

LIBYA CSOs
Mapping Report
January 2020

MOOMKENORG
FOR AWARENESS & MEDIA

LIBYA CIVIL SOCIETY MAPPING REPORT

JANUARY 2020

Moomken Organization for Awareness & Media

TABLE OF CONTENT

Executive Summary 04
- Purpose 04
- Methodology 04
- Summary of Key Findings 05

Situational Analysis 06
- Constraints in the East 07
- Infrastructure 08

Profile of CSOs 09
- Year of Establishment 09
- Online Capacity 09
- Activity 11
- Funding Sources 12
- Activity Focus Areas and Audiences 12

Capacity Assessment 14

Analysis 16
- Capacity Constraints 16
- Regional Trends 17

Recommendations 17

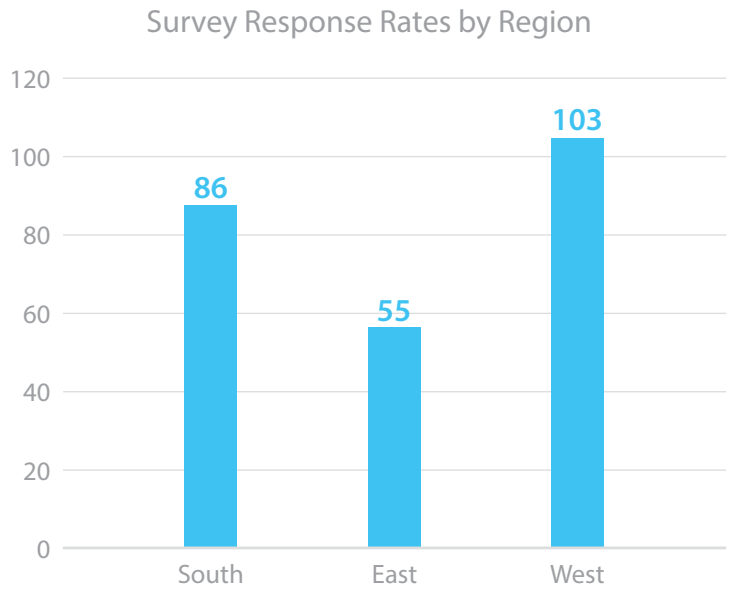
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

PURPOSE

Moomken Organization for Awareness and Media's project "Strengthening Civic Engagement in Libya" seeks to train and equip local Libyan civil society to carry out human rights and democracy-oriented activities throughout the country. Essential to the success of this project is first understanding the current state of civil society in Libya and identifying areas of strength and weakness that it faces in each region. As a result, Moomken surveyed a number of civil society organizations (CSOs) throughout the country in order to gauge their internal organizational, knowledge and skills gaps as well as external obstacles. This information will serve to help inform the international community of the current state of Libyan civil society and inform training curriculum and agendas under this project.

METHODOLOGY

The Moomken team utilized two surveys to collect quantitative data on current operations and skillsets of Libyan CSOs. Of the 2,062 CSOs officially registered with the Commission of Civil Society, Moomken initially contacted 759 by phone. During these calls, Moomken administered its first survey to collect basic information including level of activity, date of their founding, geographic spread and areas of expertise. Through this first survey, Moomken successfully collected data from 244 CSOs. As seen in the Table 1, 86 (35%) are from the South, 55 (23%) are from the East and 103 (42%) from the West.



Following this initial survey, 159 CSOs completed surveys through SMS messaging and email to evaluate CSO capacity and knowledge around certain thematic areas such as digital security, advocacy and project management.

In order to bolster this report and add contextual analysis, Moomken conducted desk research of government sources and existing reports on Libyan civil society.

RESEARCH LIMITATIONS

The Moomken team encountered some difficulty in contacting CSOs and having them successfully complete the surveys distributed via SMS/email. In some cases, Moomken had to follow up with CSOs five or more times in order to receive complete data on time. Despite this, Moomken successfully collected data to evaluate the capacity and knowledge set of 159 CSOs.

The great number of CSOs officially registered in Libya poses one limitation to the breadth of this report's mapping. While basic data on CSOs is publicly available, no data on the activity or specific knowledge areas exists. In total Moomken's survey reached 244 CSOs that comprise of some of the most active as well as inactive organizations in the country, but only a small percentage of the total number of CSOs that exist.

Despite these limitations, the CSOs surveyed represent a wide variety of organizations (big and small, national and local, experienced and inexperienced, etc). The demographic profile of respondents is also representative of different age groups, gender, geographical locations and focus and ethnicities.

SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

1. Most CSOs have never received external funding.
2. Most CSOs focus on awareness raising activities targeting the general public.
3. Many lack a strategic direction to reach their objectives, largely due to a limited knowledge of strategic planning.
4. Many CSOs lack a degree of specificity in their focus.
5. CSOs generally do not have a wide enough variety of tools, skills and resources to conduct more robust and varied types of activities outside of awareness raising.

SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS

CSOs are generally considered a new phenomenon in Libya. After dissolving or suspending most organizations that had been active during the monarchy, the authoritarian regime of Muammar Gaddafi (1969-2011) violently suppressed nearly all independent civic activities in the country. A very small number of organizations were allowed to operate but only in areas unrelated to political or legal work, and only under the close surveillance of the security services. The government also established politically affiliated youth associations and unions whose goal was to spread the ideology of the regime. Law 19/2001 on the organization and registration of CSOs, passed in 2001, cemented the state's control over the formation and activities of different types of associations. Apart from the Libyan Public Scouts, Girl Guide Movement, and the Libyan Red Crescent, no large nationally active or influential organizations operated during the Gaddafi era.

After the Libyan revolution and Gaddafi's fall in 2011, by contrast, a large portion of the public turned to civil society to support the country's transition. Article 15 of the 2011 Constitutional Declaration, which outlined Libya's transition to a constitutional democracy, guaranteed Libyans' freedom to form CSOs and effectively annulled the restrictive provisions of Law 19/2001 regarding CSOs' formation and registration. The Civil Society Commission (CSC) was established in Benghazi in 2011, and by 2014 more than 4,000 CSOs had been formed and registered with the CSC. Most organizations sought to address the pressing needs of the time, especially humanitarian relief, but a few CSOs focused on the country's political development, including aspects of democratization, transitional justice, and human rights. Many international agencies and organizations, ranging from multilateral groups such as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the European Union (EU) to bilateral missions from the United States, United Kingdom, and elsewhere, began offering support to Libyan civil society in the form of capacity-building programs, political and cultural outreach, and grants programs. This support helped Libya's CSO sector to develop and strengthen in the post-revolution period.

In 2014, political power in Libya split between two rival parliaments and their associated governments—the General National Congress (GNC) based in Tripoli, and the House of Representatives and its associated government based in Tobruk and al-Bayda, respectively. With the outbreak of violent clashes that accompanied this division, many international organizations departed, which had an impact on funding for local CSOs. Many organizations were unable to survive the sharp decline in international funding.

International organizations gradually returned to Libya after the signing of the Libyan Political Agreement in December 2015 and the formation of the Government of National Accord (GNA) in 2016. Local CSOs also began to recover.

State capacity in Libya continued to be weak in 2018, complicating CSOs' efforts to respond to the country's many needs. Authorities in Tobruk and al-Bayda maintained their respective claims to Libya's legitimate government1, but the divided and dysfunctional institutions were unable to control crime and violence. Powerful militias and other armed groups including the Islamic State clashed with one another and seized control of certain areas.

The country's economy, largely reliant on oil, continued to suffer as a result of the poor security situation and attacks on oil facilities. Nearly one-third of Libyans were living below the poverty line, and approximately 170,000 were internally displaced at the end of 2018 according to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). Meager resources and weak infrastructure were stressed further by the estimated 670,000 migrants living in Libya, many blocked from leaving and attempting to reach Europe through the Mediterranean.

In that context, CSOs' overall sustainability in Libya in 2018 was impeded. The legal environment for CSOs was unstable and complex, given the lack of a comprehensive law governing the sector. CSOs' organizational capacity was low, as most organizations lacked experience. CSOs' financial viability was the weakest dimension of sustainability because of inconsistent and narrowly focused funding flows. The sector's strongest dimension was advocacy, with CSOs achieving several notable successes during the year. CSOs' services were related mostly to humanitarian assistance and suffered from a lack of diversification. The sectoral infrastructure offered some support to organizations but was undermined by the lack of local training opportunities. Finally, CSOs' public image was mixed, with generous media coverage offset by pervasively negative public opinion. According to both the Tripoli and Benghazi-based CSOs, there were approximately 3,000 established CSOs in Libya in late 2018. There are no official figures as to how many of these organizations are operational, nor is there information about informal CSOs that have not registered with the CSC. As of 2016, according to the CSCs, roughly two-fifths of registered CSOs were based in Tripoli, one-fifth in Benghazi, and the rest are spread elsewhere in the country. Likewise, as of 2016, 14 percent of CSOs were focused on charitable work, 12 percent on social services, 10 percent on art and culture, and another 10 percent on law and human rights.

CONSTRAINTS IN THE EAST

After 2011, the sudden growth of civil society spurred the establishment of the Civil Society Commission in Benghazi in order to increase coordination and organization of the plethora of new organizations. Eventually, a branch was opened in Tripoli, and the operation of CSOs was largely smooth and allowed to flourish with minimal government interference.

This changed dramatically after the rise of Khalifa Haftar in the East. Civic activism entered a new period of increased government encroachment and oversight. A new office within the internal security department was created, requiring all CSOs to get prior approval before

conducting any event or project. Without the required permissions, internal security would visit CSO activities, interrogate staff and participants and sometimes even arrest event organizers. For a considerable length of time, operating as a CSO in the East could be risky and extremely difficult.

Despite the relaxation of some of these regulations which slightly opened the operating space for CSOs, civic activists in the East continue to be targeted for their political views or affiliations. Some executive staff of CSOs have been arrested and forbidden from working in the East because of reasons as small as Facebook likes and comments on unfavorable posts. Freedom of speech continues to be restricted, causing CSOs to avoid working on projects of any political nature. This has been seen by Moomken staff, who noted some hesitation on the part of Eastern CSOs to participate in trainings in Tripoli, as they are afraid of being targeted by security upon their return home.

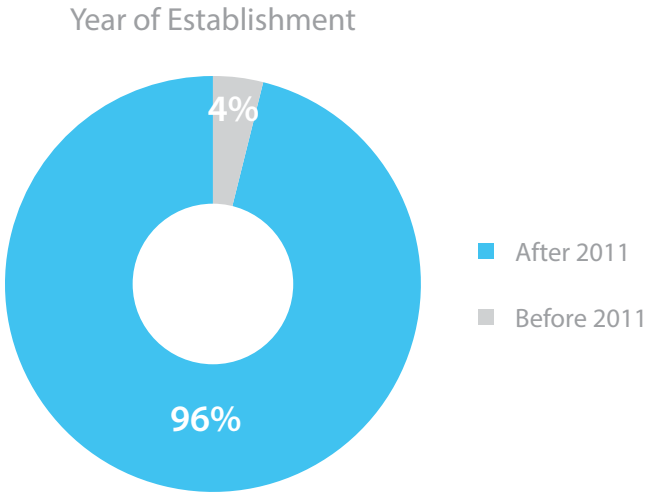
INFRASTRUCTURE

Power cuts continue to be an issue throughout Libya, and often for events CSOs must consider extra costs for generators and fuel, which sometimes can cause difficulty when operating on small amounts of funds. Additionally, Internet access in many parts of the country, especially more rural areas, can be spotty. This is amplified in much of the East outside of Benghazi, where even cellphone coverage in some places is nonexistent, causing difficulties in communicating with CSOs in these areas.

PROFILE OF CSOs

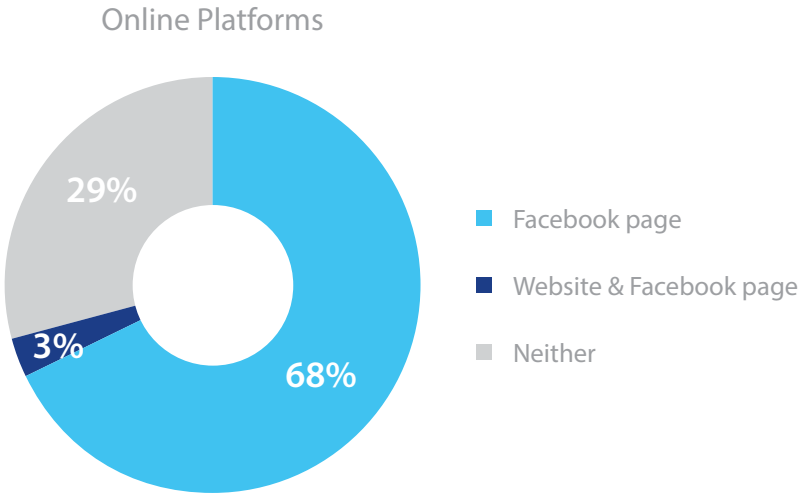
YEAR OF ESTABLISHMENT

In keeping with Moomken's desk research on the history of civil society in Libya, the vast majority of CSOs survey were founded after the revolution of 2011 when Libya witnessed a surge of civic activism. This was largely due to the sudden opening of the civic space after the fall of Ghaddafi's authoritarian regime and the need of CSOs to fill in gaps where government was not present or could not adequately fulfill its role. From this survey, 235 CSOs (96%) reported that they began operations after 2011, and only 9 CSOs (4%) were founded before 2011.

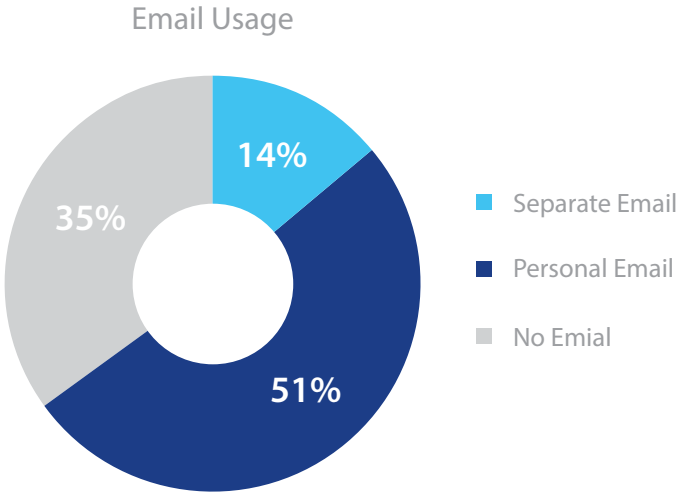


ONLINE CAPACITY

Moomken assessed each CSO's capacity to maintain an online presence and attempted to determine the most common ways in which CSOs in Libya do so. From survey responses, Moomken found that the majority of CSOs have a dedicated Facebook page (167 CSOs, or 68%), and only 7, or 3% have both an independent website as well as a Facebook page. Surprisingly, 70, or 29% have no online presence whatsoever. Respondents identified several reasons for this, ranging from the lack of a qualified team to maintain effective online platforms, hacking of previously existing online platforms due to lack of understanding of cyber security or deactivation due to team members becoming busy with day-to-day work.



Moomken further asked each CSO about their use of email to communicate with each other, funders and beneficiaries. The majority of CSOs (124, or 51%) use individual personal emails, largely due to the lack of having an online domain dedicated to the organization. Unsurprisingly when compared to data from general online presence, only 33, or 14% have email addresses dedicated to the organization. Further, 84, or 35% have no email at all in keeping with the 29% in Table 5 that have no online presence.

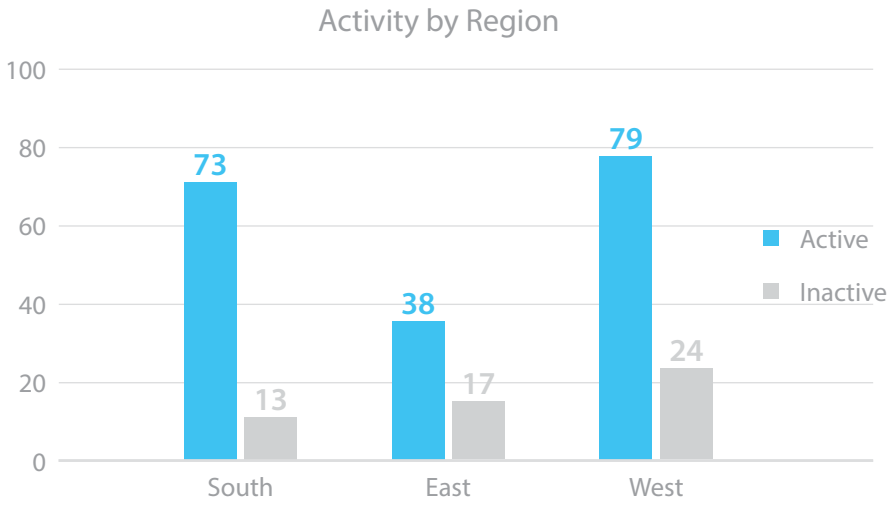


OFFICE/WORKSPACE

165 organizations out of the 244 (68%) surveyed reported having a separate, dedicated office out of which they conduct their operations. Of the 79 (32%) that reported not having a workspace, the vast majority are CSOs based in big cities, mainly from Trippoli, Sabha, Benghazi and Alzawiyah. This was largely due to prohibitive rent costs in these cities, which smaller CSOs with precarious funding situations cannot afford. CSOs in smaller and more remote cities who did not have an office conducted their business out of personal homes, schools and other publicly available spaces.

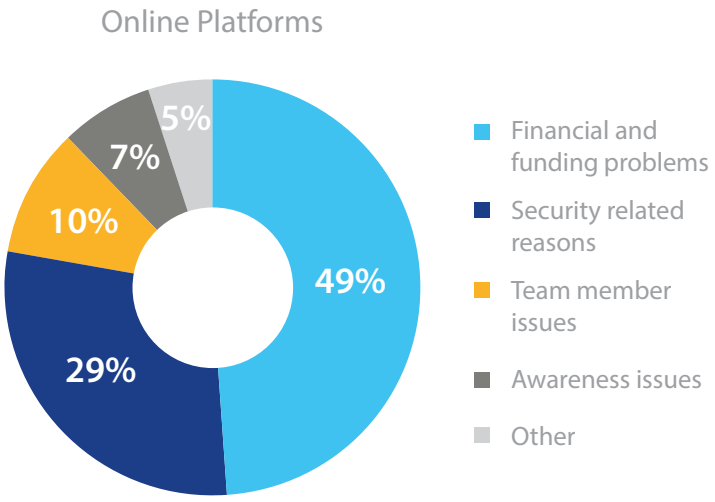
ACTIVITY

Despite being officially registered with the Commission of Civil Society, many CSOs in Libya are currently inactive and are not currently conducting activities due to a myriad of factors. When asked about their level of activity, 190 CSOs (77%) reported that they are still active, while 54 (23%) reported that they are no longer active. As seen in Table 2, some CSOs in all regions of Libya have ceased their operations, with organizations in the East representing the highest proportion of inactive organizations (31% compared to 23% in the West and 15% in the South).



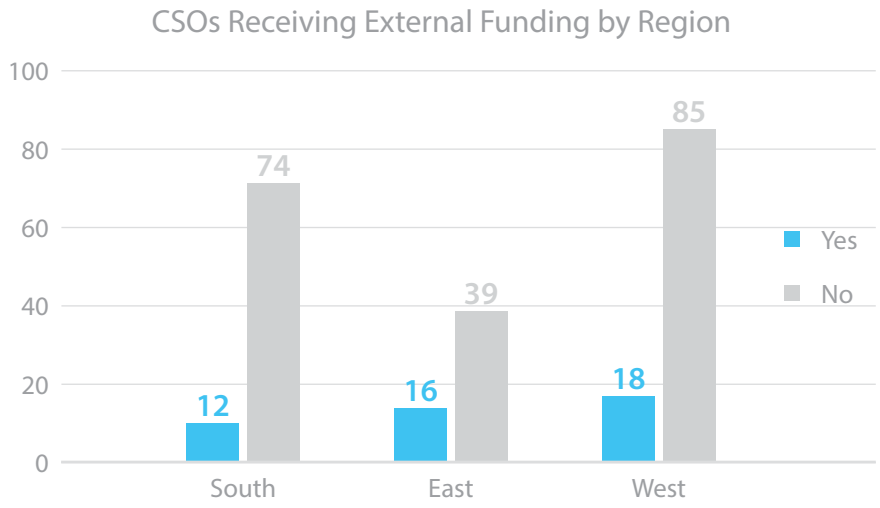
When asked about the main causes of inactivity, CSOs cited a number of internal and external barriers to continuing their work. Most common were financial and funding issues (24 CSOs or 49%) and security concerns (18 or 29%). Security concerns were mostly concentrated in the South and West, while most inactive CSOs in the East reported the lack of financial opportunities as being the biggest factor (11 of 17 inactive Eastern CSOs). Other factors include:

- No dedicated staff: **6 CSOs**
- Lack of workspace or office: **6 CSOs**
- Lack of public awareness or negative public perception of CSOs: **4 CSOs**



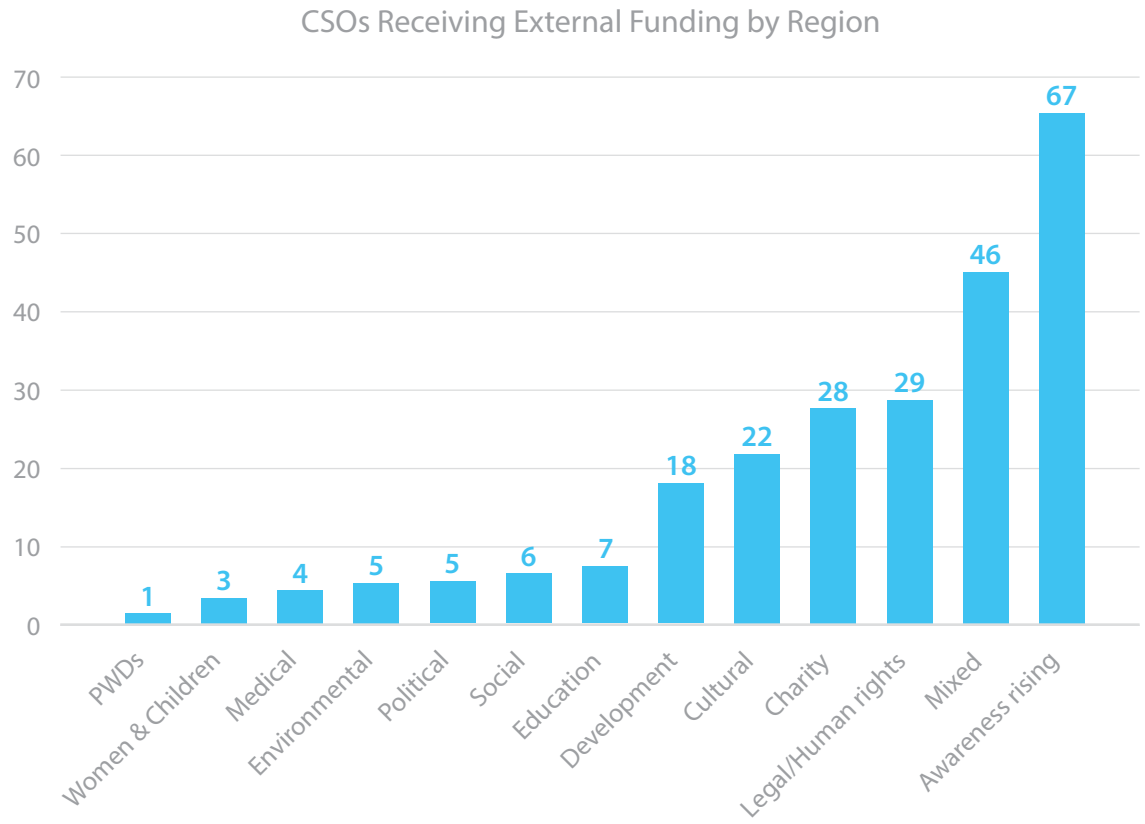
FUNDING SOURCES

The vast majority of surveyed CSOs reported that they have never received external funding to conduct activities. 197, or 81% of CSOs, stated that rather than receiving funding from outside sources, they self-financed internally from members of the organization. Only 47, or 19% of CSOs, stated that they had received external funding in the past. Proportionally, CSOs in the East represented the highest rate of external funding at 29%, followed by 17% of CSOs in the West and 14% in the South. Funding largely has taken the form of private donations (8% of CSOs), mainly from businessmen and other influential community members. Only 6% of surveyed CSOs received funding from other local sources, and a smaller 4% received funding from international NGOs.

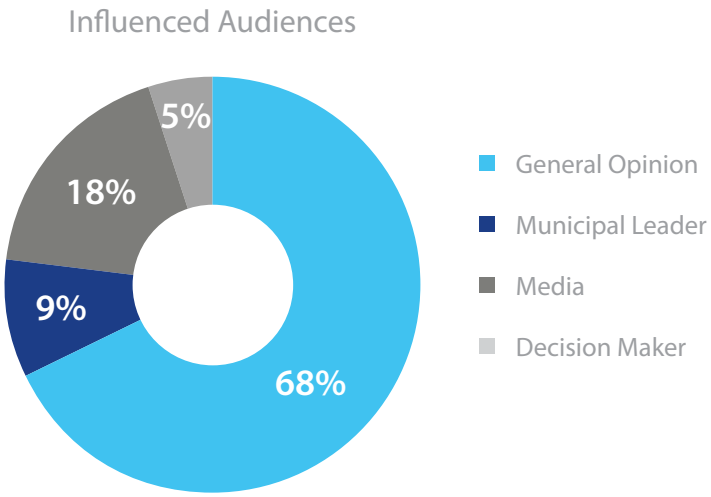


ACTIVITY FOCUS AREAS AND AUDIENCES

The most common type of activity conducted by Libyan CSOs is awareness raising, accounting for 27% of CSOs' primary focus area, followed by mixed focuses (including awareness raising, charity work and development) at 19 percent. Examples in this category include multi-faceted activities targeting a specific topic such as relief work for IDPs as well as public awareness campaigns addressing the issues that IDPs face and how the public can offer support. The focus on awareness raising, normally considered a tool to reach a specific objective and not a thematic focus itself, highlights several issues that a young Libyan civil society faces, including the lack of specificity and more targeted focus (discussed further in the "Analysis" section below). Following these issue areas most commonly focused on are legal/human rights issues (12%), charity (11%) and cultural activities (9%).



In line with a heavy concentration on awareness raising, CSOs' targeted audiences tend to be the general public and media. Only a small percentage of CSOs reporting having an influence on local leaders and decision makers, signaling a lack of knowledge on how to best engage important stakeholders who have the ability to take concrete action or affect a more permanent change on issues that CSOs are working to address.

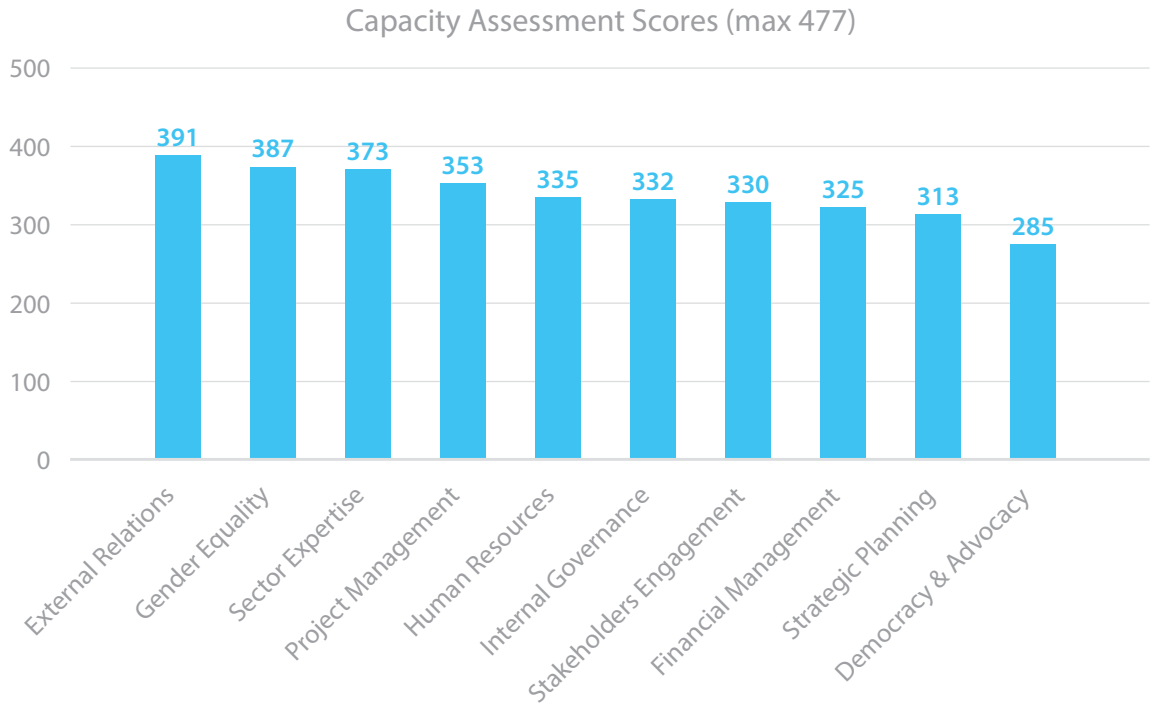


CAPACITY ASSESSMENT

To evaluate the capacity of Libyan CSOs on different technical and thematic areas, Moomken collected survey data from 159 CSOs in which they rated themselves on a scale of one to three (one being the worst and three being the best) for each category. The categories included:

- External relations
- Sector expertise
- Project management
- Human resources
- Internal governance
- Financial management
- Strategic planning
- Gender equality
- Stakeholder engagement and networking
- Democracy and advocacy

The table below breaks down the overall scores for the total 159 CSOs out of a maximum score of 477 (each CSO scoring three points in one category):



Overall, the 159 surveyed CSOs scored highest on external relations, which includes communication with the community, beneficiaries and other NGOs/CSOs on the organizations' activities. This finding correlates with observations made regarding CSOs' online capacity, which showed that 68% had an active online presence through Facebook, one of the most popular and widely used social media platforms by citizens in Libya. This is further bolstered by the finding that the most common focus area of CSOs is awareness raising and CSOs reporting that they had the heaviest influence on the general public and media, which often have social media presences as well. The strong external relations capacity indicates that Libyan CSOs are adept at maintaining communication with citizens, whether it be at the local or national level, through online and various other platforms that reach a wide audience.

While Libyan CSOs display a high aptitude for engaging with the public at large, Moomken's survey found that this is not the case with engaging and networking with stakeholders, evidenced by a difference of 61 points between the two categories. When combined with strategic planning and democracy and advocacy, the two lowest scoring categories, one overarching weakness becomes apparent. As previously mentioned, the most common focus area for Libyan CSOs is awareness raising, largely taking the form of awareness campaigns. These types of activities in many cases do not require an advanced technical capacity or specialized staff and often mainly target the general public. The prevalence of awareness raising activities and low strategic planning score demonstrate that many CSOs lack a specific strategic direction as well as more varied tools to reach their objectives. The low scores on stakeholder engagement and democracy and advocacy strategies further support this finding, as both categories require a specific, long-term strategy and a more developed and varied skillset to affect lasting change.

Middle-scoring categories are largely predictable, with the vast majority being technical capacities such as project management, human resources and financial management. This is reflective of the relatively nascent nature of Libyan civil society as well as the lack of opportunity to manage significant amounts of funds and more elaborate activities, as reflected by the low percentage of CSOs that receive external funding. These areas can be improved both by technical trainings and more experience handling external funding, which would require CSOs to develop more sophisticated internal operations.

ANALYSIS

Moomken's data collection gives a clear overall picture of the nature of Libyan CSOs. Most are young, small organizations focused primarily on awareness raising efforts that exert the most significant influence on the general public. In addition, most lack experience handling significant funding sources and managing more robust, elaborate projects that require a wide variety of tools and skillsets. Despite these constraints, CSOs in Libya have proven to be resilient and resourceful, conducting activities that do not require large amounts of money through more informal means, such as operating out of public spaces and homes and utilizing social media platforms to increase their impact in a cost effective manner. The heavy focus on social issues highlights the recognition among civic activists for the need of widespread social change during a very contentious and divided period in Libya's history. The focus on targeting the general public and media shows that many CSOs are dedicated to creating a strong social fabric throughout the country, which is essential to lasting peace and development.

CAPACITY CONSTRAINTS

As previously mentioned, CSO activities are focused mainly on awareness raising or a mixture of awareness, charity and other social issues. Activities in these categories include facilitating discussion to support reconciliation efforts and awareness campaigns against the spread of weapons throughout the country. This reflects three major constraints:

- **Lack of funding:** Awareness raising, often taking the form of workshops, dialogue sessions and public awareness campaigns can often be conducted at a lower cost and done with minimal specialized staff and volunteers. While these activities are valuable, they limit the impact that CSOs can make in decision making circles. Having influence at this level requires much longer, strategic and targeted efforts at a higher professional level, which is hard for many CSOs to maintain due to limited funds as they are restricted not only in the activities they can do, but they type of skilled staff they can retain in order to help them reach their objectives.

- **Limited tools and skillset:** Many CSOs rely on awareness raising activities due to a limited set of tools and skills, resulting both from the youth of Libyan civil society as well as limited funding opportunities. In order to maximize their impact both with the public and decision makers, including tribal and municipal leaders, CSOs must have a wider array of tools and knowledge at their disposal.

- **Lack of strategic direction:** Many CSOs, while working on a specific topic, often lack a clear strategic direction that defines the ways in which they will reach their objective (evidenced by low strategic planning scores in Moomken's capacity assessment).

REGIONAL TRENDS

Several trends can be noted from data collected through Moomken's surveys. Firstly, the biggest barrier to remaining active in the East was, perhaps surprisingly, a lack of funding and not political constraints as one might suspect, despite the fact that the Eastern administration has a history of restricting civic activism. Secondly, security concerns were most reported by CSOs operating in the West and South, highlighting the heavy impact the poor security situation has on CSO activity throughout many parts of Libya. With many CSOs operating out of Tripoli, the current conflict in the area has had an obvious impact on some organizations.

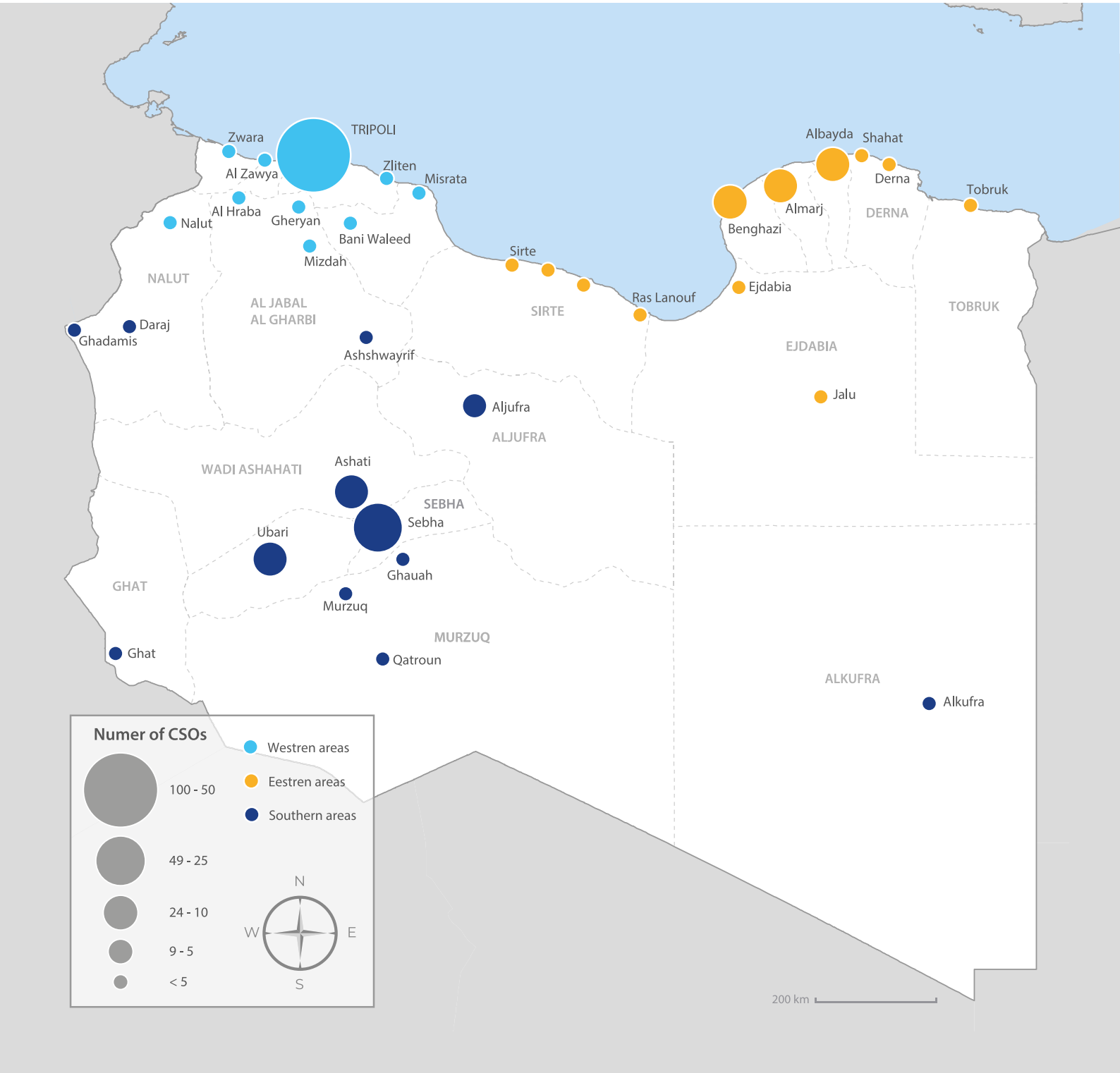
RECOMMENDATIONS

- Training activities to build CSO capacity should include an overall technical capacity curriculum and contain a heavy focus on developing a strategic direction and a more varied skillset to conduct a wider variety of activities.

- When possible, CSOs should attempt to target decision makers and leaders in addition to the general public.

- International funders should develop opportunities for smaller CSOs so that they may gain real world experience dealing with larger amounts of funds, increasing their internal capacity due to higher accountability standards being enforced.

THE CSOs DISTRIBUTION IN LIBYA



This Map is for illustration purposes only. Name & boundaries on this map do not imply endorsement or acceptance by Moomken.