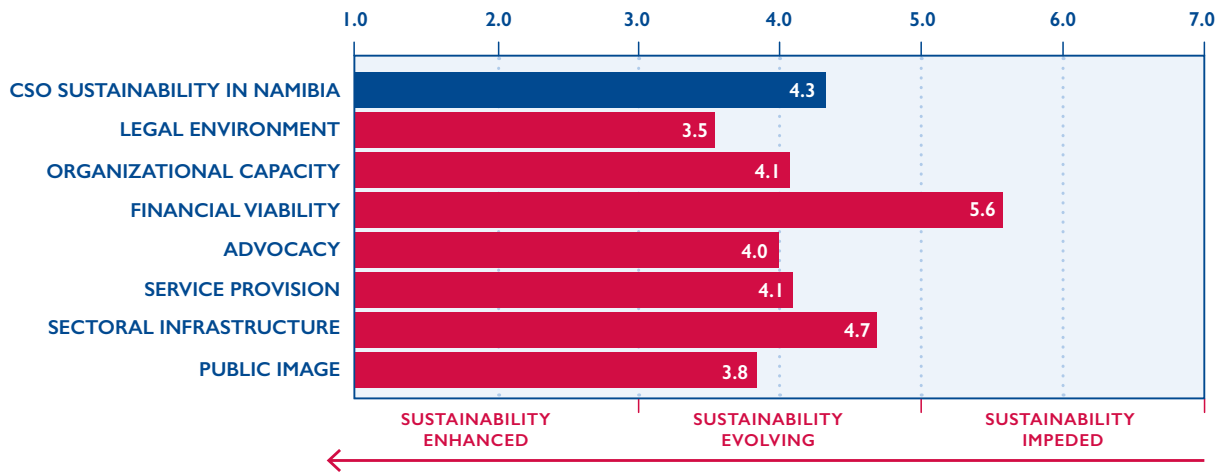


NAMIBIA

Capital: Windhoek
Population: 2,484,780
GDP per capita (PPP): \$11,300
Human Development Index: Medium (0.647)
Freedom in the World: Free (77/100)

OVERALL CSO SUSTAINABILITY: 4.3



Two main issues dominated Namibia's political arena in 2017: land reform and the national congress of the ruling party, Swapo. The government withdrew its land reform bill from parliament at the beginning of the year to allow for further consultations and a national land conference. The conference was eventually postponed until 2018 after civil society groups complained that the government was behind in its preparations for a gathering of such importance. Meanwhile, the Landless People's Movement (LPM) emerged, led by former Swapo Deputy Minister Bernardus Swartbooi, and put the contentious issues of ancestral land claims, land expropriation, and corruption in the government's resettlement scheme on the political agenda. At the Swapo party congress in November, President Hage Geingob confirmed his control of both the ruling party and the government after easily beating his rivals following a fractious campaign. Opposition parties remained weak and fragmented, and the main opposition group, the Popular Democratic Movement (PDM), had only five seats in the ninety-six-member National Assembly.

Despite its status as an upper middle-income country, Namibia remains one of the world's most unequal countries, with vast income disparities between the rich and the poor. Since 2015 the government has faced a serious fiscal crisis, and the national economy remained in recession in 2017. According to the 2016 Labor Force Survey, which offers the most recent data, unemployment was at 34 percent, with significantly higher rates among youth. Many infrastructure projects were halted or postponed in 2017, and several thousand construction workers lost their jobs. The United Nations reported in 2017 that 29 percent of the Namibian population was undernourished and 30 percent of children under five suffered from stunted growth. In the face of these challenges, the government focused its Fifth National Development Plan, adopted in 2017, on economic progress, social transformation, environmental sustainability, and good governance. In developing the plan, the government consulted with CSOs, but the final document failed to spell out a clear role for civil society.

The sustainability of Namibian civil society declined in 2017. The legal environment deteriorated as the government failed to reform a draconian research law, increased restrictions on work visas for foreign experts, and failed to repeal the apartheid-era Protection of Information Act. The president verbally attacked CSOs, claiming that they were led by failed politicians who simply want to undermine the ruling party.

The financial viability of CSOs worsened significantly as foreign donors continued to withdraw. CSOs' organizational capacity, service provision, and infrastructure also declined as a result of deepening financial problems. Despite these challenges, advocacy by CSOs gained in prominence, thanks in part to an increase in lobbying on access to information and whistleblower protection and the emergence of the social movement LPM. CSOs' public image did not change in 2017.

In 2015 the Namibia Institute for Democracy (NID) reported that 568 CSOs existed in Namibia. Of these only about 10 percent were strong, established organizations. Approximately half of them worked in the field of healthcare and HIV/AIDS, while 10 percent were active in economic and social justice, democracy, governance, and human rights. Since 2015 there has been no formal survey of civil society to establish the overall number of CSOs or identify the sectors in which they work. However, at the end of 2017 the Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR) identified sixty active CSOs in the Windhoek area able to contribute to consultations involving the African Peer Review Mechanism. The largest sectors were democracy and human rights, labor (including trade unions), and healthcare and HIV/AIDS. There appear to be few active CSOs outside the capital, although no survey has been undertaken to confirm this.

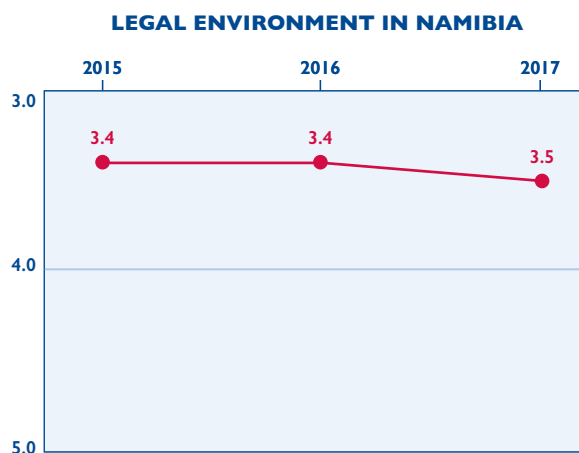
LEGAL ENVIRONMENT: 3.5

The legal environment for CSOs deteriorated in 2017, as the government failed to withdraw or amend Namibia's draconian research law, increased restrictions on work visas for foreign experts, and failed to repeal the apartheid-era Protection of Information Act.

CSOs in Namibia may register as trusts with the Master of the High Court or as companies not for gain with the Business and Intellectual Property Authority. Alternatively, they may operate as voluntary associations, which do not need to register with a government agency but must have written constitutions. CSOs conducting certain public welfare activities and requesting donations from the government or the public must also register either as welfare organizations with the Ministry of Health Services or as educational institutions with the Ministry of Education. Most CSOs operate as voluntary associations, since they are subject to fewer regulatory requirements. CSOs may also constitute themselves informally, although this can make fundraising difficult if they fail to comply with legally prescribed financial controls. CSOs based outside the capital often find it difficult to register, since they must travel to Windhoek to deal with the relevant government bodies.

In 2017 several CSOs complained that their work was impeded by difficulties and delays in obtaining works visas for specialized foreign staff, even if it was clear that such skills were not available in Namibia. Similar delays affected the private sector.

During the year the newly established oversight body for research, the National Commission on Research Science and Technology, pressured researchers and academics to register their research activities under the Research, Science, and Technology Act of 2004, which requires all organizations and individuals engaged in research to apply for permits for their projects. In 2016 IPPR, Legal Assistance Center (LAC), and *The Namibian* newspaper filed suit with the High Court to have parts of the law struck down as unconstitutional. The case dragged on in 2017 and remained undecided at the end of the year. The government offered to pursue a negotiated settlement, but the amendments to the law suggested by government as part of the settlement were not acceptable to the organizations bringing the legal action.



The president launched a strong verbal attack on civil society at a Swapo rally in the southern town of Keetmanshoop in March 2017. He claimed that CSOs were led by “failed politicians” trying to act like the opposition. This was an isolated incident, and it was not clear what prompted the attack. However, the speech raised concerns among CSOs, since it came from the head of state. The continued existence of the 1982 Protection of Information Act was also of concern to CSOs in 2017, because they feared it could be used to restrict freedom of expression and possibly target CSOs and the media. Although the law was not actively implemented during the year, CSOs in the Access to Information in Namibia (ACTION) coalition, an umbrella group of governance and human rights organizations, continued to campaign for a new access to information law.

According to the Income Tax Act of 1981 as amended, ecclesiastical, charitable, and educational institutions of a public character, whether or not supported wholly or partly by grants from the public revenue, are exempt from income tax. Individual and corporate donors receive tax deductions only on donations to CSOs registered as welfare organizations or educational institutions.

CSOs are legally able to earn income by providing goods and services and through government contracts. However, aside from welfare organizations, CSOs find it difficult to obtain government funding, and most government contracts go to private companies. There are no legal limitations on the ability of CSOs to obtain funding from foreign sources.

Legal advice from private practitioners is available to CSOs in the capital, but it can be costly. Only LAC provides legal assistance to CSOs on a pro bono basis. It is difficult for CSOs outside of Windhoek to obtain legal advice.

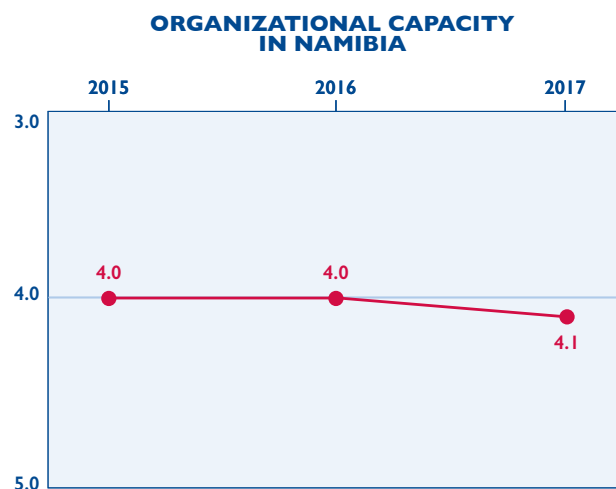
ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY: 4.1

The organizational capacity of CSOs deteriorated in 2017, mainly because of the closure of capacity-building organizations and constraints caused by persistent funding problems. Several leading capacity-building organizations were either defunct or temporarily inactive in 2017.

For example, the main umbrella body for CSOs, the Namibian Non-Governmental Organizations Forum (NANGOF) Trust, has been mostly dormant since its funding wound down in 2016, and thus it did not offer capacity-building support in 2017. Similarly, the training program on CSO management offered by the Namibia Institute for Democracy came to a halt when the institute temporarily closed during the year. Compounding this difficulty was the tendency of donors and international CSOs to overlook the needs of Namibian CSOs for capacity-building support. For example, some international organizations competed for funds against domestic organizations and organized activities in the areas in which established Namibian CSOs already operated, effectively undermining their work. Since these

international organizations receive technical support and funding for overhead costs from their head offices, they are better resourced than local CSOs and thus more credible to donors. As a result, Namibian CSOs must increasingly rely on funding for short-term projects, which usually does not include allowances for operating expenses such as rent and utilities. The net result for Namibian CSOs is unreliable incomes, staffing uncertainties, and management and oversight problems.

In previous years Namibian CSOs often failed to engage deeply with indigenous constituencies and lacked grassroots support. In 2017 this trend seemed to change course with the emergence of the LPM in the southern part of the country. The grassroots movement united youth activists and members of marginalized communities to bring attention to land issues, which are a highly emotional topic in Namibia. The Affirmative Repositioning (AR) movement, which was prominent in urban land and housing issues in 2016, was less influential in 2017.



Although most CSOs are centered in Windhoek, organizations such as the Shack Dwellers Federation of Namibia established low-cost housing schemes for thousands of residents in other areas, including the Otjozondjupa, Erongo, and Karas regions.

Because of the general lack of funding, Namibian CSOs increasingly operated in an ad hoc manner and did not undertake longer-term strategic planning in 2017. Many organizations focused on dealing with the next crisis or finding the next paycheck rather than planning ahead. This approach was reinforced by CSOs' widespread lack of permanent staff and inconsistent governance by their boards. The absence of a functioning umbrella organization and effective sector-specific bodies also undermined CSOs' strategic planning efforts. In the past, larger, well-endowed CSOs, particularly in the healthcare sector, provided guidance on strategic planning to smaller, regionally based CSOs. However, such programs have been cut back or stopped because of a lack of funding, and organizations now work in isolation, with staffs that usually do not have sufficient experience or training to undertake strategic planning.

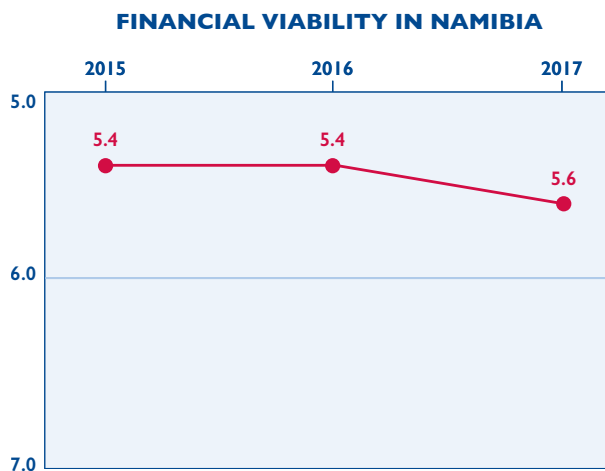
Trusts and companies not for gain must establish trustees or boards of directors. Most CSO boards cannot afford to pay sitting fees to board members, which makes it difficult for them to attract experienced and committed board members. In addition, board members often fail to attend meetings and serve in name only, causing their organizations to struggle to meet basic governance standards. At the same time, donors have posed more stringent requirements for governance and monitoring and evaluation, thereby putting more pressure on under-resourced CSO staff. The lack of core funding and a reliance on short-term or part-time staff limit the capacity of many organizations to develop formal management policies.

Many CSOs found it difficult to secure and retain experienced staff in 2017. In the face of uncertain funding, even health-sector organizations, which were once regarded as the most securely funded CSOs, began to complain that their capacity to employ workers on full-time, long-term contracts was reduced. CSOs getting by with part-time or temporary staff struggled to meet the demands of donors for complex risk assessments, log frames, plans, and other documents needed for their applications and reports on larger grants. CSOs reported that they had to focus resources on employing administrative staff to ensure that donor demands were met, thereby reducing the funding available for their core work. Volunteers were secured on an ad hoc basis rather than through a formal system that could offer useful experience followed by employment.

Many CSOs struggled to maintain offices and up-to-date technology because of their lack of funds in 2017. Few CSOs use the Internet successfully, broadcast live events, regularly update their websites, or have large followings on social media, in part because only one-third of Namibians use the Internet, according to the website Internet World Stats.

FINANCIAL VIABILITY: 5.6

The financial viability of CSOs in Namibia worsened significantly in 2017. Most CSOs depend on funding from foreign donors, which continued to withdraw during the year. The Norwegian government decided to no longer fund Namibian CSOs' projects, while the Embassy of Finland, a long-time supporter of civil society, indicated that available funding would be considerably reduced. Although there is no clear data on the overall amounts and purposes of donor aid for the Namibian CSO sector, work in the areas of human rights, democracy, and governance seemed to be hardest hit by funding shortfalls. Long-standing CSOs such as the Namibia Institute for Democracy either closed down or became dormant in 2017 because of a lack of funds. Although the largest share of support still went to the health sector, primarily services related to HIV/AIDS, this sector was also under financial pressure during the year. For example, while funding from the U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) remained constant, support



from the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria has gradually dwindled and by 2018 is expected to be at one-third of its level in 2015-17. Over the past decade, almost all international donors in Namibia have turned their focus to project funding and offer very limited core support for rent, utilities, salaries, and other administrative costs. Compounding the challenge for local CSOs is their inability to complete the complex and demanding grant applications introduced by some of the more significant donors still active in Namibia, such as the European Union (EU).

Namibian CSOs have few alternatives to donor aid, and there is a general sense of pessimism about future funding prospects. A culture of philanthropy does not yet exist in Namibia. The country has very few member-based CSOs, and those that do exist tend to draw their members from the poorest communities, who cannot afford to pay regular fees. The government tends to fund only welfare organizations and is itself facing a fiscal crisis. The private sector is generally too risk averse to support human rights or anti-corruption work and often prefers to retain good relations with the government by supporting “safe” projects linked to the government through the National Road Safety Council, National Commission on Research Science and Technology, or similar bodies. Although private-sector companies sometimes offer limited support to CSOs, in particular for environmental work, they often find it difficult to identify reliable CSO partners for their corporate social responsibility programs and so operate their own initiatives instead.

CSOs often do not have the capacity to raise funds, since they lack the necessary administrative staff. A few organizations sell products or have commercial arms such as consultancy businesses that subsidize their nonprofit work. For example, in 2017 IPPR marketed the newest edition of its *Guide to the Namibian Economy* to generate income to cover overhead costs.

More established CSOs that still receive funding from the few donors left in Namibia usually have effective financial management systems. However, the inability of many organizations to afford permanent and full-time staff has undermined sound financial management practices. Very few CSOs publish annual reports or detailed financial statements.

ADVOCACY: 4.0

CSO advocacy in Namibia is often limited in scope and overlooks many important issues. To some extent there has been a downturn in the activities of governance and democracy CSOs in recent years, as donors have shifted funding away from these areas after Namibia scored relatively well on several key governance indicators, such as the Ibrahim Index of African Governance and Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index. Nevertheless, CSO advocacy made progress in 2017 and scored several significant victories, including changes in the Whistleblower Protection Act and renewed attention to land issues.

The government seems to take a haphazard approach to consulting civil society on laws and policies. In 2017 CSOs were sometimes asked to comment on key issues, such as the Black Economic Empowerment Policy, but at other times consultation was non-existent or, at best, ad hoc. CSOs continued to have trouble accessing government representatives, mainly because many politicians and top officials do not understand the concept of civil society advocacy. For example, the Ministry of Urban and Rural Development ignored IPPR's repeated requests for a meeting to discuss housing policy. Ironically, the same ministry later sent a deputy minister to launch IPPR's research study on the same topic.

Advocacy campaigns are typically conducted by relatively small groups without a national reach or grassroots base. They are frequently hampered by a lack of funds or staff. However, in a significant development in 2017, the LPM emerged from a grouping of youth activists and marginalized communities concerned about rural land issues. The LPM's activities included rallies and community meetings, and they prompted the government to consider holding a national land conference to review policy options. The influence of the AR movement, formed by disillusioned members of the Swapo Party Youth League in 2014 to demand access to urban land at affordable prices, waned in 2017 as its calls for rent control made little headway. Both the AR and the LPM resembled social movements more than traditional CSOs, and there were indications that at some point they may enter politics more formally as parties seeking to challenge the SWAPO government. Meanwhile, the youth activists leading these groups seemed to feel that a confrontational approach was necessary. They sometimes indulged in abusive

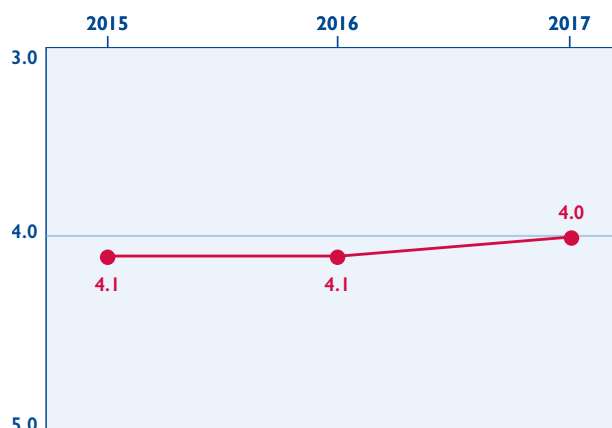
discourse aimed at their opponents, which had the potential of undermining the broader credibility of civil society, especially as, in response, the authorities often became defensive or simply ignored the main issues being raised.

Although Internet use in Namibia is limited, single-issue environmental campaigns with access to computers and smartphones successfully used social media to mobilize support and educate the public. One such campaign was conducted by residents of the coastal town of Swakopmund, whose protests helped prevent a mining company from engaging in the controversial practice of extracting phosphate from the seabed. Calls by environmental activists for restrictions or a ban on the use of plastic bags also gained momentum. Several groups continued to work towards longer-term social and cultural changes. For example, Outright campaigned for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual and intersex rights, and the Women's Leadership Center advocated against harmful cultural practices in the northeastern Zambezi region. Otherwise, few CSOs possess the necessary communications expertise to mount successful campaigns or use digital tools.

In lobbying activity, the ACTION coalition succeeded in persuading the parliament to make changes in the Whistleblower Protection Bill to ensure that the draft law was more in line with best practices. ACTION continued to encourage the government to draft a progressive access to information bill in 2017, but progress was slow as the government raised security issues involving access to information. ACTION also advocated for changes in cyber-security and broadband policies. CSOs outside of Windhoek reported frustration with lobbying local politicians, since they seemed to engage with civil society mainly to boost their reputations rather than commit to real change.

Efforts to introduce a civic organizations partnership policy and registration law in Namibia have been stalled since 2005. A draft policy exists, which recognizes the need for collective responses to development challenges and articulates a framework for CSO-government cooperation. Although agreeing in principle with the policy's objectives, Namibian CSOs have refused to support it because of concerns about certain repressive elements. The policy has not been discussed for many years, and in 2017 neither the government nor civil society showed interest in re-opening negotiations about it. Some observers consider CSOs' passive approach risky, since the government could seize the initiative to introduce controls that would not be welcomed by many CSOs.

ADVOCACY IN NAMIBIA



SERVICE PROVISION: 4.1

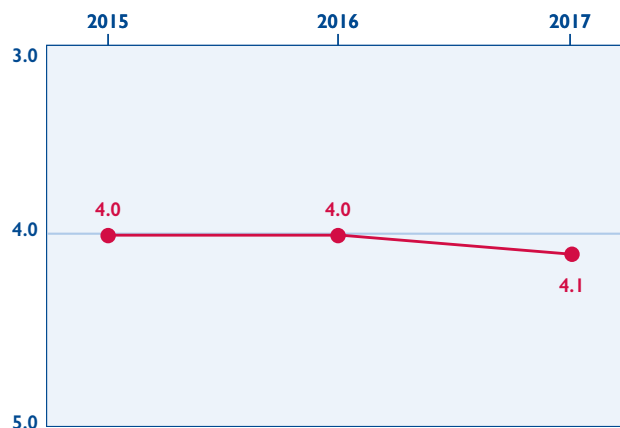
CSOs in Namibia offered more limited services in 2017 because of diminishing funding and the government's reluctance to involve civil society in its service provision. CSOs' involvement in health care, Namibian civil society's main area of activity, was reduced because of lower levels of funding, especially from the Global Fund. The cutbacks particularly affected services in remote areas and for vulnerable groups such as transgender women. After the health sector, the strongest service-providing CSO sector works on environmental and conservation issues. For example, the Namibia Nature Foundation operates a range of sustainable development projects countrywide, and the Desert Research Foundation of Namibia undertakes activities involving energy, land, water, and knowledge management, especially in rural communities. Organizations working in this area were less affected by funding cuts, since they have been more successful in gaining private-sector support.

Most active CSOs are based in Windhoek, which can restrict their ability to provide services in far-flung areas. The Shack Dwellers Federation is a rare example of a successful service-providing Namibian CSO with strong community roots. The organization is based in Windhoek but has 20,400 members organized into 605 savings schemes countrywide. As a result of its ability to provide low-cost housing, the federation has been able to

leverage government contributions, thereby enabling its member groups to secure land and build homes for several thousand families.

Some CSOs provide educational and analytical services. For example, IPPR seeks to raise public awareness about the national budget, proposed laws, and anti-corruption strategies through presentations, discussions, and

SERVICE PROVISION IN NAMIBIA



coverage in social and traditional media. The ACTION coalition holds regular community workshops to identify local needs for access to information.

No CSO is known to recover costs at a significant level by providing services for a fee. Charging for services remains problematic in Namibia, since the recipients of services are often among the country's poorest populations.

The government often overlooks the role that civil society could play in service provision. Although CSOs believe that they are better connected to communities than remote government departments, they have done little to argue the case that they can provide more efficient, more effective services. While the

government acknowledges civil society as a partner in its Fifth National Development Plan adopted in 2017, the plan does not spell out what this partnership means in practical terms or commit to definite programs. The lack of progress on a civic organizations partnership policy suggests that there is little current thinking from either the government or CSOs about how civil society could play a greater role in the government's service provision.

SECTORAL INFRASTRUCTURE: 4.7

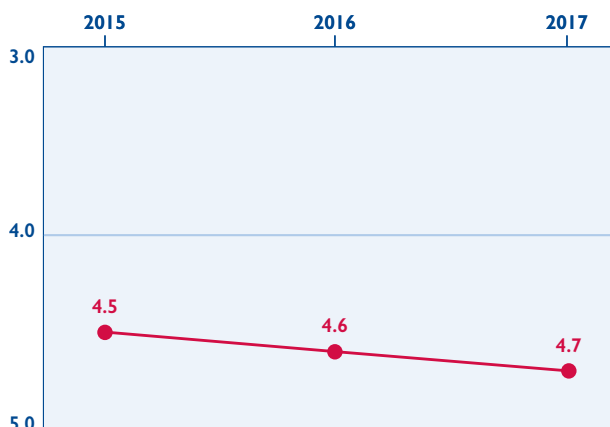
The infrastructure supporting CSOs in Namibia weakened in 2017. The country's only resource center was operated by the Hanns Seidel Foundation, a German political foundation, which used its building in central Windhoek to house several partner CSOs, including IPPR and the Economic Association of Namibia (EAN), under the rubric "House of Democracy." These CSOs were able to cut costs by sharing meeting rooms, while the foundation covered utility and security expenses.

No ISO supported Namibian civil society in 2017. Several donors, such as the Embassy of Finland, provided training for their grantees, but such opportunities were not sector wide and therefore their impact was limited. No other capacity-building training was offered to CSOs during the year.

The umbrella body for CSOs, NANGOF Trust, closed its office at the end of 2016 when support from the European Development Fund ended. Although several components of the trust continued to operate, it was basically dormant in 2017. The Civil Society Foundation of Namibia, set up in 2013 to offer training and funding to grassroots organizations, shut down at the same time, also because its funding from the EU ended. The Namibia Institute for Democracy, which usually offers training to CSOs, entered a period of dormancy in 2017 because of funding shortfalls.

As a result of these developments, CSOs operated largely on their own in 2017, without the support of outside structures or services. Organizations working in healthcare continued to cooperate under the auspices of the

SECTORAL INFRASTRUCTURE IN NAMIBIA



Namibia Network of AIDS Service Organizations, which offered technical support to its members. Governance-related groups cooperated through the ACTION coalition, which organized workshops on access to information and freedom of expression.

Civil society partnerships with other sectors were very limited in 2017, as CSOs tended to operate in survival mode or focus on their core functions because of limited funding.

PUBLIC IMAGE: 3.8

CSOs' public image remained unchanged in 2017. Namibia's lively print media and state and private broadcasters were generally keen to ask CSOs for comments on political, economic, and social issues. A handful of civil society activists made themselves available as commentators on public issues, including researchers from IPPR and EAN, who were interviewed regularly by print and electronic media. In addition, the media often covered civil society events, such as workshops, conferences, and publication launches. It was more difficult for CSOs to persuade the media to cover their projects and activities, and sometimes the media expected service-providing CSOs to pay for coverage. Overall, the coverage was generally positive, although the financial challenges that forced the closure of the secretariat of the NANGOF Trust drew some negative coverage. Since few journalists understood the sustainability issues faced by CSOs, there was little meaningful analysis of the role of CSOs in Namibian society and the challenges that they face.

The public perception of CSOs appeared to be improving in 2017. According to an Afrobarometer survey carried out in November 2017, more than 50 percent of Namibians think that CSOs have more freedom to speak out and criticize the government than in previous years. The government's view of civil society has been somewhat negative since 2014, when many CSOs banded together to oppose constitutional changes. In 2017 the president's attack on CSO leaders as "failed politicians" suggested that the government remained frustrated over criticism from CSOs. Nevertheless, accusations by politicians and government officials that CSOs push "foreign agendas" or are fronts for imperialism became less common, although these suspicions probably remained under the surface with some individuals. While the private sector seemed somewhat more willing on the whole to engage with civil society in 2017, there were few points of direct contact between CSOs and the business community, such as joint events or joint studies.

Many CSOs lack clear communication strategies. Generally, CSOs are not proactive at raising awareness about their activities and rarely reach out to journalists or editors to seek positive coverage or offer opinion articles. Only a handful of CSOs use the Internet successfully, have large followings on social media, broadcast live events, and regularly update their websites. For example, in 2017 the ACTION coalition and its leading members used social media to seek changes in the Whistleblower Protection law, while the AR and the LPM effectively used Twitter to convey their message. Otherwise, despite the evidence of growing social media use among Namibian youth, very few CSOs use social media to communicate, even though it is more cost effective than developing websites.

With no functioning umbrella body and very few training organizations, there has been no concerted effort to improve the ethical conduct of CSOs. Namibia has had its own corporate governance code since 2014, but there is little evidence that the boards of directors of nonprofit companies use it as a guide. CSOs often lack transparency and fail to publish regular annual reports with financial statements.

