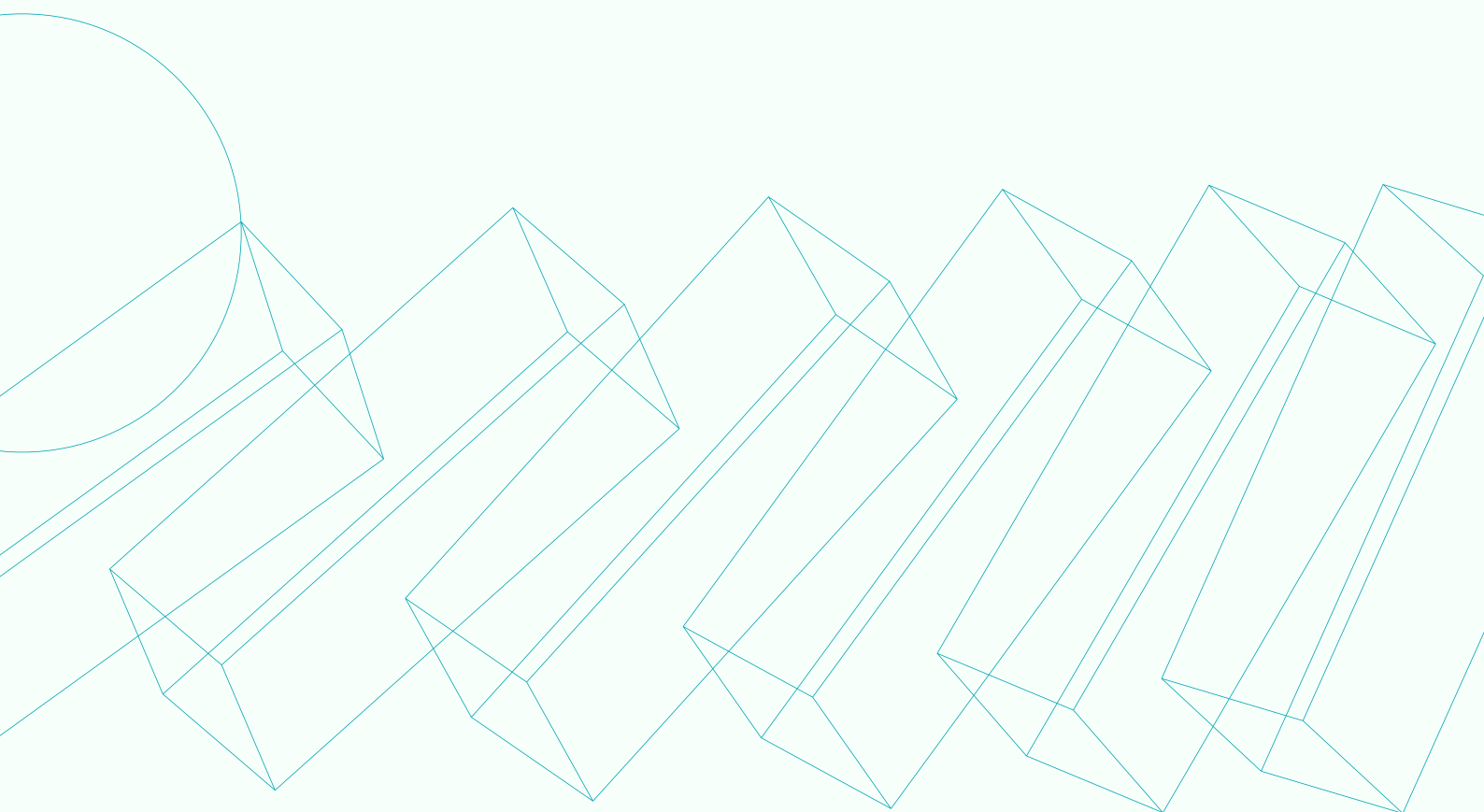




Ministry of Foreign Affairs

NOVEMBER 2025

THE SUSTAINABILITY OF CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS IN LEBANON: ADVANCING AID LOCALISATION FOR SUSTAINABLE IMPACT





ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Triangle extends its sincere thanks to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands for commissioning and funding this research under the Power of Learning programme. We acknowledge MannionDaniels as the programme's coordinating and lead body and thank them for guiding this research. We also appreciate the support of the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in Lebanon. We are grateful for their trust and constructive engagement throughout the project cycle.

We also thank our civil society partners who participated in the participatory learning and validation processes—SAMA Development, Donia for Sustainable Development, I'mpossible, and Creadel-Liban—for helping to frame the problem, sharing contextual knowledge, co-developing research tools, and supporting field activities. We are equally grateful to the many experts and key informants who generously offered their time and insights during interviews, which strengthened our analysis and recommendations. Their grounded perspectives ensured our findings remained anchored in the realities of service delivery, grassroots organising, and rights-based advocacy across Lebanon.

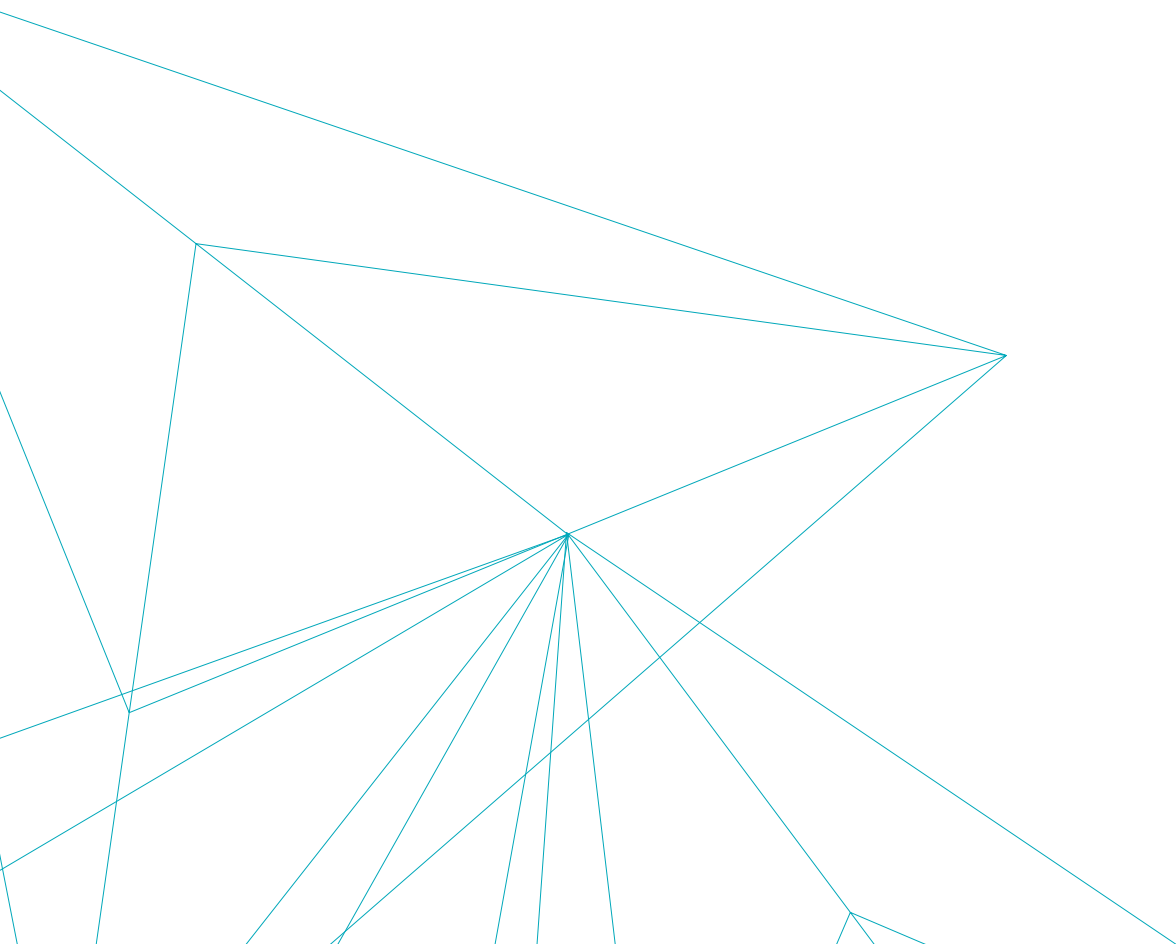
This study was delivered by the Triangle team:

- Team Lead: **Nizar Ghanem**
- Research Manager: **Hisham Jaber**
- Linking & Learning Advisor and Knowledge Manager: **Chaza Akiki**
- Research Analyst: **Nancy Ehrenberg-Peters**
- Research Analyst: **Teresa Ballesteros**



CONTENTS

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	5
2. INTRODUCTION	11
3. DEFINITION AND SCOPE	13
4. PARTICIPATORY APPROACH TO LEARNING AND ACTION	14
5. RESEARCH DESIGN, METHODOLOGY AND LIMITATIONS	17
6. LITERATURE REVIEW: THE LEBANESE CIVIL SOCIETY ECOSYSTEM	21
7. CHALLENGES AND DYNAMICS IN THE LEBANESE CSO LANDSCAPE	25
8. LOCAL AND ALTERNATIVE FUNDING STRUCTURES	35
9. RECOMMENDATIONS	41





LIST OF ACRONYMS

	Acronym	Full form
C	CSO	Civil Society Organisation
	CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
E	EGBV	Economic Gender-Based Violence
	EKN	Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands (Lebanon)
I	INGO	International Non-Governmental Organisation
K	KII	Key Informant Interview
L	LRP	Lebanon Response Plan
	LHIF	Lebanon Humanitarian INGO Forum
	LHDF	Lebanon Humanitarian & Development NGOs Forum
	LCRP	Lebanon Comprehensive Response Plan
	LGBTQI+	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer/Questioning, Intersex and others
M	M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
	MoJ	Ministry of Justice (Lebanon)
	MoIM	Ministry of Interior and Municipalities (Lebanon)
	MoSA	Ministry of Social Affairs (Lebanon)
	MoF	Ministry of Finance (Lebanon)
N	NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
	NSSF	National Social Security Fund
P	PLA	Participatory Learning and Action
U	UN	United Nations
#	3RF	Reform, Recovery and Reconstruction Framework (Lebanon)



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background and purpose

This report presents the findings of a participatory research project on the sustainability of Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) in Lebanon and on how aid localisation can enable more durable, locally driven impact. The project was conducted under the Power of Learning programme launched by Mannion Daniels in early 2023 and funded by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Triangle led the conceptualisation, design, and implementation of the research together with participating Lebanese CSOs and a Knowledge Manager. The central research question was: What are the main obstacles to CSOs' sustainability through localisation in Lebanon, particularly in terms of funding and donor relationships, and how can these obstacles be addressed?

The study responds to gaps identified in the literature review and articulated by Lebanese CSOs. Organisations are operating at the frontline of crisis response, social protection, rights-based advocacy, and community mobilisation, but their autonomy is constrained by donor-defined agendas, short and highly conditioned funding cycles, limited local financing options, and a fragmented civic space that makes collective action difficult. The report therefore documents both the structural constraints and the Lebanon-specific solutions raised during workshops and key informant interviews.

Methodology and participatory approach

The research was designed and implemented using a Participatory Learning and Action approach so that local organisations were active co-producers of knowledge instead of passive respondents. Seven Lebanese CSOs from different regions and sectors (education, women's empowerment, human rights, livelihoods) participated throughout the process. The work unfolded in four phases.

Phase 1 (June 2023 – June 2024) consisted of a joint review of Triangle's literature review with CSOs; the co-development of research tools, frameworks, and interview guides; the agreement on working definitions for "CSO sustainability" and "aid localisation" in the Lebanese context; and the framing of the problem as "wicked" because it cuts across political, financial, regulatory, and organisational dimensions.

Phase 2 (June 2024 – mid-October 2024) focused on pilot testing the research tools by participating CSOs and expanding data collection by Triangle through KIIs. These interviews covered international donors and INGOs operating in Lebanon, Lebanese CSOs of different sizes, Lebanese researchers and experts on civil society, government officials, and local/private donor actors. This allowed the study to capture different perspectives on funding flows, power asymmetries, and localisation practices.

Phase 3 (October – December 2024) was dedicated to analysis and report writing. This phase was disrupted by the escalation of the Israel-Lebanon conflict from early September 2024 until the ceasefire of 27 November 2024. The escalation reduced the team's ability to stay in contact with some participating CSOs, delayed planned validation discussions, and limited the availability of key informants who shifted to emergency operations.



Phase 4 (March – April 2025) consisted of a participatory workshop for interpretation, contextualisation, and joint formulation of recommendations with a broader group of organisations, including Abaad – Resource Center for Gender Equality, SAMA for Development Organisation, Haltek, the Collective for Research and Training on Development – Action, USPEaK, Plan Lebanon, the Lebanese Center for Human Rights, and I’mpossible Organisation. These organisations, which are active in service delivery, grassroots mobilisation, and rights-based advocacy, reviewed and confirmed the relevance of the findings and helped prioritise the recommendations.

The study drew on three main data sources: (i) an extensive literature review on the evolution and current features of the Lebanese civil society ecosystem; (ii) 12 KIIs out of the 15 planned interviews, covering international donors/INGOs, Lebanese CSOs, Lebanese researchers/experts, a public agency, and local/private donor firms; and (iii) feedback from participating CSOs across the four phases. One planned component, specifically two in-depth case studies of Lebanese CSOs that had diversified revenue or achieved a higher degree of financial sustainability and localisation, could not be implemented because of the 2024 conflict and the resulting operational disruptions. This is clearly recorded in the report as a research limitation.

Scope and definitions

Because the term “civil society” in Lebanon covers a wide range of actors (registered associations, charities, faith-based organisations, informal movements, political and activist groups, media or academic platforms) the study narrowed its primary focus, in agreement with participating CSOs, to registered, not-for-profit CSOs formally recognised by the Ministry of Justice and/or the Ministry of Interior and Municipalities, in addition to non-profit civil companies. This prioritisation allowed the research to concentrate on organisations that are legally constituted, accountable, and already operating within Lebanon’s regulatory framework.

A second tier of analysis looks at the broader ecosystem, including cooperatives, private sector initiatives (corporate social responsibility and corporate foundations), think tanks, media, academia, social enterprises, syndicates, political parties, and activists, to understand where partnerships could help create synergies, unlock local resources, or support long-term sustainability. The report notes that most active CSOs in Lebanon are registered as associations and that, by the end of 2021, no fewer than 8,500 associations were registered, including local offices or subsidiaries of INGOs. However, it also notes that official data is incomplete, sometimes contradictory, and does not always reflect actual activity levels or operational capacity, which complicates efforts to measure “sustainability” at sector level.

Results and findings

Donor dependency and power asymmetries

The research confirms that Lebanese CSOs operate within an aid architecture largely designed and led by international actors. In this arrangement, international donors and INGOs typically set strategic and geographic priorities, select thematic areas, establish reporting and visibility requirements, and define funding timeframes. Lebanese organisations are then engaged primarily as implementing partners. This dynamic became entrenched during the Syrian displacement response, when international agencies took on



coordination roles and, in practice, often channelled the largest share of funds through their own mechanisms. It reappeared during the 2024 escalation, when funding and attention shifted again to humanitarian relief, with limited space for Lebanese CSOs to negotiate locally defined development or governance agendas.

Donor funding to Lebanese CSOs remains short-term, project-based, and highly conditioned. It is tightly linked to donor thematic priorities and does not consistently cover operational or core costs such as salaries, rent, transport, or administrative systems. This means that CSOs adjust their activities and even their mandates to fit available funding, rather than the other way around. Interviewed organisations described a clear misalignment between donors' requests for rapid, visible, and quantifiable "results" and the six- to twelve-month grants that are most commonly available. The report also notes that donor emphasis on visibility metrics (numbers reached, media coverage, number of events) has the side-effect of incentivising CSOs to prioritise activities that are easy to report over longer, institutional, or community-driven processes that are essential for sustainability but harder to capture within one reporting cycle.

In certain areas, notably in the South and in locations considered politically sensitive, CSOs reported that international partners sometimes limited, adapted, or altogether withdrew support because of political or risk considerations. This further reduced the capacity of those CSOs to plan, retain staff, or pursue locally relevant activities, and it reinforced the perception that local actors remain vulnerable to external shifts in priorities.

Fragmented and competitive CSO ecosystem

The report finds that Lebanese CSOs are operating in a competitive and fragmented landscape that is, to a large extent, a by-product of current donor practices. Funding envelopes are limited, time-bound, and repeatedly accessed by the same set of better-resourced organisations, typically those with strong English-language capacity, dedicated administrative staff, and experience with international procurement. Smaller or newly registered CSOs, especially those based outside Beirut or working in peripheral or crisis-affected areas, reported that they find it difficult to secure sustainable funding and often have to position themselves as sub-grantees or implementers for larger national NGOs or INGOs.

This pattern weakens sectoral cohesion. Because funding windows are short (often six to twelve months) and relatively small, organisations focus on delivery within project timeframes and have little incentive to invest in joint planning, division of labour, or collective advocacy on localisation. Existing coordination mechanisms, such as the Lebanon Response Plan (LRP) architecture and the main humanitarian and development NGO forums, do offer technical platforms, but over time they have become bureaucratically demanding and template-heavy. Smaller CSOs, which do not have staff to dedicate to those processes, are, in effect, excluded from the most strategic discussions. The study notes that local organisations are frequently invited into coordination spaces only after priorities, budget envelopes, and indicators have already been defined by international actors. This contributes to the widely expressed view in the interviews that civil society in Lebanon lacks a unified direction, a shared message, and a single mechanism of action. The consequence is duplication of efforts, missed opportunities for complementary programming, and a weaker collective stance in negotiations with both the government and the donor community.



Capacity, funding, and M&E constraints

A consistent message across interviews is that Lebanese CSOs are unable to build and retain the internal capacities they need because the prevailing funding model does not allow it. Most organisations struggle to maintain full-time staff on stable contracts and therefore rely on consultants or short-term project-based hires. This results in weak institutional memory, discontinuity in programme implementation, and constant retraining needs. At the same time, donors have increased their requirements for monitoring, evaluation, and reporting, including baseline data, outcome-level indicators, and impact narratives, without always providing the additional financial and human resources needed to meet those requirements. For many CSOs, a considerable portion of staff time is diverted to compliance, contract management, audits, and reporting, which reduces the time and budget available for direct services or community engagement.

Project-based funding also rarely covers indirect or “back office” costs such as rent, communications, IT, HR, accounting, or legal support. This makes it difficult for organisations to invest in the internal systems that would, in turn, improve their eligibility for larger or longer-term funding. The report additionally notes that, alongside these external constraints, there is an internal one: some local organisations still operate in a short-term, project-to-project mindset and do not yet have a clear vision of how to achieve partial independence from international donors. This is why, in recent years, local consultancy agencies have started to support CSOs with fundraising strategies, organisational restructuring, diversification of revenue sources, and the design of income-generating or hybrid models.

Bureaucratic and political gatekeeping

The report finds that Lebanon’s regulatory, administrative, and political environment acts as a gatekeeper to CSO sustainability. Approvals for certain activities can be slowed or made more complicated when the organisation is working on politically or socially sensitive themes, for example, gender equality, LGBTQI+ rights, or rights-based advocacy in specific regions. Administrative requirements from ministries and other public bodies are time-consuming and absorb resources that would otherwise be invested in programming or outreach. Smaller CSOs are disproportionately affected because they have limited staff to dedicate to these tasks.

Since the 2019 financial and political crisis, the Ministry of Interior and other relevant state entities have tightened their control over associations at the same time as their own budgets have contracted. The governmental agency overseeing CSOs reported having very limited capacity to support the sector financially or procedurally. This leaves organisations with no realistic option for national-level core funding or for simplified registration and reporting channels. As a result, CSOs return to international donors to cover basic operational costs, which reproduces the same cycle of dependency that the research is seeking to unpack.

Potential of local and alternative funding structures

Despite the structural constraints described above, the report identifies several Lebanese-rooted mechanisms that CSOs themselves presented as realistic and culturally acceptable avenues for improving sustainability and furthering localisation.



First, mutual solidarity funds, governed under Legislative Decree No. 35 (1977) and Decree No. 515 (1977), are already recognised in Lebanese law and allow organisations to pool contributions to provide social benefits such as health, retirement, or emergency support. During the validation workshop, CSOs considered these funds an immediately actionable way to build a financial base, strengthen sectoral solidarity, and reduce exposure to sudden cuts in external funding.

Second, waqf (Islamic and Christian endowments) remains underutilised in Lebanon because its governance has been weakened by politicisation, lack of transparency, and legal ambiguities. Nevertheless, CSOs participating in the workshop believed that, if managed transparently, depoliticised, and linked to clear social objectives, waqf could once again become a stable local revenue source for social services and CSO activities. The report specifically notes the potential of cash waqf and of better utilisation of underused waqf real estate.

Third, corporate–CSO collaborations and corporate social responsibility initiatives already exist, particularly in better economic periods and especially within the banking sector, but their impact is currently limited. Interviewees highlighted that the absence of tax exemptions for private companies that invest in social projects is a key bottleneck, and that introducing such incentives would make CSR a more reliable source of funding for Lebanese CSOs.

Fourth, community-based revenue and crowdfunding were documented in several localities, including Sidon, where CSOs were able to mobilise local businesses and individual donors to sustain specific centres and services. However, the report also underlines that not all CSOs can replicate these models in the current economic context.

Recommendations

The recommendations in the report are presented as a package and are all grounded in what CSOs, experts, and public officials said during KIIs and workshops. They focus on: enhancing local capacity; promoting aid localisation through greater CSO decision-making; building equitable partnerships with donors; increasing private sector involvement; forming CSO alliances to advocate for reform of waqf and mutual funds; sequencing short-term (advocacy, pilots, dialogue) and long-term (legal and fiscal) reforms; and strengthening low-cost, high-impact communication to keep localisation and sustainability on national and donor agendas.

- a.** Enhancing local capacity, including financial management, strategic planning, and fundraising, and promoting greater transparency by CSOs about their real operational and financial needs.
- b.** Promoting aid localisation through increased CSO participation in project design and decision-making, and through simplified, more enabling registration and operating procedures, including advocacy for tax exemptions on donations and income-generating activities.
- c.** Building equitable partnerships with donors, including co-created projects and a shift toward multi-year, flexible funding that covers core costs and enables staff retention.
- d.** Increasing private sector involvement and improving governance of mutual funds and waqf so that they become trusted and genuinely locally controlled instruments.



- e. Forming CSO alliances to advocate collectively for reform of waqf, revival and institutionalisation of mutual solidarity funds, more equitable access to international funding, and protection of civic space.
- f. Sequencing short-term and long-term actions, with early emphasis on low-cost advocacy, pilots, and donor-CSO dialogue, while parallel work continues on legal, fiscal, and governance reforms.

Conclusion

Overall, the report finds that CSO sustainability in Lebanon is weakened by four interlinked factors: dependence on international, short-term, and highly conditioned funding; a fragmented and competitive civic space that limits collective influence; a regulatory and political environment that adds administrative burdens without providing compensatory support; and a lack of easily accessible domestic financing. At the same time, the research shows that Lebanese CSOs themselves have identified feasible, context-appropriate measures that can be pursued even under current constraints. This includes reviving and modernising mutual funds, reforming and depoliticising waqf governance, expanding CSR and corporate-CSO collaborations, piloting income-generating and hybrid models, and building alliances.



1. INTRODUCTION

This report presents the findings of research on the sustainability of Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) and aid localisation¹ in Lebanon, a complex issue referred to as a “wicked problem”.² Conducted through a participatory approach, this project brings together local Lebanese CSOs, researchers at Triangle, and a Knowledge Manager, coordinated and funded, respectively, by Mannion Daniels and the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The project seeks to uncover the structural and contextual factors pertaining to whether Lebanese CSOs are able to achieve sustainable, locally driven development, particularly through the prism of dependency on international funding and limited decision-making power with donors.

The Power of Learning project was launched by Mannion Daniels in early 2023, funded by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Triangle has been guiding the conceptualisation, design, and implementation of primary research co-conducted by local CSOs in Lebanon, together with the Knowledge Manager.

The primary research question is: “**What are the main obstacles to CSOs sustainability through localisation in Lebanon, particularly in terms of funding and donor relationships, and how can such obstacles be tackled?**”. The study aims to fill knowledge gaps about power asymmetries between Global North and Global South aid actors³ as well as Western/international donors and local CSOs in Lebanon. Specifically, it examines the extent to which local CSOs lack decision-making power with donors, and the conditions imposed on them that impede service tailoring to the detriment of the community. Finally, the research seeks to understand how the lack of local and more sustainable funding streams jeopardises CSOs’ attainment of aid localisation.

The intended utilisation of this research is four-fold:

- 1. Address gaps in the literature:** This research addresses knowledge gaps, identified in an extensive literature review of the existing literature, concerning the challenges Lebanese CSOs face in achieving localisation and sustainability. By examining power imbalances, funding dependencies, and donor relations, the study contributes to a deeper understanding of how international aid structures impact local autonomy. It also begins to explore alternative, sustainable funding models, setting a foundation for further investigation.
- 2. Promote CSO decision-making and leadership:** Our employment of the ‘participatory learning approach’ methodology aims to empower CSOs in Lebanon to take ownership of the findings, ensuring that the results reflect the priorities of the Lebanese civil society and are informed by local needs. This approach seeks to enable CSOs to identify and advocate for solutions that are inherently relevant to their communities.
- 3. Support strategic adaptation and sustainability:** By incorporating best practices and lessons learned, CSOs can adapt their internal processes and strategic planning to improve long-term sustainability and resilience, thus strengthening their ability to manage projects effectively and engage meaningfully with donors.
- 4. Inform advocacy for equitable donor relations:** The findings will serve as a foundation for future advocacy campaigns aimed at fostering more balanced donor relationships and a shift towards localised agendas. By placing local CSOs at the centre of decision-making, this research seeks to empower them to negotiate and navigate conditions set by international donors more effectively.



Following this Introduction (Section 1), the structure of the report is as follows:

Section 2, **Definition and Scope**, clarifies the terminology and scope of the report, detailing key concepts such as localisation, CSO sustainability, and donor dynamics within the Lebanese context. It provides foundational definitions that will guide the analysis and recommendations.

Section 3, **Participatory Approach to Learning and Action**, outlines the participatory methodologies employed to ensure the involvement of local CSOs throughout the research process. Emphasising a collaborative learning approach, this section highlights how local perspectives shaped the findings and provided authentic insight into the challenges facing Lebanese CSOs.

Section 4, **Research Design and Methodology**, presents the research framework, detailing the methods and data sources used, including Key Informant Interviews (KIIs), as well as research limitations. It discusses the approach to gathering insights on CSO experiences and donor relations and explains how these methods support reliable, actionable findings.

Section 5, **Literature Review: The Lebanese Civil Society Ecosystem**, offers a background to the analysis based on a literature review, exploring the historical, political, and economic factors shaping Lebanese civil society. It examines how the current aid landscape influences CSOs' operational capacities and sustainability, setting the stage for the challenges addressed in later sections.

Section 6, **Challenges and Dynamics in the Lebanese CSO Landscape**, examines the multifaceted challenges Lebanese CSOs encounter, including power imbalances with international donors, excessive regulatory demands, and structural barriers. It also considers the impact of international non-governmental organisations (INGOs) on local autonomy and the pathways available for achieving a more equitable aid environment. The information is extracted from the primary qualitative data.

Section 7, **Local and Alternative Funding Structures**, explores innovative funding models and mechanisms that could enhance financial sustainability for Lebanese CSOs. It investigates the potential for community-led funding, private sponsorship, and other locally sourced funding streams as alternatives to dependence on international donors.

Section 8, **Recommendations**, provides targeted recommendations for improving CSO sustainability and localisation in Lebanon. These recommendations aim to address the challenges identified and offer actionable steps for fostering more balanced relationships between local CSOs and international donors, promoting sustainable funding, and enhancing local leadership in aid initiatives.



2. DEFINITION AND SCOPE

To fully understand how the ‘wicked’ problem can be addressed, Triangle has examined the different definitions that have been posited in the literature to better understand the specific complexities in the Lebanese context. For the purpose of this study, a CSO is defined as an organisational entity or structure where affiliated members advocate for or assist in serving a common interest or view, whether economic, political, social, or other.⁴ The literature classifies the Lebanese civil society sector into four main sub-groups: (i) local non-governmental organisations (NGOs), (ii) INGOs, (iii) academic and media platforms, and (iv) civil society groups, movements or campaigns.⁵

In an initial workshop with the Power of Learning programme participating local CSOs, and considering the broad definition and scope of ‘civil society’, there was an agreement that this study’s focus should be placed on registered CSOs which are not-for-profit and had either/or two types of registration: with the Ministry of Justice and/or with the Ministry of Interior and Municipalities, in addition to non-profit civil companies. Registration with the Ministry of Justice typically applies to associations focused on human rights, advocacy, or other civil society functions, while registration with the Ministry of Interior and Municipalities generally pertains to organisations involved in local governance, service provision, or municipal-level initiatives. These distinctions ensure the study includes organisations operating across different domains of Lebanese civil society, while maintaining a focus on formalised, legally recognised entities.

Accordingly, the study prioritises two tiers of focus. The first tier includes CSOs that meet the agreed-upon criteria – registered, non-profit entities that operate under the Ministry of Justice and/or the Ministry of Interior and Municipalities, or as non-profit civil companies. The second tier considers the broader ecosystem by exploring how these primary CSOs can collaborate with other entities, such as cooperatives, private sector initiatives (e.g., Corporate Social Responsibility [CSR], corporate foundations), think tanks, media, academia, social enterprises, syndicates, political parties, and activists, to create synergies and enhance sustainability. Nonetheless, it remains important to recognise the contribution of these ‘other’ CSOs in shaping the sector as a whole, and especially the sector’s relationship with the state, in order to fully understand the different layers underpinning the ‘wicked’ problem. This research has applied this definition by prioritising analysis of CSOs which are not-for-profit and registered, while also exploring income-generating activities and partnerships with corporate firms for future sustainability prospects.

Most CSOs in Lebanon are registered as associations.⁶ By the end of 2021, at least 8,500 associations were registered, including at least 200 local offices or subsidiaries of INGOs.⁷ However, reliable data is limited and sometimes conflicting, and experts estimate that the actual number of CSOs is higher.⁸ The scarcity of accurate data makes it challenging to grasp trends in whether the civil society sector in Lebanon is proving to be more or less sustainable over time. Intrinsic to this understanding is the question of how to measure sustainability, whether it be that, for instance, the greater number of registrations among CSOs indicate that the sector is more open, or the factors causing hampering internal growth, sophistication or operating capacity of CSOs allows observers to measure ‘sustainability.’



3. PARTICIPATORY APPROACH TO LEARNING AND ACTION

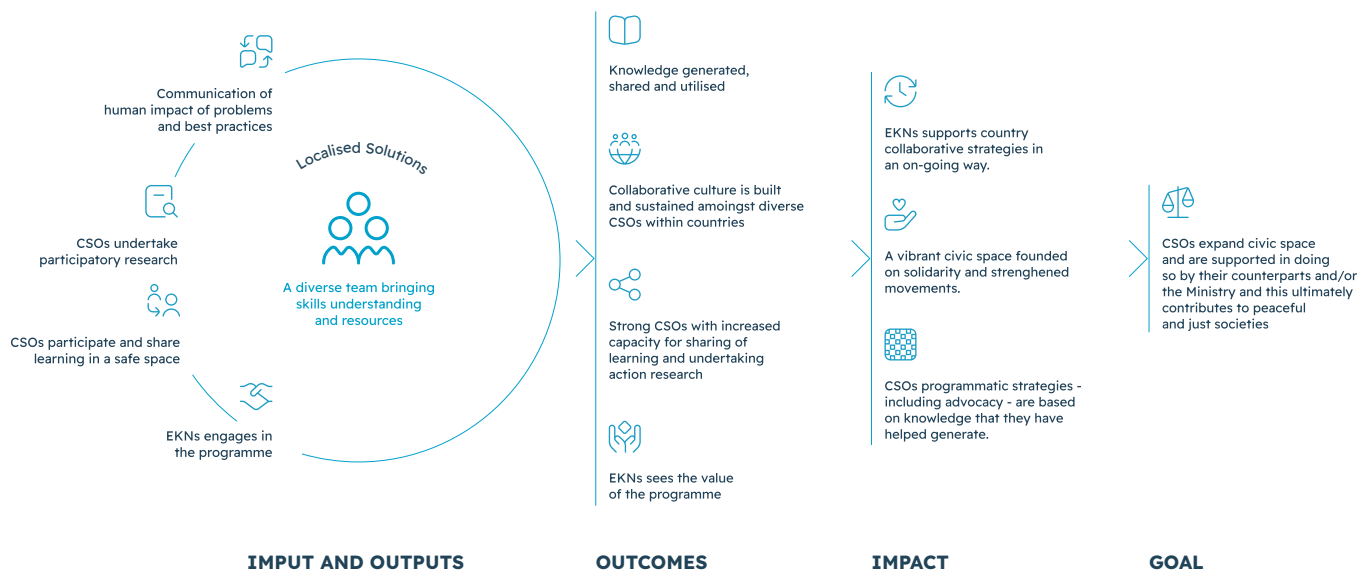
Building on the introduction, this section outlines the participatory methodology employed and key milestones and adjustments made throughout the research. The Participatory Learning and Action (PLA) methodology aims to empower local communities to actively contribute to and engage in learning, knowledge production, and sharing, thereby enabling bottom-up research, findings, and solutions.

According to Intrac for Civil Society :

“Participatory Learning and Action (PLA) is a type of qualitative research. It is used to gain an in-depth understanding of a community or situation and is always conducted with the full and active participation of community members. PLA is applied through a range of participatory tools and approaches. It is also a philosophy that emphasizes reversals in power relations between communities and outsiders.”⁹

The objectives of employing the participatory approach to this research project are to:

1. Achieve co-learning and sharing of knowledge in a safe space
2. Increase the capacity of participating CSOs in undertaking research and programmatic strategies to serve the wider civic space in Lebanon
3. Strengthen solidarity and ties among the participating CSOs
4. Contribute to forming a robust civic space and peaceful and just society in Lebanon



■ Figure 1 - Theory of change of the participatory learning and action



A total of seven local CSOs have participated in this research process since the research project was launched. The CSOs work in various sectors ranging from education to women empowerment, human rights, and livelihoods, and are also based in different geographies across Lebanon, including Tripoli (North Lebanon), Saida (South Lebanon), the Bekaa (East Lebanon), and the capital Beirut.

3.a. Milestones

In the first phase (June 2023 – June 2024) of the project, Triangle’s engagements with CSOs focused on deepening their knowledge of the wicked problem and preparing for the research implementation phase. Triangle ran six workshops with the CSOs during this period, in which the extensive literature review produced by Triangle was co-studied with the CSOs, and feedback from the CSOs was integrated. In these workshops key components of the research design, tools, frameworks, and methodologies were also co-developed between Triangle and the local CSOs.

Phase two (June 2024 – mid-October 2024) primarily involved data collection. In June 2024, a pilot phase allowed CSOs to test the research tools and methodology. Following this, Triangle conducted a critical analysis session of the pilot phase, providing the space for CSOs to offer feedback on the tools, methodology, and CSO experiences in conducting the interviews. Since then, Triangle has continued with the fieldwork, integrating feedback from CSOs to refine the research tools and ensure alignment with the intended direction envisioned by the participating organisations.

The third phase (October – December 2024) of the research project consisted of the analysis of the qualitative data and the writing of this report. Due to the ongoing Israel-Lebanon conflict, which escalated in early September and saw a ceasefire implemented on November 27, 2024, there were significant disruptions to the interactions and engagement between Triangle and local CSOs during this period, as listed below under the ‘research limitations’ section.

Fourth and final phase (March-April 2025) CSO Engagement for Interpretation, Contextualisation, and Recommendations on Sustainability. In this phase, the research team convened a participatory workshop with local CSOs to interpret the study’s findings on civil society sustainability and to contextualise them within the complex Lebanese political economy. Participating organisations included Abaad, SAMA for Development Organisation, Haltek, CRTDA, USPEaK, Plan Lebanon, the Lebanese Center for Human Rights (CLDH), and I’mpossible Organisation. These CSOs, which are actively engaged in service delivery, grassroots mobilisation, and rights-based advocacy across diverse regions of Lebanon, played a critical role in grounding the research in real-world challenges and opportunities.

3.b. The evolution of research objectives and scope

Initially, this research aimed to examine the sustainability of CSOs in Lebanon, considering funding, organisational, and legal barriers. However, in an April 2024 workshop, participating CSO members refined the focus to prioritise “aid localisation.” The CSOs underscored the need to explore power asymmetries between Global North and Global South actors, especially between Western/international donors and local CSOs in Lebanon. They highlighted local CSOs’ limited decision-making power in donor negotiations, which



largely stems from a dependence on external funding. Donor-imposed conditions often limit the ability of CSOs to tailor services to community needs and fulfil organisational operations, while the lack of local funding exacerbates this dependency. The literature review, which explored structural and systemic factors influencing aid localisation in Lebanon, further informed this refocusing of the research.

The refined research objectives therefore seek to delve into the topic of CSO sustainability through the lens of aid localisation to:

- 1.** Understand the current state of CSO sustainability in Lebanon, including structural, political, socio-economic, and financial challenges and opportunities.
- 2.** Investigate misalignments in CSO and donor priorities, exploring how aid localisation and local decision-making may be compromised.
- 3.** Identify successful models of CSO sustainability within Lebanon.
- 4.** Provide actionable recommendations to enhance CSO sustainability and address structural barriers to achieving meaningful localisation.



4. RESEARCH DESIGN, METHODOLOGY AND LIMITATIONS

The research design comprises three interlinked components.

First, the study relies on secondary data, drawing on insights from an in-depth literature review conducted by Triangle in Phase 1, some of which is included in Section 5 below. This review examined the complex challenges underlying the ‘wicked’ problem faced by CSOs, using an intersectional and historical lens to explore funding and organisational barriers. The analysis underscored that these barriers involve interconnected political, economic, and social dimensions across international, transnational, national, and local contexts. The literature review also highlighted several critical knowledge gaps. Key gaps identified were: the need to understand the impact of historical sectarianism on CSO organisation, the influence of social class and ethnicity on CSO operations and donor allocation, the implications of ties with sectarian or political factions, and the potential for collaborative approaches to mitigate funding competition. Additional gaps involve a lack of empirical data on whether Lebanon’s civic space is shrinking, and the need for metrics to assess this. Lastly, the review called for further investigation into the extent of aid localisation in Lebanon, especially regarding the influence of donor-driven agendas.

This secondary data has been triangulated with qualitative research in the form of key informant interviews (KIIs), the second component of the research. This data underpins the analysis in Sections 6 – 8.

The third component was the development of two case studies on CSOs in Lebanon that have diversified their revenue sources and/or achieved a degree of financial sustainability and aid localisation. However, unfortunately this latter component has not been achieved due to the recent Israel-Lebanon conflict (see below under ‘research limitations’).

While this research provides valuable insights into the sustainability challenges and opportunities facing Lebanese CSOs, there are areas that remain unexplored due to the scope and limitations of the study. The findings successfully highlight key issues such as donor dependency, the need for capacity building, and the potential of aid localisation and private sector partnerships to enhance CSO sustainability. However, certain planned components, such as in-depth case studies on successful CSOs achieving financial independence, could not be completed due to external challenges, including the recent Israeli-Lebanon conflict. Additionally, while this report focuses on qualitative findings, future research could incorporate quantitative data to provide a more comprehensive analysis.

4.a. Data collection

This section, along with sections 4.2 and 4.3, focuses on the qualitative component of the research, providing an in-depth analysis of data collected through KIIs and addressing the challenges and adaptations encountered during the research process.

This report is based on a comprehensive analysis of qualitative data collected in two phases, providing an in-depth understanding of CSO sustainability and aid localisation in Lebanon. The initial pilot phase involved three KIIs conducted by the local participating CSOs and were with two CSOs and one expert. One of the interviewed CSOs focused on human rights in Tripoli and North Lebanon, another on empowering



women and promoting gender equality, and the third with an expert in CSO sustainability, crisis response, and NGO resilience in South Lebanon. These early findings, which were triangulated with secondary data from a literature review, highlighted key themes such as dependency on international funding, regulatory constraints, and capacity limitations.

Following the pilot phase, which concluded in June 2024, Triangle’s research team expanded their efforts by conducting additional KIIs with a broader range of CSO stakeholders, further refining and deepening these insights.

■ Table 1 - Key Informant Interview sampling

KII Target Group	Number of KIIs (total sample)	Number of KIIs conducted
International Donors or INGOs	3	2
Lebanese CSOs	5	5
Lebanese researchers/experts on CSO sustainability in Lebanon	3	3
Government officials	2	1
Local donors (e.g. private firms)	2	1
TOTAL	15	12

The KIIs aim to:

1. Understand the current state of CSO sustainability in Lebanon, exploring challenges, opportunities, best practices, and lessons learned.
2. Identify potential candidates for the case studies.
3. Develop proactive solutions to improve CSO sustainability and support aid localisation in Lebanon.

Sampling for the KIIs ensures that perspectives from all relevant stakeholder groups are represented, employing a purposive sampling approach to identify key respondents.

4.b. Framework

The framework employed, as reflected in the research tool, consists of the two main components of the research: **problem identification and problem solving**. The definition of “aid localisation”, as provided in the introduction in Footnote 1, informed the design of the sub-research questions and overall framing of the research.

The main research question is: **“What are the main obstacles to CSOs sustainability through localisation in Lebanon, particularly in terms of funding and donor relationships, and how can such obstacles be tackled?”**



The sub-questions, as embodied in the research tool, are:

Problem identification:

- What is the current state of CSO sustainability and localisation in Lebanon?
- What are the key challenges and opportunities for CSO localisation in Lebanon?
- What are donor priorities and strategies in the short, medium and long terms, and to what extent do donor agendas inhibit organisations' ability to respond to the localised needs of the community or their beneficiaries?
- What are the positive and negative aspects of donor support and funding to local CSOs?
- What are the restrictions, challenges, or formalities donors have to overcome when working with local CSOs in Lebanon?
- What are the challenges local CSOs face when working with donors? Are conditions imposed on organisations by the donor which are difficult for local CSOs to comply with?
- To what extent are there power asymmetries between international donors and local CSOs in Lebanon?
- Have there been a shift in trends in alternative and local funding sources in Lebanon over the last 5 years? What barriers do local donors come up against?

Problem solving:

- How can the sustainability of CSOs in Lebanon be enhanced?
- What funding instruments (including non-traditional funding mechanisms) can be adopted with the donor or recipients to ensure better CSO sustainability and localisation?
- How can CSOs registered in Lebanon advance a more localised agenda and enhance their decision-making power with donors?
- How can a more equitable balance be maintained between the needs of donors and those of CSOs registered in Lebanon?
- Could alternative, local funding sources prove to be more sustainable in building local CSOs' capacity and resources over the long run than mainstream funding sources?

4.c. Research limitations

The research limitations primarily stem from the participatory learning approach and the recent conflict in Lebanon.

The participating CSOs expressed enthusiasm for the opportunity to engage in research planning and conceptualization, gaining insights into the complexities of CSO sustainability and localisation in Lebanon. However, they also faced significant organisational resource constraints, which affected their ability to fully participate in data collection due to the time, resources, and effort required. These challenges became evident during the pilot phase, with some CSOs unable to meet the deadlines set by Triangle or to complete the inception interviews.



To address these limitations, Triangle adopted the below adaptations to the research implementation phase:

- 1. Sectoral solidarity and co-learning:** CSOs with demonstrated capacity from the pilot phase were encouraged to partner with those showing limited research knowledge or capacity. This approach aimed to foster solidarity, support co-learning among CSOs, and ensure high-quality research outputs.
- 2. Increased role of Triangle in data collection:** Triangle's research team assumed a lead role in data collection, with CSOs invited to observe or participate actively in the KIIs to enhance their capacity in conducting research.

Despite these adjustments, engagement challenges persisted, as evidenced by limited communication from some CSOs since June 2024. These engagement challenges were exacerbated by the recent Israel-Lebanon conflict.

The conflict in Lebanon had a significant impact on the research process, with many CSOs and key informants faced operational disruptions that prevented them from participating in scheduled interviews. Limited access to certain regions and inconsistent communication channels further complicated our ability to reach a diverse sample, particularly in conflict-affected areas.

The case study component, intended to showcase sustainable CSO models in Lebanon, proved unfeasible to fulfil due to the operational strain many CSOs experienced. With resources redirected to emergency response, most CSOs could not commit to the in-depth participation required. Organisations that had initially agreed to collaborate on case studies were forced to withdraw, leaving a gap in our analysis of practical sustainability models within Lebanon's CSO sector. Despite Triangle's extensive efforts to secure commitment from potential candidates for a case study – including outreach to participating UN entities and INGOs – these attempts ultimately proved unsuccessful, marked by their limited responses.

For many CSOs, the conflict led to near-total operational paralysis, particularly in regions facing active war zones or resource constraints. Organisations that typically would have participated were forced to prioritise immediate crisis response, with some pausing regular activities altogether. This shift limited our engagement with CSOs, as planned interviews, follow-up sessions, and collaborative workshops were delayed or cancelled. As a result, we were unable to gather the full scope of insights originally intended, particularly on longer-term strategic planning and sectoral collaboration. Despite these challenges, the research team was able to successfully conduct most of the planned KIIs, completing 12 out of the 15 originally targeted.



5. LITERATURE REVIEW: THE LEBANESE CIVIL SOCIETY ECOSYSTEM

The barriers to CSO sustainability in Lebanon are not merely products of the current environment but are deeply rooted in structural and systemic factors. These factors, reflecting economic, social, and political complexities, have developed over time and are influenced by local, national, and international elements. This section provides a literary overview of such historical dynamics shaping Lebanon's civil society sector and its interactions with political elites and the state, the socio-economic landscape, and international actors. These interactions contribute to the ongoing challenge of achieving aid localization in Lebanon.

Lebanon's civil society sector is emblematic of the country's distinct socio-political complexity, shaped by both local dynamics and external influences. CSOs in Lebanon emerged within a fragmented socio-political environment post-independence in 1943, where fragmented religious identities and sectarian associations were established in response to the newly state apparatus.¹⁰

During the Lebanese Civil War (1975-1990), many CSOs shifted from charitable to social and welfare-oriented services.¹¹ This shift meant that CSOs filled gaps in aid provision left by the absence of a central government, demonstrating political autonomy.¹² However, the CSOs also developed alliances with militia-linked networks, including the Christian Lebanese Forces and Islamist groups like Hezbollah, al-Ahbash, and Jama'a Islamiyya, to obtain protection, financial backing, and political legitimacy.¹³

This environment fostered an alignment of Lebanon's civic space more with survival than sustainable development, with affiliations that mirrored the political and sectarian fragmentation of the country.¹⁴ The 1989 Taif Agreement further institutionalised this fragmentation by anchoring a new political elite within a power-sharing framework that reinforced sectarian divisions.¹⁵ This Agreement also enabled international actors to increase their influence in Lebanon, emphasising "neutral" governance and market-driven reforms. The mutual fund industry, introduced in 1977,¹⁶ gained traction following the Lebanese Civil War (1975-1990).¹⁷ Mutual funds have historically played a significant role in providing social services in Lebanon. In the post-war period, the failure of state-run systems led to a reliance on private mechanisms, including mutual funds, which became increasingly popular, particularly among wealthier individuals. By 2016, Lebanon had 490 mutual funds with total subscriptions of approximately \$1.945 million.¹⁸

Due to the consolidation of the sectarian system, the waqf system, rooted in Islamic and Christian charitable traditions, faced increasing challenges in its governance and legal structure.¹⁹ Waqf is a system that has long supported, since the Ottoman period, education, healthcare, and housing. Historical scholarship shows that governance and accountability in the waqf system were fundamentally altered under colonial administration—specifically, through legislative and bureaucratic reforms during the Ottoman and Mandate periods. These reforms laid the groundwork for many of the governance challenges that continue to affect waqf management in Lebanon today.²⁰ This fragmentation, combined with a lack of accountability, has resulted in widespread mismanagement of waqf properties. Trustees often exploit the legal ambiguities surrounding waqf, leading to disputes over property rights and underutilisation of waqf assets. This persistence of weak oversight has allowed waqf administrators to act with little transparency, raising concerns about the effectiveness of waqf in fulfilling its social and charitable roles.



Another long-lasting and important phenomenon that shaped funding and identity-related challenges, which also came about during the end years of the Civil War, embodied a strong global dimension.

Indeed, this period coincided with a significant shift in the global economic (re)ordering and priorities of the international development community. This was marked by the proliferation of neoliberalism, a western constructed agenda ultimately aiming to enhance economic prosperity and growth through market-driven approaches to policy reform. Neoliberalism, alongside the concept of ‘Globalisation,’ was presented as the solution to the developing world’s economic turmoil and socio-political and humanitarian issues.²¹ Intrinsic to the neoliberal agenda were liberal principles linked to good governance, human rights-based approaches, and democracy. A strand of literature suggests that since the 1990s, the global mobilisation of NGOs and CSOs has served to undermine the social state, encourage non-partisanship, and promote market creation and privatisation.²² As such, in practical terms, it is documented that international development agencies began providing grants and loans directly to vulnerable social groups, associations engaged in human or sustainable development projects, or local governments like regional councils and municipalities, instead of only to national governments.²³ This shift suggests the international donor community’s strong influence over the direction or activities of civil society, potentially serving as an impediment to aid localisation. Indeed, in the post-Civil War era, liberal norms increasingly influenced the Lebanese civil society sector, prompting many CSOs to focus on human development, human rights, democracy, and good governance.²⁴

The year 2005 marked a turning point in the trajectory of CSOs in Lebanon with both the assassination of former Prime Minister Rafic Hariri, widespread protests, and the withdrawal of the Syrian army from Lebanon after nearly three decades of military occupation. These significant events catalysed an increased participation of citizens and civil society in the country’s affairs, reflected in widespread public actions and political mobilisation. Even some social welfare and service provision CSOs were drawn into such mobilisation, according to literature of the era.²⁵ Furthermore, Hariri’s assassination and the Syrian withdrawal harboured a more liberal state approach to the Lebanese civil society sector, after decades of heightened repression of political and civic opposition under Syrian occupation.²⁶ However, this newly granted freedom for CSOs also encouraged clientelist networks to expand their influence over the sector to maintain newly founded power structures, rather than overtly aiming to suppress the civil society sector as they previously had done.²⁷ This influence threatened the relationship between CSOs and the wider population, considering the latter’s general distrust of political parties and politically connected organisations.²⁸

In the 2010s, the political awakenings associated with the region-wide 2011 Arab Uprisings rippled across Arab civic spaces, united by their collective calls for the end of poverty, authoritarian rule, corruption, and youth unemployment. The wave of regional struggles from 2011 onwards engendered the birth of a new generation of local CSOs in the West Asia and North African region,²⁹ and the sentiments embodied in such have been linked to Lebanon’s popular uprisings of 2015 and 2019.³⁰

Around the same time, the ensuing Syrian war from 2011 onwards, which led to an influx of at least 1.5 million refugees into Lebanon,³¹ had major implications for Lebanon’s civil society sector. According to the literature: it expanded the “humanitarian market” to the country, with international actors seeking to monopolise the coordination of humanitarianism in Lebanon.³² It also re-shifted the agendas and direction of the local civil society sector, with many NGOs and INGOs being set up to help Syrians cope with impoverishment and social and economic marginalisation.³³ With the civil society sector largely



filling the governance void by providing support and relief aid to Syrian refugees, the Lebanese state, desiring to regulate the response to the refugees, tightened restrictions on CSO activities and economic support programs granted to Syrian refugees through heightened checks.³⁴ Furthermore, the humanitarian response to the refugee crisis in Lebanon also widened the existing cleavages and tensions along ethnic or confessional lines by shaping the perception of the divisions between the “beneficiaries”, i.e., the Syrian refugees, and the Lebanese host communities.³⁵

The year 2015 was marked by the re-ignition of Lebanese civil society in response to the nationwide garbage crisis. Although the protests were primarily led by young activists, members of CSOs and environmental and human rights groups joined in too.³⁶ The literature highlights how this movement led to the consolidation of the new wave of political and social contention that had links with the 2011 Arab Spring, in terms of adopting a non-sectarian political framework, or ‘inclusionary politics’.³⁷ The adoption of these identities by some CSOs in turn presented significant challenges for the sector because the political elite responded by imposing heightened censorship and repression on their activities.

As per the World Bank, the 2019 financial collapse and ensuing socio-economic crisis in Lebanon is one of the most devastating in modern history.³⁸ Two main consequences of the crisis threatening the sustainability of CSOs can be identified from the literature: financial challenges and heightened political repression over the activities of CSOs. Concerning the financial challenges, the 2019 banking collapse induced severe economic instability, including a 98 percent currency depreciation by Spring 2023, triple-digit inflation, an expanding informal sector, heightened poverty, and decreased purchasing power.³⁹ The crisis had its roots in decades of political and financial sector mismanagement, laying bare the frailties of Lebanon’s post-conflict political set-up. It finally culminated in the 2019 October uprising, with protesters demanding an end to corruption and sectarian rule. There is also an important continuation to be noted between CSOs active in the 2015 garbage crisis protests and those in the 2019 revolution. In fact, the same 2015 associations resumed their role as organisers in 2019, primarily carrying non-sectarian alignments.²⁷ Central to their demands were the “us versus them” rhetoric and a denouncement of the post-civil war status quo, sectarianism, and political elites.

Another example of the financial challenges induced by the 2019 crisis is the impact on the mutual funds sector, particularly affecting the National Social Security Fund (NSSF) and civil society’s solidarity funds.⁴⁰ The crisis has stalled essential structural reforms in social health protection, increasing dependence on private insurance options that often prioritise short-term solutions over comprehensive risk pooling. This shift has fragmented the system, driving up healthcare costs and straining resources as many employers turn to private insurance providers instead. As a result, the NSSF’s capacity has been weakened, intensifying inequities in access to healthcare. Corruption further aggravates these challenges⁴¹, with mutual funds competing against private insurers that impose high fees. Weak regulatory oversight has led to an environment where profit motives can override patient welfare, making it difficult for mutual and solidarity funds to secure favourable rates with healthcare providers. This financial instability directly affects CSOs that rely on mutual and solidarity funds to subsidise healthcare costs for their beneficiaries or their own staff. As mutual funds lose negotiating power and face higher costs, CSOs are forced to allocate more of their



limited budgets toward covering these expenses. Additionally, as the financial crisis erodes public and private funding sources, CSOs struggle to maintain their healthcare-related programs and services. This dynamic has further destabilised Lebanon's fragile healthcare landscape and restricted funding for CSO activities.

Heightened political repression, which is the second main consequence of the 2019 crisis threatening the sustainability of CSOs, mushroomed from the 2019 October revolution. Nonetheless, for context, many CSOs were born out of the 2019 protest, seeking to 'build a state free from corruption and impose a government capable of enacting reforms based on transparency and accountability'.⁴² The 2019 anti-government revolution in Lebanon coincided with other anti-government popular uprisings across the Arab region, notably in Algeria, Sudan and Iraq, dubbed by many as the Arab Spring 2.0.⁴³ This timely confluence of events indicates the synergies between the region's civil society sectors, intertwined and united by shared grievances and cultural heritage. Since then, ensuing political deadlock, illustrated by the Lebanese Parliament's current failure to re-elect a president since October 2022, has also exacerbated the bureaucratic breakdown of government institutions. The impact this has had on the operational capacity of CSOs is most evident in the slow and bureaucratically complicated registration procedures, as well as limited state funding for CSO activities.

Overall, this literature review has highlighted the complex interplay of local and international actors and dynamics dictating aid localisation within the Lebanese civic space. One key trend that has emerged throughout history is the forming of alliances, which are often necessary for financial survival but precarious, with actors constantly negotiating the balance between local relevance and external expectations. Further, the dynamics described above have contributed to creating a vibrant yet fragmented civic landscape, where CSOs range from religious and sectarian organisations to secular advocacy and humanitarian groups. Each type of organisation has developed unique strategies to navigate Lebanon's shifting political and economic terrain, creating a dynamic, if at times contested, space for civic engagement and funding.



6. CHALLENGES AND DYNAMICS IN THE LEBANESE CSO LANDSCAPE

In this section, the primary research question is addressed: What are the main obstacles to CSOs' sustainability through localisation in Lebanon, particularly in terms of funding and donor relationships, and how can such obstacles be tackled? By examining the dynamics within Lebanon's CSO sector, we explore the barriers that limit their autonomy, hinder coordination, and perpetuate dependency on international actors. We aim to also identify potential pathways for overcoming these challenges, such as promoting more balanced donor partnerships, creating flexible funding models, and strengthening local CSO voices within coordination platforms.

6.a. Dependency Dynamics: Funding Structures that Limit Local Agency

The reliance of many CSOs on international funding has fundamentally reshaped CSOs' missions, limiting their ability to pursue long-term goals and address local needs. The 2011 Syrian refugee crisis brought to the surface the limited leadership role of the Lebanese state in relation to international donors' policies and agendas. The crisis introduced a new humanitarian "market" to the country, with international actors that, in practice, have established a quasi-monopoly on the coordination efforts, while sometimes excluding local actors who undoubtedly possess a thorough knowledge of the local social fabric and context.⁴⁴ Local funding structures, which were more flexible and community-focused, have been crowded out by the influx of international funding, increasing competition for limited resources and creating heightened donor dependency.

"When international institutions began playing a direct role or intervening significantly in managing grants, the role of local civil society organisations was reduced, making them the third implementing party."

**KII 3 - Expert in sector collaboration and managing crises and disasters
in South Lebanon**

"Many CSOs, especially smaller ones, are unable to secure long-term funding. This has led to issues such as brain drain (loss of local experts) and a shift toward short-term, project-based work. CSOs are often forced to accept funding tied to donor interests, even if it does not align with their core mission."

KII 5 - Lebanese Civil Society Engagement expert

International donors often impose specific agendas and short-term measurable objectives. This funding dependency forces CSOs to adapt their services to donor priorities rather than to local community needs.⁴⁵ Project-based funding models frequently fail to cover operational costs, leaving CSOs without the resources for strategic, long-term planning or infrastructure development.⁴⁶ Donor priorities also focus



on “visibility metrics,” such as the number of people reached, media coverage, or events held, rather than fostering systemic, long-term change.⁴⁷ This emphasis on short-term, measurable outputs limits CSOs’ influence in shaping sustainable, community-driven solutions. Moreover, externally driven donor agendas often conflict with CSOs’ long-term goals, further reducing their impact and responsiveness to local needs.⁴⁸ While local priorities focus on sustainable development, donor funding is often directed toward immediate relief and regional security concerns. This misalignment restricts CSOs’ ability to pursue localisation goals and diminishes their capacity to address Lebanon’s deeper socio-economic challenges.^{49 50 51 52}

“Showing impact, and having a results-based framework, has become more of a demand from donors over the last few years. However, this is an impossible task for local CSOs – impact takes time, which is not matched by the provision of short-term funding. There is an unrealistic conditions and expectations versus reality.”

| **KII 5 – Lebanese Civil Society Engagement expert**

The 2023 - 2024 conflict with Israel further exacerbated these funding constraints, as donor priorities once again shifted towards immediate humanitarian relief. This redirection of resources left development initiatives on hold, reinforcing the dependency of Lebanese CSOs’ projects. The heightened urgency of emergency aid overshadowed the need for sustainable solutions, creating a cycle of reactive rather than proactive strategies. As humanitarian aid flooded in, organisations found themselves unable to focus on systemic reform or capacity building, instead dedicating their resources to addressing immediate crises. This environment of political instability, combined with the heightened urgency of emergency aid during the conflict, has made it difficult for CSOs to plan effectively, but it has also deepened the fragmentation of services, as various groups scramble for funding to meet donor-imposed goals. Ultimately, the situation has entrenched a dynamic where organisations are forced to prioritise donor expectations over the long-term development of local communities, perpetuating the cycle of dependency that limits their effectiveness and long-term impact.⁵³



“Given the political situation and recent conflict, many CSOs are shifting toward humanitarian aid. This reallocation is both a response to urgent needs and a limitation of CSOs’ ability to sustain broader development projects.”

| **KII 11 - Public Development Finance Institution**

“Since 2019, there has been a shift from development and anti-corruption initiatives to humanitarian aid, particularly in southern Lebanon. Some CSOs have shifted their missions to survive, while others remain aligned with their original goals but struggle to secure funds.”

| **KII 5 – Lebanese civil society engagement expert**

Indeed, critical capacity gaps hinder smaller, local CSOs from participating fully in Lebanon’s civic space. These organisations often lack the infrastructure and financial resilience to navigate Lebanon’s increasingly complex funding landscape, leaving them at a disadvantage. As larger organisations dominate resource streams, smaller CSOs, many of which are deeply embedded in their communities, struggle to secure sustainable funding.⁵⁴ This competition-driven landscape fragments the sector, reduces the potential for a coordinated approach, and weakens CSOs’ collective voice in advocating for a localised aid model that aligns with Lebanon’s long-term needs.⁵⁵

In South Lebanon, CSOs reported that INGOs withdraw funding or tailor their support based on political sensitivities. This selective funding approach is rooted in the INGOs’ desire to avoid associations that could conflict with their own political mandates or the priorities of their donor bases. Consequently, CSOs with real or perceived ties to groups like Hezbollah or Palestinian organisations have seen their funding reduced or cut entirely. These actions have created a funding environment where CSOs in certain regions face frequent interruptions or denials of resources, affecting their ability to operate effectively and sustain community-focused services. Additionally, these restrictions force CSOs to make difficult decisions, often needing to adjust their missions or avoid partnerships that might jeopardize future funding. This limitation hinders CSOs’ capacity to engage fully with their communities, especially in areas where political affiliations are more pronounced. Consequently, CSOs are often trapped in a cycle of reactive adjustments rather than long-term planning, further intensifying fragmentation within the sector and eroding trust with community stakeholders who might view these adjustments as politically motivated.⁵⁶ The financial constraints resulting from this politicisation weaken the sector’s collective voice, as many CSOs with deep local ties are sidelined. For smaller, community-focused organisations, the political sensitivities surrounding funding reinforce barriers to resource access, deepening the inequity between large, internationally connected CSOs and smaller, local entities. This entrenches a cycle where only a limited group of politically aligned CSOs can consistently secure the funding needed to maintain essential services.⁵⁷

Additionally, demanding donor compliance requirements, such as extensive reporting and contractual obligations, present barriers for smaller CSOs, diverting resources from service delivery to administrative tasks. The research findings indicate⁵⁸ that these demands reduce their operational efficiency,



meanwhile politicized aid distribution often favours projects aligned with donors' geopolitical agendas. Smaller, local CSOs lacking the capacity to meet these requirements are further marginalised, intensifying their dependence on larger INGOs and limiting their influence over Lebanon's aid landscape.

The reduced state funding and increasing dependency on international donors have significantly impacted Lebanese CSOs. Since Lebanon's financial crisis in 2019, the government agency overseeing CSO registration and support has faced severe budget constraints, limiting its ability to provide widespread support to CSOs. According to a key official from the Lebanese State Agency⁵⁹, its budget can only cover essential services, leaving little room to support civil society beyond basic functions. This has contributed to the growing reliance of CSOs on international donors, whose funding is often short-term and influenced by specific agendas.⁶⁰ This reliance on external funding has led to disparities, with only a small percentage of national response funding allocated directly to local CSOs (around 3%), with the majority funnelled through larger international organisations. This funding structure disadvantages smaller or newer CSOs, which may lack the networks or capacity to access funding opportunities, leaving them marginalised. The challenges faced by CSOs in Lebanon highlight the urgent need for alternative funding mechanisms, such as a national CSO support fund. However, this would require extensive financial and structural reforms to the current budget and operations. In the meantime, the agency has suggested public-private partnerships and community-based funding sources as potential, though insufficient, alternatives to support the sector.

“Lebanon has gone through a series of crises that have affected the civil sector, as to this day, there is no coordinating body that brings together civil society in Lebanon with a single direction, a unified message and a single mechanism of action”

KII 3 – Expert in sector collaboration and managing crises and disasters in South Lebanon

“Ideally, the Lebanese government would step in to ensure a portion of foreign aid is allocated to building CSO capacity, such as through core funding for basic, operational functions, though this is unlikely given the current political context.”

KII 5 – Lebanese Civil Society Engagement expert

Overall, Lebanese CSOs face significant challenges to localisation due to heavy reliance on international funding, reduced state support, and a fragmented, politicised funding landscape. This dependency undermines their financial autonomy, strategic planning, and ability to address long-term community needs, leaving the sector vulnerable to donor-driven agendas and systemic inequalities.



6.b. Restricted growth: funding gaps and the impact on local capacity

Inconsistent funding and limited capacity-building resources prevent Lebanese CSOs from retaining skilled teams and achieving organisational stability. Lebanese CSOs face structural challenges in attracting and retaining skilled personnel, given the short-term nature of most funding. KIIs concluded⁶¹ that, without core funding, they cannot offer competitive salaries or invest in skill development, leading to high turnover and reliance on consultants. This instability weakens institutional memory, disrupts program continuity, and diminishes CSOs' ability to deliver quality services consistently,⁶² hence the lack of capacity-building resources perpetuates a reliance on external expertise, limiting Lebanese CSOs' ability to develop sustainable, locally driven solutions and impeding their long-term independence.

“CSOs are finding it difficult to maintain full-time staff due to inconsistent funding, leading to a reliance on consultants and short-term contracts. This weakens institutional memory and long-term impact.”

| **KII 5 – Lebanese Civil Society Engagement expert**

Donor-imposed Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) standards place significant financial and administrative burdens on Lebanese CSOs, straining their resources and undermining local accountability. Meeting these costly and time-consuming demands diverts resources from program delivery, reducing operational impact and limiting funds for direct service delivery.⁶³ Without robust M&E capabilities, CSOs struggle to demonstrate their effectiveness, weakening their competitiveness for future funding.⁶⁴ Additionally, the reliance on donor M&E frameworks reduces CSOs' operational independence and limits their ability to engage communities directly.⁶⁵ This dependency reinforces the power imbalance and constrains Lebanese CSOs' ability to foster locally accountable structures.

“Donors need to stop demanding monitoring and evaluation at every stage of the project – this requires too many financial and human resources that local CSOs don't have, and also distracts from addressing the real issue at hand.”

| **KII 10 - Capacity-building and development-focused Civil Society Organisation**

Rigid donor requirements restrict Lebanese CSOs from fully addressing community-specific needs. Compliance and reporting demands imposed by donors, while critical for funding, often divert resources away from impactful programming. Rigid donor criteria prevent adaptive, flexible responses during crises, as they must focus on meeting external standards rather than responding to immediate local demands.⁶⁶ Donor-imposed criteria often detract from their advocacy efforts, limiting their ability to pursue meaningful, systemic changes.⁶⁷ This disconnect between donor requirements and local priorities confines CSOs to externally set agendas, undermining their capacity to implement locally informed solutions that address Lebanon's pressing social and political issues. This study revealed how international funding dependencies have exacerbated these challenges, as CSOs have increasingly struggled to secure funding that adequately supports operational flexibility and sustainability.⁶⁸ As a result, project-based funding models fall short in



covering essential operational expenses, making it difficult for CSOs to remain adaptable.⁶⁹ This constraint, driven by strict donor compliance and reporting expectations, has created a system in which local needs are often secondary to fulfilling the stringent criteria set by international funders.⁷⁰

Nonetheless, there has been a growing trend of local consultancy agencies providing essential support for Lebanese CSOs, particularly in areas like fundraising strategy development and organisational restructuring. Increasing localisation of aid (e.g., shifting to local partners who can fully implement and fund initiatives), could significantly improve both sustainability and growth for these organisations. This has led to an increasing demand for consultancy services in recent years, with many CSOs seeking guidance to diversify funding sources beyond grants.⁷¹ This shift towards local funding mechanisms, including private sector partnerships and community-driven initiatives, is seen as a critical step in reducing reliance on external donors. Furthermore, suggesting that increased media visibility and crowdfunding could also help mobilise resources, as demonstrated by the success of recent campaigns in Lebanon, such as those during Ramadan. Further, many local organisations in Lebanon do not think in sustainable terms, nor have a vision of how to achieve independence from international donors.⁷² Building awareness around these alternatives is key, as it helps CSOs explore innovative solutions to sustain their work amidst fluctuating donor landscape.

In conclusion, the growth and sustainability of Lebanese CSOs are hindered by inconsistent funding and limited capacity-building resources, which contribute to high turnover, reliance on external expertise, and weakened institutional memory. The additional strain imposed by donor-driven M&E requirements further limits their operational effectiveness and independence. However, the increasing presence of local consultancy agencies offers a promising avenue for CSOs to address these challenges. By focusing on local solutions, such as diversifying funding sources through private sector partnerships, crowdfunding, and community-driven initiatives, Lebanese CSOs can reduce their dependence on external donors and enhance their long-term sustainability. At the same time, private sector partnerships and entrepreneurial approaches may introduce new forms of conditionality or market pressures, requiring CSOs to adapt to a different operational model compared to traditional NGO financing. To capitalise on these opportunities, raising awareness about alternative funding models and encouraging a shift towards localisation is crucial for fostering greater independence and impact.

6.c. Excluded voices: how coordination mechanisms marginalise local CSOs

The fragmented structure of Lebanon's CSO sector limits collaborative action, undermining the potential for localisation and coordinated impact. Despite facing similar challenges, CSOs operate in a competitive and fragmented environment where donor priorities discourage collaboration. The lack of structured collaboration across the sector leads to duplicated efforts, inefficiencies, and reduced community impact⁷³ highlighting that competition from well-funded INGOs, which have secure donor networks, prevents smaller CSOs from forming strategic partnerships that could foster localisation.⁷⁴ Additionally, the lack of sectoral cohesion restricts their capacity to advocate for collective goals, leaving them isolated within narrow project mandates. This fragmentation hampers the sector's ability to present a united front that could drive policy changes and strengthen Lebanon's civic landscape.



“There’s a need for local and embryonic associations or organisations to collaborate with more established and bigger ones, so that the smaller and less developed CSOs can gain expertise and support from within the local sector.”

| **KII 1 - CSO helping people obtain justice, focusing on promoting human rights**

Competition for short-term project funding exacerbates fragmentation within the CSO sector, undermining collaboration and resilience. As international donors tend to focus on short-cycle projects, Lebanese CSOs face intense competition for limited resources, which discourages cooperation within the sector. The competitive environment leads organisations⁷⁵ to prioritise individual survival over sectoral unity, making partnerships rare and often unsustainable. The competitive funding landscape means that only a small, familiar subset of CSOs consistently apply for and secure funding. These organisations possess the necessary resources, capacity, and know-how to navigate complex application processes, while many smaller, community-based CSOs lack the infrastructure to compete. As a result, funding becomes increasingly concentrated within this limited pool of larger, well-networked organisations, leaving smaller CSOs marginalised.⁷⁶ This dynamic reinforces inequalities within the sector, as smaller, localised organisations (e.g., those with direct ties to communities), often struggle to access resources, thus diminishing their presence and capacity in Lebanon’s civic space. The cycle of repetitive funding to the same CSOs limits the diversity of voices and perspectives within the sector, creating barriers to a more locally driven, cohesive approach that could address Lebanon’s long-term development needs more effectively. An expert in Lebanese civil society engagement⁷⁷ mentioned that the lack of core funding compels them to reshape missions continuously to align with temporary donor priorities, preventing them from addressing Lebanon’s complex socio-political challenges effectively.

“The main problem impeding sustainability is the lack of direct funding for local organisations. For local organisations, they are required to implement the project within a specific period of time, usually that does not exceed six months – one year, in exchange for small funding from the donor.”

| **KII 2 – Civil society organisation working in protection and support for marginalised persons**

Coordination mechanisms led by INGOs further marginalise local CSOs by limiting their input in strategic planning processes. These mechanisms often place local CSOs in implementation roles, with little input on programme direction or strategic objectives. The study observed that local CSOs are typically involved only at the later stages of planning, restricting their influence on overarching goals.⁷⁸ This explains why this dynamic restricts them to implementing pre-set agendas, which may not reflect Lebanon’s most urgent needs. Humanitarian groups note that this concentration of decision-making power among INGOs limits CSOs’ ability to create sustainable, locally relevant initiatives, further distancing them from the communities they aim to serve. During the study, an expert, mentioned⁷⁹ that those working on sensitive issues like gender and LGBTQI+ rights in northern Lebanon, described facing substantial operational



restrictions. These organisations often had to reframe their activities to avoid social and political backlash, underscoring the extent to which international coordination frameworks marginalise local voices. This exclusion reflects a larger trend, where INGOs dominate decision-making processes, leaving Lebanese CSOs with limited autonomy and exacerbating their struggle to establish locally relevant programming.

“When we talk about localization in Lebanon, we must view it as we do in the countries of the region and all “southern countries.” It is fundamentally a North-South issue, where the North gives us money, but not from the standpoint that the North is obligated to provide development aid to the South for its historical responsibility.”

**KII 9 - Network-based advocacy and capacity-building
Civil Society Organisation**

“The power dynamics between local organisation and INGOs still very much exist – while there are increasingly localised components adopted by each, the local organisations are sub-contracted by the INGOs who are leading the way, the brains in the boardroom. We are a long way from achieving the grand bargain and the localisation of aid in Lebanon.”

KII 4 – Private Sector Expert

On the other hand, platforms such as the Lebanon Humanitarian INGO Forum (LHIF) and the Lebanon Humanitarian & Development NGOs Forum (LHDF), play a key role in supporting Lebanese CSOs. These platforms provide a space for coordination, advocacy, and resource sharing among local and international organisations. However, significant challenges hinder their effectiveness, particularly for smaller, local organisations. A primary issue is the complexity of the Lebanon Response Plan (LRP) architecture, which was originally designed to streamline humanitarian and development efforts. Over time, it has become overly bureaucratic, requiring extensive formalities and templates that smaller CSOs struggle to meet. This complexity inadvertently excludes these organizations, limiting their ability to fully engage in the LRP. Additionally, the merging of the Emergency Response Plan and the Lebanon Comprehensive Response Plan, which was intended to simplify the system, has instead compounded the challenges by integrating emergency and development responses into a single, unwieldy framework.⁸⁰ Within forums like LHIF and LHDF, top-down structures dominate, limiting horizontal capacity-building and equitable collaboration. While these forums provide valuable opportunities for dialogue and resource sharing, smaller CSOs often lack the resources and support to participate effectively, hence perpetuating inequities and undermining the sustainability and local ownership of their initiatives.



“To achieve localisation, we need more advisory committees, more feedback mechanisms, platforms of coordination and accountability.

A participatory approach between donors, government representatives, INGOs, and local CSOs.”

| **KII 10 - Capacity-building and development-focused Civil Society Organisation**

To summarise, while Lebanon’s CSO sector faces significant challenges due to fragmentation and competition, coordination mechanisms such as LHIF and LHDF offer important opportunities for collaboration and resource-sharing. However, these platforms must evolve to address the need for more horizontal capacity-building, empowering local organisations to engage more equitably and meaningfully. As it stands, the dominance of INGOs in decision-making processes further marginalises local CSOs, limiting their influence on strategic goals and program design. Strengthening local CSOs’ capacity to collaborate within these coordination frameworks and ensuring their voices are heard can promote more sustainable, locally relevant initiatives, ultimately enhancing Lebanon’s civic landscape and fostering greater localisation of aid.

6.d. Barriers to autonomy: Bureaucracy as a gatekeeper in the aid landscape

Sectarian and political affiliations in Lebanon’s regulatory landscape impose operational barriers for CSOs, increasing dependency on INGOs for essential resources. Lebanon’s bureaucratic environment, shaped by political and sectarian affiliations, imposes barriers on independent CSOs that lack political connections. In politically sensitive regions, KIIs reported delays in gaining operational approvals, especially when their activities are perceived as conflicting with local political interests, thus highlighting that the resources required to navigate these regulatory hurdles detract from essential programming, reducing their effectiveness. This dependency on INGOs and international actors for resources and support reinforces the North-South imbalance in Lebanon’s aid landscape, restricting CSOs’ capacity to serve communities autonomously.⁸¹

“Sectarian divisions in Lebanon often contribute to fragmentation within civil society, making it difficult to build collaborative networks. This fragmentation detracts from the sector’s overall impact, limiting the ability of CSOs to pool resources and address common challenges effectively.”

| **KII 12 - Multilateral Development Organisation**

Excessive administrative demands drain CSO resources and detract from programme delivery. Regulatory requirements in Lebanon necessitate extensive documentation, consuming resources that could otherwise be directed toward community engagement. Some organisations reported⁸² that compliance requirements absorb large portions of CSOs budgets, limiting flexibility for urgent needs; stating that the administrative burden of meeting regulatory standards delays project timelines, reducing their responsiveness to community needs. This regulatory burden disproportionately affects smaller CSOs, which



must divert limited resources to compliance, impacting their ability to operate effectively and engage with local communities. Larger INGOs with more robust funding streams can navigate these demands more easily, reinforcing the power imbalance within Lebanon’s civic space itself. The regulatory restrictions became more stringent following the 2019 crisis, with the Ministry of Interior tightening control on CSOs, particularly those focused on promoting LGBTQI+ and women’s rights.⁸⁵ These additional barriers, coupled with the pervasive influence of sectarian politics, underscore the complexity of Lebanon’s regulatory landscape, where local CSOs are often forced to rely on INGOs to navigate bureaucratic demands, reinforcing dependency and diminishing local autonomy.

In conclusion, Lebanon’s bureaucratic and sectarian barriers make it difficult for local CSOs to operate independently, pushing many to depend on INGOs for resources and support. The lengthy approval processes and heavy administrative demands take away from time and funds that could be used for community programmes. Smaller CSOs, in particular, struggle with these burdens, which limits their ability to act quickly and effectively. With regulatory restrictions tightening after the 2019 crisis, the reliance on INGOs for navigating these challenges only deepens, creating a cycle that weakens the autonomy of local organisations and hinders their ability to drive change.

6.e. Towards balance: building equitable partnerships for sustainable impact

Equitable, co-created partnerships with donors offer a pathway to enhance CSO impact and advance localisation goals. Collaborative project design, where donors and CSOs jointly plan and execute initiatives, enables Lebanese CSOs to leverage local insights in programme development. CSOs⁸⁴ stress that such partnerships optimise resource allocation, align projects with community needs, and foster mutual accountability, adding that co-created partnerships empower Lebanese CSOs to lead initiatives, supporting aid localisation by tailoring programmes to Lebanon’s socio-economic landscape.

“Accountability needs to come at two levels: CSOs should be accountable to affected populations and donors, and donors accountable to the humanitarian response and local needs. For donors to achieve this, they need to better understand the challenges and context, instead of solely monitoring the impact.”

| KII 10 - Capacity-building and development-focused Civil Society Organisation

Flexible funding models and reduced compliance requirements could strengthen CSO resilience and operational autonomy. Lebanese CSOs across all sectors call for multi-year, flexible funding to support core operations and long-term planning. The stable funding would enhance staffing capacity and improve programme consistency, while advocating for streamlined reporting, allows resources to be reallocated to programme delivery.⁸⁵ This finding suggests that flexible, trust-based funding models would reduce dependency on Northern oversight, fostering a balanced aid ecosystem where Lebanese CSOs can take on a more active role in shaping Lebanon’s development priorities.⁸⁶



7. LOCAL AND ALTERNATIVE FUNDING STRUCTURES

Expanding on the above section, this section explores what local solutions exist and that can offer more sustainable, locally controlled approaches.

During the validation workshop, CSOs highlighted the limitations of traditional donor funding models, particularly those focused on capacity building without adequate capital investment. Many participants expressed a preference for sustainability mechanisms rooted in local structures—such as mutual solidarity funds, Waqf-based financing, and corporate social responsibility (CSR) vehicles—while also cautioning against the risks of co-optation and sectarian alignment. These discussions underscored the need for reforming both the financial infrastructure available to CSOs and the political culture that shapes it. By centring CSO voices and enabling mutual learning, this phase ensured that the study's recommendations were not only contextually appropriate but also forward-looking and actionable. The insights generated during the workshop form a foundation for future phases of the research and programming under the Power of Learning Programme, particularly in areas related to alternative financing, policy engagement, and coalition sustainability.

7.a. CSO Sustainability and Mutual Funds

Mutual funds hold significant potential for supporting CSOs by creating financial reserves and providing social protection benefits. These funds are governed under legislative Decree No. 35 (1977) and Decree No. 515 (1977), which define mutual solidarity funds in Lebanon as non-profit associations offering financial compensation for social benefits, such as marriage, retirement, and healthcare.⁸⁷ Through pooled contributions from member organizations, mutual funds can establish a robust financial base, enabling CSOs to access credit more easily, particularly in the absence of traditional collateral. This collective approach not only strengthens the financial capabilities of individual CSOs but also enhances their resilience against economic fluctuations.⁸⁸

Mutual funds in Lebanon operate under a structured governance model, with boards of directors and supervisory committees that ensure compliance with regulations, supported by regular audits. This regulatory structure ensures transparency and accountability, which are critical for maintaining trust among member organizations and donors. By facilitating access to loans and financial resources, mutual funds can empower CSOs to invest in long-term projects that align with their missions, ultimately fostering community development.

Moreover, mutual funds can play a crucial role in reducing CSOs' dependency on international funding. Laws governing these funds allow for donations and investments to bolster reserves, enabling CSOs to grow local financial support and provide additional stability. By generating local financial reserves, these funds enhance the sustainability of organizations within the social and solidarity economy (SSE).⁸⁹ This local financial support allows CSOs to implement initiatives that address community needs without relying solely on external donors, thereby promoting autonomy and stability. As mutual funds continue to evolve, they can



help create a more self-sufficient ecosystem where CSOs can thrive independently, leading to stronger local networks and improved social outcomes. Through this synergy, mutual funds not only bolster the financial health of CSOs but also contribute to a more sustainable and resilient civil society.

7.b. Waqf

A “waqf” (plural: “awqaf”) is a form of Islamic and Christian endowment that involves the donation of a fixed asset—such as land, property, or capital—for charitable or public use. Historically, waqfs have served as long-term mechanisms to fund education, healthcare, infrastructure, and social services across the Arab world. Their defining feature is that the asset itself is held in perpetuity, while the revenues generated from it are used to benefit designated causes. Waqf also represents a distinctive governance model that stands between public and private spheres—removing assets from markets and state ownership, and dedicating them in perpetuity to defined social purposes. In Lebanon, waqfs continue to play a significant role in community life, but their potential to support civil society remains underexplored, in part due to governance challenges and concerns around politicization. This report examines how reimagining waqfs as inclusive, transparent, and development-oriented institutions could unlock new pathways for locally rooted CSO sustainability.

Waqf remains an underutilized asset, with significant potential to contribute to social protection and community development if reforms are made to improve governance and financial transparency. Waqf, like mutual funds, while shaped by different historical forces, reflects the country’s ongoing reliance on private solutions for social welfare, particularly in times of state fragility. In this sense, waqf can also be understood as an early form of commons governance, creating a protected pool of resources that—if reformed—could provide sustainable community funding insulated from market or political capture.

One opportunity for funding CSO activities lies in cash waqf, a more flexible model than the traditional, real-estate-based use of endowments⁹⁰. A cash waqf mechanism could enable donors to contribute to pooled liquid funds, which can then be invested, with returns directed toward social services and CSO initiatives. This model offers a solution to waqf’s liquidity limitations and could allow for rapid crisis response, enabling broader community engagement beyond sectarian lines. Integrating cash waqf with instruments like Islamic bonds (sukuk) and impact investments can help generate financial returns while supporting CSOs.

Additionally, optimizing waqf real estate can unlock underutilized properties.⁹¹ By reforming governance, waqf can prevent mismanagement and ensure assets fulfil their intended social roles. Developing waqf properties through waqf–private collaboration, understood as an entrepreneurial approach where privately endowed assets are mobilized for the common good, could transform them into valuable community resources—such as affordable housing, healthcare, and educational centres—while ensuring revenue supports social services.

Further, partnerships with trust funds, such as the Lebanon Reform, Recovery, and Reconstruction Framework (3RF), can enhance waqf’s impact.⁹² Waqf management can be professionalized through trust fund collaborations, with the potential to make dual funding streams available to CSOs: waqf for sustainable, long-term support, and trust funds for immediate needs. Historically, waqf played a central role in Islamic



societies by financing schools, hospitals, and other civic institutions, offering a form of community-owned welfare that flourished prior to colonial interventions. Reviving this spirit of waqf as a vehicle for the common good, in combination with contemporary support mechanisms such as trust funds or other forms of waqf–private collaboration, could provide a robust model for stabilizing CSO funding today. Framed as such, waqf can be reimagined not only as a faith-based tradition but also as resilient social infrastructure aligned with international commons-based funding models. Models from other countries, like Germany’s co-financing schemes and the Czech Republic’s multi-year contracts, offer frameworks for stabilizing CSO funding through corporate–CSO collaborations and private sector collaboration.

While Waqfs represent a potentially powerful source of community-based funding, the challenges in their governance and utilization stem less from the tool itself and more from its misappropriation through sectarian and political lenses. This framing can create hesitancy among secular or rights-based organizations, especially when working in pluralistic or sensitive contexts. However, historical and contemporary examples demonstrate that Waqf funds can be mobilized in inclusive and non-sectarian ways when framed as tools for public benefit, especially when dissociated from sectarian lenses and reframed through more secular, civic, and anthropocentric approaches rather than purely theocentric ones.

To mitigate concerns and expand the scope of collaboration, Waqfs can be repositioned through a public-interest or interfaith lens. This includes models where Waqf contributions are tied explicitly to social welfare outcomes, such as education, health, and livelihoods, with clear mechanisms for equitable access and non-discrimination. Partnerships with philanthropic religious institutions—such as Caritas—offer precedents for faith-based funding that supports diverse communities without imposing religious conditions or affiliations.

Promoting such approaches requires both strategic communication and institutional reform. Reframing Waqfs as vehicles for local development, rather than as instruments of sectarian power, can help shift public perception and build broader legitimacy. In parallel, legal and governance reforms may be necessary to increase transparency, encourage interfaith endowments, and allow for the creation of publicly accountable Waqf boards. Through this dual approach—narrative change and structural reform—Waqfs can become viable, community-owned pillars of CSO sustainability in Lebanon.

7.c. Corporate–CSO Collaborations and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)

Corporate collaboration with CSOs is notably prevalent in the banking sector. A considerable portion of this collaboration stems from banks, which are vital to the country’s financial ecosystem. Additionally, mission-driven companies often establish their own CSOs or partner with existing organizations.⁹³ While many create CSR departments to allocate a portion of their profits to social missions, the overall impact of these efforts has been limited.

The decline in the banking sector has influenced CSR engagement with CSOs. During periods of significant growth, the banking sector has engaged with CSOs through various CSR initiatives, focusing on issues such as environmental sustainability and women’s empowerment.⁹⁴ Despite the perception that corporations, given their substantial resources, play a major role in funding NGOs, their contributions are often overestimated.



The lack of state tax exemptions for private companies to invest in CSR projects contributes to the challenges faced in forming corporate–CSO collaborations and engaging with the private sector. In contrast, countries like the United Arab Emirates (UAE) offer tax exemptions for entities engaged in philanthropy and community service under their corporate tax laws. Adopting similar tax incentives in Lebanon could significantly enhance private sector engagement in funding CSOs, fostering a more robust partnership landscape. This approach may help mitigate the existing funding gaps and strengthen the overall sustainability of local organizations.

“The Lebanese government should grant tax exemptions for large companies which invest in socially good organisations and projects.”

| **KII 1 - CSO helping people obtain justice, focusing on promoting human rights**

7.d. Superficial CSR Practices and the Need for Deeper Engagement

Certain organizations⁹⁵ have collaborated with several banks to provide financial assistance to CSOs. However, they emphasize that merely issuing checks does not equate to genuine CSR. Effective CSR necessitates a foundational shift within companies, starting with management and company culture, before extending to broader societal engagement. In Lebanon, many corporations exhibit a nascent understanding of CSR, often resorting to superficial gestures, such as check donations and photo opportunities with CSOs.

Income-generating models are essential for the sustainability of CSOs. While traditional funding through donations remains significant, many CSOs, including the Red Cross⁹⁶, are increasingly adopting alternative revenue streams, such as community donation boxes and crowdfunding campaigns. Shifting from reliance on donations to income-generating projects can help reduce dependency on external funding and enhance long-term sustainability. However, many CSOs lack the vision or drive to become self-sufficient, with some prioritizing short-term over long term sustainability⁹⁷ This mindset is compounded by the fact that, fewer than 10% of CSOs in Lebanon actively pursue self-sustainability⁹⁸ However, CSOs that frequently alter their mandates risk losing sight of local needs, which can lead to increased donor dependency and undermine their effectiveness. To address these challenges, policy reform, income generation, and improved alignment between donor agendas and local priorities are crucial. The Ministry of Social Affairs (MoSA) emphasizes the importance of cross-sector partnerships—encompassing municipalities, religious leaders, and the private sector—to diversify funding sources for CSOs. Although consistent long-term funding from donors and income-generating initiatives are recommended, they are insufficient on their own to ensure the resilience and impact of CSOs in the community.



“The problem is that most CSOs in Lebanon do not think in sustainable terms or even aspire to be self-sufficient. This is a symptom of the NGOisation”.

| KII 6 – Local Donor Organisation

In addition to traditional grant-based models, CSOs in Lebanon are increasingly exploring diversified financial strategies that blend social mission with market engagement. One promising area is the expansion of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) partnerships, particularly when backed by tax incentives. Research findings show the need to advocate for fiscal policies that encourage Lebanese companies to channel part of their profits into non-profit activities, especially when such contributions are aligned with sustainable development goals. This could include legal reforms to formalize CSR deductions and incentives, in coordination with chambers of commerce and parliamentary allies.

7.e. Community-Based Revenue Generation:

CSOs in Lebanon face funding shortages and heavy reliance on international donors, yet they maintain strong community trust. However, the ability of CSOs to rely on community-based revenue sources, such as local fundraising, product sales, or business initiatives, varies significantly depending on the type of organization, its internal capacity and its relationship with the local community.⁹⁹ To enhance sustainability, many grassroots or locally embedded CSOs are exploring income-generating activities like product sales and local business initiatives that foster community engagement while providing additional funding. These organizations are well-positioned to tap into local resources, as they have strong community ties and the organizational capacity to implement such initiatives. For instance, CSOs with strong local presence, clear organizational structures, and deep engagement with their communities have been able to leverage donations from local businesses, as seen in initiatives like the National Council to Combat Addiction in Sidon, where local businessmen and company owners have supported the centre financially over the years.¹⁰⁰

Crowdfunding and localized fundraising efforts also offer promising avenues for community contributions.¹⁰¹ Potential local funding sources, such as private sector engagement and corporate-CSO collaborations¹⁰² and donations from community members and religious organizations, can alleviate financial pressures. However, not all CSOs in Lebanon have the capacity or community reach to rely on these revenue streams. For many CSOs, community-based revenue sources are insufficient for long-term sustainability, especially given Lebanon’s political and economic instability, which makes local fundraising efforts challenging.¹⁰³ While local funding sources, such as private sector engagement, corporate-CSO collaborations, and donations from community members and religious organizations, can provide some relief, they are often not enough on their own to ensure the financial stability of these organizations. Collaborating with the private sector is essential to unlock new funding streams and strengthen CSOs’ negotiating positions with donors. By leveraging community support and diverse funding sources, CSOs can work towards a more sustainable future.



7.f. Innovative financing structures:

Another innovative approach raised involves donor-imposed requirements for allocating a percentage of grant funds into low-risk financial instruments or pooled investment vehicles, with the goal of generating long-term income streams for CSO operations. This model reframes sustainability as a financial discipline—not just a programmatic one—and could help CSOs weather funding gaps while building institutional reserves.

Finally, some organizations illustrate hybrid models whereby a registered for-profit consultancy supports the operational costs and activities of an affiliated non-profit. These dual-entity structures allow for service delivery, income generation, and mission-aligned reinvestment, and could serve as a replicable model for other grassroots initiatives that struggle with donor eligibility or overhead restrictions. Together, these approaches underscore the importance of embedding financial sustainability into the DNA of CSOs—not as an afterthought, but as a core part of organizational design.

“Involving the local community in formulating programs and projects helps local entities negotiate more strongly when it comes to dealing with donor requirements and conditions.”

KII 3 -- Expert in sector collaboration and managing crises and disasters in south Lebanon



8. RECOMMENDATIONS

This section provides strategic recommendations designed to enhance CSO sustainability and aid localization. Drawing on findings from the desk review and insights gathered through KIIs, these recommendations aim to strengthen the operational capacity of CSOs, enhance transparency, promote localisation within the aid sector, and encourage sustainable, locally driven funding solutions. While the final findings underscore obstacles to sustainability (e.g., evolving funding structures, coordination barriers, and bureaucratic constraints) interviewees also emphasised the sector’s resilience, adaptability, and inspirational role in responding to Lebanon’s crises. These insights collectively point to both the challenges and opportunities in the sector, reflecting its continued ability to overcome adversity and identify innovative ways to sustain its impact. These recommendations, collectively, offer a pragmatic, multi-stakeholder approach to advance CSO sustainability, reduce dependency on international aid, and enable a more resilient, community-responsive civil society sector in Lebanon.

Moreover, the engagement with CSOs served as a critical validation and co-creation moment for the study’s recommendations. Several key insights emerged that directly shaped the recommendations section, including the need to shift from externally driven capacity-building models toward more autonomous, locally led financial strategies. CSOs advocated for the revival of mutual solidarity funds, the exploration of public-private partnerships, and greater use of CSR-backed investments—all as pathways to financial sustainability. They emphasized the importance of allowing CSOs to lead with their own agendas when engaging funders, and warned against models that reproduce dependency or ignore local priorities.

Participants also called for long-term solutions to overcome political discontinuity, such as coalition-building among CSOs and legal reform to protect funding mechanisms from co-optation. Ideas around hybrid models—where registered businesses support nonprofit work—also featured prominently, alongside calls for greater equity in funding access for emerging organizations. These themes informed specific recommendations around diversified funding, enabling regulatory environments, and donor accountability. The integration of these perspectives ensures the final recommendations are not only rooted in research, but reflect the lived realities, strategic thinking, and long-term visions of Lebanon’s CSOs.

Recommendation 1: Enhancing local capacity

Invest in capacity building is essential for Lebanese CSOs to manage larger, more complex projects and diversify their funding sources. Findings from this research study highlighted that many Lebanese CSOs lack the internal capacity required to handle larger-scale projects and pursue diversified funding opportunities. The dependency on project-based, international funding has led CSOs to operate reactively, often tailoring their activities to meet short-term donor priorities. Addressing these capacity gaps is critical to enabling smaller, community-rooted organisations to play a more prominent role in Lebanon’s humanitarian and development efforts. A strategic focus on capacity building would empower CSOs to develop core competencies in areas like financial management, strategic planning, and project implementation. Strengthening these skills could help CSOs move beyond donor-driven agendas, equipping them with the tools to secure and manage a broader range of funding sources, including local and private sector contributions. Additionally, investing



in local consultancy services for financial and organisational management provides an accessible way for CSOs to build internal resilience and expertise through local sources, further supporting their long-term sustainability and independence.

Enhance transparency in communicating capacity and financial needs builds credibility and trust with both donors and the local community. Transparency emerged as a critical area for improvement among Lebanese CSOs, particularly in communicating their operational capacity and financial requirements. The findings noted that, in Lebanon's complex political and economic landscape, there is often a gap between CSOs' internal capabilities and donor expectations, leading to reduced confidence in their ability to deliver impactful outcomes. By adopting more transparent practices and providing clear, data-backed insights into their financial and operational needs, CSOs can strengthen donor relationships and encourage local support. This approach not only enhances credibility but also allows CSOs to align funding requests with their actual capacities and needs, fostering a partnership model with donors that is built on trust and accountability. Transparent communication can also help CSOs attract private sector and community-based funding, diversifying their support base and reducing over-reliance on international sources.

Recommendation 2: Promoting local aid localization

Empower CSOs with decision-making influence in donor projects ensures that initiatives are locally relevant and sustainable. The findings pointed to a significant power imbalance between Global North donors and local aid actors, with the latter often confined to implementing roles rather than being involved in strategic planning. This lack of involvement limits the ability of CSOs to tailor programmes to the specific needs of their communities, compromising the relevance and sustainability of aid efforts. Encouraging donor models that integrate CSO perspectives from the project design phase can enable a more equitable partnership, allowing CSOs to contribute their local knowledge and insights effectively. This participatory approach could lead to projects that are better aligned with local priorities and more adaptable to changing conditions on the ground. By fostering CSO involvement in decision-making, donors can support a more localised aid ecosystem that prioritises community-driven outcomes over externally imposed agendas.

Implement streamlined regulations for the establishment and operation of CSOs will facilitate their growth and sustainability. This includes introducing tax incentives for both individual and corporate donations, which can significantly enhance funding for local initiatives. Additionally, the government should create an enabling environment for CSOs to engage in income-generating activities, reducing their reliance on external funding. Capacity-building initiatives aimed at improving the governance and operational skills of CSOs will also empower these organizations to effectively address community needs. By aligning government priorities with the specific challenges faced by communities, Lebanon can strengthen its civil society sector, ultimately leading to more impactful social services.

Recommendation 3: Building equitable partnerships for sustainable impact

Co-create equitable pathways with donors to enhance CSO impact and advance localisation goals. Collaborative project design, where donors and CSOs jointly plan and execute initiatives, enables Lebanese CSOs to leverage local insights in programme development. Service-oriented and policy-driven CSOs



stress that such partnerships optimise resource allocation, align projects with community needs, and foster mutual accountability. These changes would lead to co-created partnerships aimed at empowering Lebanese CSOs to lead initiatives and support aid localisation by tailoring programmes to Lebanon's socio-economic landscape. Flexible funding models and reduced compliance requirements could strengthen CSO resilience and operational autonomy. Lebanese CSOs across all sectors call for multi-year, flexible funding to support core operations and long-term planning. Such stable funding would enhance staffing capacity and improve programme consistency. Even more, advocating for streamlined reporting, would allow resources to be reallocated to programme delivery. These initiatives suggest that flexible, trust-based funding models would reduce dependency on Northern oversight, fostering a balanced aid ecosystem where Lebanese CSOs can take on a more active role in shaping Lebanon's development priorities.

Recommendation 4: Private sector involvement

Advocate for enhanced collaboration between CSOs and the private sector through corporate–CSO collaborations which can significantly expand the resources available for social initiatives. Establishing formal channels for collaboration will allow both sectors to leverage their strengths in addressing community needs more effectively. Jointly developed projects that align corporate values with societal challenges can lead to impactful outcomes that benefit both parties. Promoting successful examples of CSR and corporate–CSO collaborations will encourage wider engagement from the private sector, fostering a culture of collaboration that enhances the overall sustainability of local CSOs. By integrating the resources and expertise of private entities with the grassroots knowledge of CSOs, Lebanon can cultivate a more resilient civil society capable of navigating the complex social landscape.

Improving transparency and accountability in mutual funds and waqf is key to boosting CSO sustainability and localizing aid in Lebanon. By adopting clear governance standards, regular audits, and transparent reporting, mutual funds can build trust and foster local financial support, reducing reliance on international aid. Similarly, governance reforms for waqf, such as professional management, would prevent mismanagement and ensure effective use of assets. These measures can strengthen local financial reserves, enabling CSOs to implement initiatives that respond to community needs independently. Enhanced oversight will help create a self-sufficient ecosystem, by ensuring that funds are protected from mismanagement, reinvested transparently, and distributed equitably, thereby bolstering the financial health of CSOs and promoting a more resilient civil society sector.

Recommendation 5: CSO alliances

Build Strategic Alliances to Advocate for Waqf Reform and Revival of Mutual Solidarity Funds. CSOs should pursue long-term, strategic alliances that focus on advocating for the reform and transparent governance of Waqf institutions and the revival of mutual solidarity funds (**sanadiq al-ta'adod**). These alliances can serve as collective platforms to push for policy changes, enhance public oversight, and unlock historical funding mechanisms that remain underutilized or co-opted by political and sectarian interests. The research findings highlight the potential of these locally rooted financial instruments to contribute to CSO sustainability—provided they are depoliticized and equitably managed. Reviving the spirit of social protection



embedded in Chehabist-era solidarity funds and advocating for inclusive, interfaith Waqf structures were seen as promising but politically sensitive strategies. To navigate these complexities, alliances must bring together CSOs, reform-minded municipal actors, legal experts, and progressive religious figures to develop shared policy proposals and initiate public dialogues.

These alliances should not only serve as advocacy vehicles but also act as watchdogs to monitor the use of communal resources. Through collective action, CSOs can build momentum for reforms that would return Waqf and mutual funds to their intended purpose: serving the public good and enabling locally owned development.

Recommendation 6: prioritizing action: short-term vs long-term strategies for CSO sustainability

To support strategic planning and implementation, it is essential to distinguish between immediate actions that can strengthen CSO sustainability in the current environment and structural reforms that require longer-term engagement. The framework below outlines key short-term and long-term priorities identified through the research and participatory consultation process:

■ Table 2 - Short- and long-term priorities for CSO sustainability

Short-Term Priorities	Target Audience	Long-Term Priorities	Target Audience
Advocacy for tax exemption and streamlined registration	Parliament, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Interior	Legal reforms enabling inclusive Waqf governance	Parliament, Directorate of Awqaf, religious authorities
Securing capital investments from CSR or private donors	Private Sector, Chambers of commerce	Institutionalization of mutual solidarity funds	CSOs, community leaders, regulators
Launching hybrid models (e.g. income-generating arms of CSOs)	CSO boards, Management teams	Creation of inter-CSO coalitions and national advocacy platforms	CSOs, umbrella networks
Initiating donor-CSO dialogue on flexible funding models	International donors, UN agencies	Enabling legislation for corporate-CSO collaborations	Parliament, Ministry of Economy, business associations
Developing practical tools for financial tracking & reporting	CSOs, Auditors	Reforming CSO-donor performance frameworks toward outcome-based metrics	donors, INGOs, funding agencies
Targeted municipal engagements and visibility efforts	Municipalities, Local councils	Building sustainable alliances across sectors and faith-based actors	CSOs, religious institutions, private sector



This dual-track approach allows CSOs to prioritize practical, achievable steps in the short term while laying the groundwork for structural transformation. It also helps funders, policymakers, and local actors to align expectations, allocate resources accordingly, and support CSOs in developing resilience strategies that are both context-sensitive and future-oriented.

Recommendation 7: strengthening advocacy through low-cost, high-impact communication tools

To complement longer-term sustainability strategies, CSOs should prioritize the development of accessible, high-impact advocacy tools that can influence stakeholders in the near term. These include targeted letters, concise policy briefs, and formal memoranda that articulate specific asks—whether related to tax incentives, donor flexibility, or Waqf reform—and are addressed to relevant decision-makers such as MPs, municipalities, or private sector partners. In parallel, the organization of a national CSO stakeholder meeting would provide a platform to unify fragmented advocacy efforts and catalyse a common vision for locally led development.

For broader public and donor-facing communication, the creation of infographics, executive summaries, and five-page briefs summarizing key findings—including those related to economic gender-based violence (EGBV)—can significantly improve visibility and understanding. These formats are especially effective for communicating complex research in digestible, visually engaging formats that appeal to diverse audiences. As low-cost interventions, these tools offer a strategic way for CSOs and Triangle to maintain momentum, shape policy discourse, and lay the groundwork for more comprehensive reform agendas. By focusing on financing streams and aid localisation, these advocacy tools also serve as proxies for addressing the broader challenge of shrinking civic space, offering CSOs a pragmatic entry point to influence the policy environment.



APPENDIX

List of KIIs interviewed

KII N°	Title of KII	Date of interview	Modality
1	Civil Society organisation helping people obtain justice, focusing on promoting human rights.	20/06/2024	Online
2	Civil society organization working in protection and support for marginalised persons	09/06/2024	Online
3	Expert in sector collaboration and managing crises and disasters in south Lebanon	10/06/2024	Online
4	Lebanese Private Sector expert	22/08/2024	Online
5	Lebanese Civil Society Engagement expert	27/08/2024	Online
6	Local Donor organisation	22/08/2024	Online
7	Humanitarian and development-focused organisation	20/09/2024	Online
8	Lebanese research and advocacy-focused Civil Society Organisation	25/09/2024	Online
9	Network-based advocacy and capacity-building Civil Society Organisation	29/09/2024	Online
10	Capacity-building and development-focused Civil Society Organisation	06/09/2024	Online
11	Public Development Finance Institution	29/10/2024	Online
12	Multilateral Development Organisation	13/09/2024	Online
13	Lebanese Governmental Agency	24/10/2024	Online



ENDNOTES

1. Aid localisation, or local participatory development, broadly defined, involves a collective effort from various stakeholders to place local and national actors at the forefront of humanitarian or development efforts, significantly enhancing their role and bridging a closer connection between development aid and its intended beneficiaries. Localisation involves not only the increased participation of local actors in decision-making across humanitarian or development aid contexts, but also a shift in tasks, power, and resources from major international entities and donors to national and local actors. The commitment to localising aid and development partly stems from extensive critiques in literature concerning the accountability processes and power imbalances within the humanitarian and development sectors; as well as being tied up with decolonisation efforts. World Bank. "Lebanon Economic Monitor." <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/dbf44593-5927-5acc-b1a2-3e1870600713/content>
2. Wallace, Duncan. "Action Learning: Harnessing the Power of Peers." Duncan Wallace (blog), accessed November 12, 2024. <https://www.duncanwallace.org.uk/insights/action-learning-harnessing-the-power-of-peers>.
3. Inter-Agency Standing Committee. "The Grand Bargain." Inter-Agency Standing Committee, accessed November 12, 2024. <https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/grand-bargain>.
4. Foundation Office Lebanon, Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung. "The State of Civil Society in Lebanon." September 27, 2021. <https://www.kas.de/en/web/libanon/single-title/-/content/the-state-of-civil-society-in-lebanon..de/en/web/libanon/single-title/-/content/the-state-of-civil-society-in-lebanon>
5. Plan International. "Assessing Civil Society, Gender Politics, and Youth Movements in Lebanon." <https://plan-international.org/lebanon/publications/assessing-civil-society-gender-politics-and-youth-movements-in-lebanon/>.
6. Foundation Office Lebanon, Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung. "The State of Civil Society in Lebanon." September 27, 2021. <https://www.kas.de/en/web/libanon/single-title/-/content/the-state-of-civil-society-in-lebanon..de/en/web/libanon/single-title/-/content/the-state-of-civil-society-in-lebanon>.
7. Foundation Office Lebanon, Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung. "The State of Civil Society in Lebanon." September 27, 2021. <https://www.kas.de/en/web/libanon/single-title/-/content/the-state-of-civil-society-in-lebanon..de/en/web/libanon/single-title/-/content/the-state-of-civil-society-in-lebanon>.
8. USAID. "2021 Civil Society Organization Sustainability Index for the Middle East and North Africa."
9. INTRAC (International NGO Training and Research Centre). Participatory Learning and Action. Oxford: INTRAC, 2017. <https://www.intrac.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/Participatory-learning-and-action.pdf>.
10. Foundation Office Lebanon, Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung. "The State of Civil Society in Lebanon." September 27, 2021. <https://www.kas.de/en/web/libanon/single-title/-/content/the-state-of-civil-society-in-lebanon..de/en/web/libanon/single-title/-/content/the-state-of-civil-society-in-lebanon>
11. About Assi, Khalidoun. Lebanese Civil Society: A Long History of Achievements Facing Decisive Challenges Ahead of an Uncertain Future. CIVICUS Civil Society Index report For the Republic of Lebanon. http://www.civicus.org/media/CSI_Lebanon_Country_Report.pdf
12. Foundation Office Lebanon, Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung. "The State of Civil Society in Lebanon." September 27, 2021. <https://www.kas.de/en/web/libanon/single-title/-/content/the-state-of-civil-society-in-lebanon..de/en/web/libanon/single-title/-/content/the-state-of-civil-society-in-lebanon>
13. About Assi, Khalidoun. Lebanese Civil Society: A Long History of Achievements Facing Decisive Challenges Ahead of an Uncertain Future. CIVICUS Civil Society Index report For the Republic of Lebanon. http://www.civicus.org/media/CSI_Lebanon_Country_Report.pdf.
14. About Assi, Khalidoun. Lebanese Civil Society: A Long History of Achievements Facing Decisive Challenges Ahead of an Uncertain Future. CIVICUS Civil Society Index report For the Republic of Lebanon. http://www.civicus.org/media/CSI_Lebanon_Country_Report.pdf.
15. About Assi, Khalidoun. Lebanese Civil Society: A Long History of Achievements Facing Decisive Challenges Ahead of an Uncertain Future. CIVICUS Civil Society Index report For the Republic of Lebanon. http://www.civicus.org/media/CSI_Lebanon_Country_Report.pdf
16. الجامعة اللبنانية مركز المعلوماتية القانونية تنظيم صناديق التضامن عدد المواد: 80
17. Nowhere To Heal: The growing luxury of medical cover in Lebanon, Badil.
18. Payments and Securities Settlement Systems in Lebanon. Arab Payments and Securities Settlement Initiative. https://www.bdl.gov.lb/CB%20Com/Publications/Publications/BDL_WhiteBook.pdf
19. Moumtaz, Nada. God's property. University of California Press, 2021. <https://www.ucpress.edu/books/gods-property/paper>
20. <https://islamiclaw.blog/2021/04/22/waqf-and-the-modern-state-capitalism-and-the-private-property-regime/>
21. Costanza, R., Hart, M., Posner, S., and Talberth, J., 2009. Beyond GDP: The Need for New Measures of Progress. The Pardee Papers, 4.
22. Traffic Injury Prevention. "Exploring the Influence of Individual-Level and Group-Level Attributes on Traffic Law Enforcement." <https://doi.org/10.1177/08969205231180263>; Salam, Nawaf. "Civil Society: A Key Element of Democracy." Program on International Law and Armed Conflict (PILAC), Harvard Law School, 2019. https://pil.law.harvard.edu/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/Civil-Society_Nawaf-Salam.pdf; Beteille, Andre. "Civil Society and the State." <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780198080961.003.0003>; Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung. "Towards Socially Just Development." Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, 2020. https://mena.fes.de/fileadmin/user_upload/pdf-files/publications/Towards_Socially_Just_Development.pdf.
23. Salam, Nawaf. "Civil Society: A Key Element of Democracy." Program on International Law and Armed Conflict (PILAC), Harvard Law School, 2019. https://pil.law.harvard.edu/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/Civil-Society_Nawaf-Salam.pdf
24. About Assi, Khalidoun. Lebanese Civil Society: A Long History of Achievements Facing Decisive Challenges Ahead of an Uncertain Future. CIVICUS Civil Society Index report For the Republic of Lebanon. http://www.civicus.org/media/CSI_Lebanon_Country_Report.pdf.
25. About Assi, Khalidoun. Lebanese Civil Society: A Long History of Achievements Facing Decisive Challenges Ahead of an Uncertain Future. CIVICUS Civil Society Index report For the Republic of Lebanon. http://www.civicus.org/media/CSI_Lebanon_Country_Report.pdf
26. Global Health Institute (GHI), American University of Beirut (AUB). "The Third Wheel in Public Policy: An Overview of NGOs in Lebanon." [Online] Available: <https://media-ghi.ghi.aub.edu.lb/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/The-Third-Wheel-in-Public-Policy-An-Overview-of-NGOs-in-Lebanon.pdf>
27. Abi Yaghi, Marie-Noëlle, Léa Yammine, and Amreasha Jagarnathsingh. "Civil Society in Lebanon: The Implementation Trap." Civil Society Knowledge Center, Lebanon Support, January 2019. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/331352105_Civil_Society_in_Lebanon_the_Implementation_Trap
28. About Assi, Khalidoun. Lebanese Civil Society: A Long History of Achievements Facing Decisive Challenges Ahead of an Uncertain Future. CIVICUS Civil Society Index Report For the Republic of Lebanon. http://www.civicus.org/media/CSI_Lebanon_Country_Report.pdf
29. Foundation Office Lebanon, Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung. "The State of Civil Society in Lebanon." September 27, 2021. <https://www.kas.de/en/web/libanon/single-title/-/content/the-state-of-civil-society-in-lebanon..de/en/web/libanon/single-title/-/content/the-state-of-civil-society-in-lebanon>
30. Foundation Office Lebanon, Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung. "The State of Civil Society in Lebanon." September 27, 2021. <https://www.kas.de/en/web/libanon/single-title/-/content/the-state-of-civil-society-in-lebanon..de/en/web/libanon/single-title/-/content/the-state-of-civil-society-in-lebanon>
31. CAIRN International. "Syrian War Refugees in Lebanon (2011-16)." https://www.cairn-int.info/article-E_ESP_172_0035--syrian-war-refugees-in-lebanon-2011-16.htm
32. AbiYaghi, Marie-Noëlle, Léa Yammine, and Amreasha Jagarnathsingh. "Civil Society in Lebanon: the Implementation Trap." Civil Society Knowledge Center, Lebanon Support, January 2019. DOI: 10.28943/CSKC.002.70000
33. Foundation Office Lebanon, Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung. "The State of Civil Society in Lebanon." September 27, 2021. <https://www.kas.de/en/web/libanon/single-title/-/content/the-state-of-civil-society-in-lebanon..de/en/web/libanon/single-title/-/content/the-state-of-civil-society-in-lebanon>



34. Civic Freedom Monitor, International Center for Not-for-Profit Law (ICNL). "Lebanon" <https://www.icnl.org/resources/civic-freedom-monitor/lebanon>
35. Abi Yaghi, Marie-Noëlle, Léa Yammine, and Amreasha Jagarnathsingh. "Civil Society in Lebanon: the Implementation Trap." Civil Society Knowledge Center, Lebanon Support, January 2019. DOI: 10.28943/CSKC.002.70000.
36. Civil Society Knowledge Centre. "Social Movement Responding to the Lebanese Garbage Crisis." <https://civilsociety-centre.org/party/social-movement-responding-lebanese-garbage-crisis>
37. Foundation Office Lebanon, Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung. "The State of Civil Society in Lebanon." September 27, 2021. <https://www.kas.de/en/web/libanon/single-title/-/content/the-state-of-civil-society-in-lebanon..de/en/web/libanon/single-title/-/content/the-state-of-civil-society-in-lebanon>.
38. World Bank. "Lebanon Overview." Accessed January 15, 2023. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/lebanon/overview>.
39. World Bank. "The Normalization of Crisis is No Road for Stabilization." Lebanon Economic Monitor, 2023. <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/099027005152320346/pdf/IDU0ea0213ae0e0f804ba309c7a00638cf710a36.pdf>.
40. Privatizing coverage: Emerging threats to universal healthcare in Lebanon, ILO.
41. ما بين شركات التأمين وصناديق التعاضد: حرب وجود
42. Foundation Office Lebanon, Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung. "The State of Civil Society in Lebanon." September 27, 2021. <https://www.kas.de/en/web/libanon/single-title/-/content/the-state-of-civil-society-in-lebanon..de/en/web/libanon/single-title/-/content/the-state-of-civil-society-in-lebanon>.
43. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. (2019, October 30). "Is This Arab Spring 2.0?." <https://carnegieendowment.org/2019/10/30/is-this-arab-spring-2.0-pub-80220>
44. AbiYaghi, M.-N., Yammine, L., & Jagarnathsingh, A. (2019). Civil Society in Lebanon: the Implementation Trap. doi: 10.28943/CSKC.002.70000
45. KII 5 Lebanese civil society engagement expert, KII 13 with Lebanese Governmental Agency.
46. KII 4 with Lebanese private sector expert, KII 5 with Lebanese civil society engagement expert,
47. KII 6 with local donor.
48. KII 8 with a research, capacity-building and advocacy for public policymaking organisation.
49. KII 7 with a humanitarian and development-focused organisation and KII 8 with a research, capacity-building and advocacy for public policymaking organisation.
50. KII 8 with a research, capacity-building and advocacy for public policymaking CSO.
51. KII 9 with network-based advocacy and capacity-building CSO.
52. Ibid, KII 10 with a capacity-building and development-focused CSO.
53. KII 8 with a research, capacity-building and advocacy for public policymaking organisation.
54. KII 8 with a research, capacity-building and advocacy for public policymaking organisation, KII 9 with network-based capacity-building CSO.
55. KII 3 with expert on local CSO expert on advocacy and awareness.
56. Ibid.
57. Ibid.
58. KII 9, KII 10, KII 11, KII 13.
59. KII 13.
60. KII 13 with Lebanese Governmental Agency.
61. KII 5,
62. KII 8, KII 10.
63. KII 6 with a Local Donor organisation, KII 11 with a Public Development Agency.
64. KII 7, KII 10.
65. KII 11.
66. KII 4 with a Lebanese Private Sector expert, KII 5 with a Lebanese civil society engagement expert, KII 7 with humanitarian and development-focused organization and KII 8 with research, capacity-building and advocacy for public policymaking organisation.
67. KII 7 with a humanitarian and development-focused CSO.
68. KII 4 with a Lebanese Private Sector expert.
69. KII 7 with a humanitarian and development-focused CSO.
70. KII 10 with a capacity building and development-focused CSO.
71. KII 4 with a Lebanese Private Sector expert, KII 8 with a research, capacity-building and advocacy for public policymaking organisation.
72. KII 4 with a Lebanese Private Sector expert.
73. KII 7, KII 9, and KII 12.
74. KII 6.
75. KII 6 with a Local Donor organisation, KII 11 with a Public Development Agency.
76. KII 8 with a research, capacity-building and advocacy for public policymaking organisation
77. KII 5 with a Lebanese civil society engagement expert.
78. KII 4, KII 6, KII 7.
79. KII 5 with a Lebanese Civil Society Engagement expert.
80. KII 12 with a Multilateral Development organization.
81. KII 11, KII 12.
82. KII 11.
83. KII 4, KII 5, KII 10.
84. KII 4, KII 6, KII 9, KII 10, KII 13.
85. KII 10 with capacity-building and development-focused CSO.
86. KII 5, KII 10, KII 13.
87. مرسوم اشتراعى رقم ٣٥
88. Financial Mechanisms for Innovative Social and Solidarity Economy Ecosystems, ILO.
89. Financial Mechanisms for Innovative Social and Solidarity Economy Ecosystems, ILO.
90. Gucci and the waqf: Inalienability in Beirut's postwar reconstruction, *American Anthropologist*
91. Ibid.
92. Comparative Approaches to Public Funding for CSOs: Initial Mapping of Selected Issues: Institutional and Thematic Funding, ECNL.
93. Capacity-building and development-focused Civil Society Organisation.
94. Capacity-building and development-focused Civil Society Organisation.
95. Capacity-building and development-focused Civil Society Organisation.
96. KII 10 with capacity-building and development-focused civil society organisation and KII 6 with local donor.
97. KII 6 with local donor.
98. Ibid.
99. KII 3 with expert.
100. Ibid.
101. KII 4, Lebanese Private Sector expert.
102. KII 5, Lebanese Civil Society Engagement expert.
103. KII 5, Lebanese Civil Society Engagement expert.

