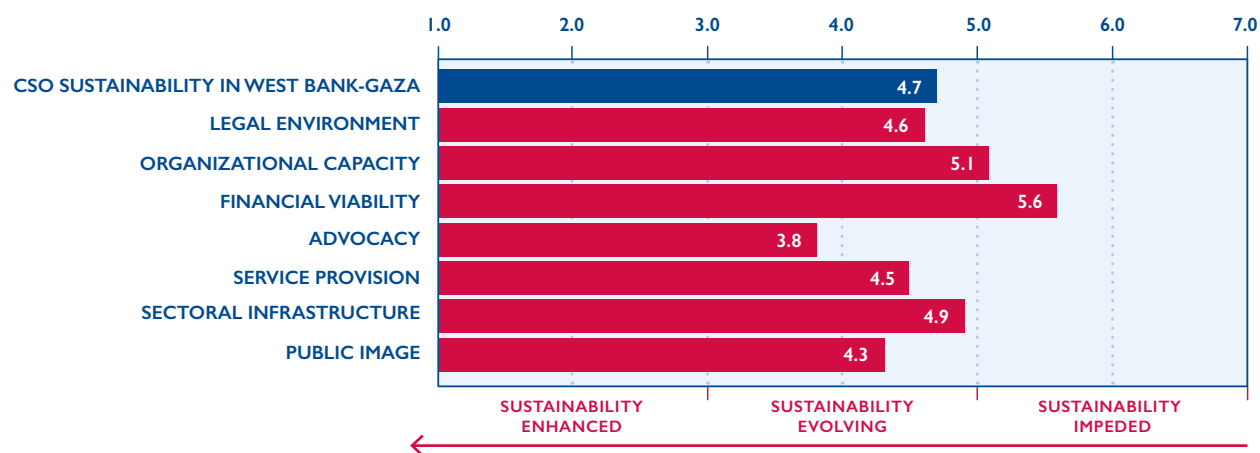


WEST BANK/ GAZA

Capital: East Jerusalem (WB), Gaza City (G)
Population: 2,747,943 (WB) 1,795,183 (G)
GDP per capita (PPP): \$4,300
Human Development Index: N/A
Freedom in the World: Not Free (28 (WB) 12 (G))

OVERALL CSO SUSTAINABILITY: 4.4



The West Bank and Gaza continued to experience political, economic, and social challenges in 2017. Palestinians faced restrictive policies and practices by Israeli forces, including limitations on their movement and expansion of Israeli settlements. Israel maintained its decade-long blockade of Gaza, restricting the movement and access of people and goods in and out of Gaza and curbing electricity and water supplies due to issues associated with revenue transfers with the Palestinian Authority (PA). As a result of the blockade, Palestinians in Gaza have limited access to healthcare, opportunities for education outside Gaza, and economic opportunities within the territory. The PA government in the West Bank and the Hamas government in Gaza remain divided with the two governments operating each territory separately.

In December 2017, the United States formally announced that it would recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and move the American embassy to Jerusalem. The US government asserted that this move did not presuppose the outcome of any final status issue, and that the final boundaries of Israeli sovereignty in Jerusalem would be left to the Israelis and Palestinians to decide. Nonetheless, the announcement was received with anger and frustration by many Palestinians, who also claim Jerusalem as their capital, and led to protests in the West Bank and Gaza.

Donor support to the Palestinian territories continued to decline in 2017, and despite the PA's improved fiscal performance, a financing gap still existed in the state budget. Funding shortages heavily limited CSOs' operations and abilities to achieve impact.

The PA continued to enact various laws without consulting with civil society. Among the most significant of these for civil society freedoms was the new Electronic Crimes Law, which President Mahmoud Abbas issued by executive decree in July 2017. The law, which applies in the West Bank, allows for restrictions to online expression based on vague terms such as "state security" and "social harmony." According to Palestinian human rights organizations, the law unduly constrains freedom of expression by granting the government vast authority to control online activity. During the year, both the PA and Hamas arrested activists for criticizing the government or its policies. Human rights organizations also documented mistreatment and torture of prisoners in 2017.

In this context, the sustainability of the CSO sector in the West Bank and Gaza declined in 2017. CSOs faced a more restrictive legal environment, with greater legal, regulatory, and practical constraints on their funding and activities. Organizational capacity remained relatively stable, though CSOs continued to struggle to build strong constituencies and execute strategic plans, and many dealt with high staff turnover. The decline in foreign donor support contributed to the deterioration of CSOs' financial viability, and led to the weakening of the sector's provision of goods and services as well. CSOs continued to advocate on a broad range of issues, though their advocacy efforts had few concrete achievements in 2017. Intermediary support organizations (ISOs), coalitions, and intersectoral partnerships persisted and the sectoral infrastructure overall was unchanged. The public perception of CSOs remained mixed.

The Ministry of Interior reported 3,213 registered CSOs in the West Bank and Gaza at the end of 2017, with 2,547 in the West Bank and 666 in Gaza. The majority of these operate on the local level and are concentrated in urban and administrative centers, such as Ramallah, Jerusalem, and Gaza City.

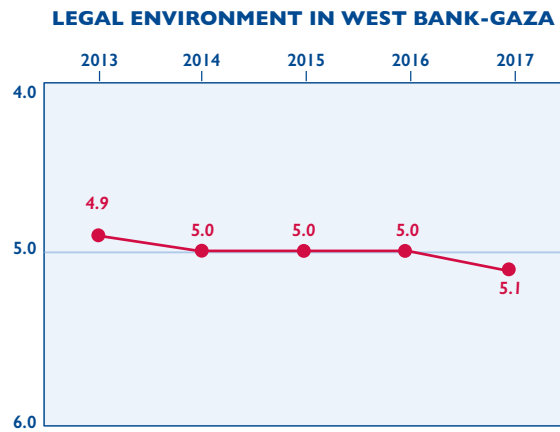
LEGAL ENVIRONMENT: 5.1

The legal environment for CSOs deteriorated in 2017 due to increased regulatory and practical restrictions, as well as a new law restricting online expression. CSOs in both the West Bank and Gaza are governed by the Law on Charitable Associations and Community Foundations (Law 1 of 2000, hereafter "CSO Law") and its implementing regulation Resolution 9 of 2003. While the law is considered one of the most enabling in the MENA region, CSOs still face legal obstacles and constraints. On paper, the law provides simple procedures by which CSOs must register with the Ministry of Interior, as well as legal protection from arbitrary rejection of registration applications. Nonetheless, in recent years, the PA and Hamas have increased the burden on CSOs' registration, operation, and funding through regulations, ministerial decisions, and official practices.

In recent years, some charitable and community-based CSOs have formed nonprofit companies in order to carry out economic activities to advance their causes, such as social development and support for marginalized communities. These nonprofit companies are under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of National Economy (MoNE) and governed by the Jordanian Companies Law of 1964 and subsequent Decree 6 of 2008. In 2010, the Palestinian Council of Ministers issued a regulation setting forth the process for registering nonprofit companies. A 2015 update to the regulation included a procedural mechanism for nonprofit companies to accept and receive funds and donations, which requires the government's pre-approval of both foreign and domestic funding. According to MoNE, some nonprofit companies did not abide by the law and framework; in 2017, therefore, MoNE decided to halt the registration of new nonprofit companies, such that no new registration applications were considered, and established a committee to revise the framework governing these companies.

CSOs consider the government's pre-approval requirement for funding for nonprofit companies as well as the 2017 decision to freeze registration of new nonprofit companies as violations of the 2008 decree and the Palestinian basic law. Moreover, CSO stakeholders are worried that the prior approval requirement will allow nonprofit companies to be denied funding if their opinions or objectives are disfavored, giving the government substantial control over which CSOs and activities can be sustained. For instance, the nonprofit Center for Palestine Research and Studies in Nablus has published opinion polls and other research that are critical of the PA; the well-known organization is now running out of funds and in 2017 was denied requests to receive additional donations and grants. CSOs also faced other new restrictions on their access to financial resources in 2017. According to CSO experts, for example, some banks refused to allow organizations to transfer funds externally through their bank accounts, citing a Ministry of Interior regulation. The CSOs were unable to confirm this with the Ministry, however, or discover the reason for [the regulation.

In June, the government passed the controversial new Electronic Crimes Law, which allows for restrictions on online expression based on vague terms such as "state security" and "social harmony." The law imposes sanctions of at least one year in prison or steep fines for violations. The government drafted and issued the Electronic Crimes Law by decree, without allowing an opportunity for CSOs or the public to provide feedback.



The Palestinian Non-Governmental Organizations Network (PNGO), which represents more than sixty CSOs, issued a statement condemning the law as it infringes on Palestinians' freedom of expression.

CSOs are legally allowed to earn income by providing services (such as health services, legal services, or subscription fees) or selling products. CSOs are also allowed to engage in fundraising campaigns, although they are required to obtain permission from the Ministry of Interior in advance. The law also allows CSOs to receive government funding in exchange for providing certain services, such as health and social services.

Political tensions between the administrations in the West Bank and Gaza continued to create additional legal and administrative challenges for CSOs. Authorities in one territory often exert quasi-legal power to obstruct the formation and operation of CSOs that are aligned with their political rivals in the other territory, whether by interfering in an organization's internal governance, requiring onerous security checks of staff members during registration, or freezing CSOs' and their members' bank accounts. For instance, in 2017 the PA government asked Publishers Union Society to replace two of its proposed board members (one in Gaza and one in Hebron) in order to register. It was finally registered after a six-month delay, and only after it replaced the board members.

Regardless of their affiliation, CSOs in both the West Bank and Gaza continued to face harassment by the state and state-aligned actors to an extent similar to that experienced the year before. The PA's security and intelligence agencies intervened in certain cases of CSO funding approval in 2017, according to several CSO representatives; on multiple occasions, security officials summoned employees of nonprofit companies for interviews that involved personal questions about staff members before allowing the company's funding applications to move forward.

Authorities in Gaza interfered in the registration of CSOs, as well as CSOs' opening of bank accounts, receipt of funds, and internal operations. As in 2016, in some cases, CSOs were required to obtain prior approval from the government before implementing any events, in clear violation of applicable laws. For instance, the Palestinian Bar Association–Gaza Center was required to coordinate with the Ministry of Justice prior to holding any event or meeting, and to have a representative from the ministry attend the event. Moreover, CSOs are not free to fully exercise the right to peaceful assembly: authorities in the West Bank and Gaza rely on remnants of the Jordanian and Egyptian Penal Codes to clamp down on unauthorized or unwanted gatherings. In July, for example, PA security forces cancelled a Palestinian Youth Forum that CSO Al-Sharq Forum had organized for young people to discuss research related to media, culture, and economics; the authorities said the cancellation was due to "security reasons."

Under the CSO Law, organizations are exempt from taxes and customs duties. In practice, however, they face challenges obtaining the exemption due to the division between the West Bank and Gaza governments. In 2017, many CSOs continued to pay taxes and registration fees to both governments in order to maintain their legal status.

CSOs often rely on legal aid, where available, to help navigate the maze of laws, regulations, and decrees. The ability to access legal aid depends largely on an organization's financial and administrative resources. Large organizations with extensive resources are usually better able to avail themselves of this protection than smaller, more financially insecure groups.

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY: 4.0

Organizational capacity across the sector remained fairly stable in 2017.

CSOs in both the West Bank and Gaza face difficulties related to constituency building. Some CSOs strengthened their ties to local beneficiaries through an increased focus on humanitarian assistance projects, particularly within Area C (under Israeli control).

But many CSOs find it difficult to sustain their connections to constituents after projects end as they operate on a project-by-project basis and projects tend to be transitory. In addition, funding constraints force CSOs to focus on external relations with potential donors in order to secure enough funds for their operations, rather than outreach and constituency building with local groups and beneficiaries.

CSOs continue to improve their capacities in strategic planning and performance management. However, since in many cases CSOs engage in strategic planning only to satisfy current or future donors, the planning often ends on paper, with limited translation into action. Further, the desire to please donors incentivizes CSOs to formulate their missions and strategic objectives in line with donors' interests, rather than the purposes and values the CSOs were established to achieve. Limited funding also impacts CSOs' achievement of the goals and objectives set forth in their plans. However, some CSOs do work towards operationalizing and implementing their strategic plans, and some have strong performance management systems and indicators.

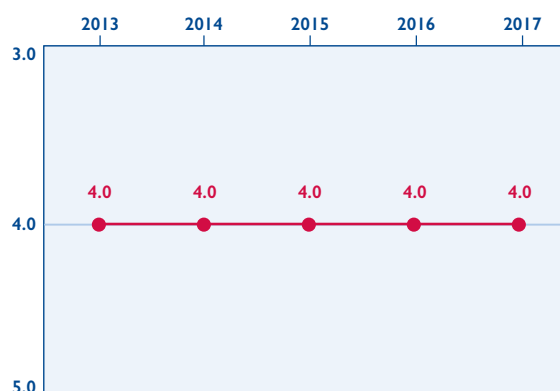
For instance, an external auditor helped Taawon, a welfare association, certify its quality management system to ISO 9001:2015, an international quality standard.

Although the CSO Law stipulates that board members must be elected, CSOs do not always adhere to this requirement. CSOs often select their board members based on personal connections—particularly to potential funding sources—rather than their vision or ability. As a result, in many organizations, the management has assumed some of the powers legally allocated to the board of directors, while board members do not actively engage in the organization's governance. An organization's bylaws and internal policies generally govern this division of labor but they are not always adhered to, leading to conflicts of interest and lack of transparency and accountability.

CSO experts observe that mobility of staff between and among organizations has increased, with high staff turnover across CSOs. This is likely a result of organizations' reliance on sporadic, project-by-project funding, which limits their ability to maintain full-time staff. Moreover, CSOs' low salaries, especially in comparison to INGOs, make many organizations less competitive in attracting talent. Due to scarce employment opportunities, especially in Gaza, young people continue to volunteer with CSOs to gain work experience and in the hopes of being employed if an opportunity arises.

Almost all CSOs have access to modern office technology including Internet access, smartphones, and office software, though smaller organizations find it more difficult to invest in regular upgrades and other improvements to their technology. An increasing number of organizations use social media, which serves as a valuable alternative to traditional communications platforms such as newspapers, radio, and television. Sharek Youth Forum, for instance, used social media to disseminate information to and conduct activities for young people and other audiences in 2017.

**ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY
IN WEST BANK-GAZA**



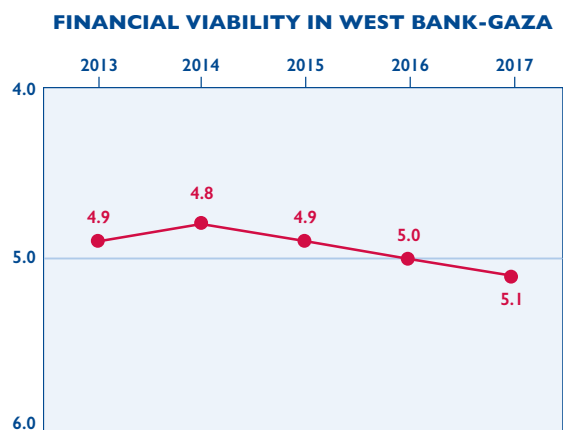
FINANCIAL VIABILITY: 5.1

CSOs' financial viability deteriorated in 2017. Most organizations are unable to fully sustain themselves on local funding, and foreign funds remain subject to the shifting priorities of international donors.

Local funding is an irregular and often inadequate means of covering CSO expenses. The private sector provides some funding to CSOs through corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives. Private sector entities that support CSOs include large banks and companies such as the Bank of Palestine, Palestine Telecommunication Company, and Palestine Cellular Communication Company (Jawal). Philanthropic contributions from wealthy individuals and foundations also provide some support to CSOs and CSO projects, though to a lesser degree.

Charitable societies in the West Bank and Gaza, as well as other small CSOs, also rely on local support through fundraising events and zakat giving. Atfaluna Society in Gaza, for example, launched a fundraising campaign in 2017 to make up for diminishing international funds and avoid closing a classroom for its deaf students. Other examples include Inash Alusra Charitable Society, Al-Ihsan Charitable Society, and Al-Sadeq Al-Taeb Society, which usually host events such as charitable dinners or launch fundraising campaigns during religious holidays that encourage *zakat* and other charitable giving. Many CSOs also rely on membership fees and contributions, although these usually serve as additional sources of income and are on their own insufficient to sustain an organization.

In the absence of substantial local private sector funds or charitable contributions, Palestinian CSOs rely largely on project funding from international donors. As a result, CSOs' fortunes are often tied to donors' priorities; reductions in funding or shifts of funds to different issues can leave organizations without vital revenue. Continuing a 2016 trend, a number of major international donors reduced their assistance to the Palestinian Territories in 2017, leading to a decline in the amounts reaching CSOs. Support from the UK's Department for International Development (DFID), for instance, declined from 68.7 million British pounds in 2016 to 54 million pounds in 2017 (approximately \$89 million to \$70 million), while funding from the EU declined from EUR 252 million to EUR 220 million (approximately \$292 million to \$255 million) over the same period.



Moreover, several foreign governments increased vetting procedures and other controls on the funds that go to the West Bank and Gaza, in particular restricting funding to groups that support the Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions (BDS) movement. The Norwegian government cut its funding to a Palestinian CSO that advocates for BDS and declared that it would implement a tougher vetting process for the funding of Palestinian CSOs in the future. Norway and Switzerland reversed their decisions to fund the Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law Secretariat, a joint mechanism that had supported CSOs that were linked to the BDS campaigns. The Danish government's review of its funding to the West Bank and

Gaza concluded that the government should likewise strengthen its vetting procedures.

The reliance on donor funding results in financial insecurity among Palestinian CSOs, with those that cannot secure sufficient funding left financially vulnerable. In 2017, funding shortages led many CSOs to scale back their core budgets, activities, and staffing. In Gaza, for example, Yaboos Charitable Society in Rafah and five other CSOs had to close in 2017 due to lack of funds.

The CSO Law requires organizations to file annual financial reports with the Ministry of Interior. In order to comply with this requirement, CSOs maintain basic financial management systems, and among other things, archive contracts, receipts, and paystubs. Many use accounting software or rely on the services of professional accountants. CSOs' annual financial reports often reflect their overall organizational and technological capacities. Large organizations with an active online presence regularly publish reports in Arabic and English, while smaller organizations with less technological capacity struggle to keep up. Even among established organizations, however, it is not uncommon for financial reports to be one or two years out of date.

ADVOCACY: 4.3

The environment for CSOs' advocacy efforts generally stayed the same in 2017, despite some indications of greater CSO-government cooperation. The PA announced in 2017 that it was committed to partnering with civil society, for example, and included provisions on CSO participation in public policy and law-making processes in the National Policy Agenda 2017-2022.

CSOs in the West Bank are occasionally invited to participate in policy discussions and conferences, such as the conference to discuss the 2017 budget or discussions around the 2017-2022 Social Development Sector Strategy. In general, however, CSOs in the West Bank still struggle to cooperate with the PA government. CSOs' advocacy role continued to be limited by the ongoing absence of the legislative council, as well, to which CSOs would otherwise raise law- and policy-related concerns and submit requests for change.

In Gaza, cooperation between CSOs and the Hamas government or the PA is even more complex, particularly as some donors have policies restricting participation of Hamas government officials in CSO activities. For instance, the Belgian government, a donor to the CSO Palestinian Housing Council in Gaza, requested that no government officials attend the Council's opening of a new public garden—an event that the Belgian government funded.

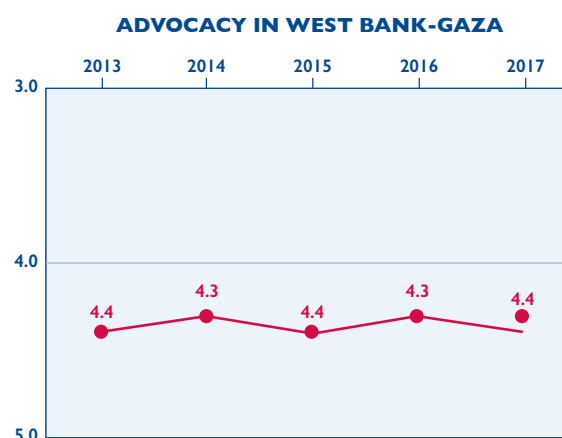
While cooperation with national-level authorities generally remains relatively insubstantial, CSOs coordinate more extensively with local bodies. CSOs regularly serve as advisors, responsible for providing input on municipal planning, service delivery, and policy development.

Several Palestinian CSOs engage in monitoring and advocacy related to human rights, both locally and internationally. The Coalition for Integrity and Transparency (AMAN), the Palestinian affiliate of Transparency International, publishes reports on corruption within the Palestinian Territories. Al Haq and the Independent Commission for Human Rights regularly advocate around rights issues and publish reports on rights and freedoms, while the Palestinian Center for the Independence of the Judiciary and the Legal Profession (Musawa) engages in advocacy related to the judiciary and separation of powers. Other CSOs, such as the Applied Research Institute – Jerusalem (ARIJ) and Palestinian Academic Society for the Study of International Affairs (PASSIA), provide academic and research services. Civil society advocacy groups are particularly active and visible on the international front. The activities of such CSOs largely focus on advocacy for human rights and freedoms in the context of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, such as the BDS Campaign, led by a broad coalition of CSOs, and organizations such as Stop the Wall and Defense for Children International–Palestine.

Throughout 2017, CSOs also advocated against the government's issuance of new special legislation, though CSOs' advocacy efforts did not result in any changes during the year. Such laws are passed by decree, often without public consultation or opportunity for CSOs' review. These included the High Criminal Court Law by Decree and the Law by Decree Amending the Law on the Supreme Constitutional Court, both of which were met with widespread, vocal opposition by CSOs due to their perceived infringement on the competences and independence of the Judicial Authority as well as guarantees of a fair trial. The government also passed by decree the controversial new Electronic Crimes Law, likewise with no opportunity for CSOs or the public to provide feedback. Soon after the law's passage, it was used as the legal basis for the arrest of several civil society actors including Issa Amro, activist and co-founder of the CSO Youth Against Settlements, and five journalists who worked for Hamas-affiliated media outlets in the West Bank.

CSOs carried out substantial advocacy efforts around the 2017 local elections. Organizations involved in these efforts included PNGO and the Palestinian Human Rights Organizations Council (PHROC). While CSOs' advocacy in favor of holding elections in Gaza as well as the West Bank was unsuccessful, they played an important role in raising awareness about and monitoring the polls. They partnered with the Central Elections Committee, issued official statements in favor of the elections, conducted public campaigns, and monitored polling places.

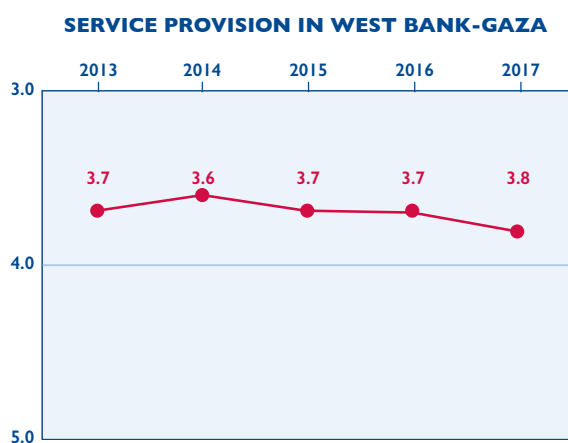
CSOs continued to have limited ability to influence laws governing their operations. In 2017, CSOs advocated against the new framework for nonprofit companies, mentioned above.



CSOs also called for shifting the oversight of CSO registration from the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Interior to the Ministry of Justice, and to limit the authority to suspend a CSO to the courts rather than the Ministry of Interior. None of these campaigns resulted in changes in 2017, however.

SERVICE PROVISION: 3.8

CSOs continued to offer a diverse range of goods and services, though their provision of services declined in 2017 largely due to political turmoil and funding shortages. Most CSOs involved in service delivery are dependent on international aid. Increasing uncertainty as to the future of a Palestinian state and a decline in support from international donors weakened CSOs' ability to provide services, as many were forced to downsize projects or saw projects end without renewal. In 2017, for instance, DFID halted funding to Palestinian CSO partner Ma'an Network—a nonprofit media organization; the funding cut-off resulted in an end to the What Works to Prevent Violence against Women and Girls Program, an initiative to provide media programming to prevent gender-based violence. Remaining CSO services continue to fill critical gaps in service provision by the



state, especially in areas like mental health, education, humanitarian aid, and the rights of women and youth. In Gaza, CSOs continue to offer humanitarian services linked to crisis management and post-conflict aid, such as medical and psychological assistance.

In 2017, some CSOs including the Center for Youth Economic Empowerment provided diverse projects and programs largely comprising small initiatives carried out over a short period of time, as opposed to large projects over longer periods of time. The shrinking size of projects combined with the need of CSOs to take on more varied projects in order to remain solvent contributed to a growing decline in specialization among CSOs in 2017.

CSOs in the West Bank and Gaza provide goods and services to their own constituencies as well as other beneficiaries. When programming allows, CSOs distribute and market resources, publications, and expert analysis to the public at large and sometimes to the private sector. They also consult and provide support for academic, religious, and government institutions. CSOs continue to provide goods and services without discrimination in regard to race and ethnicity. Some have also streamlined gender- and youth-sensitive approaches into their service delivery.

For the most part, the goods and services that CSOs provide reflect the needs and priorities of their constituents and communities. CSOs in the West Bank and Gaza follow two approaches to service delivery: either a bottom-up approach, based on qualitative and quantitative data collection to assess a population's needs, or a top-down approach which is determined beforehand by the CSO and/or a donor. The priorities of local government officials where CSOs operate may also affect their approach to service provision and delivery, particularly in Gaza.

Many CSOs in the West Bank provide services under government contracts. For instance, the Ministry of Social Development contracts CSOs to provide social services such as rehabilitation for people with disabilities, elderly care, mental health services, and early childhood development; since 2014 the Ministry has increased its procurement of CSOs' services from 2.5 to 7.5 million NIS (approximately \$694,000 to \$2.1 million). Such funding is not always reliable, however. The Al-Makassed Islamic Charitable Society Hospital, for example, provides health services to citizens covered by government insurance, but the government's payments are usually delayed due to the PA's financial difficulties.

CSO cost recovery is minimal and most CSOs provide services without charging fees. Only a few CSOs require their beneficiaries to pay, but those that do usually distinguish between paying and non-paying groups. For instance, several CSOs including the Palestine Agricultural Development Association (PARC) and Palestine Medical Relief Society (PMRS) provide services and collect fees based on recipients' abilities to pay, and may charge no fee or only a minimal amount if the recipient cannot afford to pay. While CSOs are sometimes criticized for their dependence on aid and lack of responsiveness to the community, the government generally recognizes and values their work through its public statements.

SECTORAL INFRASTRUCTURE: 4.0

The infrastructure supporting the CSO sector remained stable overall in 2017, with some strengthening of CSO coalitions and networks.

Several intermediary support organizations (ISOs) in the West Bank and Gaza continued to provide support to CSOs in 2017. These include PNGO and PNGO-Gaza, the Palestinian General Union of Charitable Societies (PGUCS), and the Palestinian National Institute of NGOs (PNIN) and the General Palestinian Union for NGOs in Gaza (GPU). ISOs continue to disseminate and coordinate information among CSOs, and provide particularly useful support to CBOs that work in remote areas and areas under Israeli control with additional laws and restrictions. Despite their access to a large pool of resources represented by the knowledge, capacity, and financial resources of their member organizations, however, ISOs suffer from inadequate human resources: most of their staff are part-time, which limits the organizations' abilities to engage consistently.

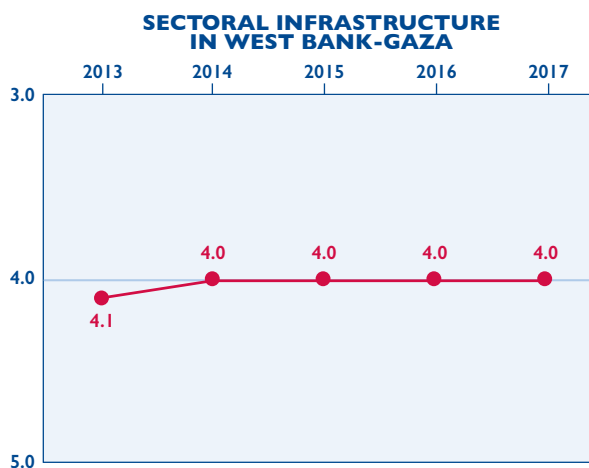
Coalitions exist throughout civil society and are generally effective at coordinating CSO efforts.

They are generally focused on a specific sector, campaign, or geographic area. Coalitions that were active in 2017 included PHROC, Palestinian Women National Coalition of 1325, the Coalition for Climate Justice, and the Coalition for Economic and Social Rights. In most cases, however, the sustainability of CSO coalitions depends on the urgency and importance of the issue they were formed to address, as well as whether they have a strong organization to lead them. CSO coalitions maintain an informal status, as the law does not provide for formal registration of coalitions or networks; accordingly, when a coalition achieves its purpose or if it fails to do so, it may easily dissolve.

In 2017, ISOs and coalitions continued to be active, particularly in advocacy efforts. During 2017, coalitions convened on multiple occasions to discuss and take action on various matters, including the PA's policy regarding Gaza, the growing number of decree-laws such as the Electronic Crimes Law, and harassment by security officials.

A small number of domestic organizations engaged in grant making in 2017, but these tended to be affiliated with or funded by international bodies. For instance, in 2017 the Palestinian Central Elections Commission, with funding provided by the EU, provided fourteen CSOs with grants to conduct various activities aimed at enhancing political participation in local elections.

CSO training is available in both the West Bank and Gaza and organizations generally perceive it to be effective. Some CSO experts believe that training has become redundant in terms of the topics offered, as well as the organizations and the individuals who attend the trainings. Many CSOs that are based in Gaza rely on remote training, due to the challenges they face when trying to send personnel abroad for training or to receive trainers from abroad into Gaza.



CSOs continue to partner with entities in other sectors. For instance, Palestinian CSOs have partnered with international development agencies, private companies, and individual investors in a project called Al Bayyara Parks Project to establish hundreds of new parks for children across the West Bank and Gaza. The partnership includes the nonprofit Taawon, Bank of Palestine, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), the nonprofit United Holy Land Fund, and the Muna and Bassem Heshmeh Foundation.

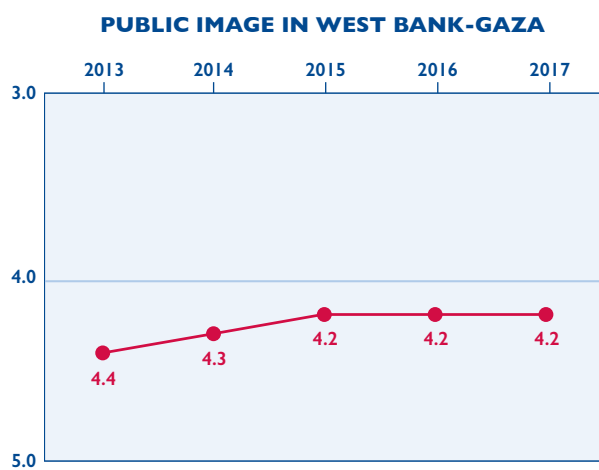
PUBLIC IMAGE: 4.2

CSOs' public image remained generally unchanged in 2017. In the West Bank, journalists are often willing to cover CSOs' engagement in national-level advocacy. This is particularly true when CSOs are advocating around issues in line with media interests, such as freedom of expression and government censorship. According to CSO experts, the media in Gaza does not play as positive a role in covering CSOs' role and activities.

In both the West Bank and Gaza, media outlets are often affiliated with certain political factions, which has an impact on their independence and media coverage. Because government-aligned stations do not seek out civil society leaders for interviews or programs, organizations focus on developing relationships with local TV and radio stations. Relationships with these outlets allow opportunities for CSOs to gain media exposure while connecting more directly with constituents.

The public maintains an appreciation for the role of CSOs in Palestinian society—particularly those organizations that provide valuable public services such as medical and social assistance. This positive image mainly exists among the beneficiaries of such services. Negative public perceptions of CSOs are largely based on perceptions of external influence by foreign donors or the government. CSOs are increasingly perceived as contractors of large, international donors and agencies that solely implement external actors' projects and programs.

Government officials in both the West Bank and Gaza administrations remain wary of civil society's objectives—particularly those of advocacy and human rights organizations. CSOs' opposition to several laws such as the Electronic Crimes Law has heightened suspicion and animosity by the state, which occasionally manifests in government harassment and obstruction of CSOs.



By contrast, CSOs that provide services generally enjoy better relations with the government and a more positive image among officials. In the West Bank, the relationship between CSOs and the private sector is generally positive, and several large banks and companies have CSR practices that support CSO projects and activities. Leading CSOs promote their public image and raise awareness about their activities through the efforts of communications and public relations staff, on organizational websites, and via social media channels. Smaller CSOs such as societies and small nonprofit companies focus on social media, especially Facebook, to promote their image and activities.

Some leading CSOs publish annual reports on their websites for the public to access, however, in many cases such reports are delayed, and many CSOs do not publish them at all.

CSOs developed a code of conduct in 2008 and updated it in 2015 to help CSOs meet established standards. As of 2017, the code had been endorsed and signed by 630 organizations. The NGO Development Center supported this trend in 2017 by providing technical assistance and certification to CSOs that complied with the code.