high level of trust and 44 percent having a moderate level of trust. The remaining 11 percent reported a modest level of trust (Figure 6).

Figure 6: Public Trust of CSOs by Technical Area



In 13 KIIs and FGDs with these groups, respondents said bases for trust and credibility include:

**Grassroots Engagement with Communities:** CSOs said their grassroots engagement with communities helped them build trust and credibility. (12 CSOs.)

**Inter-CSO/CBO Networks:** Relationships with other CSOs and CBOs are a source of trust and credibility. (10 CSOs.)

**Impartiality in Serving the Community:** Peacebuilding CSOs noted people trust CSOs because they are neutral in serving all ethnic groups and all social groups (eight CSOs); seven CSOs cited their inclusiveness, including engagement with youth and across social groups. “We work with all ethnic communities together, so the community trusts us in working for peacebuilding,” one CSO said.

**Transparency and Accountability:** Transparency builds trust, and CSOs follow relevant regulations, which builds trust because communities believe that they will not be taken advantage of. (Eight CSOs, one local government official.)

**Advocacy for People’s Rights:** Advocacy on behalf of the people’s rights and welfare helped CSOs earn their trust. “There is trust in the organization because we always work for the people’s rights and welfare,” one CSO said. (Seven CSOs.)

**Collaboration with Government:** Seven CSOs said their work with the government built trust and credibility.

**Long-Term Community Engagement:** Where CSOs are able to work with communities on a long-term basis, they can develop community buy-in to their activities and build trust. (Five CSOs.)

**Service Provision:** Service provision built trust in communities being served, specifically work during the COVID-19 pandemic. “They trust us that even in emergency period we will support them,” one CSO said. (Four CSOs.)

“We follow the same strategy and mechanism to education on peacebuilding and reconciliation over a long period of time [...] This creates ownership for community. It becomes their own thing, so they trust us.”  
 –CSO Leader

## HUMAN RIGHTS

The 15 surveyed human rights CSOs reported a lower perceived level of trust and credibility than other CSOs, with only 20 percent enjoying a high or very high level of trust and 60 percent having a moderate level of trust. This mirrors findings from the desk review, which found that the civil society sector's public image deteriorated in 2018 as negative statements about rights-based CSOs increased. Former president Sirisena branded human rights organizations and activists as LTTE sympathizers, blamed donor-funded NGOs for ongoing protests in the North and East, and accused them of misleading the public.<sup>16</sup>

In 14 KIs and FGDs with these groups, they said factors for trust included:

**Inter-CSO/CBO Networks:** Human rights CSOs have built trust and credibility through their connections with other CSOs and local CBOs. (12 CSOs.)

**Impartiality in Serving the Community:** Human rights CSOs are trusted because they serve all members of the community without prejudice. "People have high trust and credibility because CSOs directly address the human rights needs of community, with no partiality," a government official said. (11 CSOs, one government official.)

**Advocacy for People's Rights:** CSOs have built trust by advocating for communities whose rights have been violated, such as Tamil speakers and plantation workers. "Looking at the work [our CSO] has done over the years, we've not hesitated in challenging the government whenever we felt the need," one CSO leader said. (12 CSOs, one local government official.)

**Service Provision:** CSOs have earned trust by taking care of the needs of the community when government officials violate rights, and five CSOs specifically mentioned service provision. "There is more and more government suppression and control, which are driving the marginalized community into much more deprivation," a CSO leader said. (Seven CSOs, one CBO leader.)

**Long-Term Engagement:** As noted above for peacebuilding organizations, human rights CSOs that work with communities on a long-term basis develop community buy-in to their activities and build trust. "Families trust us because our way of working with community has built longstanding partnerships with communities," one CSO said. (Six CSOs.)

*"We trust CSOs because they take care of us, even in small needs that we have. They care so much and take care of us to find solutions to problems. Even government officers who work closely with the community don't care about these problems. They just want to do livelihood support. When it comes to transitional justice issues, they just ignore them." –CBO Staff Member*

One negative factor impacting trust is that some human rights CSOs are seen as working for the benefit of their leaders rather than the communities that they serve. One government official said some human rights organizations have built strong relationships with police departments, but they use those ties for their own personal gain. Another negative factor is that some political parties engage in "mudslinging

<sup>16</sup> FHI 360. 2019. Sri Lanka. *The 2018 CSO Sustainability Index for Asia*. Washington, FHI 360. Retrieved from <https://www.veriteresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/CSOSI-Sri-Lanka-2018.pdf>.

campaigns” against human rights CSOs, which undermines public trust. Seven CSOs mentioned campaigns against CSOs by the government, and five cited such campaigns in the media.

## GENDER AND SOCIAL INCLUSION

The 26 CSOs working on GESI issues reported levels of perceived public trust comparable to CSOs overall, with 42 percent of CSOs stating that they enjoy a high or very high level of trust and half saying they have a moderate level of trust.

In 23 KIIs and FGDs with these groups, they said bases for public trust in GESI CSOs include:

**Impartiality:** CSOs build trust by acting neutrally. (14 CSOs, one government official.) Ten CSOs cited inclusiveness, including other ethnic groups and youth.

**Transparency:** Eleven GESI CSOs said they built trust by being transparent.

**Advocacy:** GESI CSOs build trust through their advocacy for survivors of GBV or amendments to the MMDA, especially in the affected communities. “We have more credibility and trust from victimized women due to interventions for rights of victims,” one CSO said. (10 CSOs and one USAID official.)

**Service Provision:** CSOs build trust when they provide services to women in need, such as shelters, counseling, legal services, and microfinance loans. “If one person’s problem is solved, she would tell another person that [our CSO] would support them [...] A lot of this shows confidence and credibility,” one CSO leader said. (Eight CSOs, one CBO leader, one government official.)

## GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

The eight CSOs that responded to the survey and work on government accountability said they enjoy less trust and credibility than other CSOs. Only one-quarter said they enjoy a high level of trust, and half said they have a moderate level of trust.

In 13 KIIs and FGDs with these groups, they said trust in government accountability CSOs is due to:

**Grassroots Engagement:** CSOs said their community-based approach and fighting for the community’s rights lead people in the community to trust them. A government official said CSOs provide information early in the process and meet with the community before implementing projects, which leads the communities to trust that CSOs are doing what the communities want. (11 CSOs.)

**Government Collaboration:** CSOs said their engagement with government entities builds trust and credibility. (Eight CSOs.)

**Inclusion:** Eight CSOs said they are perceived as neutral, and six said they are inclusive. “We work without any discrimination, so we were able to win the trust of the people, while other organizations work only with a selective group or community,” one CSO leader said.

**Accountability:** Transparent operations are a basis for trust. Beneficiaries in an FGD said CSOs provide budget lines for their activities, do not promise what they cannot deliver, and operate transparently,

which builds trust. A CBO official said the CSO that works with the CBO checks its registration and reporting procedures to ensure that it is accountable to the community. (Five CSOs.)

## EQ 2 CONCLUSIONS

**2.1 CSOs in different regions of Sri Lanka report different levels of public trust and credibility that require different approaches.** Trust of civil society is inversely related to public trust in the central government and media. Where the government enjoys less trust, particularly in the North and East, CSOs are a trusted, credible alternative to and check on the government. In the South, where the government is more popular, the public is susceptible to accusations that civil society acts contrary to the interests and values of Sri Lanka. However, economic development CSOs have managed to maintain unified public trust both in the North and South of Sri Lanka.

**2.2 Relational factors like grassroots connections and networks affect trust of civil society across stakeholders.** CSOs that have strong grassroots connections with local communities reported earning the trust of the public, which was able to see first-hand how the CSOs operate and serve communities. Likewise, strong networks serve as a force multiplier, enabling CSOs with grassroots credibility to work together to obtain greater results. Networks help facilitate both bonding within a certain demographic and bridging across different groups, particularly in interventions related to livelihoods and economic development. Bonding generally takes place within communities to strengthen advocacy, while bridging is noted in building social cohesion and GESI.

**2.3 Inclusivity of CSO support or services is essential to public trust, especially given societal divisions.** Where CSOs work with all groups in a community, regardless of gender, religion, or ethnicity, they build credibility with all elements of society that they are working for the common good, rather than to advance the interest of one group relative to others.

**2.4 Transparency of operations supports trust.** Thanks to government and media attacks, CSOs are vulnerable to accusations that they exist solely to receive foreign contributions for the benefit of their officials. Transparency allows the public to learn how CSOs spend their funds and builds trust that organizations exist to benefit their communities, rather than the CSOs' leaders. As mentioned in EQ 2 and further in EQ 2b, development and implementation of a CSO code of conduct has improved perceptions of CSOs through increased transparency and accountability.

**2.5 Less politicized technical areas provide a stronger foundation for trust of CSOs across multiple stakeholder groups.** CSOs working in historically politicized technical areas (human rights, government accountability) are less likely to perceive themselves as trusted. This contrasts with less political areas, like gender equality and social inclusion, where CSOs are more likely to report a high level of trust with the public. CSOs could build greater trust with the public and the government if they focus on service provision, but this is unlikely to advance USAID objectives in democracy and governance and may simply cover up government shortcomings in providing services. Achieving intended results in democracy and governance may require support to CSOs operating in politically sensitive fields.

## EQ 2A: HOW HAVE CSO ACTIVITIES AFFECTED STAKEHOLDER PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR EFFECTIVENESS, CONTRIBUTIONS, AND WORK?

### COMMUNITIES

An overwhelming majority of respondents said CSO activities have positively affected community perceptions of their effectiveness, contributions, and work. A total of 62 respondents said activities positively affected stakeholder perceptions; by contrast, three CSOs said there was no change in perceptions, and one government official said perceptions were more negative.<sup>17</sup> Through its interviews with CSOs and their CBO partners the ET found several primary areas in which CSO activities created positive community perceptions of their effectiveness and contributions:

**Service Provision:** Service provision positively affected community perceptions of CSOs. Examples of service provision include psychosocial support at the village level and village-level groups providing rapid support to families of disappeared persons who may be harassed by government intelligence agents. (20 CSOs, 17 CBOs, seven FGDs, three government officials, and three USAID officials.)

*“The government refers to these [CSO-provided mental health and disability] services. People come to the centers, whether disability or psychosocial. They then don’t see it as an NGO, just a service provider.” –USAID/Sri Lanka Staff Member*

**Peacebuilding Activities:** Participants in constituent FGDs from the affected communities in particular positively viewed peacebuilding activities at the grassroots level, who noted the importance of long-term commitments, in some cases dating back to 2014. Community leaders said activities like inter-village councils were successful at averting inter-communal violence at the district level and at eliminating instances of hate speech and violent expression. “What I learnt was that rather than putting up posters about reconciliation, it is more effective to conduct programs where we work together with the communities, thereby gradually bringing them together,” one CSO leader said. “That’s how peace and reconciliation can be built. We saw the mindsets of the people gradually changing as activities were carried out.” Ten CSOs and four CBOs cited conflict prevention activities. Seventeen CSOs, seven CBOs, three FGDs, and one government official mentioned long-term commitments as a positive contribution.

**Economic Development Activities:** Economic development activities as an important factor in communities’ views of CSOs. The contributing activities included “Change Makers” self-help groups that contribute to employment; district-level “Small Societies” that provide microlending for community infrastructure projects; and a network 400 women-centric CSOs and CBOs across Sri Lanka that provide services like livelihood and service development. (Nine CSOs, two CBOs, one government official, and one USAID official.)

**Network of CSOs:** Effective civil society networks contribute to positive community perceptions of CSOs by effectively protecting their rights, promoting livelihoods, and improving the skills and capacity

---

<sup>17</sup> Overall, 38 CSOs, 17 CBOs, three beneficiary FGDs, three government officials, and one USAID official cited positive contributions. Other respondents did not provide a clear, directional statement of change. It should be noted that the convenience sampling of this evaluation, which also served to reduce risk to evaluation participants, likely provided a positive bias to the evaluation findings relative to the population as a whole.



of member CSO staff. For example, they cited a network of fisheries CSOs that united to advocate on behalf of Sri Lankan fishermen regarding encroachment of foreign fishermen in Sri Lankan waters and another network that advocates for people's land rights. (Four CSOs.)

**Grassroots Activities:** Participants also indicated that grassroots activities (e.g., assistance with people's commissions on land rights now operating in five provinces that works with local government officials to enhance knowledge of land rights; protection of community rights; consultation with communities prior to implementing activities) drive positive perceptions of CSOs.

## MARGINALIZED POPULATIONS

Fifty-five<sup>18</sup> respondents said CSO activities have positively affected marginalized groups' perceptions of their effectiveness, contributions, and work. By contrast, one CSO said there was no change in perceptions, and no interlocutor said perceptions were more negative. Key informants identified several types of CSO activities that created positive perceptions of their effectiveness and contributions among the target groups:

**Long-Term Support:** Long-term support to target groups resulted in more positive perceptions. For example, one CSO said, "There was a story recorded where in a village—it's a strong Buddhist area—and this particular youth had conducted a campaign on disappearance families and [the Office of Missing Persons], and they sent photos and writings of how they did the posters and how they were received and how they overcame it. Changing the mindset is a long process." (21 CSOs, eight CBOs, three FGDs, and one government official.)

**Advocacy for Marginalized People's Issues:** Target groups have a more favorable perception of civil society due to advocacy. For example, beneficiaries in FGDs said that they appreciated CSO advocacy on issues like the MMDA, noting particularly the proposed ban on marriage of girls under 18 and efforts to find female judges for GBV cases in Islamic domestic relations courts. (19 CSOs, five CBOs, and three FGDs.)

**Community Groups:** Similarly, building community groups resulted in a more favorable perception of civil society among target groups. (14 CSOs, seven CBOs, three FGDs, and one government official.)

**Service Provision:** Target groups formed positive perceptions of CSOs due to provision of services like providing safe spaces for women heads of households, caring for pregnant women and helping ensure that they have adequate nutrition, supporting LGBTQI individuals, and providing legal services to victims of human rights violations. (Four CSOs, seven CBOs, two FGDs, and one local government official.)

**Network of CSOs:** Formation of a national GBV forum contributed to a positive perception of CBOs among women. Conflict resolution activities, like a network of women's CSOs and CBOs working in border villages between Sinhala and Tamil communities that promoted social inclusion, created positive perceptions among the villagers. (10 CSOs, three CBOs, and one FGD.)

**Economic Development:** Beneficiaries of a livelihood development program said in an FGD that they appreciated efforts by a CSO to support them to become productive citizens. In all, eight CSOs, three

---

<sup>18</sup> 32 CSOs, 17 CBOs, three beneficiary FGDs, and three government officials.



CBOs, and two FGDs said economic development efforts resulted in a more positive perception of civil society by target groups.

**Source of Information:** Target groups view CSOs more favorably because they are a source of information. (Three CSOs, three CBOs, and two FGDs.)

## GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS

Overall, 31 respondents said CSO activities have positively affected government perceptions of their effectiveness, contributions, and work, compared to 14 who said perceptions were more negative and nine who said there was no change in perceptions.

Government officials were virtually unanimous that economic development and infrastructure work were the most effective areas for civil society involvement, contrasting this work with peacebuilding, which they said was unnecessary. One official was positive about the social inclusion aspect of economic development work. CSOs themselves agreed that economic development work improved government perceptions of civil society, with nine CSOs and three CBOs sharing this view.

Other work that affected government officials' perceptions of civil society included:

**Service Provision:** Four government officials praised civil society activities to provide services to communities, such as psychosocial support to teachers. Three CSOs and two CBOs agreed that service provision improved government perceptions of CSOs.

**Government Collaboration:** An underlying theme in all interviews with government officials was their desire for civil society to work together with government in those areas that are a priority for the government. They expressed particular willingness to work with civil society on gender issues, such as management of GBV cases. One CSO noted that more junior government officials are more open to collaboration with civil society. In all, 15 CSOs and six CBOs agreed that supporting the government agenda improved government perceptions of civil society.

**Peacebuilding:** While government officials generally downplayed the importance of peacebuilding, two officials did express a positive view of civil society work in building “communal harmony” in communities that had seen communal violence. Government officials indicated that communal harmony enables economic development. Seven CSOs agreed that building community groups resulted in a more positive view of civil society by government officials.

## EQ 2A CONCLUSIONS

**2a.1 Achievement of tangible outcomes is a key factor in stakeholder perceptions of CSO effectiveness.** CSO activities related to economic development and service provision had the greatest impact on perceptions of their effectiveness and contributions among communities and government officials because they had a tangible impact on livelihoods and communities.

**2a.2 Grassroots programs are perceived as effective because communities can see the results.** Programs operating at a higher level may not be seen as effective because people cannot easily see the results and connect them to a CSO, whereas programs in local communities can demonstrate a

direct benefit to beneficiaries. Communicating results may be an important step for CSOs at regional or national levels to build perceptions of effectiveness.

**2a.3 There is an opportunity to embed peacebuilding and reconciliation (and other work) in economic development to improve popular receptivity.** People in Tamil and Sinhala communities in the North and East, in border villages, and in Buddhist and Muslim communities in the South saw the effectiveness of peacebuilding activities in reducing violence and inter-communal conflict. Government officials tend to discount the effectiveness of peacebuilding, though local government officials appreciate the role of CSOs in improving communal harmony to facilitate local economic development. A more explicit connection of peacebuilding to economic growth could build government support for such programs.

## **EQ 2B: WHAT ARE THE CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPROVING CIVIL SOCIETY CREDIBILITY AMONG THE PUBLIC, INCLUDING MARGINALIZED POPULATIONS?**

### **PUBLIC**

#### **CHALLENGES**

According to key informants, the main challenges to improving civil society credibility among the public come from the government, politicians, and the media.

**Politicians and Government:** Respondents said political leaders and the current NGO Secretariat are a challenge to improving the credibility of civil society. CSOs whose activities do not align with government policies face disruption of their activities and “mudslinging” campaigns by politicians. The desk study found that negative rhetoric from politicians and government representatives during the 2019 campaign challenged civil society credibility.<sup>19</sup> Furthermore, CSO documents state that the sector’s vilification has negatively affected public perceptions of CSOs among Sinhalese, and these perceptions are compounded by many CSO’s limited constituencies that are often disconnected from the South. (23 CSOs, three CBOs, three USAID official, and one CSO expert.)

**Anti-Government and Anti-Sri Lankan Perceptions:** In areas that support the government, the credibility of CSOs is damaged by perceptions that civil society operates in opposition to the government, branding civil society as opposed to Sri Lankan values. This is particularly true of human rights CSOs, which are seen as and working through forums like the United Nations Human Rights Council in Geneva, which is viewed as unfairly maligning Sri Lanka. (Nine CSOs, three CBOs, one FGD, and one government official.)

**Media Misinformation and Malice:** Outlets with both traditional media and social media spread misinformation about CSOs and their intentions. They said that media with anti-Western agendas use CSOs as convenient targets for misinformation. Two CSOs recalled a 2014 poster campaign that branded them as “dollar crows” who sold out the Sri Lankan people for Western money for their own benefit. The desk review found that CSOs do not engage in effective media outreach for coverage of

---

<sup>19</sup> FHI360, 2019 CSO Sustainability Index.

their activities.<sup>20</sup> “We need to be more savvy and smarter about communicating the good work that we are doing,” one interview participant said. “But what we should not do is, we should not understand it as a communication problem. This is much more of a political problem and tackle that way.” (Seven CSOs, one CBO, one FGD, and two USAID officials.)

Other challenges to improving civil society credibility include:

**Donor Priorities:** There has been a decrease in interest by foreign donors in Sri Lanka, due both to the country’s upper-middle income status and the end of the civil war. The desk study found that decreased funding for CBOs also led to feelings of betrayal among beneficiaries who have access to fewer services.<sup>21</sup> (Four CSOs, one CBO, one expert, and two USAID officials.)

**Decline in Voluntarism:** A decline in voluntarism<sup>22</sup> in Sri Lanka in recent decades across all age groups has become a challenge in improving the credibility of civil society. (10 CSOs and one government official.) Another five CSOs, one FGD, and one government official said the public is not interested in the work of civil society.

**COVID-19:** The COVID-19 pandemic is a challenge for improving the credibility of civil society. (16 CSOs, five CBOs, and two FGDs.)

## OPPORTUNITIES

Among the opportunities for CSOs to improve their credibility among the public are:

**Grassroots Engagement and Service Delivery:** Increased community engagement could improve the public image of CSOs. Modalities include working through existing community networks and inclusive community engagement and service provision. (29 CSOs, 12 CBOs, one FGD, four government officials, and one USAID official.)

**Government Collaboration:** As noted above, large segments of the public view the central government favorably, so increased civil society collaboration with the government could improve public credibility. Respondents pointed specifically to education, where they said CSOs could partner with universities and youth. One CSO noted that the government is promoting “co-existence” in education, and local governments are interested in social cohesion as an enabler for economic growth. They also said that less controversial projects, like water, sanitation, and nutrition, could incorporate a peacebuilding component to promote social cohesion, noting that “softer” language could make civil society projects more acceptable to the public. (19 CSOs, one CBO, and three government officials.)

**Standing up to Government:** Conversely, two CSOs, one CSO sectoral expert, and one USAID official suggested that civil society can increase its credibility by standing up to the government when it violates human rights or fails to provide the public with needed services. They said that defending human rights is more likely to build public credibility in the North and East, though **service provision** where the

---

<sup>20</sup> USAID. 2015. Democracy, Rights and Governance Assessment of Sri Lanka: Updated Report. Washington: MSI. Retrieved from <https://msiworldwide.com/sites/default/files/additional-resources/2018-12/DRG%20Assessment%20of%20Sri%20Lanka.pdf>.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> “Voluntarism” is the principle of relying on voluntary action (used especially with reference to the involvement of voluntary organizations in social welfare).

government falls short would build credibility everywhere. The desk review found that service-providing CSOs are viewed positively by local government officials and tend to benefit from more positive public perceptions across the country.<sup>23</sup>

**Social Media:** Three CSOs and one government official suggested that a social media campaign would improve public perception of CSOs. A respondent said a U.S. government campaign to educate the Sri Lankan public about American values would help the image of CSOs that receive U.S. funding.

## MARGINALIZED GROUPS

As part of its analysis of the EQ, the ET investigated challenges and opportunities for CSOs to improve their credibility with groups like women, youth, disabled and LGBTQI persons, ethnic and religious minorities, and lower castes.

### CHALLENGES

CSO leaders said their primary challenge in improving their credibility with marginalized groups is that they run into strong opposition from some communities that say gender and social inclusion programs run contrary to their community's cultural norms. They said this is particularly true in Muslim communities and for certain marginalized groups, like the LGBTQI community. (18 CSOs, nine CBOs, two FGDs, and one government official.)

**Youth Engagement:** Respondents cited a lack of youth engagement and participation in civil society. One CSO leader added that youth are disaffected and dissatisfied with democracy, particularly in the North, which makes it difficult for CSOs to persuade them that there is hope for democracy. (13 CSOs, two CBOs, one FGD, and one USAID official.)

**Social Fragmentation:** Social fragmentation by caste and religion are a challenge to increasing credibility among marginalized groups. One CSO leader stated, "Communities with different religions living side by side each other can spark violence when external support does not appear to be impartial. Sometimes this is very challenging to us when implementing with them the projects of social inclusion." (10 CSOs, two CBOs, one FGD, one expert, and one USAID official.)

**Misunderstanding Cultural Values:** A lack of understanding of cultural values is a challenge to improving credibility with marginalized groups. "NGOs do not develop inclusive planning with communities," one CSO said. "They receive donor funding but implement projects not relevant to underrepresented groups in local communities." A CBO leader added, "People who come from the same ethnic group don't have the mindset to entertain, mingle, or help people who are from other ethnic groups." (Six CSOs, one CBO, one FGD, and one USAID official.)

### OPPORTUNITIES

**Service Provision:** Respondents said CSOs could improve their credibility with marginalized communities through service provision to those groups, such as microfinance and psychosocial support, particularly in resettlement areas among women and youth. (12 CSOs, one CBO, and one government official.)

---

<sup>23</sup> FHI360, 2019 CSO Sustainability Index.

“There is more and more government suppression and control, which are driving the marginalized community into much more deprivation,” said a human rights CSO official. “During COVID, several laws and regulations have been brought. First thing is that their livelihood is affected. They are not allowed to live a normal life. A prisoner who had been released by court and gets back to the village; he should be allowed to live a normal life. The intelligence sector keeps on visting and sometimes go to their workplace to monitor, the employer gets worried, and the work gets affected. After sometimes they discontinue their work.”

**Community Engagement:** A USAID official said there is an opportunity for civil society to improve its credibility among the disabled and LGBTQI communities through engagement and support for those groups, and respondents cited diverse and inclusive community engagement as an opportunity. Making a reference to the disability sector, one senior USAID official stated, “When USAID first started to upgrade the disability sector technologies in 1999, there prevailed only a couple of Indian technologies. USAID therefore wanted to change and improve the technology. USAID introduced the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) polypropylene technology. Now after 20 years what we are seeing is increased capacity and increased service delivery from the CSOs in this area. Today CSOs are leading, and they are the only players in the country. Even the GoSL is still unable to meet the quality of CSOs. It’s a good example of how CSOs can sustain a service to earn the highest form of credibility from the general public.” (12 CSOs, two CBOs, and one government official.)

**Code of Conduct:** One government official said adoption by CBOs of a code of conduct on how to operate transparently will help sustainability of CBOs and meet needs of marginalized communities, which will improve perceptions of CSOs. CSO documents note that stronger financial management and accountability in the civil society sector improves credibility and counters misperceptions about limited financial transparency.

## EQ 2B CONCLUSIONS

**2b.1 Expanding grassroots engagement, including service provision, is an opportunity to enhance trust and mitigate risks from government and media influence.** There is an opportunity for peacebuilding and reconciliation activities to work with local officials through an economic development perspective, particularly because government officials judge the effectiveness of CSOs on whether they help government promote its agenda, especially economic development and service provision. By presenting “peacebuilding and reconciliation” activities as building “communal harmony” to provide a foundation for economic growth, civil society can build trust among communities and local officials. Service provision is also especially important to marginalized populations based on this evaluation.

**2b.2 There is a tension for civil society to maintain trust by both cooperating with and standing up to the government on behalf of communities.** While cooperating with the government can help civil society improve the well-being of communities, civil society’s work in the democracy and governance sector will necessarily require it to serve as a watchdog and advocate to ensure government accountability. This need becomes more pronounced when government violates the rights of its citizens, particularly of minority groups. Human rights and government accountability CSOs are particularly vulnerable in such an environment and in need of support.

**2b.3 Barriers in the form of cultural norms, or perceived misalignment of values, stands in the way of progress and building trust regarding GESI-related outcomes.** This is particularly a barrier given CSO skill gaps in supporting norm change (see Conclusion 1a.4) and the importance of GESI integration across sectors to support equality and equity. The main credibility challenge regarding marginalized populations is that Sri Lankan cultural norms are not receptive to some work with marginalized populations. For example, the public is not receptive to LGBTQI values, women leaving abusive husbands, or mainstreaming of the disabled community. The main opportunities for CSOs to improve credibility with marginalized populations include programs that help improve public image of marginalized groups, like LGBTQI and disabled, and service provision to marginalized communities, like microfinance and psychosocial support.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The ET presents recommendations stemming from the findings and conclusions. Each recommendation is followed by a reference to the conclusion(s) that support(s) it.

**Recommendation 1: Support for CSO networks.** USAID should support networks operating in common thematic areas to improve their capacity to build diverse coalitions and effective operations and relationships. USAID should seek to strengthen civil society response and engagement with communities and should encourage CSOs' engagement with informal groups and other grassroots actors. USAID/Sri Lanka may want to examine how USAID has supported civil society networks in other countries with an eye toward systemic changes and sustainability, such as the network- and capacity-focused interventions (both technical and organizational) undertaken by USAID/Mexico.<sup>24</sup> (Conclusions 1.2, 2.2)

**Recommendation 2: Encourage civil society contributions to higher-level results through advocacy support for grassroots networks.** To support the new CDCS's commitment to improve government responsiveness and enable active public participation, USAID should support grassroots networks to aggregate public preferences and effectively advocate for policies supported by their communities. USAID should train CSO staff on how to (1) effectively raise awareness of their issues through strategic initiatives at the national level and (2) engage effectively with legislative issues, including policy drafting or reform. This training could link with capacity development, learning, or partnerships enhanced through CSO networks to leverage the different strengths of CSOs at different levels. CSOs require more support and coaching to present their grassroots efforts nationally, and regional CSOs need more visibility and identification of their accomplishments and recognition. (Conclusions 1.2, 1a.1, 1b.1, 1b.3, 2.2, 2a.2)

**Recommendation 3: Support civil society to build trust through partnerships with the government.** Both civil society and government respondents cited an opportunity for civil society to build trust and credibility with the government through partnership and cooperation, and USAID should support such partnerships where they align with CSOs' priorities. Where CSOs can design their programs and projects according to the government's National Policy Framework, there will be more support from the state sector. Especially for next year, the budget allocation for women's and children's programs are limited, providing an opportunity for CSOs to collaborate with the government. (Conclusions 1.2, 1a.3, 2.5, 2a.1, 2b.1)

**Recommendation 4: Help CSOs identify long-term sources of funding.** In light of the reduction in donor interest and funding in Sri Lanka, USAID should assist CSOs to identify alternative sources of funding. These could include fundraising strategies, exploration of membership models, and expanding streams of funding. USAID could seek to connect Sri Lankan civil society with other CSOs in South Asia that have successfully diversified their funding streams. (Conclusions 1.1, 1a.2)

**Recommendation 5: Fund civil society activities for a longer term.** USAID should fund future civil society projects on a longer-term basis; rather than a three-year duration, USAID should initially enter into six-year agreements, with option periods to terminate if necessary, such as it has done in

---

<sup>24</sup> For example, see the final report for USAID/Mexico's Civil Society Activity here: USAID, [Mexico Civil Society Activity \(CSA\). Full Report](https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PA00X3GH.pdf), September, 2020, retrieved from [https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf\\_docs/PA00X3GH.pdf](https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PA00X3GH.pdf).



Nepal with the six-year Sajhedari-Support to Federalism Activity.<sup>25</sup> When sub-grants are determined to be appropriate, USAID should enter long-term relationships of one to three years with the CSOs and CBOs with which they work, rather than shorter terms of two to 12 months, in order to take advantage of the greater trust, credibility, and effectiveness stemming from longer-term support. (Conclusions 1.1, 1a.2, 2b.2)

**Recommendation 6: Increase youth leadership in civil society organizations.** USAID should seek to develop the next generation of civil society leaders by encouraging CSO outreach and training of interested youth and integration of young CSO staff in activities. Support for recruitment of potential civil society leaders, particularly at universities, would help to expose youth to civil society work, as would working with youth already engaged in informal civic collective action through social movements. There is an opportunity to engage with youth to connect their work with grassroots efforts, expand networks, and bring active young people into formal civil society organizations. Furthermore, greater integration of youth in CSOs is needed to ensure that young staff are retained and developed as civil society leaders. If employing a positive youth development approach, other programming offers lessons and more specific options for pursuing this recommendation.<sup>26</sup> (Conclusion 1.3)

**Recommendation 7: Enhance CSO GESI support and capacity development.** USAID should encourage CSOs to more fully address GESI, in line with the CDCS outcome of advancing inclusivity, and as an area of need. Potential areas of support could include:

- Support GoSL progress on GESI issues, such as training government officials on gender awareness and gender-responsive budgeting;
- Revising laws and bylaws related to GESI, including strengthening CSOs' capacity to engage on legislative issues at multiple levels;
- Providing further services to women and marginalized communities, particularly in recovery from COVID-19 and the secondary effects of the pandemic;
- Strengthen GESI support across all CSOs, as inclusivity can be a positive factor for public trust and is important to maintain neutrality and Do No Harm; and
- Provide capacity-building support on design and implementation of norm change programming, which is both a capacity gap and a barrier to improved effectiveness and trust. (Conclusions 1.2, 1a.4, 1b.1, 2.3, 2.5, 2b.3)

**Recommendation 8: Promote a CSO code of conduct.** USAID should support CSOs and CBOs to establish and implement codes of conduct to enable them to operate transparently, including additional organizational capacity support if needed. This step may help to pre-empt potential criticisms or attempts to undermine civil society credibility through charges that CSOs' funding goes only to benefit their leaders, and it could further build public trust by demonstrating that CSOs operate for the public good. (Conclusion 2.4)

**Recommendation 9: Mainstream civil society support in other sectors.** As Sri Lanka's civil and political context continues to evolve, and based on USAID/Sri Lanka's risk tolerance, USAID/Sri Lanka

---

<sup>25</sup> See fact sheet at <https://www.usaid.gov/nepal/fact-sheets/sajhedari-support-federalism>.

<sup>26</sup> See: USAID, *Youth and Democracy, Human Rights, and Governance Toolkit, Module 1: Civil Society*, October, 2019. Retrieved from [https://www.youthpower.org/sites/default/files/YouthPower/files/resources/MODULE%201%20CIVIL%20SOCIETY\\_web\\_OCTOBER%2023%202019.pdf](https://www.youthpower.org/sites/default/files/YouthPower/files/resources/MODULE%201%20CIVIL%20SOCIETY_web_OCTOBER%2023%202019.pdf).



should consider a model to partially mainstream civil society support in non-DRG sectors (such as economic development, health, and education). This recommendation is also based on existing global evidence that civil society interventions in economic development can support peacebuilding and cohesion outcomes.<sup>27</sup> As part of this approach, USAID should embed peacebuilding components in livelihood activities as a mechanism to encourage beneficiaries to participate in such programs and to take advantage of peace dividends at local levels. This would effectively link peacebuilding outcomes—which can be less observable—with more tangible outcomes that can support positive perceptions of civil society.

Economic development remains a significant priority coming out of the COVID-19 pandemic, a shock that disproportionately affected marginalized populations. Additionally, this evaluation found that demonstrating tangible outcomes, like economic development, helped build public trust and improve perceptions of civil society, while being less controversial with local government officials. This model could also provide a flexible mechanism should the civil-political space become too risky for continued support, while also addressing CDCS cross-cutting issues around trafficking in persons, gender equality, and improving inclusiveness. This could complement Recommendation 7, which emphasizes GESI services and training. (Conclusions 2.1, 2a.1, 2a.3)

---

<sup>27</sup> International Initiative for Impact Evaluation, [Building Peaceful Society Evidence Gap Map](https://gapmaps.3ieimpact.org/evidence-maps/building-peaceful-societies-evidence-gap-map), June, 2019. <https://gapmaps.3ieimpact.org/evidence-maps/building-peaceful-societies-evidence-gap-map>.

## ANNEX A: SCOPE OF WORK

### SCOPE OF WORK

#### A. PURPOSE

The purpose of this evaluation is to understand the capacity of civil society organizations (CSOs). The assessment findings will help USAID/Sri Lanka in planning future work with civil society, including under the new Country Development Cooperation Strategy (CDCS) that incorporates a cross-cutting sub-intermediate result (IR) related to civil society advocacy and sustainability.

#### B. BACKGROUND

##### CIVIL SOCIETY IN SRI LANKA

On January 8, 2015, the Sri Lankan people elected President Maithripala Sirisena. Subsequently, Colombo-based civil society was actively engaged in many of the new reforms, and members of civil society were included in the constitutional council, although regional or single-issue organizations are not as well-represented. During this time the CSOs were able to make some significant achievements.

According to USAID's Civil Society and Media Assessment conducted in March 2016, CSOs still continue to face challenges. These challenges include negative public opinion of civil society, limited space for civil society activities, difficulties in engaging communities and government, constant pressure and risk to civil society activists, withdrawal of donor funding, and difficulty retaining staff, which has contributed to an erosion of capacity of CSOs across the country.

After the presidential election of 2019, Sri Lanka's economic and democratic governance priorities have shifted from a focus on good governance reform to national security and sovereignty of the state. Following presidential elections held on November 16, 2019, former Secretary of Defense Gotabaya Rajapaksa, representing the Sri Lanka Podujana Peramuna, was sworn in as the seventh executive president of Sri Lanka.

##### USAID CIVIL SOCIETY PROGRAMMING

USAID has been the lead donor strengthening CSOs to act as drivers of reform, citizen engagement, and advocacy for the rights and needs of marginalized groups. USAID's CDCS 2017–2020 identifies supporting civil society as an integral part of the development hypothesis by having the IR 1.3: Increased civil society and media advocacy and oversight. As per the CDCS, under this IR, USAID will foster cooperation among CSOs, including between Colombo-based and provincial-level CSOs, and expand CSO partnerships and consultative processes with the Government of Sri Lanka (GoSL) to improve the enabling environment for CSOs, including those representing marginalized groups. USAID will provide technical assistance and training, and mobilize innovation and technology to support institutional and professional capacity-building, reconciliation and constitutional reform processes, policy advocacy and oversight initiatives, and the implementation of the Right to Information (RTI) Act. The new CDCS 2021–2025 will also have an important component for CSO support.

## C. EVALUATION QUESTIONS

The following questions are designed to help evaluate civil society and provide analysis for future programming:

- 1) What are CSOs strengths/weaknesses in their technical capacity in their area of work?
  - a) Given the prevailing strengths/weaknesses, what are the risks/opportunities for CSOs in operating/functioning in their role of promoting their missions?
  - b) What are CSOs' knowledge and attitudes about their contribution to advancing human rights, gender and social inclusion, promoting peacebuilding, and government accountability?
- 2) What is the level of trust and credibility of CSOs, and what are these perceptions based on?
  - a) How have CSO activities affected stakeholder (communities, target groups related to gender and social inclusion, government officials, etc.) perceptions of their effectiveness, contributions, and work?
  - b) What are the challenges and opportunities to improve civil society credibility among the public, including marginalized populations?

## D. EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

The Evaluation Team (ET) shall review pertinent documents and interview relevant actors related to Sri Lanka's civil society, either through direct one-on-one interview, by organizing roundtables or focus group discussions (FGDs), where appropriate. Interviewing may need to be at a distance (virtual gatherings or by telephone interviews); but whenever safe and possible, ET members may conduct in-person meetings while using safe interactive practices (e.g., masks, distancing, open space, minimum numbers in meetings).

Pertinent documents:

- CSO documents that can use to assess the capacity
- CSO progress reports to other organizations (if available)
- CSO publications

Relevant key people to be interviewed:

- USAID Washington
- USAID Sri Lanka
- Constituents in CSO activities
- Any government officials who have interacted with project staff or who have served as partners with sub-grantees
- Other donors who provided assistance for CSOs.

Data collection methodologies

- Desk review
- On-line and/or telephone surveys (CSOs)
- Key informant interviews (KIs; U.S., Sri Lanka)
- FGDs

USAID/Sri Lanka will assist the ET by providing contact information for some key informants such as government officials or major donors. In addition, during the desk review stage the team should work to identify additional key informants to fill any existing information gaps (i.e., any unexpected sources of support). USAID/Sri Lanka will also provide some documents for the desk review and assessments from other donors available. USAID/Sri Lanka expects the ET to conduct independent research to identify relevant documents from diverse sources to include in the desk review.

## **E. ET COMPOSITION**

The team will be composed of experts in conducting evaluations of civil society programs. The Team Leader will have ultimate responsibility for overall team coordination and development of the final report. Including the Team Leader, the ET will likely consist of three members. The team will have the following expertise or qualifications:

Team Leader:

- A master's degree in international development or any related field.
- At least 15 years of experience in international development, especially with civil society programming in human rights and reconciliation in post-conflict settings.
- Previous experience performing related project evaluations, particularly CSO programs.
- Recent experience in and background knowledge of South Asia or countries similar to Sri Lanka.
- Fluent in English, particularly in report writing.

Two Senior Researchers:

- Bachelor's degree in international development or related field.
- At least 10 years of experience in the international development sector.
- Experience in working with Sri Lankan CSOs.
- Should be fluent in English
- They should be collectively fluent in Sinhala and Tamil.

In addition to the above three members, the team may consist of logisticians, research assistants, and a data analyst/IT assistant.

## **F. SCHEDULE AND LOGISTICS**

The evaluation should take approximately 18–20 weeks to complete, including:

Remote work:

- Desk review, including project documents as well as other external literature
- Interview Washington-based key informants at USAID

In Sri Lanka:

- Primary data collection via online survey
- KIIs
- FGDs

Below are some key considerations when developing the schedule:

- Two teams work in parallel in Colombo and outside Colombo.

- U.S.-based staff to adjust some of their work time to Sri Lankan friendly time (9 a.m.–4 p.m.).
- Time allotted in the United States to write the report and to revise the report once comments on the draft are received from USAID.

For the Sri Lanka team, a six-day work week is authorized. All logistical support will be provided by the contractor, including any travel, transportation, secretarial, interpretation, report printing, and communication, as appropriate. USAID will provide all relevant documents as well as contact names and phone numbers to the contractor. The contractor shall arrange all meetings necessary for the evaluation. In Sri Lanka, the contractor will meet with CSOs and their beneficiaries in Colombo and outside Colombo.

## **G. DELIVERABLES**

Key deliverables for the evaluation will include:

- Summary document providing an overview of desk review findings, organized by evaluation questions
- Work Plan, including data collection methodology
- Data collection tools outline
- In-brief meeting with USAID/Sri Lanka at the start of data collection
- Regular check-ins with USAID/Sri Lanka during data collection
- Out-brief presentation with USAID/Sri Lanka at the end of data collection to share initial findings
- A draft report within 4–5 weeks of ending data collection
- A final report within two weeks of receipt of comments from USAID

The contractor shall submit an electronic version of the report (in WORD and in PDF format) in English (no translation required). The report shall also be submitted to Development Experience Clearinghouse according to the terms and conditions of the contract. Development Data Library (DDL) submission is not necessary for unstructured, qualitative data, and notes (redacted or unredacted) do not need to be given to the Mission.

The final report will include the following:

- Abstract (between 150 and 200 words),
- Executive Summary (no more than 5 pages),
- Body of the Report (answering the questions posed in Section C above) no more than 30 pages, not including annexes, tables, charts, diagrams, photos), and
- Appendices, including:
  - Bibliography from the desk review

## ANNEX B: DETAILED METHODOLOGY

The ET used a desk review, survey, KIIs, and FGDs to collect valid and reliable data to analyze and answer each EQ. The process of using each method during the evaluation was used to inform the other methods. Respondents for these tools included:

- **USAID/Sri Lanka.**
- **Independent CSO experts:** Experts on the civil society sector in Sri Lanka, who provided important context information and situate particular CSOs within DRG.
- **CSOs:** Leaders of CSOs who focus on the capacity of their organizations to work in areas of DRG as well as how their CSOs are perceived. These were generally the executive directors or presidents of organizations; in larger CSOs that are active in many technical areas, the respondents were the key managers for the technical areas in which CSOs focus on DRG.
- **CBOs:** Leaders of CBOs who partner with CSOs. CBOs are civil society groups that typically are smaller and operate in a more limited geographic area and scope of activities than a CSO and are likely to have less capacity as organizations overall as well as in the technical areas in which they work.
- **Government stakeholders:** Local government. These local government officials have a stake in the communities in which the CSOs work.

Using the list of CSO survey respondents, the ET then purposively selected a sample of CSOs and their CBO partners and government stakeholders for more data gathering via KIIs and FGDs. The ET also interviewed USAID/Sri Lanka officials. Last, the team consulted with USAID/Sri Lanka to develop a convenience sample of independent CSO experts to interview for the evaluation. Data from CSOs, CBOs, and independent experts were used to answer the technical capacity (EQ 1 and sub-questions) and credibility and trust (EQ 2 and sub-questions) questions, while local government data were primarily focused on addressing EQ 2.

Data collection took place remotely due to COVID-19 safety considerations in Sri Lanka. Anticipated sample sizes were revised based on the shift to remote data collection. The two Sri Lanka-based senior researchers divided for data collection based on their native languages (Sinhala and Tamil) and those of their interlocutors.

Quality assurance was provided through transparent, rigorous data collection approaches, team leader monitoring and discussion with ET members, and SI home office review. Data analysis was through comparison and triangulation of desk review, KIIs, FGDs, and survey data. The ET reported on preliminary findings in a November 8, 2021, briefing at the completion of the fieldwork. This final report will be submitted to USAID/Sri Lanka for its use, as well as posted to Development Experience Clearinghouse.

### DATA COLLECTION METHODS

#### DESK REVIEW

A comprehensive desk review was completed as the first deliverable for the evaluation. For this review, the ET examined a variety of materials, including: (1) CSO documents, and (2) documents from other international organizations and independent sources on civil society in Sri Lanka over the past six years. These documents are listed in Annex C.

The desk review was iterative and continued throughout fieldwork as additional documents and information become available. Specifically, KIIs (see discussion) asked CSO partners whether they have additional documents to contribute to the review that measure their capacity in their technical areas of work or perceptions of their CSOs by partner CBOs and stakeholders. Additional materials identified through this method were solicited from these CSOs and analyzed to contribute to answering the EQs and sub-questions in the evaluation report.

## SURVEY

A survey was used to collect data on CSOs' technical capacity in their areas of work and their perceptions of how they are seen by key stakeholders. The survey instrument included close-ended, quantitative questions with Likert Scales measured from one to five, with five being the "best" response. The survey also included open-ended, qualitative questions. Thus, the survey directly addressed both EQs and their related sub-questions. It solicited data from the 101 different CSOs. The ET ensured that an informed consent protocol was included at the beginning of the survey tool, emphasizing the confidentiality of participant responses. The ET did not associate the data from the survey with specific CSOs or names of CSO staff in the report. A draft CSO survey instrument, including the consent protocol, is attached as part of Annex D.

The ET translated the English-language instrument to Sinhala and Tamil and tested the CSO survey to ensure that the questions were valid (were understood accurately by CSOs to ask about the content of each question) and reliable (understood in the same way across CSOs). Following this testing, the ET revised the survey before use. Distributed through the Survey Monkey platform, the survey instrument had 22 questions accounting for skip logic. The ET expected duration of the CSO survey to be about one hour. There was a 42 percent completion rate for the survey.

## KIIS

KIIs were used to collect qualitative data from (1) USAID, (2) CSOs and CSO network leaders, (3) CBOs partners of CSOs, (4) independent CSO experts, and (5) local government stakeholders. Except for CSO expert interviews, the team used a purposive sampling approach to select individual KII participants (described further in the "Sampling" section). See **Table AI** for more detailed information on the participant categories and number of KIIs targeted by the ET.

Table A1: List of KIIs

STAKEHOLDER	KIIs
USAID	3
CSOs	34
CBO Partners of CSOs	16
Government Officials	7
Outside Experts	2
CSO Network Leaders	2
<b>TOTAL KIIs</b>	<b>64</b>

Teams of two (at minimum) conducted the interviews with these respondents, with one person facilitating the interview and one taking notes. Protocols that address the EQs guided KIIs, but these were semi-structured (as relevant, KII protocols included follow-up probes) to allow flexibility in the discussion. Protocols were translated to Sinhala and Tamil and piloted with relevant stakeholders. Annex D contains KII protocols. The ET conducted remote KIIs over the telephone due to COVID-19 and government responses to the pandemic.

KIIs were conducted in English, Sinhala, or Tamil, depending on the preference of the respondent, and lasted approximately one hour. At the beginning of each discussion, the KII facilitator read an informed consent form, which provided information about the evaluation and assured confidentiality and non-attribution of all responses. As such, the ET did not use the names of respondents or their organizations directly in conjunction with the data provided in the report. ET members also took care to respect varied relevant local social and gender dynamics in all KIIs.

**USAID/Sri Lanka.** The ET conducted KIIs with USAID/Sri Lanka. These interviews focused on CSOs' technical capacity in their areas of work and their perceptions of how they are perceived by partner CBOs and stakeholders. The team leader and the two national evaluators managed notetaking and data quality and conducted these KIIs in English.

**CSOs and CBOs.** The ET conducted KIIs with CSOs and CBOs, which were useful for following-up on results of the CSO survey. The team also interviewed conveners of CSO networks, gathering more detailed information on their technical capacity in their areas of work, and their impressions of how they are perceived by stakeholders.

**Independent CSO Experts.** The ET held KIIs with several independent experts on the CSO DRG sector. In addition to the proposed list, the ET further consulted with USAID/Sri Lanka to name a few



CSO DRG independent experts for interviews. A convenience sample of two was selected for interviews from this list based on availability (for further discussion, see “Sampling”).

**Government.** The ET conducted KIIs with local government. These interviews collected data directly relevant to answering the trust and credibility EQs (EQ 2 and the associated sub-questions). For these KIIs, the ET purposively selected respondents from among lists of CSO local government stakeholders offered by CSOs interviewed by the ET (see “Sampling”). A draft KII instrument for local government stakeholders is attached as part of Annex D.

### FGDS

The ET conducted FGDs with three groups: (1) CSOs; (2) CBO partners of these CSOs; and (3) CSO constituents.

As with KIIs, at least one facilitator and one notetaker conducted the FGDs using a semi-structured guide tailored to each respondent group that is piloted and revised before first use. These guides included follow-up probes that allowed facilitators to explore any particular points of interest that arose during discussions, as well as differences in experiences among males and females, geographic location, or other relevant groups. FGD protocols contained informed consent language that ensured confidentiality for respondents. The two Sri Lanka-based senior researchers administered the protocols in either English, Sinhala, or Tamil, depending on respondent preference. The duration of the FGDs was approximately 90 minutes. FGDs were composed of four to six individuals.

STAKEHOLDER	FGDs
CSOs	10
CBO Partners of CSOs	4
CSO Constituents	9
<b>TOTAL FGDs</b>	<b>23</b>

**CSOs.** The ET used FGDs to collect qualitative data from a sample of CSOs to collect data on both EQs and their associated sub-questions. These discussions focused on CSO capacity in technical areas of DRG and how CSO leaders saw issues of trust and credibility with CSOs in the communities where they work. The selection of CSO staff for FGDs used the same sampling criteria as the selection of CSOs for KIIs (see “Sampling”). A draft CSO FGD instrument is attached as part of Annex D.

**CBO partners of CSOs and constituents.** Finally, the ET used FGDs to collect qualitative data from CBO partners and constituents of CSOs. Discussions with these CBOs and constituents focused on collecting data on all the EQs, including on trust and credibility and its associated two sub-questions. FGDs focused on how CBOs and constituents perceive CSOs; how CSO and CBO activities affect these perceptions; and where CBOs see challenges and opportunities to improve civil society credibility. A draft CBO FGD instrument is attached as part of Annex D.

## SAMPLING

As described above, the survey was distributed to 101 CSOs and CSO networks. Once distribution was completed, the ET used the list of survey respondents to select a purposive sample of CSOs to target for KIIs and FGDs. The following criteria were used to construct the sample:

1. **Location:** CSOs that work on a national, regional, and local level, and in different provinces and districts.
2. **Language:** Organizations that work in English, Sinhala, and Tamil.
3. **Organization type:** CSOs with different technical areas of focus in DRG.
4. **Survey results:** The team targeted CSOs with a range of results from the survey regarding issues such as technical capacity, perceptions of CSO credibility, and so on.

When selecting which CSO and CSO network leaders to interview or meet for FGDs, the ET also ensured that it reached both male and female leaders (the final gender breakdown of the sample necessarily depended on who occupies CSO leadership roles). As KIIs were conducted, the ET asked respondents for CBO staff and government stakeholders in the communities where they operate. The ET then used these lists to further construct a purposive sample for the remaining KIIs and FGDs. When developing a sample, the ET considered criteria such as gender, age, ethnicity/caste, religion, language, and geographic location. For CBO FGDs in particular, the ET selected relatively homogenous groups (e.g., one FGD was all women and another all men; one was all young people monitoring, etc.).

## DATA MANAGEMENT

ET members based in Sri Lanka played a significant role in managing data collected by the team to ensure both quality and protection of respondent privacy. The ET gathered survey data through Survey Monkey, then saved and analyzed in Excel as needed. Then, notes were uploaded onto SI's secured SharePoint site, which is password-protected and accessible only by the ET. The full ET also had regular meetings throughout fieldwork to check-in on progress.

## ANALYSIS AND REPORTING

The ET employed various data analysis techniques to support the development of evaluation findings, conclusions, and recommendations. During the fieldwork period, the team held regular internal working sessions to discuss emerging themes. The Findings, Conclusions, and Recommendations Matrix captured these emerging themes by EQ. This ensured that the team (a) developed a systematic and thorough response to each EQ and corresponding sub-questions; (b) assured that preliminary analysis accounted for gender dimensions and other key evaluation considerations (e.g., gender, location, language, etc.); (c) identified any gaps where additional clarification or analysis was necessary; and (d) developed a rigorous basis for the Draft Evaluation Report. As results are gathered and analyzed, the ET tracked the magnitude of the findings by noting, for example, specific numbers of respondents who agreed or disagreed with findings, any outliers, and so on.

## QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS

Following data collection, the ET used the detailed KII and FGD notes, as well as responses from the open-ended survey questions, for comprehensive thematic and content analysis, with coding captured in a Microsoft Excel tally sheet and through Survey Monkey. The ET developed a qualitative codebook prior to data analysis based on themes from the Findings, Conclusions, and Recommendations Matrix and discussions with USAID/Sri Lanka key audiences (particularly the out brief presentation described under “Dissemination and Use”). The ET designed the codebook to identify and respond to information sought in the EQs and sub-questions and included codes to delineate primary categories of disaggregation (e.g., gender, location, language). These were considered during analysis and included where relevant in the Draft Evaluation Report. As needed, the ET added emergent codes to the codebook. Each ET member participating in coding was thoroughly oriented to the process to increase inter-rater reliability.

The ET aggregated the qualitative data used in the Evaluation Report. For any specific quotations included, only respondent type and data collection location were noted to provide context while ensuring respondent confidentiality. The Evaluation Report includes sample numbers by respondent type and relevant disaggregates as noted above, but no names or identifying information are included.

## QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS

The quantitative data received from the survey were analyzed in Microsoft Excel to tabulate responses, produce descriptive statistics, and disaggregate along the same lines as the qualitative data. The ET employed triangulation, a data analysis strategy in which qualitative and quantitative data are first analyzed independently, in parallel, and then cross-verified for validity. The ET subsequently conducted a comparative analysis of the coded desk review data, coded qualitative data, and quantitative survey data to validate discrete findings across all data sources. The ET compared the data from these varied streams against one another to determine whether findings were divergent or convergent for each EQ. The extent to which these multiple data streams provided consistent findings informed the certitude and internal validity of the evaluation conclusions.

Triangulation was also a key strategy to help minimize biases in the evaluation (see “Limitations and Mitigation Strategies”). For example, some respondents may have provided exaggerated positive remarks with the hope of attracting financial support; others may have made overly negative remarks. When appropriate, interviewers probed any indication of overly expressed positive or negative remarks from respondents to assess motivation and context. Triangulating responses with other interviews, FGDs, and secondary information from existing documents helped place such feedback in context.

## GENDER EQUALITY AND SOCIAL INCLUSION ANALYSIS

Consistent with USAID’s Evaluation Policy and its Gender Equality and Female Empowerment Policy, the ET applied a Gender, Equity, and Social Inclusion (GESI) perspective to the entire evaluation process.

As such, the evaluation report analyzed and present relevant, sex-, age-, ethnicity-, caste-, religion-, and language-disaggregated individual-level data. The ET included at least one GESI specific question in each tool; however, the ET disaggregated the data collected in response to all questions/tools as appropriate for answering the two EQs and sub-questions. Additionally, CSO, CBO, and government stakeholder selection and recruitment ensured the inclusion of women, youth, and marginalized populations. For

example, the team considered how to ensure these populations can be reached at times/places that are convenient to their participation.

## **QUALITY ASSURANCE**

All aspects of this evaluation came under scrutiny by the Evaluation Quality, Utilization, and Impact (EQUI®) system, SI's innovative approach to achieving high quality, influential evaluations that enhance development effectiveness. Developed over ten years through 300 evaluations in 85 countries, EQUI has proven effective in driving exceptional learning, accountability, and performance improvement. By following utilization-focused evaluation principles, SI ensures all evaluations engage key audiences and are clearly targeted to their decision-making needs. To achieve maximum relevance to USAID/Sri Lanka and maintain the highest possible technical quality, EQUI employed rigorous quality assurance checkpoints at key stages of the evaluation, integrating gender and social analysis at each phase. This system ensured that the information generated by this evaluation is useful and utilizable for the principal stakeholders within USAID/Sri Lanka and beyond.

## LIMITATIONS

Table A2: Limitations and Mitigation Strategies

Limitations	Mitigation Strategies
<p><b>Sampling bias:</b> The evaluation interviewed a limited number of CSOs. As such, the findings are representative of those CSOs interviewed and may not be reflective of the experiences of all CSOs in Sri Lanka.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The ET used sequential sampling, using the survey results to inform selection of participants for KIIs and FGDs.</li> <li>• The ET proposed a purposive sampling strategy that incorporates appropriate criteria to guide sampling and ensure reliable evaluation findings that reflect as accurate as possible the range of CSO experiences. ET members looked at document review and secondary quantitative data if disaggregated by site to predict differences between countries.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Recency bias:</b> Data collection participants may be biased toward recent events rather than considering longer-term trends or services.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The ET employed strong data collection tools that included probes to encourage respondents to think through all activities and experiences.</li> <li>• In analysis and reporting, the ET considered both major events (nationally and locally) that may influence findings and assess findings against broader trends in the sector to identify opportunities and challenges.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Recall bias:</b> Data collection participants may respond to questions posed by the ET with answers that blend their experiences into a composite memory.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The ET used triangulation of data, matching information from different sources to corroborate varied experiences.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Response bias:</b> Respondents may provide positive or negative remarks about support to CSOs because s/he would like support in the future; Thus, it is possible that some responses would be skewed more positively (or negatively).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The ET designed and employed strong data collection tools that clearly stated that answers would not affect an individual's receipt of future services and explored critical lines of inquiry in several ways to check consistency.</li> <li>• The ET triangulated data to corroborate fieldwork information with document and secondary quantitative data.</li> </ul>

Limitations	Mitigation Strategies
<p><b>Remote data collection:</b> Data collection was conducted remotely due to COVID-19 restrictions, which could impact nonverbal and other communication during interviews. This includes an ongoing vaccination campaign, especially outside of Western Province, coincided with data collection.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Training of KII facilitators included sessions on use of remote platforms and practice conducting remote interviews.</li> <li>● Employing data triangulation helped ensure that specific interviews that may have been impacted by a remote platform would not skew study results. By combining information from multiple sources of data, any one piece of data was balanced against others.</li> <li>● Majority of data collection with respondents was conducted by team members based in Sri Lanka, which allowed for use of phones and time zone alignment.</li> </ul>

**ET**

The ET selected is well-balanced and provides expertise in evaluation methods, DRG/civil society sector knowledge, and an understanding of the Sri Lanka operating context. Biographies of the team members, including the Team Leader and two Sri Lanka-based Senior Researchers are provided in Table A3. The Senior Researchers were supported by note-takers during fieldwork. ET disclosures of any conflicts of interested are reported in Annex E.

Table A3: Evaluation Team

ET Role	ET Background	ET Responsibilities
<p><b>Team Leader</b></p>	<p>John Lis is a legislative strengthening consultant with more than two decades of experience in the U.S. Congress and international parliamentary bodies. As an independent consultant since 2013, he has conducted evaluations and assessments of democracy and governance programs in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Haiti, Nepal, Ukraine, Georgia, Romania, Kyrgyzstan, Algeria, Tunisia, Iraq, Lebanon, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Burma, Guinea and Kenya, and he has trained parliamentary staff in Kyrgyzstan and Indonesia. From 2003 to 2013, he was a Professional Staff Member for the House Committee on Foreign Affairs, including eight years as Staff Director of the House Democracy Partnership, the peer-to-peer legislative strengthening initiative of the U.S. House of Representatives, and served as a legislative fellow for Sen. Joseph R. Biden. He holds a bachelor’s degree in history from Stanford University and a master’s degree in international affairs from Columbia University.</p>	<p>Lead the design and conduct of the evaluation, including development of data collection instruments, analysis, report-writing, and dissemination. Task ET members with assignments for contributions to fieldwork and deliverables.</p>
<p><b>Senior Researcher</b></p>	<p>Indrani Rajendran has a Master of Arts in Conflict Transformation &amp; Peace Studies, with her main expertise areas being Organizational Development, Social Cohesion &amp; Peace Studies, Monitoring &amp; Evaluation, and Gender &amp; Development. She has over ten years of experiences in working with interventions with specific involvement in the capacity-building component to develop the technical capacities of the CSOs in different sectors. Indrani has also worked with different international nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and UN organizations developing data collecting system related to sexual and gender-based violence, conducting evaluations, research and surveys related to various subjects in the humanitarian sector.</p>	<p>Contribute to evaluation design, desk review, data collection instruments, analysis, report-writing, and dissemination, as directed by the Team Leader. Take the lead on assigned data collection in Sri Lanka.</p>

ET Role	ET Background	ET Responsibilities
<p><b>Senior Researcher</b></p>	<p>Mangala Fernando has a PhD in Social Psychology and over 20 years of extensive experience in Sri Lanka as a CSO specialist. He has worked with a wide range of organizations: CBOs, CSOs/NGOs, think tanks, trade unions, faith-based organizations, etc. His thematic foci include human rights, development, gender, MHPSS, and children and youth. The type of work he performed with the CSOs/NGOs sector has included: baseline surveys, evaluations, strategic planning, project design, implementation, and capacity-building. During 2020–2021 he conducted a number of high-profile project evaluations involving the International Labor Organization and European Commission. Currently he is involved in a number of USAID, U.S. State Department, and Global Fund funded projects in Sri Lanka on building capacity of over 50 CSOs/NGOs and think tanks.</p>	<p>Contribute to evaluation design, desk review, data collection instruments, analysis, report-writing, and dissemination, as directed by the Team Leader. Take the lead on assigned data collection in Sri Lanka.</p>



## ANNEX C: DOCUMENTS REVIEWED

### GENERAL CIVIL SOCIETY SOURCES

Asian Development Bank. 2013. Civil Society Brief. Manila: ADB. Retrieved from <https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/publication/31161/csb-sri-lanka.pdf>.

CIVICUS. 2020. Sri Lanka: A Year after Presidential Elections, Civic Freedoms under Increasing Assault. Retrieved from <https://www.civicus.org/index.php/media-resources/news/4740-sri-lanka-a-year-after-presidential-elections-civic-freedoms-under-increasing-assault>.

FHI 360. 2020. Sri Lanka. In The 2019 CSO Sustainability Index for Asia. Washington, FHI 360. Retrieved from <https://www.fhi360.org/sites/default/files/media/documents/csosi-asia-2019-report.pdf>.

FHI 360. 2019. Sri Lanka. In The 2018 CSO Sustainability Index for Asia. Washington, FHI 360. Retrieved from <https://www.veriteresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/CSOSI-Sri-Lanka-2018.pdf>.

FHI 360. 2018. Sri Lanka. In The 2017 CSO Sustainability Index for Asia. Washington, FHI 360. Retrieved from [https://www.veriteresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/CSOSI\\_Sri-Lanka-Report.pdf](https://www.veriteresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/CSOSI_Sri-Lanka-Report.pdf).

Human Rights Watch. 2021. Sri Lanka. In World Report 2021. Washington: HRW. Retrieved from <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2021/country-chapters/sri-lanka>.

Human Rights Watch. 2021. European Parliament Alarmed over Sri Lanka Rights Situation. Retrieved from <https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/06/10/european-parliament-alarmed-over-sri-lankas-rights-situation>.

Lanka News Web. 2021. Government Agencies Barred from Entering into Agreements with NGOs and Embassies—Presidential Order. Retrieved from <https://www.lankanewsweb.net/67-general-news/71939-Government-agencies-barred-from-entering-into-agreements-with-NGOs-and-embassies---Presidential-order>.

Moonesinghe, Vinod. 2018. The History of Civil Society Organisations in Sri Lanka. Blog post. Retrieved from <https://thuppahis.com/2018/03/23/the-history-of-civil-society-organisations-in-sri-lanka/>.

Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). 2021. Promotion Reconciliation, Accountability and Human Rights in Sri Lanka. A/HRC/46/20. Human Rights Council. Retrieved from [https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Countries/LK/Sri\\_LankaReportJan2021.docx](https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Countries/LK/Sri_LankaReportJan2021.docx).

OHCHR. 2020. Promoting Reconciliation, Accountability and Human Rights in Sri Lanka. A/HRC/46/20. Human Rights Council. Retrieved from [https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/A\\_HRC\\_43\\_19.pdf](https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/A_HRC_43_19.pdf).

OHCHR. 2019. Promoting Reconciliation, Accountability and Human Rights in Sri Lanka. A/HRC/46/20. Human Rights Council. Retrieved from <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/G1902925.pdf>.

Sri Lanka Centre for Development Facilitation. N.D. Annual Report 2018/2019: Dynamic Facilitator for Civil Society. Colombo: SLDCF. Retrieved from [https://slcdf.net/wp-content/uploads/SLCDF\\_AR\\_2018-19.pdf](https://slcdf.net/wp-content/uploads/SLCDF_AR_2018-19.pdf).

UNDP. 2007. Civil Society and UNDP in Sri Lanka: Partnerships in Crisis Situations. Colombo: UNDP. Retrieved from [https://www.undp.org/content/dam/undp/documents/partners/civil\\_society/publications/Civil\\_Society\\_and\\_UNDP\\_in\\_Sri\\_Lanka\\_partnerships\\_in\\_crisis\\_situations.pdf](https://www.undp.org/content/dam/undp/documents/partners/civil_society/publications/Civil_Society_and_UNDP_in_Sri_Lanka_partnerships_in_crisis_situations.pdf).

USAID. 2016. Sri Lanka. In The 2016 CSO Sustainability Index for Asia. Washington: USAID. Retrieved from <https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1866/2016-Asia-CSOSI-Report-v4-508.pdf>.

USAID. 2015. Democracy, Rights and Governance Assessment of Sri Lanka: Updated Report. Washington: MSI. Retrieved from <https://msiworldwide.com/sites/default/files/additional-resources/2018-12/DRG%20Assessment%20of%20Sri%20Lanka.pdf>.

Verite Research (VR). 2015. Maintaining Democratic Space in the Public Sphere: A Strategy for Sri Lankan Civil Society. Colombo: VR. Retrieved from <https://www.veriteresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/Maintaining-Democratic-Space-in-the-Public-Sphere.pdf>.

## ANNEX D: DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENTS

### CSO SURVEY INSTRUMENT

#### Informed Consent and Confidentiality:

Hello, I am \_\_\_\_\_, and I work with Social Impact, an independent American company conducting research for the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) in Sri Lanka. We are conducting an overall evaluation of civil society support projects. Our team is conducting a survey of civil society organizations in this project, and you have been selected to participate because we believe you can provide important information on the status of civil society in Sri Lanka.

This survey will take approximately XX minutes to complete. Your honest responses will help USAID understand CSO strengths and weaknesses as well as levels of trust and credibility in CSOs.

Your name and the name of your civil society organization will not be connected to any information you provide in this survey or the report that is written. The data from this survey (excluding your personally identifiable information and information on your CSO) will be used by the Social Impact team for analysis purposes only and your answers will only be reported to USAID as part of an aggregated data set. This survey will take approximately XX minutes. Your participation in this interview should not pose any harm or discomfort to you. Your participation in this survey is completely voluntary, and you are free to decline to respond to any question for any reason and to stop the survey at any time. You will not be provided with any payment for your participation in this survey. If you have any follow up questions, please contact [irb@socialimpact.com](mailto:irb@socialimpact.com).

Do you confirm your consent to participate in this survey?

1. Yes → Proceed to survey
2. No → End Survey (thank you page)

No.	Question	Responses	Code/instruction
ID1	Survey Respondent Sex	1. Female 2. Male	
ID2	Name of organization	-----	
ID3	How long have you worked with your CSO?		

**EQ 1: What are CSOs strengths/weaknesses in their technical capacity in their area of work?**

1	What is the <b>main technical area</b> that your CSO works in? By technical area, we mean where your CSO has specialized, such as support for widows or human rights defenders. Select the one option that best represents your CSO's main area of work.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Human rights</li> <li>● Gender equality</li> <li>● Social inclusion</li> <li>● Peacebuilding and reconciliation</li> <li>● Government accountability</li> <li>● Other (please specify):</li> </ul>	Survey logic: Based on response, will address different set of questions for Questions 9–16
2	For this main technical area, what is your CSO's level of capacity to achieve results?	<p>1 - Extremely weak, making it impossible to achieve results (1)</p> <p>2 - Insufficient, making it difficult to achieve results</p> <p>3 - Adequate to deliver on results (3)</p> <p>4 - Good, making it relatively easy to deliver on results (4)</p> <p>5 - Excellent, making it easy to deliver on results and consider expanding our work</p>	
3	Please briefly describe <b>the three main strengths of your CSO in this technical area?</b>		
4	Why is your CSO strong in these aspects of this technical area?		
5	What has been done to increase the strength of your CSO in this technical area?		
6	Please briefly describe <b>the three main weaknesses of your CSO in this technical area?</b>		
7	Why is your CSO weak in these aspects of this technical area?		

8	What has been done to help address weaknesses of your CSO in this technical area?		
---	---	--	--

**Survey Logic, Question 1: Separate sections for each of the technical areas**

9	How does your CSO’s work contribute to [specify technical area from Question 1]?		
---	--	--	--

**Given the prevailing strengths/ weaknesses, what are the risks/opportunities for CSOs in operating/functioning in their role of promoting their missions.**

10	To what extent are the risks your CSO faces in promoting its mission in [technical area] significant? Risks are possibilities that the capacity or credibility of the CSO are damaged in doing this work. Are these risks:	<p>1 - Not significant</p> <p>2 - Modest, providing a manageable barrier</p> <p>3 - Moderate, making it somewhat challenging to succeed</p> <p>4 - Significant, making it difficult to succeed</p> <p>5 - Very significant, making it unlikely to be successful</p>	
----	--	---	--

11	What do you see as the main opportunities for your CSO in promoting your mission in [technical area]?		
----	---	--	--

12	Has your CSO’s capacity been sufficient to promote [technical area] missions when opportunities arise?	<p>YES</p> <p>NO</p>	
----	--	----------------------	--

**EQ 1b: What is CSOs’ knowledge and attitudes about their contribution to advancing human rights, gender and social inclusion, promoting peacebuilding, and government accountability?**

13	To what extent does your CSO contribute to advancing <b>[technical area]</b> in Sri Lanka:	1 - Not significant contribution 2 - Modest contribution 3 - Moderate contribution 4 - Significant contribution 5 - Very significant contribution	
14	Does your CSO contribute to these higher-level achievements?	YES No If Yes (next)	
15	Please explain briefly <b>how</b> your CSO contributes these high level achievements.		

**EQ 2: What is the level of trust and credibility of CSOs in the areas, and what are these perceptions based on?**

16	How would you rate the level of <b>public trust in CSOs in the area of [technical area]</b> ? Select the most appropriate response.	1- The public in Sri Lanka does not trust CSOs at all 2 - The public in Sri Lanka has a modest level of trust in CSOs 3 - The public in Sri Lanka has a moderate level of trust in CSOs 4 - The public in Sri Lanka has a high level of trust in CSOs 5 - The public in Sri Lanka has a very high level of trust in CSOs	
----	---	--	--

**EQ 2: What is the level of trust and credibility of CSOs, and what are these perceptions based on?**

**EQ 2b: What are the challenges and opportunities to improve civil society credibility among the public, including marginalized populations?**

17	What do you see as most promising opportunities to improve the		
----	--	--	--

	<p>credibility of civil society among the public? Credibility is</p> <p>the quality of being believable or worthy of trust, meaning that the public has confidence in civil society’s ability to promote the public good. What can civil society—the sector not only your CSO—do to gain more trust among the public?</p>		
18	<p>What is the one most promising opportunity to improving the credibility of civil society among the public?</p>		
19	<p>How promising do you think this opportunity is to improve the credibility of civil society among the public. Please select the most appropriate response.</p> <p>When assessing the promise of the opportunity, consider both the likelihood it could occur and the potential impact if it were to be realized.</p>	<p>1 - Not promising</p> <p>2 - Slightly promising</p> <p>3 - Moderately promising</p> <p>4 - Promising</p> <p>5 - Extremely promising</p>	
20	<p>What are the <b>most serious challenges</b> to improving the credibility of civil society among the public</p>		
21	<p>What is the <b>one most serious challenge</b> to improving the credibility of civil society among the public?</p>		
22	<p>How serious is this challenge? Please select the most appropriate response.</p>	<p>1 - Not serious</p> <p>2 - Slightly serious</p> <p>3 - Moderately serious</p>	

	When assessing the seriousness of the opportunity, consider both the likelihood it could occur and the potential impact on civil society if it were to occur.	4 - Serious 5 - Extremely serious	
--	---	--------------------------------------	--



## KII INSTRUMENTS

### CSO KII TOOL

<b>Researcher Name:</b>	
<b>Notetaking Method:</b>	[Recorded and transcript/computer notes/handwritten notes/notetaker]
<b>Interview Date:</b>	
<b>Respondent Name:</b>	
<b>Respondent Position:</b>	
<b>Respondent Gender:</b>	
<b>Respondent Ethnicity:</b>	
<b>Respondent Age:</b>	
<b>Respondent Region:</b>	
<b>Start Time:</b>	
<b>End Time:</b>	

### Informed Consent and Confidentiality:

Hello, I am \_\_\_\_\_, and I work with Social Impact, an independent American company conducting research for the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) in Sri Lanka. We are conducting an overall evaluation of civil society. We intend to interview approximately XX constituents in this project, and you have been selected to participate because we believe you can provide some information on the status of civil society in Sri Lanka. Your participation in this interview should not pose any harm or discomfort to you. Indeed, your participation in this interview is completely voluntary, and you are free to decline to respond to any question for any reason and to end the interview at any time. You will not be provided with any payment for your participation in this interview. Your honest responses will help USAID understand CSO strengths and weaknesses as well as levels of trust and credibility in CSOs. Your name will not be connected to any information you provide in this interview. The data from this interview (excluding your personally identifiable information) will be used by the Social Impact team for analysis purposes only, and your answers will only be reported to USAID as part of an aggregated data set. This interview will last approximately XX minutes. Do you understand that your participation in this interview is voluntary, unpaid, and that you can end the interview at any point? If you have any follow up questions, please contact [irb@socialimpact.com](mailto:irb@socialimpact.com).

Do you confirm your consent to participate in this interview?

1. Yes
2. No

#	Questions	Guidance, Adaptions, & Prompts
1	Can you describe <u>your role</u> within your organization?	<b>Prompt:</b> How long have you been in this position/working with your organization?
<b>EQ1: What are CSOs strengths/weaknesses in their technical capacity in their area of work?</b>		
2	How do you plan to build on the technical areas that your CSO is already strong in?	
3	How do you plan to address the technical areas that you identify as weak in your CSO?	
<b>EQ 1a: Given the prevailing strengths/weaknesses, what are the risks/opportunities for CSOs in operating/functioning in their role of promoting their missions?</b>		
4	What do you see as the risks for your CSO in developing and implementing activities?	<b>Guidance:</b> Risks are possibilities that the capacity or credibility of the CBO are damaged in doing this work.
5	Given your evaluation of your CSOs strengths and weaknesses, what is your plan for your CSO to take advantage of opportunities for more activities and results in these technical areas?	
<b>EQ 1b: What are CSOs' knowledge and attitudes about their contribution to advancing human rights, gender and social inclusion, promoting peacebuilding, and government accountability?</b>		
6	How do you assess the contributions of your CSO to the work of the CSO sector in advancing human rights, gender and social inclusion, promoting peacebuilding, and government accountability?	
7	Should your CSO strive to make a larger contribution?	How might your CSO contribute more to community, provincial, and

		national level results in these areas?
8	Are there other high-level results that your CSO contributes to?	How does your CSO contribute to these high-level results?
9	Are there other high-level results that you believe your CSO should be contributing to?	How should your CSO contribute to these high-level results?
<b>EQ 2: What is the level of trust and credibility of CSOs, and what are these perceptions based on?</b>		
10	How would you characterize the level of trust and credibility that people in the communities where you work have in your CSO?	<p><b>Prompt:</b> What is your evidence for this level of trust and credibility in your CSO among people in the communities where you work?</p> <p><b>Prompt:</b> Why do you think the people there have this kind of trust in your CSO?</p>
<b>EQ 2a: How have CSO activities affected stakeholder (communities, target groups related to gender and social inclusion, government officials, etc.) perceptions of their effectiveness, contributions, and work?</b>		
11	How have your CSO's activities shaped the perceptions of people in the community on the effectiveness of your CSO?	<p><b>Prompt:</b> Can you give us 3 concrete examples from the last 3 years where the perceptions of people in the community of your CSO's effectiveness improved as a result of your CSO's activities?</p>
12	Has your CSO had experiences where the perceptions of people in the community of your CSO's effectiveness deteriorated as a result of your CSO's activities? If so, what was this experience?	<p><b>If YES:</b></p> <p><b>Prompt:</b> What was this experience?</p> <p><b>Prompt:</b> Why did it lead to a decline in community perceptions of your CSO's effectiveness?</p>

13	How have the activities of other CSOs shaped the perceptions of people in the community on the effectiveness of CSOs and civil society in general?	<b>Prompt:</b> What three things should be done to improve the perceptions of civil society among marginalized populations?
14	How have your CSO's activities shaped the perceptions of marginalized groups that you work with in the community on the effectiveness of your CSO?	<b>Prompt:</b> What three things should be done to improve the perceptions of civil society among government officials?
15	How have the activities of other CSOs shaped the perceptions of marginalized groups that you work with in the community on the effectiveness of CSOs and civil society in general?	
16	How have your CSO's activities shaped the perceptions of government officials on the effectiveness of your CSO?	
17	How have the activities of other CSOs shaped the perceptions of government officials on the effectiveness of CSOs and civil society in general?	
18	What three things should be done to improve the perceptions of civil society among the people in the communities where you work?	
19	What three things should be done to improve the perceptions of civil society among marginalized populations?	
20	What three things should be done to improve the perceptions of civil society among government officials?	

**EQ 2b: What are the challenges and opportunities to improve civil society credibility among the public, including marginalized populations?**

21	How do you think perceptions of civil society credibility have changed over the past few years?	Why do you think these perceptions have changed?
22	What do you see as the main challenges to improve the credibility of <b>your CSO</b> with the public?	<b>Prompt:</b> What do you see as the main opportunities to improve the credibility of <b>your CSO</b> with the public?

23	What do you see as the main challenges to improve the credibility of <b>your CSO</b> with marginalized populations?	<b>Prompt:</b> What do you see as the main opportunities to improve the credibility of <b>your CSO</b> with marginalized populations?
24	What do you see as the main challenges to improve the credibility of <b>your CSO</b> with local government authorities?	

## CBO KII TOOL

<b>Researcher Name:</b>	
<b>Notetaking Method:</b>	[Recorded and transcript/computer notes/handwritten notes/notetaker]
<b>Interview Date:</b>	
<b>Respondent Name:</b>	
<b>Respondent Position:</b>	
<b>Respondent Gender:</b>	
<b>Respondent Ethnicity:</b>	
<b>Respondent Age:</b>	
<b>Respondent Region:</b>	
<b>Start Time:</b>	
<b>End Time:</b>	

### Informed Consent and Confidentiality:

Hello, I am \_\_\_\_\_, and I work with Social Impact, an American independent company conducting research for the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) in Sri Lanka Office. We are conducting an overall evaluation of civil society. We intend to interview approximately XX constituents in this project, and you have been selected to participate because we believe you can provide some information on the status of civil society in Sri Lanka. Your participation in this interview should not pose any harm or discomfort to you. Indeed, your participation in this interview is completely voluntary, and you are free to decline to respond to any question for any reason and to end the interview at any time. You will not be provided with any payment for your participation in this interview. Your honest responses will help USAID understand CSO strengths and weaknesses as well as levels of trust and credibility in CSOs. Your name will not be connected to any information you provide in this interview. The data from this interview (excluding your personally identifiable information) will be used by the Social Impact team for analysis purposes only, and your answers will only be reported to USAID as part of an aggregated data set. This interview will last approximately XX minutes. Do you understand that your participation in this interview is voluntary, unpaid, and that you can end the interview at any point? If you have any follow up questions, please contact [irb@socialimpact.com](mailto:irb@socialimpact.com).

Do you confirm your consent to participate in this interview?

1. Yes
2. No

#	Questions	Guidance, Adaptions, & Prompts
1	Can you describe <u>your role</u> within your organization?	<b>Prompt:</b> How long have you been in this position/working with your organization?
<b>EQ I: What are CBOs strengths/weaknesses in their technical capacity in their area of work?</b>		
2	What is the <b>main technical area</b> that your CBO works in?	<b>Guidance:</b> By technical area, we mean where your CBO has specialized, such as support for widows or reconciliation in the community.
3	What do you see as the 3 main strengths of your CBO in this technical area?	<b>Prompt:</b> How do you plan to build on the technical areas your CBO is already strong in?
4	What do you see as 3 main weaknesses of your CBO in this technical area?	<b>Prompt:</b> How do you plan to address the technical areas you identify as weak in your CBO?
<b>EQ I a: Given the prevailing strengths/weaknesses, what are the risks/opportunities for CSOs in operating/functioning in their role of promoting their missions (reconciliation, human rights, gender and social inclusion, etc.)?</b>		
5	What do you see as the risks for your CBO in developing and implementing activities?	<b>Guidance:</b> Risks are possibilities that the capacity or credibility of the CBO are damaged in doing this work.
6	What do you see as the risks for your partner CSOs in working with you in this area?	
7	Given your evaluation of your CBO's strengths and weaknesses, what is your plan for your CBO to take advantage of opportunities for more activities and results?	
8	What do you see as opportunities for your partner CSOs to work with you in this area?	
<b>EQ I b: What are CSOs' knowledge and attitudes about their contribution to advancing human rights, gender and social inclusion, promoting peacebuilding, and government accountability?</b>		

9	How do you assess the contributions of your CBO to the work of the CSO sector in advancing human rights, gender and social inclusion, promoting peacebuilding, and government accountability?	Has, and how has, _____ [the name of the CSO] improved the ability of your CBO to contribute to this area?
10	Should your CBO strive to make a larger contribution?	How might your CBO contribute more?
11	Are there other high-level results that your CBO contributes to?	How does your CBO contribute to these high-level results?
12	Are there other high-level results that you believe your CBO should be contributing to?	How should your CBO contribute to these high-level results?

**EQ 2: What is the level of trust and credibility of, and what are these perceptions based on?**

12	How would you characterize the level of trust and credibility that people in the communities where you work have in your CBO?	<p><b>Prompt:</b> What is your evidence for this level of trust and credibility in your CBO among people in the communities where you work?</p> <p><b>Prompt:</b> Why do you think the people there have this kind of trust in your CBO?</p>
----	---	--

**EQ 2a: How have CSO activities affected stakeholder (communities, target groups related to gender and social inclusion, government officials, etc.) perceptions of their effectiveness, contributions, and work?**

13	How have your CBO's activities shaped the perceptions of people in the community on the effectiveness of your CBO?	<b>Prompt:</b> Can you give us 3 concrete examples from the last 3 years where the perceptions of people in the community of your CBO's effectiveness improved as a result of your CBO's activities?
14	Has your CBO had experiences where the perceptions of people in the community of your CBO's effectiveness deteriorated as a result of your CBO's activities? If so, what was this experience?	<b>Prompt:</b> Why did it lead to a decline in community perceptions of your CBO's effectiveness?



		<b>Prompt:</b> What three things should be done to improve the perceptions of civil society among the people in the communities where you work?
15	How have your CBO’s activities shaped the perceptions of marginalized groups that you work with in the community on the effectiveness of your CBO?	<b>Prompt:</b> What three things should be done to improve the perceptions of civil society among marginalized populations?
16	How have your CBO’s activities shaped the perceptions of government officials on the effectiveness of your CBO?	<b>Prompt:</b> What three things should be done to improve the perceptions of civil society among government officials?
<b>EQ 2b: What are the challenges and opportunities to improve civil society credibility among the public, including marginalized populations?</b>		
17	How do you think perceptions of civil society credibility have changed over the past few years?	Why do you think these perceptions have changed?
18	What do you see as the main challenges to improve the credibility of <b>your CBO</b> with the public?	<b>Prompt:</b> What do you see as the main opportunities to improve the credibility of <b>your CBO</b> with the public?
19	What do you see as the main challenges to improve the credibility of <b>your CBO</b> with marginalized populations?	<b>Prompt:</b> What do you see as the main opportunities to improve the credibility of <b>your CBO</b> with marginalized populations?
20	What do you see as the main challenges to improve the credibility of <b>your CBO</b> with local government authorities?	

## LOCAL GOVERNMENT STAKEHOLDER KII TOOL

<b>Researcher Name:</b>	
<b>Notetaking Method:</b>	[Recorded and transcript/computer notes/handwritten notes/notetaker]
<b>Interview Date:</b>	
<b>Respondent Name:</b>	
<b>Respondent Position:</b>	
<b>Respondent Gender:</b>	
<b>Respondent Ethnicity:</b>	
<b>Respondent Age:</b>	
<b>Respondent Region:</b>	
<b>Start Time:</b>	
<b>End Time:</b>	

### Informed Consent and Confidentiality:

Hello, I am \_\_\_\_\_, and I work with Social Impact, an independent American company conducting research for the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) in Sri Lanka. We are conducting an overall evaluation of civil society. We intend to interview approximately XX constituents in this project, and you have been selected to participate because we believe you can provide some information on the status of civil society in Sri Lanka. Your participation in this interview should not pose any harm or discomfort to you. Indeed, your participation in this interview is completely voluntary, and you are free to decline to respond to any question for any reason and to end the interview at any time. You will not be provided with any payment for your participation in this interview. Your honest responses will help USAID understand CSO strengths and weaknesses as well as levels of trust and credibility in CSOs. Your name will not be connected to any information you provide in this interview. The data from this interview (excluding your personally identifiable information) will be used by the Social Impact team for analysis purposes only, and your answers will only be reported to USAID as part of an aggregated data set. This interview will last approximately XX minutes. Do you understand that your participation in this interview is voluntary, unpaid, and that you can end the interview at any point? If you have any follow up questions, please contact [irb@socialimpact.com](mailto:irb@socialimpact.com).

Do you confirm your consent to participate in this interview?

1. Yes
2. No

#	Questions	Guidance, Adaptions, & Prompts
1	Can you describe <u>your role</u> within your organization?	<p><b>Prompt:</b> How long have you been in this position/working with your organization?</p> <p>What is your background before taking up this position?</p> <p>How do you work with CSOs here in this position?</p>
<b>EQ1: What are CBOs strengths/weaknesses in their technical capacity in their area of work?</b>		
2	What do you see as the 3 main strengths of the CSOs that work here?	<b>Guidance:</b> We are particularly interested in their technical knowledge and capacity in skills like reconciliation rather than ability to operate, such as having a vehicle.
3	What do you see as 3 main technical weaknesses of the CSOs that work here?	
<b>EQ 1a: Given the prevailing strengths/weaknesses, what are the risks/opportunities for CSOs in operating/functioning in their role of promoting their missions?</b>		
4	What do you see as opportunities for CSOs here to better promote their missions, particularly in areas such as human rights, gender and social inclusion, promoting peacebuilding, and government accountability?	How can these opportunities be seized?
5	Do you see risks for CSOs in developing and implementing activities here in these areas? Risks are possibilities that the capacity or credibility of the CSO are damaged in doing this work.	How can these risks be reduced?
<b>EQ 1b: What are knowledge and attitudes about their contribution to advancing human rights, gender and social inclusion, promoting peacebuilding, and government accountability?</b>		
6	How do you assess the contributions of CSOs in advancing human rights, gender and social inclusion, promoting peacebuilding, and government accountability here?	

7	Are there other high-level results that CSOs here contribute to?	If so, what are these areas?
8	Are there other high-level results that CSOs here should be contributing to?	If so, what are these areas?
<b>EQ 2: What is the level of trust and credibility of CSOs, and what are these perceptions based on?</b>		
9	How would you characterize the level of trust and credibility that people here have in CSOs?	
10	What is your evidence for this level of trust and credibility?	
11	Why do you think the people there have this kind of trust in CSOs?	
<b>EQ 2a: How have CSO activities affected stakeholder (communities, target groups related to gender and social inclusion, government officials, etc.) perceptions of their effectiveness, contributions, and work?</b>		
12	How have the activities of CSOs here shaped the perceptions of people in the community on the effectiveness of CSOs?	Can you give us 3 concrete examples from the last 3 years of how the activities of CSOs here shaped the perceptions of people about CSOs?
13	How have the activities of CSOs here shaped your perceptions as a government official on the effectiveness of CSOs?	
14	What three things should CSOs do to improve the perceptions of civil society among people here?	
15	What three things should CSOs do to improve your perceptions as a government official of CSOs?	
<b>EQ 2b: What are the challenges and opportunities to improve civil society credibility among the public, including marginalized populations?</b>		
16	What do you see as the main challenges to improve the credibility of CSOs with the public?	

17	What do you see as the main challenges to improve the credibility of CSOs with marginalized populations?	
----	--	--

## USAID, INDEPENDENT CSO EXPERTS KII TOOL

<b>Researcher Name:</b>	
<b>Notetaking Method:</b>	[transcript/computer notes/handwritten notes/notetaker]
<b>Interview Date:</b>	
<b>Respondent Gender:</b>	
<b>Respondent Ethnicity:</b>	
<b>Respondent Age:</b>	
<b>Respondent Region:</b>	
<b>Start Time:</b>	
<b>End Time:</b>	

### Informed Consent and Confidentiality:

Hello, I am \_\_\_\_\_, and I work with Social Impact, an independent American company conducting research for the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) in Sri Lanka. And we have \_\_\_\_\_ taking notes. We are conducting an overall evaluation of civil society for USAID. We intend to interview 68 people across Sri Lanka, and you have been selected to participate because we believe you can provide useful information on the status of civil society in Sri Lanka. This interview will last approximately 60 minutes.

Your honest responses will help USAID understand CSO strengths and weaknesses as well as levels of trust and credibility in CSOs. USAID may use this general information about the CSO sector in developing future activities in civil society. Participation will not affect whether your particular CSO receives any future support from a future USAID activity.

Your name and the name of your non-USAID organization will not be connected to any information you provide in this survey or the report that is written. Your non-identifiable information will be compiled with other responses, analyzed by the Social Impact team, and serve as the data for a report to USAID that will be made publicly available on website called the Development Experience Clearinghouse. No information will be associated with you as an individual or with your non-USAID organization.

We recognize that civil society activism is challenging. Your participation in this interview should not increase risk to you or your organization beyond your existing work with civil society. Your participation in this survey is completely voluntary, and you are free to decline to respond to any question for any reason and to stop the survey at any time without consequences. You will not be provided with any payment for your participation in this survey. Participation will not affect whether

your particular CSO receives any future support from a future USAID activity. If you have any follow-up questions, please contact [irb@socialimpact.com](mailto:irb@socialimpact.com).

Do you confirm your consent to participate in this interview?

1. Yes
2. No

Start at questions to be asked slightly differently to USAID and Independent Experts. **BOLD ARE OUR EVALUATION QUESTIONS.** The text under the BOLD is what we could ask. In an hour, we can perhaps get 5 minutes each for 12 questions and discussion.

These meetings are particularly likely to leave lots of room for us to follow up and asking additional probing questions toward answering our evaluation questions based on their answers to our initial questions.

**Get:**

Sex	
Organization	
Date	
Interviewer	
Notetaker	

**ASK**

**1) What are CSOs strengths/weaknesses in their technical capacity in their area of work?**

What do you see as the **strengths** of CSOs in their technical capacity in:

Human rights, gender equality, social inclusion, peacebuilding and reconciliation, and government accountability?

What do you see as the **weaknesses** of CSOs in:

Human rights, gender equality, social inclusion, peacebuilding and reconciliation, and government accountability?

**a) Given the prevailing strengths/weaknesses, what are the risks/opportunities for CSOs in operating/functioning in their role of promoting their missions?**

What do you see as the **risks** for CSOs in promoting their missions?

What do you see as **opportunities** for CSOs in promoting their missions?

**b) What are CSOs' knowledge and attitudes about their contribution to advancing human rights, gender and social inclusion, promoting peacebuilding, and government accountability?**

In your view, do CSOs do enough to contribute to higher-level results in the development of human rights, gender equality, social inclusion, peacebuilding and reconciliation, and government accountability in Sri Lanka? Why or why not?

- *Probe for USAID staff: How could CSO strengthening better support other results under the Mission's strategy?*

In your experience, what factors shape how and how much CSOs contribute to these higher-level results?

**2) What is the level of trust and credibility of CSOs, and what are these perceptions based on?**

What do you think the level of trust and credibility of CSOs is among the people in the areas where they are working? What is your evidence for trust or credibility?

Why do you think the people in these areas have this level and kind of trust and credibility in CSOs?

**a) How have CSO activities affected stakeholder (communities, target groups related to gender and social inclusion, government officials, etc.) perceptions of their effectiveness, contributions, and work?**

How do you think the activities of CSOs shape the perceptions of people in Sri Lanka on the effectiveness and contributions of CSOs to democracy, human rights, and governance in the country?

How have the activities of other CSOs shaped the perceptions of people in the community on the credibility of CSOs and civil society in general?

**b) What are the challenges and opportunities to improve civil society credibility among the public, including marginalized populations?**

What do you see as the challenges for CSOs to improve civil society credibility among the public, including among marginalized populations?

What do you see as opportunities for CSOs to improve civil society credibility among the public, including among marginalized populations?



#	Questions	Guidance, Adaptions, & Prompts
1	How have CSOs worked with you and people in your community?	
2	<b>What is the level of trust and credibility of CSOs in the areas where [CSO] is working, and what are these perceptions based on?</b>	Trust is often recognized to be important in relationships, including in relationships between CSOs and the people in the communities in which they work. One of the ways trust comes into play is whether people in the community find CSOs as credible partners—organizations that they can count on to deliver on their plans or to address what the community has identified as needs.
3	Are there CSOs here that you trust to credibly deliver in their work with you and others in the community?	Why do you trust them?
4	What is your level of trust and credibility in the CSOs that work with you?	What are the main reasons for your evaluation?
a)	<b>How have CSO activities affected stakeholder (communities, target groups related to gender and social inclusion, government officials, etc.) perceptions of their effectiveness, contributions, and work?</b>	
5	Are there things that CSOs do that positively change community perceptions of their effectiveness?	<p>What are some of these things?</p> <p>Why do they increase the community's perceptions of CSOs as effective?</p> <p>What do they do to communicate what their contributions are?</p>
6	What do CSOs do in operating in your community that creates the perception CSOs are not effective?	
b)	<b>What are the challenges and opportunities to improve civil society credibility among the public, including marginalized populations?</b>	
7	What do you see as the main challenges for CSOs to improve their credibility in your community?	

8	Are there opportunities that CSOs that work in your community could seize to improve the credibility of CSOs in your community?	What are these opportunities?  How could CSOs take advantage of them?
---	---	---

## FGD INSTRUMENTS

### CSO FGD TOOL

#### Informed Consent and Confidentiality:

Hello, I am \_\_\_\_\_, and I work with Social Impact, an independent American company conducting research for the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) in Sri Lanka. We are conducting an overall evaluation of civil society. We intend to reach approximately XX constituents in this project, and you have been selected to participate because we believe you can provide some information on the status of civil society in Sri Lanka. Your participation in this discussion should not pose any harm or discomfort to you. Indeed, your participation in this discussion is completely voluntary, and you are free to decline to respond to any question for any reason and to end your participation in the discussion at any time. You will not be provided with any payment for your participation in this discussion. Your honest responses will help USAID understand CSO strengths and weaknesses as well as levels of trust and credibility in CSOs. Your name or the name of your CSO will not be connected to any information you provide in this discussion. The data from this discussion (excluding your personally identifiable information and the identification of your CSO) will be used by the Social Impact team for analysis purposes only and your answers will only be reported to USAID as part of an aggregated data set. This discussion will last approximately XX minutes. Do you understand that your participation in this discussion is voluntary, unpaid, and that you can end your participation the discussion at any point? If you have any follow-up questions, please contact [irb@socialimpact.com](mailto:irb@socialimpact.com).

Do you confirm your consent to participate in this discussion?

1. Yes
2. No

#	Questions	Guidance, Adaptions, & Prompts
1	<b>What are CSOs strengths/weaknesses in their technical capacity in their area of work?</b>	
2	How do the strengths and weaknesses of CSOs overall in promoting their missions in human rights, gender and social inclusion, peacebuilding and reconciliation, government accountability, and other technical areas shape the CSO sector?	
3	What do you think is going well and why?	
4	What do you think is not going as well, and why?	

5	How do you assess contributions to increasing CSO capacity?	
a)	<b>Given the prevailing strengths/weaknesses, what are the risks/opportunities for CSOs in operating/functioning in their role of promoting their missions?</b>	
6	How do the risks for of CSOs overall in promoting their missions, and other technical areas shape the CSO sector?	
7	How do the opportunities for CSOs overall in promoting their missions in human rights, gender and social inclusion, peacebuilding and reconciliation, government accountability, and other technical areas shape the CSO sector?	
b)	<b>What are CSOs' knowledge and attitudes about their contribution to advancing human rights, gender and social inclusion, promoting peacebuilding, and government accountability?</b>	
8	How do your CSOs contribute to the overall CSO sectors' progress—or endeavoring to prevent regression—in human rights, gender and social inclusion, peacebuilding and reconciliation, government accountability, and other technical areas?	
9	What could be done to amplify your CSOs' contributions to the overall CSO sectors' progress—or endeavoring to prevent regression—in human rights, gender and social inclusion, peacebuilding and reconciliation, government accountability, and other technical areas?	
2	<b>What is the level of trust and credibility of CSOs, and what are these perceptions based on?</b>	
10	How would you characterize the level of trust and credibility that people in the communities where you work have in CSOs overall? What are the main forces that shape their perceptions?	
a)	<b>How have CSO activities affected stakeholder (communities, target groups related to gender and social inclusion, government officials, etc.)</b>	

	<b>perceptions of their effectiveness, contributions, and work?</b>	
11	How does what your and other CSOs do shaped the perceptions of people in the community on the effectiveness of CSOs?	
<b>b)</b>	<b>What are the challenges and opportunities to improve civil society credibility among the public, including marginalized populations?</b>	
12	What do you see as the main challenges for CSOs to improving the credibility of civil society among the public?	
13	What do you see as the main opportunities for CSOs to improve the credibility of civil society among the public?	

## CBO FGD TOOL

### Informed Consent and Confidentiality:

Hello, I am \_\_\_\_\_, and I work with Social Impact, an independent American company conducting research for the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) in Sri Lanka. We are conducting an overall evaluation of civil society. We intend to reach approximately XX constituents in this project, and you have been selected to participate because we believe you can provide some information on the status of civil society in Sri Lanka. Your participation in this discussion should not pose any harm or discomfort to you. Indeed, your participation in this discussion is completely voluntary, and you are free to decline to respond to any question for any reason and to end your participation in the discussion at any time. You will not be provided with any payment for your participation in this discussion. Your honest responses will help USAID understand CSO strengths and weaknesses as well as levels of trust and credibility in CSOs. Your name or the name of your CBO will not be connected to any information you provide in this discussion. The data from this discussion (excluding your personally identifiable information and the identification of your CBO) will be used by the Social Impact team for analysis purposes only, and your answers will only be reported to USAID as part of an aggregated data set. This discussion will last approximately XX minutes. Do you understand that your participation in this discussion is voluntary, unpaid, and that you can end your participation the discussion at any point? If you have any follow-up questions, please contact or [irb@socialimpact.com](mailto:irb@socialimpact.com).

Do you confirm your consent to participate in this discussion?

1. Yes
2. No

#	Questions	Guidance, Adaptions, & Prompts
1	<b>What are CSOs strengths/weaknesses in their technical capacity in their area of work?</b>	
2	How do the strengths and weaknesses of CSOs overall in promoting their missions in human rights, gender and social inclusion, peacebuilding and reconciliation, government accountability, and other technical areas shape the work your CBOs can do in the sector?	
3	What do you think is going well, and why?	
4	What do you think is not going as well, and why?	

5	How do you assess contributions to increasing CSO capacity?	
a)	<b>Given the prevailing strengths/weaknesses, what are the risks/opportunities for CSOs in operating/functioning in their role of promoting their missions?</b>	
6	How do the risks for CSOs overall in promoting their missions in human rights, gender and social inclusion, peacebuilding and reconciliation, government accountability, and other technical areas shape the CSO sector and the work of your CBOs?	
7	How do the opportunities for CSOs overall in promoting their missions, and other technical areas shape the CSO sector and the work of your CBOs?	
b)	<b>What are CSOs' knowledge and attitudes about their contribution to advancing human rights, gender and social inclusion, promoting peacebuilding, and government accountability?</b>	
8	How do your CBOs contribute to the overall CSO sectors' progress in human rights, gender and social inclusion, peacebuilding and reconciliation, government accountability, and other technical areas?	
9	What could be done to amplify your CBOs' contributions to the overall CSO sectors' progress in human rights, gender and social inclusion, peacebuilding and reconciliation, government accountability, and other technical areas?	
2	<b>What is the level of trust and credibility of CSOs, and what are these perceptions based on?</b>	
10	How would you characterize the level of trust and credibility that people in the communities where you work have in CSOs overall? What are the main forces that shape their perceptions?	
a)	<b>How have CSO activities affected stakeholder (communities, target groups related to gender and social inclusion, government officials, etc.)</b>	

	<b>perceptions of their effectiveness, contributions, and work?</b>	
11	How does what your CBOs do shape the perceptions of people in the community on the effectiveness of CSOs?	
b)	<b>What are the challenges and opportunities to improve civil society credibility among the public, including marginalized populations?</b>	
12	What do you see as the main challenges for CSOs to improve the credibility of civil society among the public?	
13	What do you see as the main opportunities for CSOs to improve the credibility of civil society among the public?	



## CONSTITUENT FGD TOOL

### Informed Consent Solicitation prior to FGD

Hello, I am \_\_\_\_\_, and I work with Social Impact, an independent American company conducting research for the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) in Sri Lanka. We are conducting a study of civil society. We intend to reach more than a hundred fifty people across Sri Lanka for interviews and focus groups to learn about civil society across Sri Lanka.

[CSO name] suggested that you would be a valuable person to talk to because of your experience with [CSO name] in the community.

We would like to invite you to participate in a discussion of approximately one hour over Viber with three to five other people from your community that work with [CSO]. Your participation in this discussion is completely voluntary, and you are free to decline to participate or to not respond to any question for any reason and to end your participation in the discussion at any time. You will not be provided with any payment for your participation in this discussion. Your honest responses will help USAID understand community perceptions of civil society organizations, particularly levels of trust and credibility that you and others in your community have in CSOs. USAID may use this information to shape future programming with civil society. We will not use your name or the name of your community or the CSO in our report and will not associate your name with the discussion at all.

Do you confirm your consent to participate in this discussion?

1. Yes
2. No

### Confidentiality—Assurance reiterated prior to FGD.

I am \_\_\_\_\_. We also have \_\_\_\_\_ taking notes. Thank you again for agreeing to participate in our discussion on the status of civil society in Sri Lanka. To reiterate, your participation in this discussion is completely voluntary, and you are free to decline to respond to any question for any reason and to end your participation in the discussion at any time. You will not be provided with any payment for your participation in this discussion. Your honest responses will help USAID understand how civil society organizations are viewed in your community, and perceptions of the whether and how civil society organizations are trusted or credible in the community. USAID may use this information to shape future programming with civil society.

Your name or the name of your community will not be connected to any information you provide in this discussion by the Social Impact team. We ask that all participants agree not to share anything that is discussed with anyone outside of this group once this conversation ends. Nonetheless, there is a risk that other discussion participants will repeat what is shared here today. Remember that you are free to not to answer any question or stop participating at any time without consequence. What we learn from this discussion will be analyzed and compared with other information from Sri Lanka and used only for the team's overall report to USAID. Social Impact will erase the notes of the discussion after completion of the report. This discussion will last approximately one hour. If you have any follow-up questions or issues, please contact [irb@socialimpact.com](mailto:irb@socialimpact.com).

INTERVIEWER INTRODUCE SELF. THEN ASK. Please take 1 minute for each participant to introduce themselves to other participants. ASK EACH TO INTRODUCE.

Now that we are all introduced, we have a few questions for discussion.

#	Questions	Guidance, Adaptions, & Prompts
1	How have CSOs worked with you and people in your community?	
2	<b>What is the level of trust and credibility of CSOs in the areas where [CSO] is working, and what are these perceptions based on?</b>	Trust is often recognized to be important in relationships, including in relationships between CSOs and the people in the communities in which they work. One of the ways trust comes into play is whether people in the community find CSOs as credible partners—organizations that they can count on to deliver on their plans or to address what the community has identified as needs.
3	Are there CSOs here that you trust to credibly deliver in their work with you and others in the community?	Why do you trust them?
4	What is your level of trust and credibility in the CSOs that work with you?	What are the main reasons for your evaluation?
a)	<b>How have CSO activities affected stakeholder (communities, target groups related to gender and social inclusion, government officials, etc.) perceptions of their effectiveness, contributions, and work?</b>	
5	Are there things that CSOs do that positively change community perceptions of their effectiveness?	What are some of these things?  Why do they increase the community's perceptions of CSOs as effective?
6	What do CSOs do in operating in your community that creates the perception CSOs are not effective?	
b)	<b>What are the challenges and opportunities to improve civil society credibility among the public, including marginalized populations?</b>	

7	What do you see as the main challenges for CSOs to improve their credibility in your community?	
8	Are there opportunities that CSOs that work in your community could seize to improve the credibility of CSOs in your community?	<p>What are these opportunities?</p> <p>How could CSOs take advantage of them?</p>

## ANNEX E: DISCLOSURE OF ANY CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

Disclosure of Conflict of Interest for USAID Evaluation Team Members

<b>Name</b>	Lawrence Robertson
<b>Title</b>	Team Leader
<b>Organization</b>	Social Impact, Inc.
<b>Evaluation Position?</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Team Leader <input type="checkbox"/> Team member
<b>Evaluation Award Number (contract or other instrument)</b>	AID-486-I-14-00001/TO-72048619F00001
<b>USAID Project(s) Evaluated (Include project name(s), implementer name(s) and award number(s), if applicable)</b>	USAID Democratic Governance Civil Society Sector Evaluation
<b>I have real or potential conflicts of interest to disclose.</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
<b>If yes answered above, I disclose the following facts:</b> <i>Real or potential conflicts of interest may include, but are not limited to:</i> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Close family member who is an employee of the USAID operating unit managing the project(s) being evaluated or the implementing organization(s) whose project(s) are being evaluated.</li> <li>2. Financial interest that is direct, or is significant though indirect, in the implementing organization(s) whose projects are being evaluated or in the outcome of the evaluation.</li> <li>3. Current or previous direct or significant though indirect experience with the project(s) being evaluated, including involvement in the project design or previous iterations of the project.</li> <li>4. Current or previous work experience or seeking employment with the USAID operating unit managing the evaluation or the implementing organization(s) whose project(s) are being evaluated.</li> <li>5. Current or previous work experience with an organization that may be seen as an industry competitor with the implementing organization(s) whose project(s) are being evaluated.</li> <li>6. Preconceived ideas toward individuals, groups, organizations, or objectives of the particular projects and organizations being evaluated that could bias the evaluation.</li> </ol>	


I certify (1) that I have completed this disclosure form fully and to the best of my ability and (2) that I will update this disclosure form promptly if relevant circumstances change. If I gain access to proprietary information of other companies, then I agree to protect their information from unauthorized use or disclosure for as long as it remains proprietary and refrain from using the information for any purpose other than that for which it was furnished.

<b>Signature</b>	
<b>Date</b>	30 June 2021

Disclosure of Conflict of Interest for USAID Evaluation Team Members

<b>Name</b>	John Lis
<b>Title</b>	Team Leader
<b>Organization</b>	Social Impact
<b>Evaluation Position?</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Team Leader <input type="checkbox"/> Team member
<b>Evaluation Award Number</b> <i>(contract or other instrument)</i>	AID-486-I-14-00001/TO-72048619F00001
<b>USAID Project(s) Evaluated</b> <i>(Include project name(s), implementer name(s) and award number(s), if applicable)</i>	Sri Lanka Civil Society Sector Evaluation
<b>I have real or potential conflicts of interest to disclose.</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
<b>If yes answered above, I disclose the following facts:</b> <i>Real or potential conflicts of interest may include, but are not limited to:</i> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Close family member who is an employee of the USAID operating unit managing the project(s) being evaluated or the implementing organization(s) whose project(s) are being evaluated.</li> <li>2. Financial interest that is direct, or is significant though indirect, in the implementing organization(s) whose projects are being evaluated or in the outcome of the evaluation.</li> <li>3. Current or previous direct or significant though indirect experience with the project(s) being evaluated, including involvement in the project design or previous iterations of the project.</li> <li>4. Current or previous work experience or seeking employment with the USAID operating unit managing the evaluation or the implementing organization(s) whose project(s) are being evaluated.</li> <li>5. Current or previous work experience with an organization that may be seen as an industry competitor with the implementing organization(s) whose project(s) are being evaluated.</li> <li>6. Preconceived ideas toward individuals, groups, organizations, or objectives of the particular projects and organizations being evaluated that could bias the evaluation.</li> </ol>	I worked as a short-term consultant for MSI on the 2015 evaluation of the USAID/Kenya Parliamentary Support Program and on the 2013-14 evaluation of programs in Iraq of the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor (DRL) at the Department of State.

I certify (1) that I have completed this disclosure form fully and to the best of my ability and (2) that I will update this disclosure form promptly if relevant circumstances change. If I gain access to proprietary information of other companies, then I agree to protect their information from unauthorized use or disclosure for as long as it remains proprietary and refrain from using the information for any purpose other than that for which it was furnished.

<b>Signature</b>	
<b>Date</b>	Oct. 26, 2021

Disclosure of Conflict of Interest for USAID Evaluation Team Members

<b>Name</b>	Indran Rajendran
<b>Title</b>	Senior Researcher
<b>Organization</b>	Social Impact, Inc.
<b>Evaluation Position?</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Team Leader <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Team member
<b>Evaluation Award Number (contract or other instrument)</b>	AID-486-I-14-00001/TO-72048619F00001
<b>USAID Project(s) Evaluated (Include project name(s), implementer name(s) and award number(s), if applicable)</b>	Sri Lanka CSOs Evaluation
<b>I have real or potential conflicts of interest to disclose.</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
<p><b>If yes answered above, I disclose the following facts:</b></p> <p><i>Real or potential conflicts of interest may include, but are not limited to:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Close family member who is an employee of the USAID operating unit managing the project(s) being evaluated or the implementing organization(s) whose project(s) are being evaluated.</li> <li>2. Financial interest that is direct, or is significant though indirect, in the implementing organization(s) whose projects are being evaluated or in the outcome of the evaluation.</li> <li>3. Current or previous direct or significant though indirect experience with the project(s) being evaluated, including involvement in the project design or previous iterations of the project.</li> <li>4. Current or previous work experience or seeking employment with the USAID operating unit managing the evaluation or the implementing organization(s) whose project(s) are being evaluated.</li> <li>5. Current or previous work experience with an organization that may be seen as an industry competitor with the implementing organization(s) whose project(s) are being evaluated.</li> <li>6. Preconceived Ideas toward individuals, groups, organizations, or objectives of the particular projects and organizations being evaluated that could bias the evaluation.</li> </ol>	<p>No</p> <p>No</p> <p>No</p> <p>No</p> <p>No</p> <p>No</p>


I certify (1) that I have completed this disclosure form fully and to the best of my ability and (2) that I will update this disclosure form promptly if relevant circumstances change. If I gain access to proprietary information of other companies, then I agree to protect their information from unauthorized use or disclosure for as long as it remains proprietary and refrain from using the information for any purpose other than that for which it was furnished.

<b>Signature</b>	Indran
<b>Date</b>	5/07/2021

Disclosure of Conflict of Interest for USAID Evaluation Team Members

Name	Mangala Fernando
Title	Senior Researcher
Organization	Social Impact, Inc.
Evaluation Position?	<input type="checkbox"/> Team Leader <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Team member
Evaluation Award Number (contract or other instrument)	AID-486-I-14-00001/TO-72048619F00001
USAID Project(s) Evaluated (include project name(s), implementer name(s) and award number(s), if applicable)	Sri Lanka CSOs Evaluation
I have real or potential conflicts of interest to disclose.	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No (However, pertaining to point 2 below, I need to give some details)
<p>If yes answered above, I disclose the following facts:</p> <p>Real or potential conflicts of interest may include, but are not limited to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Close family member who is an employee of the USAID operating unit managing the project(s) being evaluated or the implementing organization(s) whose project(s) are being evaluated.</li> <li>2. Financial interest that is direct, or is significant though indirect, in the implementing organization(s) whose projects are being evaluated or in the outcome of the evaluation.</li> <li>3. Current or previous direct or significant though indirect experience with the project(s) being evaluated, including involvement in the project design or previous iterations of the project.</li> <li>4. Current or previous work experience or seeking employment with the USAID operating unit managing the evaluation or the implementing organization(s) whose project(s) are being evaluated.</li> <li>5. Current or previous work experience with an organization that may be seen as an industry competitor with the implementing organization(s) whose project(s) are being evaluated.</li> <li>6. Preconceived ideas toward individuals, groups, organizations, or objectives of the particular projects and organizations being evaluated that could bias the evaluation.</li> </ol>	<p>Even though I have provided my consultancy services as an external consultant to the IDEA (70 LOE) and SCORE (15 LOE), I do not or did not have any financial interest or significant/material though indirect with these two organizations.</p> <p>Compared to number of total days these two projects have been operating in Sri Lanka, my level of effort is very insignificant.</p> <p>Also, I have not participated in any decision-making structures of these organizations nor have I occupied any permanent staff positions with these organizations, and my role has been largely on a STTA external resource person basis to perform specific tasks based on a specific contract agreed on a daily rate and invoice.</p> <p>Please note that I have disclosed about the above points clearly in my detailed CV to the Social Impact, Inc. and the USAID, interview with the Social Impact, Inc. and COPs of both the organizations mentioned above.</p>


I certify (1) that I have completed this disclosure form fully and to the best of my ability and (2) that I will update this disclosure form promptly if relevant circumstances change. If I gain access to proprietary information of other companies, then I agree to protect their information from unauthorized use or disclosure for as long as it remains proprietary and refrain from using the information for any purpose other than that for which it was furnished.

Signature	
Date	05 July 2021

Disclosure of Conflict of Interest for USAID Evaluation Team Members

<b>Name</b>	Cherisma Rajaratnam
<b>Title</b>	Senior Local Researcher
<b>Organization</b>	Social Impact
<b>Evaluation Position?</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Team Leader <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Team member
<b>Evaluation Award Number (contract or other instrument)</b>	AID-486-I-14-00001/TO-72048619F00001
<b>USAID Project(s) Evaluated (Include project name(s), implementer name(s) and award number(s), if applicable)</b>	Sri Lanka CSOs Evaluations
<b>I have real or potential conflicts of interest to disclose.</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
<b>If yes answered above, I disclose the following facts:</b> <i>Real or potential conflicts of interest may include, but are not limited to:</i>	
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Close family member who is an employee of the USAID operating unit managing the project(s) being evaluated or the implementing organization(s) whose project(s) are being evaluated.</li> <li>2. Financial interest that is direct, or is significant though indirect, in the implementing organization(s) whose projects are being evaluated or in the outcome of the evaluation.</li> <li>3. Current or previous direct or significant though indirect experience with the project(s) being evaluated, including involvement in the project design or previous iterations of the project.</li> <li>4. Current or previous work experience or seeking employment with the USAID operating unit managing the evaluation or the implementing organization(s) whose project(s) are being evaluated.</li> <li>5. Current or previous work experience with an organization that may be seen as an industry competitor with the implementing organization(s) whose project(s) are being evaluated.</li> <li>6. Preconceived ideas toward individuals, groups, organizations, or objectives of the particular projects and organizations being evaluated that could bias the evaluation.</li> </ol>

I certify (1) that I have completed this disclosure form fully and to the best of my ability and (2) that I will update this disclosure form promptly if relevant circumstances change. If I gain access to proprietary information of other companies, then I agree to protect their information from unauthorized use or disclosure for as long as it remains proprietary and refrain from using the information for any purpose other than that for which it was furnished.

<b>Signature</b>	
<b>Date</b>	18th October 2021



Disclosure of Conflict of Interest for USAID Evaluation Team Members

<b>Name</b>	NIRANJALI JEYASHANKER
<b>Title</b>	LOGISTICIAN / NOTE TAKER
<b>Organization</b>	SOCIAL IMPACT
<b>Evaluation Position?</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Team Leader <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Team member
<b>Evaluation Award Number</b> <i>(contract or other instrument)</i>	AID-486-I-14-00001/TO-72048619F00001
<b>USAID Project(s) Evaluated</b> <i>(Include project name(s), implementer name(s) and award number(s), if applicable)</i>	SRI LANKA CSOs EVALUATION
<b>I have real or potential conflicts of interest to disclose.</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
<p><b>If yes answered above, I disclose the following facts:</b></p> <p><i>Real or potential conflicts of interest may include, but are not limited to:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>1. Close family member who is an employee of the USAID operating unit managing the project(s) being evaluated or the implementing organization(s) whose project(s) are being evaluated.</i></li> <li><i>2. Financial interest that is direct, or is significant though indirect, in the implementing organization(s) whose projects are being evaluated or in the outcome of the evaluation.</i></li> <li><i>3. Current or previous direct or significant though indirect experience with the project(s) being evaluated, including involvement in the project design or previous iterations of the project.</i></li> <li><i>4. Current or previous work experience or seeking employment with the USAID operating unit managing the evaluation or the implementing organization(s) whose project(s) are being evaluated.</i></li> <li><i>5. Current or previous work experience with an organization that may be seen as an industry competitor with the implementing organization(s) whose project(s) are being evaluated.</i></li> <li><i>6. Preconceived ideas toward individuals, groups, organizations, or objectives of the particular projects and organizations being evaluated that could bias the evaluation.</i></li> </ol>	

I certify (1) that I have completed this disclosure form fully and to the best of my ability and (2) that I will update this disclosure form promptly if relevant circumstances change. If I gain access to proprietary information of other companies, then I agree to protect their information from unauthorized use or disclosure for as long as it remains proprietary and refrain from using the information for any purpose other than that for which it was furnished.

<b>Signature</b>	
<b>Date</b>	22 NOVEMBER 2021

U.S. Agency for International Development – Sri Lanka  
No. 44, Galle Road  
Colombo 3, Sri Lanka