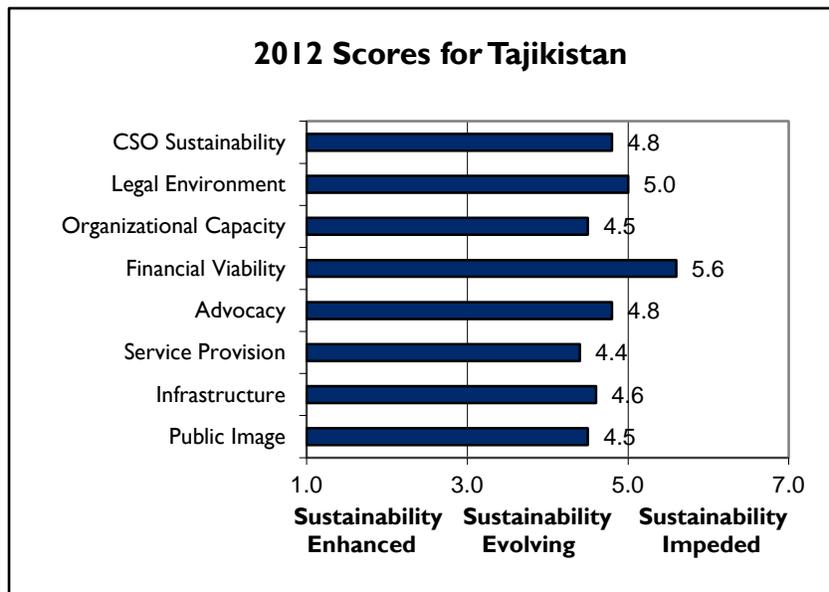


# TAJIKISTAN



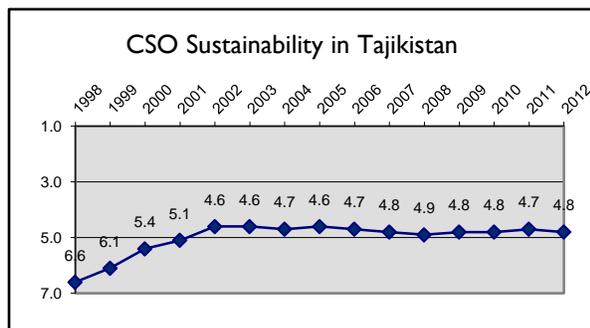
**Capital:** Dushanbe

**Population:** 7,190,041

**GDP per capita (PPP):** \$2,200

**Human Development Index:** 125

## CSO SUSTAINABILITY INDEX: 4.8



Civil society in Tajikistan represents a wide spectrum of organizations, ranging from communal and neighborhood councils to more formal, officially registered public associations. According to the Ministry of Justice (MoJ), as of October 2012, there were 2,600 public associations registered in the country, an increase of approximately one hundred since the end of 2011. Approximately 1,000 of these are estimated to be active. There are also 1,400 legally registered Village Organizations (VOs), 105 Social Unions for the Development of VOs (SUDVOs),

eleven Associations of SUDVOs (ASUDVOs), over seventy Water Users Associations (WUAs), and more than 2,600 community-based saving groups supported by the Aga Khan Foundation (AKF).

CSO sustainability in Tajikistan worsened slightly in 2012. The legal environment remains very challenging. Public associations complain of bureaucratic obstacles and increasing corruption during the registration process.

CSO funding sources are limited. Many CSOs depend completely on grants from international donors. Some CSOs receive limited local funding from commercial banks and cellular companies.

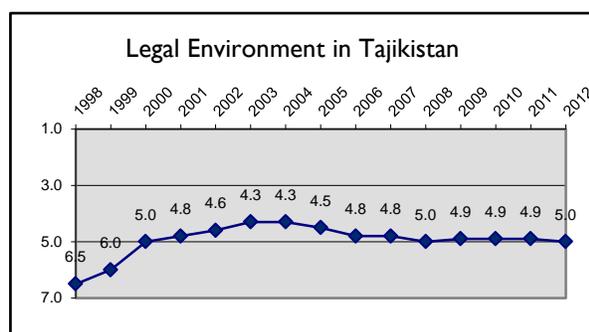
CSOs have increasingly broadened their scope of activities from service delivery to monitoring public services and promoting accountable and transparent governance, particularly at the local



level. Large organizations and coalitions have greater advocacy and lobbying capacities than smaller and rural CSOs, which lack the necessary tools, resources, and capacities to engage in lobbying efforts.

Rural communities only have vague ideas of the role CSOs play in society. In urban areas, the public perceives CSOs as grant-dependent and donor-driven primarily because of CSOs' lack of transparency and accountability. Businesses generally do not understand the benefits of cooperating with CSOs.

## LEGAL ENVIRONMENT: 5.0



Most CSOs operate as public associations. Public associations continue to experience problems registering with the MoJ and its regional departments. According to the law, a public association should be able to complete the registration process within a month; in reality, however, the process generally takes longer. Public associations must re-register if they make even minor changes to their bylaws, such as their addresses. Public associations complain of bureaucratic obstacles and increasing corruption and discrimination by the MoJ during the registration process. The

Counterpart International office in Tajikistan, for example, was unable to register through the one-stop shop and had to overcome many bureaucratic obstacles, including MoJ rejection of its application three times because documents were missing or incorrectly formatted. After three months, Counterpart finally managed to register.

Registration for other types of CSOs, including public funds, is relatively simple, and can be completed through the one-stop shops established by the tax authorities in 2010. However, individuals interested in registering a public foundation should consult with the Tax Committee first, which generally sends them to the MoJ to register as public associations.

Public associations are subject to sanctions if their activities do not conform to the laws, and the MoJ, tax committees, and other government agencies closely monitor and inspect their activities to verify compliance with the laws. During the last half of 2012, inspections against active CSOs, primarily those working on human rights or media issues, increased in frequency. For example, the Association of Scientific and Technical Intelligentsia (ASTI) was questioned about its involvement in regional public discussions with the Islamic Revival Party.

Although political activities are not legally prohibited, CSOs are de facto forbidden from engaging in public debates on political issues or criticizing the government at the local or national levels. For example, the Khujand court ordered the closure of the Association of Young Lawyers (Amparo), an outspoken local rights group investigating torture and advocating for the rights of military recruits and other vulnerable groups. Alleged operational infringements included failing to register its new address; working in several regions without applying to open regional branches; unlawfully operating a website; and conducting training on the rights of army conscripts without the relevant license. CSOs and international human rights groups consider the case politically motivated and without merit.

A new Tax Code was adopted by the parliament and signed by the President of Tajikistan in September 2012; it will enter into force on January 1, 2013. The old Tax Code contained a provision requiring CSOs to calculate income and social taxes based on either the average monthly salary (which is determined periodically by the government based on survey data from various regions) or the actual salary, whichever is higher. The new Tax Code eliminates the use of average monthly salary, which was often higher than real CSO salaries, thereby reducing taxes for many CSOs.

In early October, the Ministry of Education (MoE) issued new instructions barring students from attending events organized or funded by international CSOs. For example, the MoE forced the German Academic Exchange Service to cancel a meeting for students about language testing. CSOs speculate that the authorities are afraid of young people becoming politicized by these events, which often focus on democracy building and leadership skills. The education authorities maintain that they did not introduce this measure to shut out foreign influence, but because they are concerned about unspecified foreign groups breeding religious or other extremism in young people.

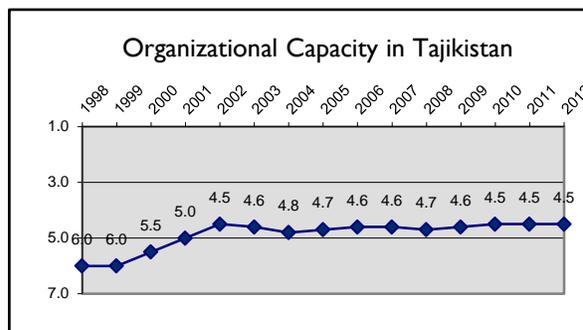
In 2012, the Ministry of Labor became the third government agency, after the Youth Committee and the Women’s Committee, to develop the necessary procedures to award contracts to CSOs under the Law on Social Orders.

Most CSOs lack knowledge of their legal responsibilities, but can get legal consultations from a network of over eighty lawyers in Dushanbe, Kulob, Rasht, Khujand, and Khorog.

## ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY: 4.5

Most CSOs have clearly defined missions. However, due to overwhelming dependence on donor funding, many CSOs are project-driven and pay little attention to strategic planning. Only a few well-developed CSOs develop multi-year strategic plans, while the rest make annual plans. Only leading, experienced CSOs seek to cultivate constituencies beyond their project beneficiaries.

Many CSOs have clearly defined organizational structures. CSOs are mostly managed by executive bodies, which are typically led by one or a few strong personalities. Most public associations have boards of directors on paper, but they are largely inactive. Business associations, CSO coalitions, and associations of legal entities, on the other hand, actively involve their boards in governance.

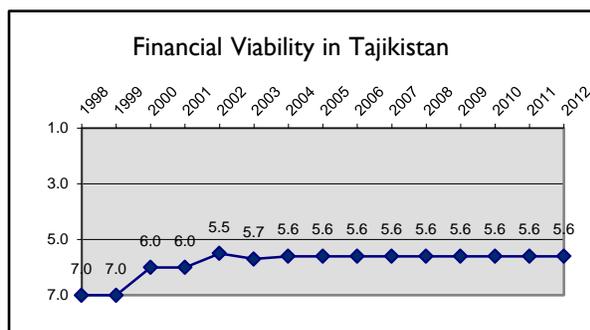


CSOs do not always have sufficient funding to maintain permanent program staff and therefore frequently hire staff on a contract basis for specific projects. Almost all CSOs have two or three permanent administrative staff members, including professional accountants. Most CSOs use contracts, develop job responsibilities, and have payroll practices, but written personnel policies are rare. CSOs hire professional IT specialists and lawyers on a contract basis when needed. In 2012, the Tajik National NGO Association (TNNGOA) started to implement an AKF-funded institutional capacity building program to improve the management records of thirty CSOs in the Khatlon Province.

Volunteerism among youth is limited due to the poor economic conditions in the country. Educated students in urban areas are more likely to understand the benefits of volunteering and participating in public campaigns. The recent MOE instructions banning students from attending events organized by international CSOs prompted intense CSO discussions about youth involvement in future CSO projects. Volunteerism among the broader public is more developed in rural areas, where people regularly provide labor for construction and infrastructure development projects.

Financial constraints and donor policies prevent CSOs from updating their technical resources. Most CSOs have outdated desktop computers in their offices, though CSO leaders might utilize laptops and flash drives to be mobile. Most CSOs cannot afford licensed software. Internet use is adequate in urban areas, but still modest in rural areas, where electricity outages are frequent.

## FINANCIAL VIABILITY: 5.6



and 7 percent from business and charity donations.

Only a few CSOs, like Fidokor, Zerkalo, Eurasia Foundation, Panorama, and Rushdi Dehot, employ effective fundraising strategies to secure long-term support. They have experienced program staff and competent English-speaking support staff, enabling them to develop strong proposals. Generally, only business associations and professional unions have membership outreach and philanthropy development programs.

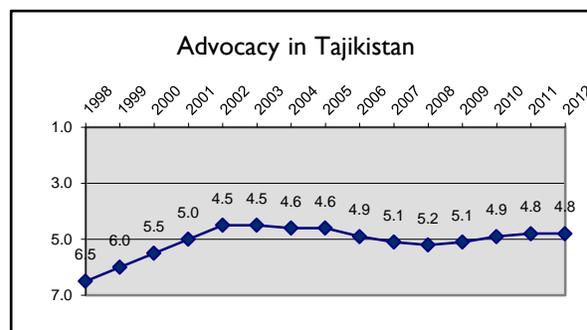
Earned income accounts for approximately 5 percent of the sector's annual income, as the market for paid services is underdeveloped. CSOs' income-generating activities are generally limited to training and consulting. CSO services are generally not financially sustainable due to high poverty rates among beneficiaries. Many CSOs are also hesitant to engage in commercial activities due to the separate financial management and unfamiliar taxation mechanisms that this entails.

State funding continues to focus on small-scale projects benefiting women and youth. In 2012, government support through the Law on Social Contracts totaled \$230,000, the same as in 2010 and 2011. Government procurement of social services is not transparent and promotes the establishment of government-organized NGOs (GONGOs).

Few CSOs have financial management systems, although the shift of international donors from cash operations to banking systems continues to increase the need for better financial management. Financial audits are costly and thus rare. Some leading CSOs post their annual reports on websites, but do not include financial information.

## ADVOCACY: 4.8

CSOs have direct lines of communication with policymakers through public councils at the national and regional levels. However, these councils are formalities that do not genuinely allow CSOs to influence decision making. Local governments increasingly engage in dialogue with civil society groups. For instance, the mayor of Dushanbe solicits feedback about the quality of public services through social networks, the municipal website, and a public dialogue facilitated by the mayor. However, CSOs did not participate actively in these feedback mechanisms.



Large organizations and coalitions have more advocacy and lobbying capacities and opportunities, while smaller and rural CSOs do not have the necessary tools, resources, or capacities to engage in such efforts.

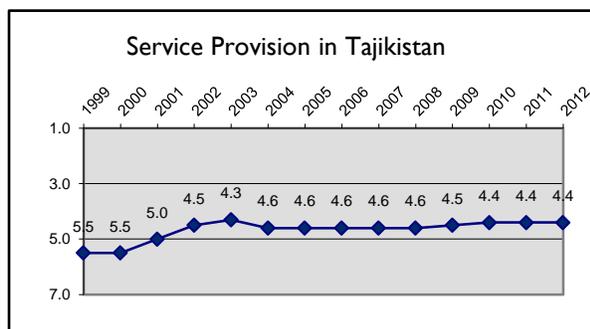
There is a significant disconnect between region-based and capital-based CSOs. Dushanbe-based CSOs are involved in advocacy work, but are generally not well informed on or involved in issues that concern rural Tajikistan. Consequently, the interests of the rural population are not advocated for at the capital level.

Issue-based advocacy continued to improve in 2012. Several mature coalitions, networks, and membership associations successfully engaged with the national government this year. The Coalition of Women CSOs successfully pushed the national government to finalize and adopt the law on domestic violence prevention in December 2012. The Adult Education Association is still advocating for a new draft law on adult education. However, the CSO network on monitoring the poverty reduction strategy suspended its activities this year due to a lack of funding.

Leading CSOs increasingly monitor public services and promote accountable and transparent governance at the national and local levels. For instance, ASTI monitors health services, and Rusldi Dehot has started monitoring land resource management. CSOs also increased their work on elections, transparency, and good governance issues this year. CSOs provided training and consultations to community members to increase voter turnout, campaigned for local council elections, advocated for increased access to information, monitored service delivery, participated in budget development, and monitored local budget implementation. In addition, CSOs organized local budget hearings, and parent-teacher associations were involved in monitoring education budgets. In August 2012, the Association of Independent Media (NANSMIT) and Media Alliance, in partnership with Reporters without Borders, advocated against the clampdown of online media.

Some leading CSOs, like Society and Law and the Association of Small and Medium Businesses in Tajikistan, actively lobbied for amendments to the Tax Code to relieve the tax burden on CSOs.

## SERVICE PROVISION: 4.4



CSOs continue to provide diverse services. Most CSOs provide basic social services, such as informal education, health care, and social protection of vulnerable groups, or human and legal rights advocacy. Some organizations provide services in other areas, like energy, water, and economic development. Most goods and services are provided free of charge and reflect the needs and priorities of CSOs' constituents and communities.

Although some CSOs sell their services, fees are usually below market rates because communities expect CSO services to be free. Many CSOs have insufficient marketing skills to promote their products and services.

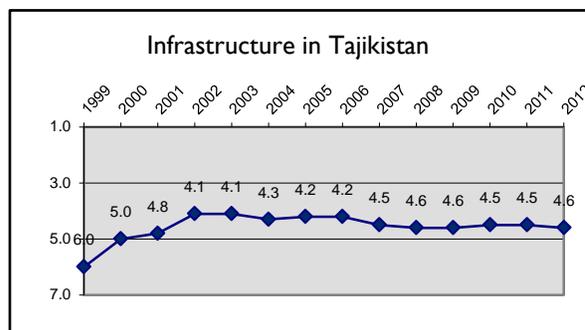
National and local governments recognize the benefit of CSOs providing basic social services, although CSOs sometimes suspect that governments only value CSOs for their ability to attract more donor funding for services. Three national agencies provide CSOs with social orders and grants to serve youth, women, and the elderly. Many CSO social services are provided in cooperation with local governments, which offer in-kind support, like free building space. Government bodies tend to claim CSO successes as their own, even when they are funded by international donors.

## INFRASTRUCTURE: 4.6

Seven civil society support centers (CSSCs) and other intermediary support organizations (ISOs) offer limited services to CSOs, including information, new technology, and basic training in strategic planning, volunteer development, and fundraising. For the last six years, the CSSCs have not received any institutional capacity

building support. Instead, donors have provided targeted support to build the capacity of CSOs in specific topics, like HIV/AIDS and migration issues.

Most trainers are graduates of the Counterpart training-of-trainers program on NGO basics, which took place in the late 1990s and early 2000s. They can adequately train new and mid-level organizations, but are unable to provide advanced training. In small towns, the strongest local CSOs often take on the role of resource centers. Donor organizations and others have stopped funding or including capacity building and institutional development components in their grant programs, weakening the sector's ability to advance its capacity, especially as new CSOs develop.



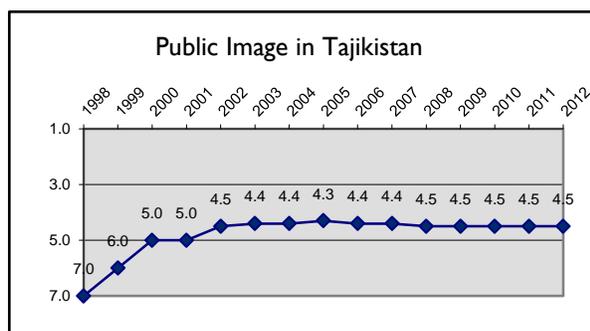
The number of local grantmaking organizations decreased in 2012, due to a decrease in funding. According to an assessment by the Eurasia Foundation Central Asia, only four local community foundations and ISOs re-granted international funds to CSOs in 2012, down from twenty in 2011. No organization grants locally generated funds.

Many leading CSOs, including the CSSCs, joined the TNNGOA to create a National CSO Platform for CSO Social Partnership. The TNNGOA continues to serve as a nationwide platform for CSOs to share best practices and promote their interests at the national level. In 2012, TNNGOA, which now has approximately 200 members, continued to conduct civil society forums throughout the country to increase awareness of CSO needs and capacities. It also launched a series of roundtables to promote CSO involvement in monitoring of government projects and services. TNNGOA's lobbying efforts focus on promoting civil society development, government support to the CSO sector, and social partnerships.

CSOs create coalitions and issue-based alliances to better represent their interests, as well as those of their constituents. CSOs working on gender, ecology, human rights, youth, HIV/AIDS, microfinance, business development, and banking issues are particularly successful. However, new coalitions are generally unsustainable, only operating while supported by donors. CSO networks and coalitions need technical assistance and training in order to better represent and lobby for the interests of their members.

CSO cooperation with businesses is rare, but growing slowly. Intersectoral partnerships with the public sector are moderate. In 2012, the CSO coalition Transparency for Development worked with the Ministry of Finance and private mining businesses to prepare documentation for Tajikistan to be included in the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI).

## PUBLIC IMAGE: 4.5



CSO issues are most likely to garner media coverage when they involve political scandal or speculation. National print media often publish sensational CSO-related stories. For instance, the case against Amparo was widely covered by independent media. Only liberal newspapers like AsiaPlus and Vecherny Dushanbe cover issues from various angles. Local and rural CSOs generally lack media access and coverage due to financial restrictions, as media does not distinguish between public service and corporate advertising. Many online media outlets, like AsiaPlus, Avesto, and

Radio Ozodi, quote CSO leaders and rely on their expertise. The number of independent radio stations

increased in 2012, particularly in the north of the country. The stations compete for interesting news; therefore, they provide CSOs with opportunities to present their activities at discounted rates.

Rural communities still have only vague ideas of CSOs' role in society. In urban areas, CSOs are perceived as grant-dependent and donor-driven organizations because they do not operate transparently. Although CSOs follow the legal requirement to submit formal annual reports to the MOJ, few leading CSOs make them publicly available on [www.tajikngo.tj](http://www.tajikngo.tj), a CSO portal administered by the Information and Communications Technology (ICT) Center. In 2012, 234 non-profit organizations published annual reports or information about their achievements on the Tajik CSO portal.

The government sometimes views CSOs and their specialists as sources of expertise and invites them to participate in working groups. Other times, CSOs are only invited to participate in governmental working groups to meet donor requirements. Some government officials refer to the Tajik CSO portal for information regarding CSO expertise and achievements. In general, businesses do not understand the benefits of cooperating with CSOs.

Most CSOs lack quality public relations materials to attract media to their events and promote their public image. The online presence of CSOs, including on Facebook and in blogs, is increasing. However, this has limited impact on public image as only a fraction of the population has Internet access.

A few leading CSOs and some networks and coalitions have developed codes of ethics, but a sector-wide code of ethics does not yet exist.