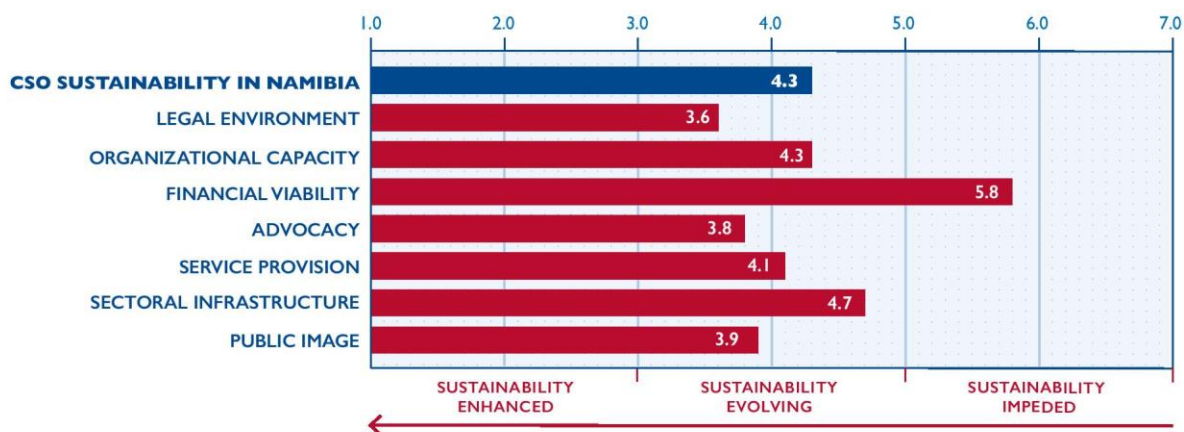


NAMIBIA

Capital: Windhoek
Population: 2,533,224
GDP per capita (PPP): \$11,200
Human Development Index: Medium (0.647)
Freedom in the World: Free (77/100)

OVERALL CSO SUSTAINABILITY: 4.3



For most Namibian citizens, 2018 was a challenging year. Namibia’s economy continued to contract, and by the end of the year had been in recession for thirty consecutive months. The government was unable to boost the economy by increasing spending because of the high level of public debt, which reached 50 percent of GDP in 2018. Meanwhile, the media reported that the formal economy continued to shed jobs, particularly in the mining and construction industries. The 2018 Labor Force Survey by the Namibia Statistics Agency found that 34 percent of the workforce was unemployed and, most concerning, 46 percent of people under the age of thirty-five did not have jobs.

The economic crisis led to public tensions and disputes, with housing, unemployment, access to land, and poor governance particularly sensitive points of friction. The Shack Dwellers Federation of Namibia reported that in 2018, there were 228,000 shacks in urban areas, accommodating about 995,000 people or approximately 40 percent of the population. Land reform in both urban and rural areas was the subject of a major consultative conference called by the government in October 2018.

The overall sustainability of Namibia’s civil society was unchanged in 2018. The legal environment deteriorated slightly because of increased government harassment and the lack of progress on reforming the restrictive research law and introducing access to information legislation. CSOs’ ability to secure funds was weaker, causing their organizational capacity and financial viability also to deteriorate. The public image of Namibian CSOs worsened slightly as the government expressed more negative views. However, public protests, concerted lobbying, and social media activism were evidence of moderately improved CSO advocacy during the year. CSOs’ service provision and sectoral infrastructure did not change.

Data on the size of the civil society sector in Namibia is very limited. Neither the government nor other entities regularly collect comprehensive information about CSOs. The Namibia Institute for Democracy (NID)’s 2018 “Guide to Civil Society” lists more than 130 active organizations countrywide, with the majority working in education, health, and human rights. This figure is about the same as the number of CSOs listed in the previous edition of the Guide to Civil Society issued in 2012. Previously cited reports of 568 active CSOs in Namibia are now considered unsubstantiated, although, given the deteriorating funding environment for CSOs in recent years, it is assumed that the sector contracted in 2018.

LEGAL ENVIRONMENT: 3.6



The legal environment for Namibian CSOs continued to deteriorate slightly in 2018, as government harassment increased and little progress was made on reforming restrictive laws.

Namibian CSOs may register as trusts with the Master of the High Court or as companies not for gain with the Business and Intellectual Property Authority. CSOs offering certain public education or health services must also register either as welfare organizations with the Ministry of Health and Social Services or as educational institutions with the Ministry of Education. In general, CSO registration and de-registration are overly burdensome and time-consuming processes. For this reason, most CSOs operate as voluntary associations, which must have written constitutions but do not need

to be registered with the government and are otherwise subject to fewer regulatory requirements. In practice, many CSOs find it difficult to comply with national regulations because of the bureaucratic processes involved and a lack of capacity in the civil service. For example, updating registration details is a necessary but often tedious task that can obstruct CSOs' operations.

The government has pursued a piecemeal approach to repealing outdated and often discriminatory apartheid-era laws. A worrying precedent was set in April 2018 when, for the first time since Namibia's independence in 1990, the Namibian Central Intelligence Service (NCIS) used the Protection of Information Act of 1982 to stop The Patriot newspaper from publishing information about the service's questionable acquisition of properties. A subsequent court hearing found in favor of the newspaper, which proceeded to publish the report. However, the Protection of Information Act remains on the statute books, and efforts by the Access to Information in Namibia (ACTION) coalition, an umbrella group of governance and human rights organizations, to lobby the government for an access to information law made very slow progress in 2018, with the government holding no public consultations on the issue. The controversial Research, Science, and Technology Act of 2004, which requires all organizations and individuals to apply for permits for research projects, remained in force in 2018, although the government had yet to fully implement the law and made only limited efforts to reform its most contentious parts. A High Court challenge over the law's constitutionality, brought by the Legal Assistance Center (LAC), Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR), and The Namibian newspaper, made little progress during the year.

Government harassment of CSOs increased in 2018. In June 2018, the police broke up a press conference organized by the Caprivi Concerned Group (CCG), which seeks to end the long incarceration of individuals who had violently pursued the secession of the north-eastern Zambezi region (previously known as the Caprivi region) from the rest of Namibia in the late 1990s and early 2000s and promotes dialogue on the issue. In July, security officers arrested six of CCG's leaders during an attempted public meeting and charged them with obstructing the police, sedition, and incitement to commit public violence. The CCG leaders were initially denied bail, but a few days later the police dropped all charges and released them, citing a lack of evidence. The police said the case could be reintroduced at a later stage.

CSOs face no legal limitations on accepting funding from international sources. CSOs may compete for government contracts and earn income through the provision of goods and services.

By law, charitable, religious, and welfare organizations are exempt from paying taxes on their incomes. However, concerns about churches undertaking profit-making activities prompted the Minister of Finance to propose in March a tax on any income that charities derive from commercial activities. CSOs were concerned about the intent of this proposal, but the government undertook no follow-up action on the proposed tax during the year.

CSOs can access private legal services, although they are prohibitively expensive and difficult to find in remote areas. Only LAC provides legal advice on a pro bono basis.

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY: 4.3

CSOs' organizational capacity continued to decline moderately in 2018, mainly because of funding constraints, which caused a decline in CSO staffing, especially in the health-care sector. Even long-established organizations, such as the IPPR and LAC, were unable to afford to build the capacity of their staffs or strengthen their operations.

Most national CSOs do not engage with local or grassroots constituencies, in part because of funding constraints. Some CSOs occasionally seek to form stronger ties with communities in areas such as health education and democracy promotion, but their success is limited, since their activities are generally program-based and cease with the completion of projects. For example, NID provides civic education to promote democracy and prevent corruption but is unable to do so on a continuing basis because of funding constraints.

Some larger CSOs such as the Society for Family Health are able to maintain regional offices. Although some CSOs engage at the local level, information about the organizations and details of their work is scarce.

Limited organizational strength and scant core funding have allowed donors increasingly to set the agenda for CSO activities. Most organizations struggle to conduct medium- and long-term strategic planning because of their lack of staff capacity, the need to focus on meeting immediate funding needs, and donors' preference for shorter-term projects.

The challenge of inadequate staffing grew more acute in 2018. CSOs in the health sector experienced a particularly steep decline in both funding and capacity, and, as a consequence, their staff members often sought more secure employment elsewhere. For example, after the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria announced in February 2018 that it was drastically reducing funding for CSOs' community-based health outreach programs, eight organizations had to cut staff positions significantly. There was a growing interest in voluntary work in 2018, often by unemployed people seeking work experience, even if unpaid. Most CSOs, however, do not have adequate administrative and supervisory capacity to utilize volunteers effectively.

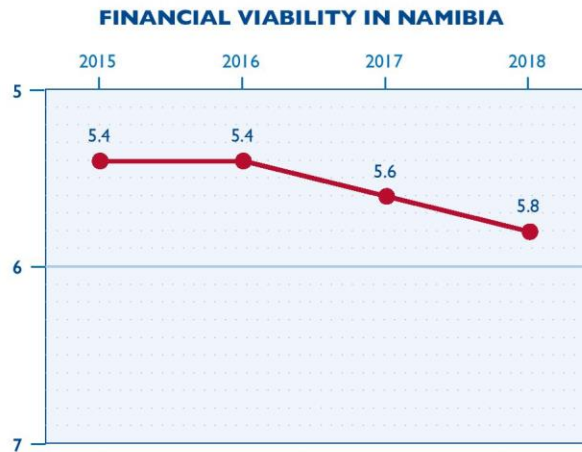
Few CSOs have access to modern office equipment, including computers, printers, and furniture. Project staff at IPPR, for example, use private laptops at work. In general, CSOs' first priority in using their limited resources is to secure office space and cover utility costs.

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY IN NAMIBIA



FINANCIAL VIABILITY: 5.8

CSOs' ability to secure funds continued to deteriorate moderately in 2018, and many organizations became financially unstable. Most organizations depend on external donors. While there are no exact figures on levels of donor support, much of it is directed towards governmental entities rather than CSOs. For example, the German government allocates most of its annual aid budget for Namibia to government infrastructure development and vocational training. Namibia is usually not seen as a priority for global or regional funding calls, because of its classification by the World Bank as an upper-middle-income and its reputation as a politically stable country. The Namibian Internet Society, for example, finds it hard to attract donor funding, since the country's internet access is not considered impeded. In addition, a number of once highly engaged donors have stopped or significantly curtailed their financial support or have gradually shifted their focus away from civil society. In February 2018, the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria announced a steep reduction in funding for CSOs' community-based health outreach programs in Namibia from 2018 to 2020 and will fund only two of ten previously funded organizations during this period. The Embassy of Finland, a long-standing partner of CSOs working on governance and human rights, signaled in 2018 that it would significantly curtail its support for CSOs and focus instead on promoting trade and commercial ties.



Also undermining CSOs' financial stability is donors' preference for funding short-term projects with minimal allowances for administrative costs. This trend puts pressure on CSOs to find other sources to finance rent, staff, and utilities. In addition, donors often require that CSOs applying for funding be registered on international online accreditation systems, submit audit reports, and compile detailed budgets and program documents within a short period of time. Many CSOs lack the technical and administrative capacity to realize these complex application and administrative processes.

There were positive signs in 2018 that the United States President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief intended to shift funding from large organizations based in the capital city to locally based CSOs. But local CSOs' lack of

capacity to manage large multi-year projects makes them concerned that international organizations will displace them in implementing projects under this program.

Opportunities for CSOs to obtain funds from Namibian sources remained severely constrained in 2018. Namibian philanthropy is underdeveloped, and there are few local grantmaking institutions. The private sector provides some financial support to individual CSOs or organizations working in specific sectors, such as environmental protection or social welfare. For example, the First Rand Namibia Foundation, which is linked to one of Namibia's largest banks, reported in 2018 that in the past year it had spent NAD 10.6 million (approximately \$763,000) on corporate social responsibility projects, with an emphasis on health, community development, and education. But companies generally steer clear of involvement in areas that are considered politically sensitive. For example, large corporate sponsors such as the telecommunications company MTC dedicate most of their corporate social responsibility funding to sports and the arts. The government has historically provided little funding to CSOs, especially since the 2015 financial crisis.

In general, Namibian CSOs have neither the dedicated staff nor the capacity to engage in systematic fundraising. In the past, a few CSOs have sought to sell services and products to supplement their income, but such activities have largely ceased, since poor communities cannot afford their services, and private-sector entities prefer to hire commercial outfits.

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: 3.8

A growing number of public protests, concerted lobbying efforts, and social media activism were evidence of moderately improved CSO advocacy in 2018.

CSOs continued to find it difficult to engage meaningfully with government officials during the year. Government ministries usually insist that CSOs make use of overly formalistic, bureaucratic communications channels, and government representatives are often reluctant to participate in CSOs' events. There are no active mechanisms that facilitate regular consultations on policy issues between the government and CSOs. Any consultations that take place are ad hoc.

The regional summit of the intergovernmental Southern African Development Community (SADC) took place in Windhoek in August 2018. During the summit, Namibian CSOs, organized by Namibian Non-Governmental Organizations Forum (NANGOF) Trust, cooperated with other southern African CSOs to submit a petition to the incoming SADC chairperson, Namibian president Hage Geingob. The petition called on regional governments to address high youth unemployment, child marriage, social protection, and other concerns. Under the auspices of IPPR, Namibian CSOs met several times during the year to draft a report on governance as part of the country's

participation in the African Peer Review Mechanism, a self-monitoring exercise aimed at promoting good governance among members of the African Union. The report focused on twelve key issues, including poverty, youth unemployment, corruption, land reform, and gender-based violence (GBV). CSOs expect to submit the report to the government once the review process starts in 2019.

CSO activists and journalists were key participants in a campaign to prevent rapid deforestation in northern Namibia in 2018. After citizens monitored and disseminated information via social media about the movement of trucks carrying timber to Walvis Bay, Namibia's main port, the government banned the transport of timber at the end of November 2018. In a

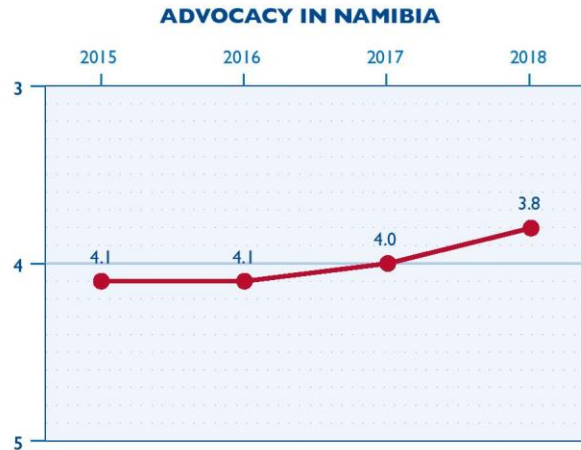
rare success for consumer activism, a previously unknown group called the Center for People's Resistance organized a consumer protest outside of the main branch of a supermarket chain in Windhoek in August. The protesters called for a boycott of the South African-owned Shoprite chain until it abandoned its legal case against ninety-three workers who in 2015 had conducted an unofficial strike over salaries, benefits, and working conditions. The company had charged the workers with disciplinary offences and sued them but dropped all charges in reaction to the boycott.

In August, hundreds of Namibians marched against GBV as part of coordinated regional protests also held in South Africa, Botswana, and Lesotho. The marchers, who mobilized under the banner of the Women's Coalition Against GBV, called on the authorities to resolve outstanding cases of rape and femicide and take other measures to reduce the high rate of GBV in Namibia. Environmental and labor activists, led by the Economic and Social Justice Trust, called on the government to permanently set aside an environmental clearance certificate granted to a company that intended to mine phosphate deposits off Namibia's coast. Several environmental organizations submitted petitions to the Ministry of Environment against phosphate mining, which they fear will have damaging consequences for Namibia's fishing industry. A number of community groups protested severe housing shortfalls in Windhoek, Otjiwarongo, Okahandja, and other towns.

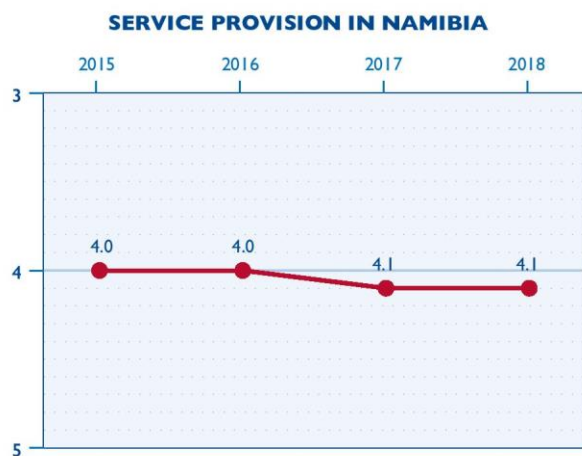
At times in 2018, CSOs were unable to speak with one voice on important issues. For example, civil society was split over whether to participate in the government's second national land conference in October. The conference sought to address mounting frustration over the land reform process in urban and rural areas. Some groups, including the Affirmative Repositioning Movement, Landless Peoples' Movement, part of the NANGOF leadership, and several traditional authorities, boycotted the gathering, labeling it a sham process that would produce little change. Other CSOs, such as LAC and the Shack Dwellers Federation, took part in the conference. In the end, although civil society failed to present a united front, conference participants from the government, civil society, local communities, and business agreed on some groundbreaking resolutions, including the establishment of a commission to address ancestral land claims

In lobbying activity, the ACTION coalition and other CSOs successfully pressured the government to withdraw a combined electronic transaction and cyber security bill. The government agreed to separate the draft law into two parts and move ahead with the bill on electronic transactions while consulting further on the cybercrime issue. ACTION also lobbied the government to view cyber security as a human rights issue rather than as a matter of imposing controls.

Efforts by CSOs to press for legal reforms in 2018 focused mostly on issues of information technology and telecommunications. Led by the ACTION coalition, CSOs provided comment on the country's broadband policy. CSOs did not advocate for changes involving their legal framework during the year.



SERVICE PROVISION: 4.1



CSO service provision was stable in 2018. Although the services they provided were limited, CSOs' willingness, especially at the local level, to innovate in using what little resources they helped to offset protracted reductions in funding. For example, the White Ribbon Campaign, which works to address harmful male cultural norms, relied largely on volunteers to run its activities, and Young Africa, which provides training for young people in Walvis Bay and Otjiwarongo, used successful entrepreneurs as trainers in place of permanent staff. Nevertheless, CSOs' service provision faced an uncertain future because of the lack of funding and limited coordination with the government.

CSOs continued to provide crucial assistance by filling gaps not met by the government in 2018. CSOs provide

services ranging from basic health care to legal advice and information on democracy, human rights, and voting rights. Some organizations active in environmental matters maintained their services at previous levels in 2018, thanks to foreign donors' interest in climate change, anti-poaching measures, and natural resource management. These organizations focused largely on improving the management of range lands and conservancies, environmental monitoring, and educational services.

Smaller regional organizations have benefitted from capacity building by formalizing their engagement with local and regional authorities to benefit local communities. Some organizations sought to explore low-cost projects to meet communities' needs in 2018. LAC provided pro bono legal services to the public, particularly underserved and marginalized communities.

Larger national CSOs often provide extensive information and expert advice on various topics to government departments, visiting academics and researchers, students, businesses, and the public. For example, IPPR provides analysis and policy recommendations to the National Planning Commission to help improve the country's business environment. The Economic Association of Namibia (EAN) advises the Ministry of Finance on the national budget.

CSOs do not generate meaningful income from their services, since they primarily serve poor constituencies.

Although the government acknowledges CSOs to be valuable stakeholders, it does not have an overarching vision of how to involve civil society in the country's development. Consequently, the government does not recognize that CSOs are offering or could offer services with greater cost-effectiveness and practical efficiency, thereby benefiting local communities.

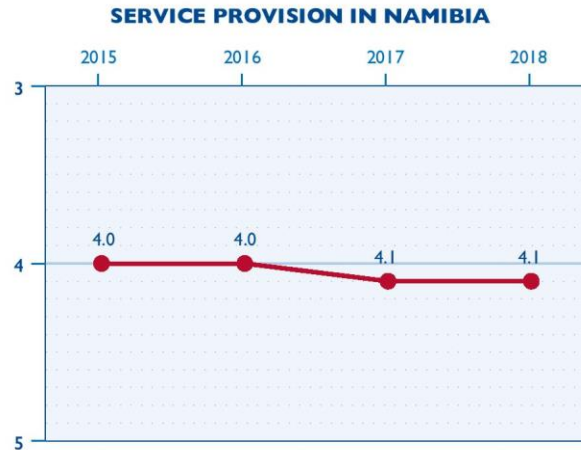
SECTORAL INFRASTRUCTURE: 4.7

The rudimentary infrastructure serving CSOs in Namibia did not change in 2018.

There are no resource centers or intermediary support organizations serving Namibian CSOs. Only a handful of donors make provisions for training or resources such as meeting rooms. The Hanns Seidel Foundation, a German political foundation, continued to offer dedicated office space and meeting rooms to its partner CSOs, including NID, IPPR, and EAN.

Coordination among CSOs is limited and usually takes place at a sub-sectoral level. The main national CSO umbrella organization, NANGOF, which had been dormant in 2017, reemerged partially in 2018 to engage in several activities with funding from the United Nations Development Program and the German Agency for International Cooperation. For example, NANGOF arranged consultations among CSOs on the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals and spoke on behalf of civil society at the national land conference. However, because of a lack of core funding, NANGOF still did not have a formal secretariat or office, and its role remained limited. On the sub-sectoral level, health CSOs continued to coordinate their activities through the Namibia

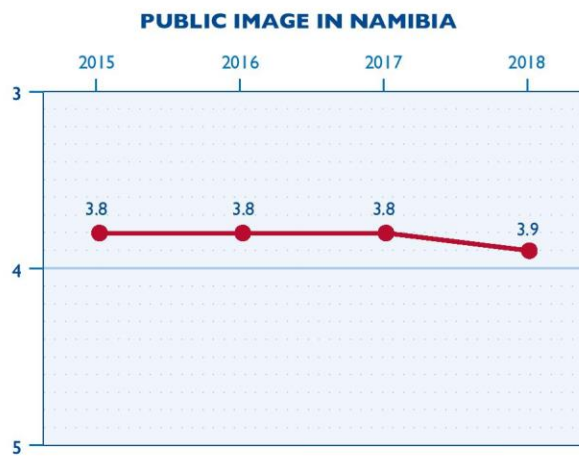
Network of AIDS Service Organizations, while the Namibian Chamber of Environment brought together organizations focused on environmental issues. The Namibian Association of Community-Based Natural Resource Management Support Organizations provided a successful example of sectoral cooperation in offering capacity building and training to a number of community-run conservation areas. The ACTION coalition continued to bring together human rights and governance-focused CSOs to campaign for an access to information law. Discussions started in 2018 among a number of Windhoek-based CSOs about establishing an information-sharing network for civil society, which could in turn promote the image of CSOs. They expected to establish the network in 2019.



Few opportunities exist for CSOs to build their internal capacities. In the past, some organizations offered capacity-building activities for smaller CSOs, but these activities mostly ceased in 2018. For example, LAC no longer had funding to offer training to other CSOs during the year. Most capacity building is offered by donors, is project based, and targets selected grantees. One of the few successful capacity-building initiatives is a program funded by the European Union that began in 2015 and is co-implemented by NID and the Konrad Adenauer Foundation. The program continued to build the organizational capacity of smaller, regionally based CSOs in 2018. Capacity-building activities by Deutsche Welle and the ACTION coalition helped to strengthen CSOs' communications skills, information literacy, and cooperation with the media.

The government maintains a point-of-contact for CSOs in the National Planning Commission. However, in practice this office shows little interest in supporting or engaging CSOs. The government provides no training to CSOs.

PUBLIC IMAGE: 3.9



The public image of Namibian CSOs worsened slightly in 2018 as the government expressed more negative views.

Most coverage of CSOs' activities is positive, and CSOs' events and workshops usually receive adequate coverage in newspapers and on radio and television. While the state-owned broadcaster, the Namibian Broadcasting Corporation, tends to ignore or downplay CSOs' critical commentary on government policies, the country's state and independent press makes extensive use of information provided by CSOs and regularly publishes their analyses on a variety of issues, especially housing and land reform. However, inexperienced journalists misreport information or misquote civil society activists on occasion. In general, few journalists have the knowledge to analyze information provided by CSOs, and

this sometimes acts as a barrier to more in-depth public discourse.

Negative views of CSOs originate primarily from government circles. During the September 2018 visit of the delegation for the African Peer Review Mechanism, whose members emphasized the benefits of working with civil society, the president publicly criticized CSO leaders as "failed politicians" seeking to exert influence through irregular means. The president has repeated this criticism of civil society on several occasions since coming into office in 2015, but his remarks seem to gain little traction. In addition, the government organized two press conferences to attack reports by IPPR on access to information and private-sector corruption, and the minister of poverty eradication and social welfare alleged that the Afrobarometer survey, which is conducted by IPPR, has a hidden agenda of turning "the people of this country against the government." IPPR strongly rebutted the

government's criticism of its research. Private-sector representatives generally avoid publicly supporting or engaging with CSOs on controversial topics, as they do not want to be seen as “anti-government.”

CSOs' overall lack of organizational capacity affects their public image, as many organizations do not have staff members specifically responsible for public relations or stable office staffs able to answer queries from the public. As a result, only a handful of CSOs, such as IPPR, LAC, and the Namibia Media Trust, have media profiles or clear strategies for developing relations with the public. CSOs make little use of information and communication technologies to promote their work or engage constituencies and donors. Only a few CSOs, such as ACTION and IPPR, make concerted efforts to use internet platforms to raise awareness and lobby constituencies.

There was no attempt by CSOs to self-regulate in 2018.

Disclaimer: *The opinions expressed herein are those of the panelists and other project researchers and do not necessarily reflect the views of USAID or FHI 360.*