Mapping Study of Civil Society in Palestine - Update 2015

Civil Society Facility South

برنامج تمكين المجتمع المدني في جنوب المتوسط

FINAL REPORT

Prepared by Gianfrancesco COSTANTINI, Estephan SALAMEH, Maher ISSA

January 28, 2015

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List of acronyms

ACAD	Arab Center for Agricultural Development
Addameer	Prisoner Support and Human Rights Association
AFD	French Agency for International Development
Al Haq	Al Haq Institute
AIDA	Association of International Development Agencies
Al Marsad	Arab World Democracy and Electoral Monitor
Al Mezan	Al Mezan Center for Human Rights
Al Tareeq	The Palestinian Institution for Development and Democracy
AMAN	Coalition for Integrity and Accountability
ANSA	Arab Network for Social Accountability
APLA	Association of Palestinian Local Authorities
ARIJ	Applied Research Institute Jerusalem
ASALA	Palestinian Business Women Association
AWCSW	Association of Women Committees for Social Work
BADIL	Resource Center for Palestinian Residency and Refugee Rights
BDS	Boycott, Disinvestment and Sanctions Movement
BISAN	Center for Research and Development
CBO	Community Based Organisation
CFTA	Culture and Free Thought Association (Gaza)
CIVITAS	Civitas Institute
CS	Civil Society
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
CWLRC	Center for Women›s Legal Research & Consulting
DCI	Defence for Children International – Palestine Section
DFID	United Kingdom Department for International Development
DWRC	Democracy and Workers' Rights Center
EC	European Commission
ECHO	EU Directorate-General for Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection
ESCS	The Elderly Supportive Community Services Society
EU	European Union
EUREP	European Union Representative to West Bank, Gaza Strip and UNRWA
GCMHP	Gaza Community Mental Health Program
GCRC	General Commission for Regulating Cooperatives
GIZ	German agency for international cooperation
GUCC	General Union of Cultures Centres
HDIP	Health, Development, Information and Policy Institute
HR/GG	Human Rights and Good Governance Secretariat
Hurryyat	Center for Defense of Liberties and Civil Rights
HWC	Health Work Committees
ICB	International Center of Bethlehem
ICCO	Interchurch Organisation for Development Cooperation
ICP	Institute of Community Partnership

IDPsLeague	Internally Displaced Persons League
IEPALA	Instituto de Estudios Politicos para America Latina y Africa
INGOs	International Non Governmental Organisations
IO	International Organisations
IPCC	International Peace and Cooperation Center
IPCRI	Israel/Palestine Center for Research and Information
JCSER	Jerusalem Center for social and economic rights
LA	Local Authority
LACD	Local Aid Coordination
LDC	Wall damages registration committee
FLC	Fund for Local Cooperation
MA'AN	MA'AN Development Center
MAS	Palestine Economic Policy Research Institute
Masader	Masader Web Portal set up by the NGO Development Center
MIFTAH	Palestinian Initiative for the Promotion of Global Dialogue & Democracy
MoSA	Ministry of Social Affairs
MUSAWA	Palestinian Center for the Independence of Judiciary and Legal Profession
Muwatin	Palestinian Institute for the Study of Democracy,
NDC	NGO Development Center
NDP	Palestinian Authority›s National Development Plan
NGO	Non Governmental Organisation
NORAD	Norwegian aid agency
NORWAC	Norwegian Aid Committee
NPA	Norwegian People's Aid
NSA	Non State Actors
OCHA	UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
oPT	Occupied Palestinian Territory
PA	Palestinian Authority
Palthink	Palestinian Think Tank Organization
PalVision	Palestinian Vision
PANORAMA	Panorama Center for the Dissemination for Democracy and Community Development
PAPP	UNDP's Programme of Assistance to the Palestinian People (PAPP)
PARC	Palestinian Agricultural Development Association – Palestinian Agriculture Relief Committees
PASSIA	Palestinian Academic Society for the Study of International Affairs
PCC	Palestinian Counselling Centre
PCDCR	The Palestinian Center for Democracy & Conflict Resolution
PCHR	Palestinian Center for Human Rights
PCPD	Palestinian Center for Peace and Democracy
PCS	Palestinian Consultative Staff for NGOs Development
PENGON	Palestinian Environmental NGOs Network
PFPPA	Palestinian Family Planning & Protection Association
PFU	Palestinian Farmers Union
PLC	Palestinian Legislative Council

PLO	Palestinian Liberation Organisation
PNA	Palestinian National Authority
PNCR	Palestinian Network for Children's Rights
PNGO IV	World Bank "Palestinian NGO Project IV"
PNGO	Palestinian NGO Network
PNIN	Palestinian NGO National Institute
POGAR	Programme on Governance in the Arab Region
PPC	Palestinian Peace Coalition
PYALARA	Palestinian Youth Association for Leadership and Rights Activation
RIWAQ	Riwaq Historic and Cultural Heritage
SAWA	All the Women Together Today and Tomorrow
SDC	Swiss Agency for Development Cooperation
SFCG	Search for Common Ground
Sharek	Sharek Youth Forum
SIDA	Swedish International Development Agency
SMEs	Small and Medium Enterprises
SSF	Single Support Framework
TIRI	TIRI Make Integrity Work
ToR	Terms of Reference
TRC	Treatment and Rehabilitation Center for Victims of Torture
UAWC	Union of Agricultural Work Committees
UHCC	Union of Health Care Committees
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations Children›s Fund
UNIFEM	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
UNRWA	United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East
US Aid	United States International Aid Agency
WA	Welfare Association
WASH	Water Sanitation and Hygiene
WCLAC	Women's Centre for Legal Aid and Counseling
WEDO	Water and Environmental Development Organization
WHO	World Health Organisation

Executive Summary

In January 2011, the Office of the EU Representative to the West Bank, Gaza Strip and UNRWA launched a mapping study on civil society organisations (CSOs) in Palestine[1]. The study was finalised in May 2011. In October 2014 a second study aimed at updating and widening the mapping study of 2011 was launched with the support of the EU's Civil Society Facility South programme. The research work was finalised in December 2014. Its main findings are outlined in this report. The two studies have been carried out within the framework of the EU policies for supporting civil society in partner countries. Such policies, particularly after the "Arab Spring" in 2011, have been increasingly focused on supporting the engagement of civil society organisations in policy dialogue and in governance, not merely as partners in project and programme implementation, but as partners in policy making and management of public resources; thus recognising both the legitimacy and the capacity of CSOs to play an autonomous and active role in partnership with public institutions and other actors.

The study's theoretical framework is based on a set of concepts and analytical tools aiming at: identifying the main actors involved in civil society development, analysing the dynamics and processes in which CSOs are involved and singling out the main capacity building and institutional development needs of CSOs. The study focused not only on Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), but on a wider and multifaceted universe of organisations that can be analysed through four main organisational levels: the grassroots organisations and Community Based Organisations (CBOs) (first level), NGOs and other intermediary organisations (second level), and then the local, thematic and national platforms (third and fourth levels).

From the methodological perspective, the mapping is characterised by some specific main features, including: a participatory approach; the integration of both quantitative and qualitative information; the integration of "factual elements" (processes, situations, resources, actions, etc.) and "cognitive elements" (such as the representations of reality, the objectives and goals of stakeholders, their expectations, etc.), and finally the capitalisation of existing knowledge and information. A variety of information sources have been used, including documentary sources, consultation activities such as individual interviews, focus group meetings and workshops, and questionnaire – based surveys.

Issues and stakes at national level

CSOs in Palestine manage a large part of social services. Despite this fact, CSOs are not always recognised as actors able to contribute to policy making and good governance. Nevertheless, a stronger participation of CSOs in governance and policy dialogue, at the local and national levels, is crucial given the current realities in Palestine, mainly:

- The uncertainty and the dynamics related to the Israeli occupation influence not only the capacity and possibility for CSOs to operate, but deeply affect Palestinian social cohesion, economic development and any hope for peace in the region, including the people's trust in public authorities and their legitimacy;
- The unclear identity of CSOs themselves and their ambiguous relationship with public authorities that hinder the possibility of CSOs to engage in policy and governance mechanisms. The division among Palestinian territories – the West Bank, divided into Areas A, B and C and separated from East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip –affects the formation and activities of CSOs, creates different needs and demands, and contributes to the emergence of different identities and conflicts. This reality hinders CSOs' ability to play a role in the maintenance of Palestinian unity and to create linkages between people and public authorities. Additionally, the reality of territorial division is restricting the ability of CSOs to produce and channel knowledge and information, maintain culture and identity and facilitate the formulation of relevant policies.

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[1]*This designation shall not be construed as recognition of a State of Palestine and is without prejudice to the individual positions of the Member States on this issue*

- The decentralisation process is rooted in the Palestinian constitution. However, this process has been managed through a top-down approach, which is often ineffective. Therefore, it requires CSOs to play an active role, as organised actors, to bring up the voice and perspectives of citizens to the decision making level. Additionally, CSOs need to work closely with local authorities in advocating for a process that would recognise CSOs not only as "service delivery actors," but more importantly as key players in decision making and local development.
- The innovation processes require CSOs to play a stronger role, both in producing and disseminating knowledge and in building bridges between society and universities – as well as other CSOs – in order to increase the relevance of their action.
- The cooperation processes through which CSOs engage with other actors, such as international NGOs (INGOS) and international organisations (IOs), are often challenged by the emergence of competition dynamics between the local and international actors, as well as by the tendency – often by INGOs – to engage directly in project implementation. In such framework new partnership modalities need to be developed in order to foster the assumption of new roles by international partners, including those related to innovation and to the exercise of more effective political pressure.

The specific issues and stakes at local level

In addition to stakes and challenges involving CSOs at the national level, some processes generate issues and challenges at the local/regional levels. These specifically include:

- The establishment of mechanisms that would allow the Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip to have a voice in the reconstruction process following the Israeli military operation of July-August 2014;
- The "sharpening" of Israeli occupation practices in East Jerusalem that hinders the work of Palestinian CSOs and creates a difficult environment for CSOs to operate in the city. As a result, CSOs in East Jerusalem operate in a space characterised by uncertainty, lack of interlocutors and isolation.
- The need to play an active role to ensure better integration of the interests and needs of the communities located in "Area C" in the policies of the Palestinian Authority and the services provided by the Palestinian governmental institutions.

CSO engagement in governance and policy dialogue

There are a number of initiatives in which CSOs are engaged in governance and policy dialogue at central and local levels. In most of these initiatives, CSOs are invited by the public authorities to participate in policy discussions. These initiatives are organised under the following categories in the report:
- Policy development and law formulation;
- Fostering good governance and social accountability;
- Improvement of public service delivery;
- Support to decentralisation and local governance;
- Support to the improvement of international cooperation effectiveness;
- Support to international campaigns and policy dialogue at regional and international levels.

Despite this wide range of initiatives and experiences, CSOs' engagement in policy making and good governance is still weak and often has limited impact. This is caused by the lack of a recognised social space for CSOs in governance and policy dialogue; the competition and lack of trust among CSOs, limited legitimacy and communication with constituencies, and by focusing almost exclusively on service delivery.

Looking at past experiences, the following lessons learned can be identified:

a) International NGOs can play key functions to initiate and strengthen governance and policy dialogue initiatives, such as: facilitating innovation and transfer of approach, information and knowledge from other countries; facilitating access to funding for organisations to overcome legal or locale related obstacles that would otherwise hinder access to funding; creating a safer environment for local CSOs, etc.;

b) The variety of experiences and conditions in Palestine indicate that the possibility to have a plurality of independent and different funding mechanisms, involving both international and national donors, is both a need and an opportunity.

c) The most successful initiatives were not only based on the transfer of knowledge and information through training and workshops, but have included support to institutional consolidation through a set of follow up activities, including technical assistance and in some cases the provision of resources (including "core" or institutional funding).

An analytical view of Palestinian CSOs

There are 2,793 CSOs distributed across Palestine[2]. About 57% of these organisations operate only in a confined area, such as: a single village, a city in which they are based, or in some cases, a district or a governorate. The other 43% of CSOs are working within a whole region or across the whole of Palestine. The distribution of activities suggests that, even if all organisations define themselves as "NGOs" and compete equally for funding, almost 60% of these organisations are defined more as "community based organisations" (CBOs) or as self-help groups set up by a group of individuals who aspire to solve local problems and improve the situation of their local communities. Only a small number of organisations concentrate their work on one sector of activity, others work in a minimum of 2 or 3 sectors and at least half of the organisations address 4, 5 or even more sectors. The lack of specialization by CSOs is an issue of concern. Unless an organisation is very large and has been established for some time, it is unrealistic to have the needed technical capacity to engage in many sectors, which would require the accumulation and production of specialized knowledge.

A specific analysis of the main needs emerging from the different groups/levels of organisations is extensively elaborated in the report; however, the main findings are listed here:

Emerging needs of **CBOs, grassroots organisations, local NGOs and other 1st level organisations** include the need to:
- Develop a reflection of the CSO›s role at grassroots / local level;
- Recognize 1st level CSOs as actors that can take an active part in governance, policy dialogue and development actions, without the need to transform into an "NGO";
- Strengthen existing organisations to help play an active role in policy dialogue, instead of creating new grassroots bodies;
- Reduce actions that would increase competition at the local level and would increase vertical and unequal partnerships;
- Support actions that organisations tend to carry out autonomously, rather than as result of external proposals or demands.

Emerging needs for 2nd level CSOs (NGOs and other intermediate organisations) are:
- Define CSOs› identity and role;
- Knowledge sharing and dissemination aimed at developing capacities in order for CSOs to be able to actively engage in development issues;
- The establishment of an environment that would allow CSOs to actively participate in policy dialogue, local governance and innovation processes.

[2] *Interview with Ministry of Interior (December 7, 2014). Data retrieved in the Ministry database*

For thematic or geographic platforms (3rd level CSOs), the following needs emerged:

- The need to review the existing legal framework – based on the Law 1/2000 - to facilitate the official registration of thematic or geographic networks and platforms;
- The need to support existing networks to establish functioning structures;
- The need to support existing networks to define their own development strategies.

4th level organisations, including the national platforms, have been characterised in the last 3 years by an increased vitality. In this framework, emerging needs include:

- Support to existing networks in order to establish functioning structures;
- Support to existing networks to define their own development strategies, based on the analysis of expectations of member organisations and on the identification of services/functions that would not generate competition and conflicts, including functions related to advocacy, knowledge production and sharing, information dissemination, innovation dissemination;
- Support to secretarial tasks, information collection and dissemination, and networking functions, in order to allow for the organisational consolidation of networks;
- Recognition of the general platforms' role as channels of communication with CSOs at the different levels and as legitimate actors in governance and policy dialogue mechanisms at the national level.

Conclusions and recommendations

The lack of a strategic and common vision of the roles that CSOs can assume is a key weakness of the Palestinian CSOs. Other weaknesses are related to the tendencies of CSOs to remain "locked" in service delivery function, to lose their linkages with constituencies and communities, to remain dependant on donors and other political actors, or to continue to operate in isolation or renounce participating in innovation, etc.

CSOs› weaknesses are the result of internal dynamics (such as those related to internal governance mechanisms) and external ones (such as those deriving from lack of social recognition and the partially unsupportive legal framework). Based on these dynamics it is possible to identify some needs that should be considered in order to foster a stronger engagement of CSOs in policy, local governance and development.

- Despite some tendencies to collaborate and network, there is a prevalent situation of self-isolation by CSOs, which tends to concentrate on their own functioning. Competition often exists among CSOs and in relation with other actors (including other CSOs, local authorities, private sector, etc.). Therefore there is a need to support initiatives that would establish bridges amongst CSOs and between CSOs and other actors, with a special focus on the private sector and local authorities.
- Networks, unions and platforms are a group of actors who play a key role in fostering greater engagement of CSOs in policy dialogue and governance mechanisms. However, they are still weak, with an undefined role, which often leads to conflicts and competition with member organisations and among "collective organisations". There is a need for supporting networks, unions and platforms to define their specific role and exercise their functions accordingly. Such roles would be mainly related to networking, knowledge management, joint policy agenda setting, and representation in local, national and international forums. Earmarked resources should therefore be allocated to "collective organisations" for fulfilling their roles.
- Existing legal frameworks are not fully supportive of freedom of association and of valorising the action of CSOs, but they are also a causal factor for a variety of processes related to internal governance of organisations, their relationships with constituencies and their capacity and orientation to cooperate. A review of current regulations is consequently needed, in order to formulate new regulations, taking into account the different forms of CSOs and the variety of roles they play. In this framework, it would also be particularly necessary to develop a simplified local registration procedure for CBOs, so they are not forced to become NGO-type organisations.

- Even if some spaces exist for CSO engagement in governance and policy dialogue, there is a widely perceived situation of vulnerability of CSOs in relation to governmental actors and political parties. Such a perception is a big obstacle for active, autonomous CSO participation in governance and policy dialogue mechanisms. Diplomatic and political support for fostering a wider recognition of CSO legitimacy to engage with public authorities in setting and monitoring policies, services, and democratic processes is a basic need.
- Existing spaces and opportunities for engagement in governance and policy dialogue are very much dependent upon the direct intervention of international donors and agencies. In order to further enlarge these spaces and make them more commonplace, rather than an ad hoc "project" or «programme», there is a need to include participatory governance mechanisms in all cooperation initiatives, at different levels and in all steps (identification and formulation, monitoring, evaluation) and to include participatory governance mechanisms in all initiatives aimed at strengthening / supporting public services (monitoring and management committees).
- For years Palestinian CSOs have been the recipients of a large variety of training and capacity building activities. However, these activities have not been always effective. In order to make knowledge sharing, technology transfer and information dissemination an effective tool for supporting CSO development, a shift in the approach is needed, from training actions targeting individuals to "institutional capacity development" processes, including long-term assistance and support to involved organisations.
- Most organisations are involved in service delivery and their main funding modality is through short/medium term projects. This generates a stressful situation for organisations and for institutional partnerships and forces organisations to invest precious resources exclusively on fundraising. Strengthening support to long-term initiatives and core funding mechanisms is therefore a basic condition for allowing a more active and effective engagement of CSOs in governance and policy dialogue, improving their quality of action and accountability in front of partners and constituencies, and for strengthening cooperation with public authorities at the local and national levels.

Further specific recommendations are proposed in the report, based on the review of the 2011 CSO support strategy and the 2014 "**EU Country Roadmap for engagement with Civil Society, 2014 - 2017".** These recommendations specifically consider the modalities for improving the institutional and operational environment of CSOs, the ways for improving CSOs' capacities, and the possibilities for improving CSOs engagement in governance and policy dialogue.

Finally, recommendations are also provided regarding the participation of CSOs in the activities carried out within the EU focal sectors in the context of the **Single Support Framework** - "Support to governance at local and national levels», «Support to the private sector and economic development» and «Support to water and land development» as well as the needs emerging in the different geographic areas of Palestine.

1. Background

1.1 The institutional framework

In January 2011, the Office of the EU Representative in the West Bank, Gaza Strip launched a mapping study on civil society organisations in Palestine[3]. The study was finalised in May 2011. In October 2014, a second study aimed at updating and widening the mapping study of 2011 was launched with the support of the EU's Civil Society Facility South Programme. The research was finalised in December 2014.

The two studies have been carried out within the framework of EU policies for supporting civil society in partner countries. Such policies, particularly after the "Arab Spring" in 2011, have been increasingly focused on supporting the engagement of civil society organisations in policy dialogue and in governance, not merely as partners in project and programme implementation, but as partners in policy making and management of public resources, thus recognising both their legitimacy and their capacity to play an autonomous and active role together in partnership with public institutions and with other actors[4].

The acknowledgement of the role and autonomy of CSOs has been the main focus of the EU Commission's Communication: "The Roots of Democracy and Sustainable Development: Europe›s engagement with Civil Society in External Relations" issued in 2012. In this framework and in the context of the EU cooperation in Palestine, a wide consultation process with stakeholders was carried out for both the elaboration of the EU multiannual cooperation strategy «Single Support Framework (SSF) 2014-2015»[5] and the formulation of the EU Roadmap for supporting civil society organizations, adopted by the EU and the EU MS in June 2014.

1.2. Objectives

The **overall objective** of the mapping is to strengthen the involvement of civil society in public affairs and in the elaboration, implementation and monitoring of development strategies, in line with the current Palestinian Authority›s National Development Plan (2014-16).

The **specific objective** is:

«to update/upgrade the existing mapping study of 2011 by expanding its scope in order to provide a comprehensive complete overview of the civil society state of play in Palestine, including its capacity-building needs and recommendations for better EU engagement with CSOs in/through cooperation and policy dialogue.»

In fulfilling these objectives, the study was set to include:

- give some recommendations concerning the EU Country Roadmap for Engagement with Civil Society and mainstreaming civil society in the SSF;
- Identify **key CSOs and structures** in civil society, and to identify their **key constraints** and their main **capacity building needs**;
- Identify the **key policy areas** in which CSOs could successfully engage, given their current capacities, the political context and the state of the civil society sector.

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[3]This designation shall not be construed as recognition of a State of Palestine and is without prejudice to the individual positions of the Member States on this issue.
[4]COM 492/2012, "The Roots of Democracy and Sustainable Development: Europe›s Engagement with Civil Society in External Relations".
[5]Single Support Framework (SSF), European Union Representative Office in Jerusalem (EUREP Office) 2014/2015 (28/02/2014). The SSF identify three focal sectors for EU cooperation: support to Governance at local and national levels; support to the private sector and economic development; support to water and land development. Special attention will be given in the EU cooperation to the development of Area C. East Jerusalem is supported as a non-focal sector, while the support to PEGASE DFS and URWA is maintained.

- Provide an overview of current donor strategies in civil society development and an indication of future trends in terms of overall involvement and areas of focus.
- Elaborate an operational strategy for effectively promoting the engagement of civil society in policy dialogue and governance, also providing recommendations on how to use the existing EC instruments (bilateral assistance, thematic programmes, geographic programmes, etc.) in support of CSO's role in policy making in Palestine.

1.3 Civil society in Palestine: a diachronic and geographic view

As it was discussed in the CSO mapping carried out in 2011, a peculiar feature of Palestinian CSOs is the fact that many of them have been created out of an established "state framework" and prior to the establishment of the Palestinian National Authority. The first developments of Palestinian CSOs can be dated back to early 20th century. They played a key role in local and national development prior to the establishment of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) in 1964 and then in the period between 1964 and 1988. In this period, the PLO supported the establishment of voluntary work committees, grassroots youth groups and women organisations, while many health and education organisations emerged. In the absence of a state and under occupation, these organisations found their main role in the provision of services and relief work. A more active political role was assumed by CSOs during the surge of the First Intifada movement (1987), with a stronger focus on the defence of human rights. A new phase in CSO development was initiated in 1994, with the creation of the Palestinian Authority (PA). Many services which were provided by CSOs before 1994 were transferred to the public authorities (as in the case of the Health Service Council, which ran 64 clinics and that was merged in the public health service). Since then, the number of CSOs has dropped significantly (over 800 organisations disappeared). However, when local CSOs became an important channel of international aid to Palestine, their numbers started to grow at a fast pace. At the same time, the presence of international NGOs and international organisations started to increase.
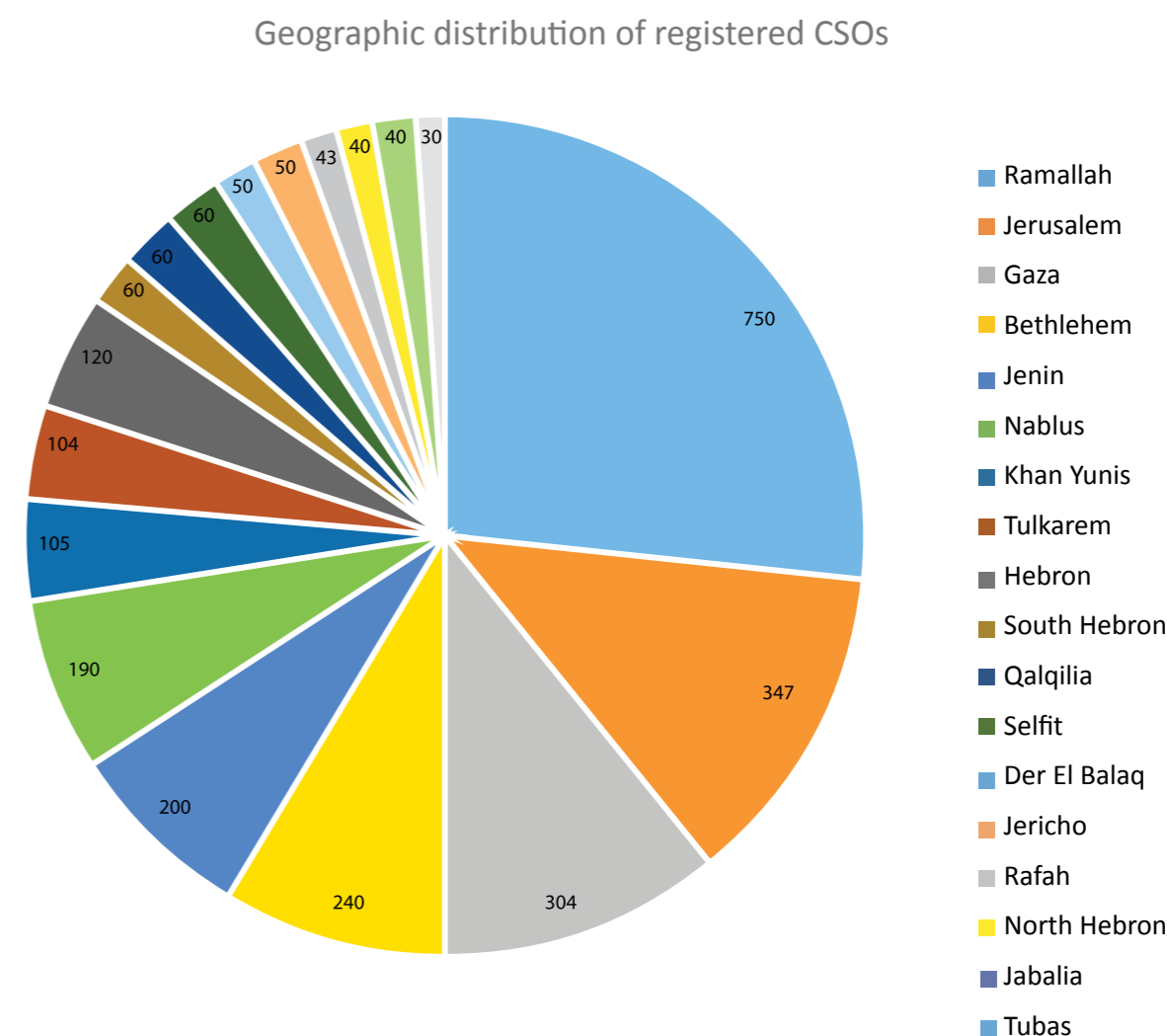
An important change is marked in this process by the promulgation in the year 2000 of the "Law of Charitable Associations and Community Organisations". While the law maintains a certain control over CSOs by the Ministry of Interior, it also recognised the CSOs' autonomy and independence from public authorities. The following years have been characterised by a proliferation process involving CSOs, correlating to a steady increase in the growth of international support. In 1996, external aid funds to Palestinian CSOs accounted for less than 50% of their total funding, it become close to 80% at the end of the decade[6]. According to most observers (including civil society leaders, academic researchers and public authorities), the rise of funds resulted in a decrease of civil society engagement in advocacy and policy work: rather than playing a role in representing citizens in front of other actors, most organisations assumed an exclusive focus on service delivery and project implementation. Despite the reduction in available funding and increased engagement of public authorities in service delivery, this is currently the main tendency[7].

The proliferation of organisations can easily be perceived by looking both at the number of CSOs identified by the UN Office of the Special Coordinator in the Occupied Territories (which in 1999 recorded 261[8], while these were 716 in 2006) and to the data of the Palestinian Ministry of Interior[9]. According to the latter, the registered CSOs are currently 2,793, while the official number in 2012 where 2,245[10]. In just two years there was an increase of over 540 organisations. According to the Registration Office of CSOs, 114 new organisations were registered during 2014 and 89 were dismantled either upon their request or for their non-compliance

with the law. While there is an increase in the number of organisations, the pace of the growth seems to be slowing down.

The territorial concentration of CSOs is marked by a concentration in some governorates, namely Ramallah, Jerusalem and Gaza, followed by Bethlehem and Jenin. Such concentration can be easily explained by the fact that most NGOs try to have their offices as close as possible to the donors› and the PA›s offices. Ramallah alone hosts almost 2/5 of the registered CSOs. The organisations registered in Jerusalem include community-based organisations, small charities and sport clubs, as well as some very large charities managing hospitals and schools. Among the smaller organisations, many are not active and in some cases do not even exist on the ground. About 100 CSOs are based in East Jerusalem as reflected in the Jerusalem focus group meetings, provided by some key informants and in data of CSO networks that have presence in East Jerusalem[11].

Figure 1 – Geographic distribution of registered CSOs (2014)

Geographic distribution of registered CSOs

Legend: Ramallah 750, Jerusalem 347, Gaza 304, Bethlehem 240, Jenin 200, Nablus 190, Khan Yunis 105, Tulkarem 104, Hebron 120, South Hebron 60, Qalqilia 60, Selfit 60, Der El Balaq 50, Jericho 50, Rafah 43, North Hebron 40, Jabalia 40, Tubas 30

Source: Elaboration on data from the Palestinian Ministry of Interior (Dec. 2014)

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[6]De Voir J. Tartir A., Tracking external donor funding to Palestinian NGOs in the West Bank and Gaza 1999 – 2008, MAS – NDC, Ramallah, 2009
[7]STEM-VCR, 2013
[8]UN Office of the Special Coordinator in the Occupied Territories, Directory of the NGOs in the WB, 1999; UN Special Coordinator in the Occupied Territories, Directory of the NGOs in the WB, 2006;
[9]Interview (December 7, 2014)
[10]NDC, 2012. The number of registered organisations is considered to be much higher than that of active organisations. In fact, organisations which have not projects can maintain their registration.

[11]See among others the Jerusalem Union of Charitable Societies and the "Grassroots Jerusalem" network.

2. Theoretical and Methodological Framework

2.1 Main concepts and categories used in the mapping

The study's theoretical framework is based on the use of a set of concepts and analytical tools facilitating the identification of the main actors involved in civil society development, the analysis of the dynamics and processes in which CSOs are involved and the reflection of the main capacity building and institutional development needs of CSOs.

A working definition of civil society organisations

The concept of «CSOs» encompasses a wide range of actors with different roles and mandates. The EU considers CSOs to include all non-State, not-for-profit structures, non-partisan and non–violent, through which people organise themselves to pursue shared objectives and ideals, whether political, cultural, social or economic[12].

In line with recent CSO mapping exercises carried out in the framework of EU actions for supporting CSOs, an operational concept was adopted including all forms of grouping or aggregation involving citizens, formal and informal (i.e. collective organised action), that are characterised by:

- **relative autonomy** from other actors (thus organisations whose decisions do not depend upon the state and political institutions, nor upon religious institutions and market actors);
- **voluntary and free adhesion** of members (thus organisations whose members are not legally or socially obligated to participate);
- **independence from family and kin linkages** (thus organisations that are not a direct emanation of family or kinship related institutions);
- **action space that is mainly outside the realm of "political institutions"** (thus organisations that do not directly participate in political elections and in the functioning of political institutions, such as political parties, parliament, representative democracy institutions, government; however, CSOs can interact with these institutions);
- **prevalently engaged in actions that are not aimed at generating "profit"** (however, organisations carrying out economic activities aimed at generating resources to be reinvested for achieving the organisation goals – including cooperatives, non-profit companies and "social enterprises" - are to be considered as CSOs);
- **(Socially) legitimate status** that does not depend on legal frameworks and provisions, but on being a citizen's initiative to support a cause and/or solve a problem.

Moreover, according to the concept adopted in the research, civil society actors **focus on social responsibility,** since they are operating in favour of the collective interest and of social and economic development in their own territory. This implies that organisations directly promoting individual or "party" interest will not be included among CSOs.

A differentiated approach to civil society

Based on the above operational concept, the study focuses not only on NGOs, but also on a wider and multifaceted universe of organisations that can be analysed through four main organisational levels:

- First level includes grassroots groups, cooperatives and community-based organisations (including informal ones such as youth and women groups, sport associations, parents committees, etc.).

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[12] European Commission, Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committees of the Regions: The roots of Democracy and sustainable development: Europe's engagement with Civil Society in external relations (Brussels, 12.9.2012 COM(2012) 492 final)

- Second level is composed of NGOs and other intermediary organisations, characterised by the fact that they produce services or generate knowledge and policy actions, rather than aim to benefit the member constituency or members;
- Third level comprises the aggregations of CSOs focusing on a sector or a theme, a geographical area or a campaign;
- Fourth level consists of the general aggregations of CSOs, such as national civil society platforms.

Such categorisation does not pretend to reflect reality, but allows for a better understanding and analysis of CSOs' dynamics, as tested in most CSO mapping studies carried out in the framework of several EU initiatives around the world. Special focus is on the dynamics concerning the border areas between the different "levels" as well as on the emergence of organisations that participate in more than one level. The model mainly serves as a reference for identifying dynamics and capacity building needs. When relevant, the study considers other features to identify emerging CSOs sub-groups (e.g. engagement in specific sectors).

Further actors

While focusing on CSOs, the mapping also included, as target groups, the following:
- Private sector organisations and chambers of commerce and industry (which are in most cases established by governmental decrees);
- Trade-unions and professional associations (that actually can represent specific cases of civil society organisations, but are characterised by specific dynamics, and may in some cases have direct linkages with political parties);
- Local authorities, and their associations;
- Universities and academic institutions;
- Political parties and other groups participating in "political institutions";
- Family and company foundations, which depends on private actors (mostly these organisations are registered as "foundations", having specific requirements).

These different actors have been considered focusing on their relationships with CSOs.

The focus on dynamics and processes

The analysis of organisations at the different levels focused on the set of dynamics briefly described below. These dynamics include the functioning of the organisation itself, the relationships among the different CSOs and between CSOs and other actors, and the outcomes of CSOs' activities.

- **Internal governance, organisational development and sustainability dynamics** within CSOs and in the processes they generate;
- **Social capital and trust,** as well as bonding and bridging dynamics (i.e. the creation of linkages among different actors or – on the contrary – the strengthening of linkages and cohesion within a single actor/group of actors);
- **Social and cultural change and social innovation dynamics,** such as those related to the recognition of new actors and the support to innovative social action (i.e. the development/recognition/ fostering of collective and individual actions, new social representations, social expectation, etc.);
- **Knowledge management and innovation,** both within organisations and with regards to the external social and political environment;
- **Policy and governance dynamics,** including those related to engagement in advocacy activities and in policy setting and those related to participation in governance mechanisms, both at the local and national levels;

- **Service provision and the struggle against poverty and social exclusion,** including dynamics related to service delivery (i.e. quality of services, standard setting processes, access of people to services, etc.) and those related to the reduction of poverty and social exclusion processes, as well as to the fostering of sustainable development processes and social cohesion.

The concept of governance

Governance engagement of CSOs is a key focus of this study, thus it is necessary to define an operational concept of governance. Such an operational concept takes into account the EU policies related to the "Agenda for Change"[13] and the analysis of new aid modalities for better development outcomes and governance[14].

On this basis, it is possible to identify governance as the processes that involve the different actors in the identification and analysis of emerging (social, economic, environmental, etc.) problems and in the identification, implementation and monitoring of possible solution to such problems.

Governance functions are therefore not only played within political institutions[15] and by political actors (as elected representatives and government) **but are played by any actor – collective, public, private, etc. – that engages itself in the management and/or change of social reality in its different dimensions.**

Actually, CSOs effective engagement in governance functions can facilitate the "governing" of social settings and situations that are out of reach of the direct action of public bodies, for instance:

- remote geographical areas in which public action would be too expensive;
- social areas in which problems emerge and that cannot be managed by using the instruments of law, because the law application would produce paradoxical effects (as often happens in conflict management) or because they are out of the reach of law (as where negotiation and consensus among parties are key elements for solving problems);
- social areas in which the direct involvement of the public bodies will involve "collateral" effects (such as the emerging of dependency upon public intervention or the emergence of patron-client relationships).

Adopting this concept, governance does not consist simply of the functioning and participation to government functions, but of the engagement in a wide set of activities and actions, including:

- Problem identification and analysis at local, national and transnational levels, including through research;
- Identification and implementation of problem solutions at different levels, particularly through the engagement of the different stakeholders, including other actors, such as the private sector, local authorities (LA) and government bodies;
- Management of "common goods", such as environmental resources and the public space, including the monitoring of their uses and the setting and implementation of multi-actor arrangements for their use (as in the case of fishermen who may agree on the use of water basins, or in the case in which they get involved in the surveillance on the exploitation of resources);

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[13] Increasing the impact of EU development policy: an agenda for change. Communication from the Commission to the Council, COM 2011, 637 final (13.10.2011)

[14] Engaging Non-State Actors in New Aid Modalities, For better development outcomes and governance, EU, January 2011

[15] Political institutions include government, parliament, political parties, public bodies, etc. The legitimacy of these institutions depends upon the law rather than by social dynamics and processes. In addition to political parties and representation mechanisms (i.e. the parliament and the government, as well as elected or nominated local authorities), political institutions include public bodies, because these respond to the national and local government. In some cases, political institutions can include also other organisations (e.g. state enterprises) that are depending upon political decision making.

[16] Limiting "governance" to the engagement of CSOs with or in political institutions moreover easily generate a confusion between the space of civil society and that of "political institutions". This results sometimes both in the emergence of conflict between government and public authorities, on the one side, and CSOs, on the other side, and/or in the invasion of civil society space by political institution (thus involving a politicisation of CSOs) or vice-versa (thus involving a reduction of the "rule of law" compliance by public bodies).

- Management of public services, such as education and health, through participation in their governing bodies, participation in standard setting processes, evaluation & monitoring of their functioning, delivery of information and advice for their improvement;
- Participation to (public) policy formulation, policy setting and policy evaluation & monitoring;
- Information and mobilisation of citizens on issues related to the exercise of citizenship rights (including campaigns for rights enforcement or enhancement);
- Engagement with public authorities for the improvement of conditions for the exercise of citizens' rights as well as for the advancement of rights (including through monitoring, evaluation and advocacy actions at the different levels and through actions for the protection of rights).

CSO effective participation to governance

Based on the literature, some requirements are needed for effective participation in governance and policy dialogue some requirements are needed, namely:

- CSOs to play an autonomous role, in which linkage with communities and the capacity to identify and/or solve problems can guide their action more than the linkages with donors, authorities or stronger CSOs (notably for CSOs being truly autonomous and independent).
- CSOs to develop the capacities for effectively acting within this "governance space" and to perform "governance functions" (as those related to make voice of citizens perceived, to effective advocacy, to effective management of social dynamics, etc.).
- The presence of spaces in which the governance functions can actually be performed, without entering in conflict with political institutions.

This implies that political institutions recognise that a "civil society" space exists, which is distinct from the political space, even if public policies are influenced. Such "civil society" space functions according to dynamics that are different from those of politics: legitimacy of actors participating to this space is not based on the "consensus" of citizens or upon their backing – as in electoral competition and in the political space – but upon the own organisation self-mobilisation and "standing")[17].

Policy dialogue in such a framework is a key element for governance. If there are no dialogue spaces between CSOs, other actors and the government and political institutions (including political parties), CSO engagement in governance risks to generate a situation in which CSOs mainly play a kind of "political opposition role". When confined in this position and role, CSOs tend to lose the capacity to influence policies and governance mechanisms. Moreover, assuming such a role and position easily minimize the social and political legitimacy of CSOs themselves (in fact, while government and political parties found their legitimacy on citizens' consensus expressed through electoral processes, CSOs cannot claim such a foundation for their legitimacy).

<div align="right">An operational concept of capacity building</div>

The identification of capacity building needs of civil society organisations is a main element of the mapping study. Needs were identified by addressing three dimensions:
- **individual skills,** knowledge and capacities;

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[17] *The definition of governance have two main foundations: the academic studies on civil society engagement in governance (see the discussion in: Hyden G., Julius Court and Ken Mease; Civil Society and Governance in 16 Development Countries, ODI, 2003; de Nève D., Governance and Civil Society - Pluralising the State, Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, 2012; Caramani, D., Comparative Politics, Oxford, 2008; Shabbir Cheema G., Popovski V., Engaging Civil Society: Emerging Trends in Democratic Governance, UNU, 2010) and the previous EU elaboration on this theme (EC Communication, Increasing the impact of EU Development Policy: an Agenda for Change, 2011, 1172 final; 1173 final; EC Communication, The Roots of Democracy and Sustainable Development: Europe's Engagement with Civil Society in External Relations, 2012, 492 final; Structured Dialogue on the involvement of CSOs and Local Authorities in EU development cooperation 2012* [(http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/who/partners/civil-society/structured-dialogue en. htm).](http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/who/partners/civil-society/structured-dialogue en. htm).)

- **inter-organisational dynamics,** including organisational identity (values, mission and ethics), efficient and effective management,and available resources;
- **Interaction and relationships among** CSOs and their external context (including institutional framework).

The identification of CSOs' capacity building needs and the formulation of strategic indications for supporting CSO development are therefore not only based on the analysis of the gaps between CSOs' existing capacities and those that are desirable according to abstract models of CSOs (as in many cases is done, carrying out mainly training on administrative and project management skills). Rather, the analysis of the stakes and issues related to CSO development and engagement in governance processes constitute the main reference in the identification of capacity building needs, which in many situations would require a greater focus on thematic, technical, strategic or institutional dimensions.

2.2 The methodological framework

<div align="right">Main features</div>

The methodological framework adopted in the implementation of the assignment is characterised by the following main features:

1. **A participatory approach** – involving the use of rapid participatory appraisal techniques – and a focus on **participation and collective construction of knowledge**, based on the recognition of the actors involved in social processes, not only as "sources of information", but also as bearers of important perspectives for the construction of relevant knowledge on social processes and dynamics. This requires that analysis and data collection are not simply carried out by the experts' team, but are shared, cross-checked and validated through the consultation with stakeholders.
2. The integration **between quantitative and qualitative information:** statistical data were collected when reliable information was available and when information was relevant for analysis. While for analysing processes and dynamics on which statistical information is unavailable or is unreliable, "proxy" indicators and indices were using qualitative information.
3. The **integration between information on "factual elements"** (processes, situations, resources, actions, etc.) and **information on "cognitive elements"** (such as the representations of reality, the objectives and goals of stakeholders, their expectations, etc.). This allowed an analysis that not only provides a picture of the current situation of CSO processes and dynamics, but also is able to provide information on possible developments and change processes. Moreover, this facilitated the identification of the perspectives and viewpoints of the main stakeholders and a better understanding of information and data.
4. The **capitalisation of existing knowledge and information,** based both on the mapping and analysis of available documentary sources (including previous studies, carried out both in the framework of academic research and in the framework of policy-making) and on the consultation of key informants and researchers.

<div align="right">Sources of information</div>

The study integrated different information sources, shortly presented in the following table:

Table n. 1: Information sources	
Documentary sources	EU Policy documents and EU Country Roadmap for Engagement with Civil Society in Palestine
	Policy documents from national and international CSOs
	Reports on EU funded programmes and projects
	Reports of major donors on programmes and initiatives concerning CSOs – NSA
	CSO mappings and diagnostic studies produced by CSOs, academic institutions and development partners

Table n. 1: Information sources	
Documentary sources	Research reports on CSO and development in Palestine
	CSOs' documents on their own resources, activities, statute, etc.
	Documents of the main international donors (European Donors; UN agencies; WB; USAID) – providing information on their own policies and projects, as well as on CSOs
Live sources	EU staff involved in CSO support activities and on policy dialogue
	The CSOs and their representatives
	Representatives of the public authorities (including different ministries)
	Scholars engaged in CSO analysis and qualified informants not having a direct role in CSOs or in public institutions.
	Representatives of International NGOs
	Representatives of EU funded programmes supporting CSOs and CSO/PA dialogue
	Representatives of APLA, Private sector associations, and other actors
	Representatives of national and local CSO platforms
	Representatives of donors engaged in initiatives supporting CSOs and NSA

The list of consulted persons and organisations, as well as the list of analysed documents are reported as annexes. A further important source of information consisted of the CSO mapping study carried out in 2011 and of its preparatory material (interviews, documents, questionnaires, and database)[18]. The 2011 mapping study was both a reference for comparison and a source of information on phenomena to be further analysed and/or updated.

Consultation tools

Data gathering tools included:

- In-depth interviews, with representatives of the 2nd, 3rd and 4th level organisations;
- Structured questionnaires for 1st and 2nd level organisations (these questionnaires were filled out directly by CSO representatives, electronically or in person during the focus group meetings);
- An analysis framework for collecting and organising the information on 3rd and 4th level organisations, through different kinds of sources;
- Focus group meetings and small workshops, carried out using a "discussion guide".

TABLE N. 2: Tools for information gathering					
	Structured questionnaires	Focus groups/ Workshops	In depth interviews	Questionnaires for key organisations	Documentary analysis
1st level organisations	●	●			
2nd level organisations	●	●	●	●	●
3rd level organisations			●	●	●
4th level organisations			●	●	●
Other Actors			●		●
INGOs			●		●
Development partners			●		●
Public authorities			●		●

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[18]Costantini G., Atamneh J. et al, Mapping of CSOs in oPt, EU, 2011

As already observed in the CSO Mapping of 2011, the fact that all "autonomous" organisations should be registered creates a situation in which the distinction between 1st and 2nd level organisations is often unclear. Considering that, after the testing of questionnaires, a decision was taken to apply one only questionnaire for both the 1st level and 2nd level CSOs. As it will be further discussed, in many cases the 1st level organisations, such as community based organisations and self-help groups, tend to identify themselves as "NGOs" and to assume the features of 2nd level organisations.

The following table presents a quantitative view of the information collection tools.

Table n. 3: Information sources for geographical areas				
Geographic areas	Focus groups	Participants	Structured Questionnaires A-B	Questionnaires for key organisations
Gaza Strip	5	30	34	30
Jerusalem	1	18	18	3
Ramallah and central West Bank	3	22	24	30
Bethlehem Refugee Camps	1	6	6	
Hebron and Southern West Bank	2	13	13	
Jenin and Northern West Bank	2	13	13	1
Total	**14**	**102**	**108**	**64**

The mapping does not provide a view of Palestinian CSOs based on the application of a statistical sampling procedure. Nevertheless, in order to allow for a relevant representation of differences existing among Palestinian CSOs, not only the study has focused on a variety of governorates and regions, but in each geographical area, organisations of different kinds and working in different sectors/themes were invited to take part in the consultation activities. Particularly, in each focus group the following groups of CSOs have been involved:

	Organisation types	Sectors to be represented by participants
NGO Focus groups	Local and National organisations based in the area of the focus group	• Support to other CSOs • Governance / good governance • Human Rights • Health • Education • Youth • Women • Agriculture and environment • Economic/Local development
CBO Focus groups	• Charitable Societies locally providing services • Small NGOs working at local level • Not registered or informal groups having a permanent nature • Self-help groups • Youth and Women Clubs • Committees • Cooperatives	• Governance / good governance • Human Rights • Health • Education • Youth • Women • Agriculture and environment • Income generating activities

The present study mainly aims at updating the information and recommendations provided in the 2011 Mapping study. Therefore, it was carried out with less resources and time. This implies some limitations related to the implementation and expected outcomes. Particularly, the sample of organisations involved in the filling of questionnaires and the number of interviews have been reduced. This has not affected the validity and the quality of information. Interviews and questionnaires were used more as a tool for exploring new emerging phenomena and confirming what we already know, than as an instrument for collecting basic information. However, this limits the capacity of information tools to represent the differences that could emerge at local level particularly for questionnaires, differences emerging between the previous 2011 mapping and the current one at very local level (i.e. the sub-regions of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip) in fact may depend on the individual cases of consulted organisations. Differences among regional and local situations were mainly identified and analysed by using qualitative tools (such as focus group meetings and the documentary analysis).

Furthermore, carrying the Mapping into the period that followed the war on Gaza implied taking into account a certain distortion in the analysed field. Particularly in the Gaza Strip, the impact of the war is still not fully evident. Many "de-facto" organisations have been forced to assume roles related to the management of immediate consequences of the war, new movements are emerging but are in an early development stage, and some new dynamics concerning both the "coalition" among organisations and the competition/conflicts among them are still in an early stage and so are not fully visible.

3. Main issues and stakes: what roles for CS

3.1 Issues and stakes at national level

CSOs in Palestine manage a large part of social services[19]. Despite this fact, CSOs are not always recognised as an actor able to contribute to policy and governance processes. Particularly in the CSO mapping a set of issues were identified that were placing CSOs in a risky position and challenging CSOs to play a more active role. These were:

- an unclear role of CSOs in politics and the need to find a new and specific role in the process of political transformation and state building;
- the exclusive focus on service delivery, implying both the risk of entering in competition with public authorities and the risk of remaining at the periphery when it comes to policy dialogue and governance dynamics;
- the permanent condition of insecurity and state of emergency caused by the Israeli occupation, generating both divides within Palestinian society and difficulties for CSO's activities;
- the lack of a common voice, both in front of the public authorities and in front of international actors;
- the identification of civil society with NGOs and charities; and a limited recognition of grassroots organisations as "actors" that could effectively contribute to policy making and good governance;
- the increasing competition and conflicts among CSOs due to limited and unequal access to financial resources, which has led to inefficiency in using the available resources;
- the inadequacy of CSOs' internal governance, accountability and transparency, causing crisis of public trust and a reduction in CSOs' mobilisation capacity;
- the shift of many CSOs from a political and rights-based view of social issues to approaches focusing on access to services, limiting the engagement in policy and governance.

These main issues are still there and represent the main challenges for CSOs. However, some important changes are currently emerging, creating a situation that is to a certain extent new.

Israeli occupation has been characterised in recent time, and particularly in 2013 and 2014, by an increased pressure on the Palestinian people, institutions and resources. Settlement construction and expansion continued and intensified, land confiscation, home demolition and exploitation of Palestinian land and resources have increased over the past years; two major military operations were launched against the Gaza Strip since the last CSO mapping in 2011, etc. The intensification of occupation practices influences not only the capacity and possibility for CSOs to operate but deeply affects Palestinian social cohesion, economic development and any hope for peace in the region.

While the legitimacy and people's trust in public authorities are increasingly challenged (since the people perceive the latter as unable to "defend" the legitimate interests of the Palestinian people and unable to assure safe living conditions), political processes are growingly characterised by:

- The radicalisation and polarisation of political positions (in some cases even implying a shift from a "political" to a "religious" representation of issues).
- The uncertainty of the political process itself (internally, presidential and parliamentary elections are not on the political calendar and agendas, the agreements and negotiations between Hamas and the PA did not materialize and the reconciliation process is losing credibility and momentum;

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[19] According to NCD (2014), the CSOs manage 90% of early childhood development services; almost 100% of specialised health services; 60 % of agricultural services; the totality of services for elderly care, of those for the rehabilitation of people with special needs, and of those related to mental health.

externally, the peace process between Israel and Palestine collapsed after 21 years of failed negotiations).

- The ability of the PA to provide services continues to be uncertain, which depend mainly on external aid and funding.

Given the reality described above, the need for an active participation of CSOs in governance and policy making is more needed than ever, not only playing the "watchdog" functions, but more importantly playing an active role in:

- constructing common social representations regarding emerging issues (including modalities for resisting the occupation, which require innovative approaches, such as: actions supporting art, culture and the recovery of material and immaterial cultural heritage);
- managing problems (including through the mediation of conflicts between different groups and interests);
- fostering better relationships among the people and public authorities (for instance, through: communication, need assessment, formalisation of emerging demands, coordination among services, etc.);
- supporting and creating the conditions for a greater public participation of actors that are usually marginalized in Palestinian society and within Palestinian political institutions (such as youth, women, and people with disabilities), particularly through organisation and mobilisation.

The unclear identity of CSOs

In the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip, CSOs continue to be characterised by an unclear identity. As surfaced in the questionnaires and focus group meetings, most CSOs are mainly engaged in service delivery (98 % of the CSOs participated in the mapping provide services). However, when looking at both the way the CSOs describe their objectives and function, and at the mission statements of CSO networks and platforms, often policy, advocacy, and resistance to occupation and others are included. There is therefore a gap between the actual work and role played by CSOs and what is included in their mission statements.

The prevalent engagement in service delivery/project implementation frequently creates a competitive situation among CSOs, which seldom cooperate in knowledge and information sharing nor in engaging in good governance practices and policy initiatives. When reviewing declarations issued by CSOs and their platforms, common positions emerge when dealing with "external issues", such as the Israeli occupation.

In such a context, a need is emerging for collective work to better define the contribution of CSOs.

Unclear relation with public authorities

Not only is the relationship with politics unclear (many organisations are characterised by indirect affiliation with political parties, and many NGOs and community based organisations are considered to have been set up in the framework of party politics as a way to access and channel resources, services and consensus), but also the relationship with public authorities is not always clear. Despite the fact that NGOs are working with 16 ministries in 9 different fields[20], the relationship among CSOs and public authorities are mainly dependent upon personal relationships and upon the emergence of specific situations, so that:

- in some cases, CSOs are perceived by public authorities as competitors both in service delivery and in the management of consensus dynamics (the engagement of CSOs in policy/governance is often seen as a threat by authorities, and their engagement in service/project delivery as a way to

"drain resources" that would be otherwise available for public authorities[21]);

- in some cases, CSOs are perceived as technical partners, both in policy setting (at central government level) and in service delivery (at both central level and local level), and as a channel for accessing resources otherwise not available (as international funds);
- in some cases, CSOs are involved in "councils" both at the Ministry level and at the Municipality level; however, their engagement tends to be mainly "cosmetic" and to have little impact on policies (moreover, in most cases the participation in councils is based on "invitation" by the authority that manages the council itself, so that representation of CSOs is not always based on clear criteria);
- in many cases, particularly for small municipalities and village authorities, CSOs – particularly large NGOs – constitute a communication channel for facilitating the access to the national government, when in fact NGO leader's personal relationships with government personnel are much more frequent than those between the staff and elected local authorities in small villages/municipalities and the government personnel-leaders.

These different kinds of relationships do not facilitate CSO effective engagement in policy and governance mechanisms. On the contrary, they tend to:

- reduce such engagement to technical/utilitarian co-operation (thus denying the CSO legitimacy to play an autonomous governance/policy role and their capacity to represent citizens' perspectives);
- generate co-optation mechanisms (that de facto reduce the capacity of CSOs to represent community interests);
- generate situations in which CSOs and local authorities tend to cooperate for their own interests/benefits, creating complicity and lack of critical capacity, rather than producing "common/public goods";
- foster political affiliation of parties and thus creating conflict situations and the loss of CSO capacity to represent citizens perspectives and to build up governance/policy spaces "out of political institutions" (with the risk of such spaces, which are crucial for generating socially shared representations, being occupied by other actors).

A key factor influencing such situations is the lack of a clear policy framework regarding CSOs/public authority relationships. As a result, different ministries and authorities have different policies and different modalities in dealing with CSOs. While some ministries are fostering dialogue and cooperation, others tend to increase control over CSOs.

Paradoxically, even policies formulated with the strong engagement of civil society, such as those related to the struggle against corruption, tend to create further problems and conflicts. Some of the consulted NGOs consider that the requests of information and documentation related to the work of the anti-corruption commission are a way to limit the autonomy of CSOs and their capacities[22].

A further factor influencing this situation is the limited adequacy of the existing legal framework. Legal framework is mainly based on the so-called NGO Law of 2000. The law does not consider differences among CSOs. While all CSOs should be registered, there is no difference in the registration among CBOs, small NGOs, large NGOs, and CBOs unions or platforms. An NGO managing a large hospital or a large school has the same requirements as a small CBO working at village level, and a platform involving hundreds of organisations is registered as a single individual NGO.

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[20] *CSO Commission, Interview, December 2014.*

[21] *A clear sign of the perception of CSOs as competing actors is visible in the public declarations about the fact that a large part of international aid to Palestine is channelled through NGOs. The attitudes of authorities to control CSO actions and funding sources have been discussed in many interviews, particularly with large Palestinian NGOs.*

[22] *Anti-corruption rules foresee that the board members and directors of CSOs should provide to authorities the documentation about their personal and family income and properties. This requirement creates a big burden for people and organisations, and is perceived, by some CSOs consulted during the study, as opening space for control by political/public authorities and as a way to discourage people to actively engage in CSO's boards and management.*

The division among Palestinian territories - West Bank, the Gaza Strip, East Jerusalem, and area C – continues to be an influential factor in the formation and the activities of CSOs. As a result, the organisations in the West Bank, in the Gaza Strip and in East Jerusalem respond to different authorities and different legal and policy frameworks. Moreover, national organisations having activities in the West Bank and in Gaza should register with both the Palestinian Authority and the de-facto Hamas government in Gaza, creating different directive boards. Organisations working in East Jerusalem – to act legally – must report to Israeli authorities and respect Israeli rules (including decisions related to "security" and military, the tax system, and to the urban law system). The application of these rules may involve the application of fines or even the closure of organisations.

In addition to influencing the function and activities of CSOs, the division creates different needs and contributes to the emergence of different identities and conflicts (including among displaced people and the local communities) and requires diversified strategies and innovation in local governance mechanisms, particularly considering that large areas within the West Bank, as well as the Gaza Strip and East Jerusalem are beyond the direct reach/control of the Palestinian Authority. In these circumstances, CSOs are expected to play not only the role of service provider, delivering both basic services and legal support to people, but also to create linkages between people and public authorities, produce and channel knowledge and information, maintain culture and identity, increase visibility of problems and needs and facilitate the formulation of relevant policies.

State building and of strengthening the rule of law

Participation in governance and policy dialogue represents two modalities for supporting state building and for strengthening the rule of law. This is a significant issue for Palestinian CSOs, both because of the difficulty of state institutions to develop under occupation and because of the fact that the focus of CSO "policy action" on issues related to emergency, like those related to protecting people from human rights violations committed by both by Israeli occupation forces, the Palestinian Authority or the de-facto government in the Gaza Strip, and those related to the struggle against corruption (which is particularly high in conflict situations as well as in situations in which access to resources is mainly related to "personal relations" (friendship, political affiliation, etc.). In fact, CSOs have been traditionally been involved in the protection of human rights and have in recent years advocated for the establishment of a number of "accountability institutions", specialised in the struggle against corruption (as among others the Human Rights Independent Commission or the Palestinian Anti-Corruption Commission). Despite that, even in recent surveys – as those carried out by the AMAN Coalition – a large percentage of Palestinians express a negative perception about public authorities and their accountability towards citizens[23]. Focusing on these themes has somehow limited the actions related to the strengthening of "normal" citizenship rights, to citizen's participation in local and national governance and on the relevance and effectiveness of public policies.

A further issue that emerges, concerning CSO contribution to state building is related to the recognition and fostering of "the common good". As was already observed in the 2011 mapping, Palestinian society is deeply divided by political factions: a major role that CSOs can play in this setting is that of supporting the development of a common, socially shared, representation of the problems and of possible development perspectives, from a perspective that is different and autonomous from those of political parties. Clearly, basic requirements for CSOs assuming a role in this framework are those of recognising themselves as an actor (or

as a set of actors), of developing autonomous perspectives, of producing one coordinated voice and of being recognised as independent from other actors. These requirements are far from fulfilled. CSOs (particularly the small and medium ones) often perceive to be too weak to play a relevant role in policy dialogue and governance or to develop autonomous perspectives; meanwhile, the stronger CSOs are not perceived as think tanks that could positively influence policy dialogue, but as "opposition" or enemies, or as bearers of foreign "hidden agendas".

Decentralisation process

A specific area in which the CSOs are called to provide a contribution is that of the decentralisation process. The Palestinian constitution and legal framework recognise a large variety of local authorities: 136 municipalities, 12 local councils; 237 village councils, 113 project committees and 29 offices in refugee camps[24]. All these authorities are involved in different ways in the management of local resources and infrastructures and in the delivery of services, often in collaboration with the central government, with private service providers and with CSOs. In 2012, the elections of local authorities were carried out in the West Bank, and for more than a decade different change processes have been in progress, focusing - on the one side - on the decentralisation and de-concentration of governance and service functions and – on the other side - aggregation, coordination and "agglomeration" of local authorities.

However, both these processes are often managed according to a top-down approach: even if just about 15% of their resources come from the central public administration, municipalities and other local authorities have in recent years often "amalgamated" through ministry administrative orders, rather than by promoting processes of change at the local level. In such a framework , both the Association of Palestinian Local Authorities (APLA) and the CSOs have been most frequently playing the roles of "technical partners" or implementing agencies in the delivery of technical assistance and training to local authorities staff and elected, and in the delivery of services (education, health, water supply and sanitation, housing and renewal).

Further elements of complexity in the development of decentralisation are the uncertainty about next local elections (as these would depend more on the political dynamics than on the legal provisions), the hybrid legal framework (local authorities are in some cases under different laws, related to the past) and the status of the territory (even in Area C and in the areas under the Israeli control, there are Palestinian local authorities, which have as counterparts both the Palestinian government on which they legally depend and the Israeli occupying power).

Despite the difficult situation - even if still on a limited scale - many experiences have been carried out, in which local authorities have been engaged in local development planning activities, with the support or with the participation of NGOs and CBOs[25].

It is therefore possible to identify a more advanced role that can be played by CSOs, on the one side supporting and participating in local governance processes and mechanisms (not just as "technical partners", but as organised actors bringing the voice and perspectives of citizens[26]) and on the other side actively partnering with local authorities and APLA in advocating for a process that rather than merely delegating "service delivery" to the local actors, would recognise them power, authority in decision making and in the guide of local development[27].

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[23] In a 2011 survey by AMAN, 40% of respondents expressed their dissatisfaction with the follow-up on and resolving of public complaints. According to the 2011 World Bank "Worldwide Governance Indicators", Palestine scores just 20.7 % on Voice and Accountability, and 20.9% on Control of Corruption and 41.3% on Rule of Law. The need for greater citizens/community participation was established as a requirement in the 2010 – 2014 Strategic Framework of the Ministry of Local Government.

[24] Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, 2010.

[25] As will be further analysed in the following paragraphs, many of these activities depend from the support of international donors. It is important to say, however, that in some cases these activities have been carried out in areas that are under the Israeli occupation, strengthening the capacity and resiliency of local population.

[26] An example is the Civic Participation Programme (CPP), involving citizen engagement with LA. The programme has been carried out during 9 years in the Gaza Strip, by Civitas, with support from NED and GIZ.

[27] As it will be discussed, the "local development plan" formulated by municipalities and other local authorities often have just the shape of "list of projects" to be considered by government and international donors, without a clear idea of local development. These local development plans therefore tend to strengthen the perception of local authorities and their local partners as "beneficiaries" of government action, rather than as actors of governance.

CSOs have been traditionally playing an innovation role in Palestine. As observed in the 2011 CSO Mapping, CSOs have strong and meaningful relationships with universities and research centers (actually, from a legal perspective, the most important think tanks and research institutions are considered NGOs). Despite that, when looking at the current innovation processes and at the identification of innovative ways to support development in Palestine, it seems that just a very limited number of CSOs are actually involved and that just a few CSOs – mainly those with longer experience and with recognizable leaders - are engaging with universities and scientific research centres, particularly in the West Bank. Moreover, looking at universities it seems that while the number of universities in Palestine is growing, those that are engaging in cooperation initiatives with CSOs are just few (as for instance Birzeit University, the AlQuds University and AlQuds "Open" University, Bethlehem University and to a certain extent the Palestine University "Access to Justice Project"[28]).

This situation can be seen as a risky one from different perspectives:

- "large" CSOs that are closer to universities tend to be distant from communities' "local dynamics" and "local needs";
- "large" CSOs tend to be "less interested" in innovation, as they have normally well-established methodologies and partnerships and thus are interested in innovation as a way to support others, while innovation processes can paradoxically be a threat to their own bureaucracies;
- in the current situation of perceived growing competition for funding (and perceived decrease in the availability of resources from the international community) the larger organisations can increasingly be tempted by keeping new knowledge and information "for themselves", limiting the sharing of knowledge;
- Universities are often perceived by CSOs to be another actor entering in the competition for funding, particularly through "Community Development" and/or "continuous learning" departments;
- Universities themselves are at risk to lose their innovation capacity, because of the decrease of new knowledge "entering" in the academic environment from outside, and the reduction of the relevance of their action in the Palestinian setting.

Additionally, CSOs mainly focus on introducing innovation for improving services and infrastructure (including water, sanitation, housing, etc.). Currently new challenges emerge which require innovative approaches, namely: culture, art and economic activities, considering the restrictions imposed by the occupation.

Cooperation with INGOs and international organisations

Over 200 international NGOs are registered in Palestine and 74 are members of AIDA (Association of International Development Agencies). Although the number of INGOs working in Palestine has been stable, there is a general perception that the number of INGOs directly engaged in project management and implementation in Palestine (particularly in the Gaza strip, in East Jerusalem and in the Central West Bank) is increasing.

In almost all focus groups and interviews, both in the West Bank and in the Gaza Strip, a growing competition with INGOs and even with international organisations was mentioned.

Competition among INGOs and national NGOs had already emerged in 2011 CSO Mapping. However, it was mainly related to the issues of staff recruitment/retaining[29] and of agenda setting, while the presence of INGOs was very much appreciated as a channel for obtaining funds and as partners "protecting" local NGOs from both the threats linked to the political environment and to those related to the Israeli occupation.

Currently competition for funding and the engagement in activities that could be carried out also by national NGOs are the most perceived phenomenon. Furthermore, the decision of AIDA not to join the coordination body among Palestinian CSOs platforms and not to take a clear position on issues related to the Israeli occupation have been perceived as a sign of deep diverges regarding interests and goals.

Most CSOs at the second and first levels are engaged in many sectors (agriculture, training and income generating activities, children care and support to women, support to people with disabilities and to youth are among the most frequent ones, as in the following tables) and consequently lack specialisation and are dependent on project formulation and methodological guidance of larger and more specialised (international and national) NGOs. When looking at the focal sectors of EU cooperation in Palestine - "Support to governance at local and national levels", "Support to the private sector and economic development" and "Support to water and land development – the situation is different. A relatively small number of CSOs is engaged in these sectors, but in most cases with a stronger capacity and specialisation.

- In the "Support to governance at local and national levels", three main groups of organisations are involved. The larger group is represented by "Human Rights" and legal protection NGOs. The second group is composed of the NGOs and CBOs involved in the activities for supporting "accountability" and anti-corruption actions (such as those of the AMAN Coalition). The third group includes NGOs involved at the local level in activities that aim at increasing citizens' participation in local governance, in cooperation with local authorities (also comprising some of the AMAN Coalition members or the CBOs participating in activities with local authorities in Gaza and in the West Bank). The engagement on policy setting is a key element of the action of organisations involved in this sector, particularly when focusing on accountability and anti-corruption (at the central level) and on people's participation at the local level[30]. However, despite the many activities of cooperation with local authorities there is little or no engagement with the Ministry of Local Government.
- A smaller group of organisations is involved in initiatives supporting the private sector and economic development. A main group of CSOs can be identified in this area of action: those supporting cooperatives and micro-finance activities. The introduction of a new legal framework on micro-finance required the CSOs supporting entrepreneurship through micro-finance to change their legal status, transforming themselves in "micro-finance institutions" and raising a capital (5 million US$) as guarantee of operations. In most cases, CSOs involved in this sector created new institutions for managing micro-finance operations – in some cases starting partnership with international finance/micro-finance companies – and kept for the original organisation training and technical assistance activities supporting the enterprises using the credit. Out of the support to cooperatives and of few initiatives aimed at incubating new "innovative companies" (including in the art and culture sector), in most cases, the support to private sector is limited and peripheral[31]. Despite the many CSOs active in these activities, little cooperation exists among CSOs and the private sector associations (particularly the Federation of Palestinian Chambers of Commerce), mainly with a

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[28] *Supported by UNDP.*

[29] *INGOs in many cases can offer better salaries than Palestinian organisations.*
[30] *Initiatives on local governance are often are supported by international donors and agencies, that often play a key role in the involvement of national government.*
[31] *STEM – VCR, 2013.*

focus on women and informal sector firms. CSOs involved in this sector mainly intervene in service delivery, little engagement exists in the governance mechanisms and in policy dialogue initiatives.

- Some large NGOs play a key role in the water and land development sector, engaging both in service delivery and in research and policy making. However, in policy making and implementation these organisations (as ARIJ, MAS, etc.) mainly play the role of technical partners to both public authorities (generating information and knowledge) and local organisations (offering technical assistance and training opportunities). The growing gap emerges among national government and CSOs in this sector as regarding policy setting: monitoring and assuming a critical position on government proposals and actions are in fact often seen as a political opposition act.

Sector distribution and leading CSOs

Based on documentary analysis, key-person interviews and focus group meetings, sector distribution of CSOs has not changed in a meaningful way since 2011. However, while the general distribution of organisations is not changing, what clearly emerges is the fact that most organisations intervene in different sectors, so that actual specialisation is limited among organisations. What has happened recently is the increase in "relief activities" of different kinds as an answer to the war on Gaza and to the increase of Israeli pressure in the West Bank and East Jerusalem.

The key organisations in each sector show no evident changes. The leading NGOs tend to remain the same. In the agricultural and environmental sector a key role continues to be played by PARC (Palestinian Agricultural Relief Committee), the UAWC (Union of Agricultural Workers Committees), the Land Research Center, MAAN (MAAN Development Center) and the Palestinian Hydrology Group (and in general the PENGON (Palestinian Environment NGO Network) organisations). The Palestinian Farmers Union is playing a growing role in supporting credit access for agriculture modernization, while local committees and LDC (Land Defence Committees) continue to engage in the resistance against the Wall: Out of organisations working on agriculture, others are playing important roles in the support to economic local initiatives. Others include ACAD – Arab Center for Agricultural Development (supporting cooperatives) and ASALA – Palestinian Businesswomen's Association (supporting women businesses).

In the governance sector, AMAN coalition is playing a leading role, while some more CSOs are emerging with innovative initiatives, as the Civitas Institute and Palthink (Pal-Think for Strategic Studies) in Gaza, PAL-Vision, Al Marsad Arab Center for Human Rights and PCDP (Palestinian Center for the Defense of Prisoners) in the central West Bank, and the PCS (Palestinian Consultative Staff for NGOs Development) in the Northern West Bank. Other large CSOs, as Muwatin – Palestinian Institute for the Study of Democracy, BISAN Center for Research and Development, MUSAWA Palestinian Center for the Independence of the Judiciary and Legal Profession, continue to play an important role. The DWRC - Democracy and Workers' RightsCenter is another organisation playing a central role, focusing on labour rights and unions.

The Human rights sector has a functioning network amongst organisations. Al-Haq Institute is likely to play a leading role, together with BADIL Resource Center for Palestinian Residency and Refugee Rights, MIFTAH Palestinian Initiative for the Promotion of Global Dialogue & Democracy, Addameer Prisoner Support and Human Rights Association, Jerusalem Legal Aid and Human Rights Center, Al Mezan Center for Human Rights and the Palestinian Center for Human Rights.

Women organisations are aggregating on the one side around the WCLAC (Women Center for Legal Aid and Counselling), and on the other side continue to be aggregated in the large network of AWCSW (Association of Woman Committees for Social Work). In Gaza, the Women's Affairs Technical Committee and the Women's Affairs Committee play a key role, while organisations set at local level often play an innovation role.

In culture, the GUCC (General Union of Cultural Centers) in Gaza plays a major role as a platform umbrella for 54 small CSOs working in culture, including music, theatre and drama, heritage, and culture identity. Basma Institution for Culture and Arts in Gaza and Al Karama Consortium for Culture and Arts in Rafah are also and added value in the theatre scene of Gaza Strip, along with Edward Sa'ed Institute for Music as well. Khalil Sakakini Culture Centre, Al Hakawati Theatre, Popular Art Center, and Nawa Troupe have a visible role in cultural aspect in central West Bank, meanwhile theatre "Yes" has good reputation in Jenin.

Working with youth, three main organisations are visible in the West Bank: the Palestinian Youth Union, PYALARA (Palestinian Youth Association for Leadership and Rights Activation) and Sharek Youth Forum, meanwhile Save Youth Future and El Wedad Society for Community Rehabilitation have a visible role in Gaza. Out of charity work, which is a very diffused one, the DCI – Defence for Children International - Palestinian section continue to play a key role on children rights.

In the Health sector, a group of organisations is managing large hospitals (particularly in Jerusalem and Bethlehem), however a key role is played by the Palestinian Red Crescent (which has a very large number of local sections all-over the Country), by HWC (Health Workers Committees) and UHCC (Union of Health Care Committees). Local organisations, such as the Gaza Mental Health Programme, play often an innovative role.

3.2 A focus on geographical dynamics

The specific issues and stakes in the Gaza Strip

In the Gaza Strip, CSOs face some specific issues and their action has some specific stakes, briefly considered below.

- Following the Israeli attack of August 2014, a broad reconstruction effort is expected to get into gear in Gaza. CSO involvement in the identification of reconstruction priorities and modalities has been very limited: CSOs have not been consulted on the Government's National Recovery and Early Reconstruction Plan and have not been invited to the international Cairo meeting on Gaza reconstruction. Nevertheless, CSOs could still play an active role in monitoring the reconstruction process, looking at the ways resources are employed, evaluating the short-term impacts of reconstruction on communities, and influencing the decisions of local authorities involved in the reconstruction activities. Clearly, such an active role would be difficult to play without the economic and political support of other actors, including donors. However, actual CSOs' involvement requires two preconditions: the first is the recognition of the role of CSOs in the process as a full partner that can provide insight and real data from the field; second is the cooperation of the authorities that have to share with CSOs their data, information, plans, and thoughts in a transparent way. Cooperation would result in better targeted resource allocation for reconstruction that is beyond the capabilities of each party.
- **The siege and blockade of Gaza** continues since 2006. This not only creates difficulties for people's life and for economic activities in the Gaza Strip, but also creates a situation in which demand for CSOs' services is continuously growing[32], the sustainability of CSO activities[33], and the possibility to support economic activities (for instance, through micro-finance and technical assistance) are virtually impossible to be achieved [34].
- The siege on Gaza and frequent military escalations in Gaza create **a permanent state of emergency.** Based on that CSOs have been mainly specialised in the delivery of relief services, while the focus

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[32] Over 52% of the CSOs surveyed highlight the difficulty to match the growing demand for services as a main challenge.

[33] For instance, through the launching of income generating activities and through the management of "social infrastructure" for health, disabilities, education, culture, etc.

[34] Among CSOs consulted in the Gaza Strip, several pointed out that their infrastructure has been severely damaged and that it is impossible to find a market for products, particularly for income generating projects that are managed by certain CSOs and cover somehow more than 25% of their respective total annual budget

on local development, governance and policies has been marginalized and has been maintained only by a small number of organisations. Almost 25% of surveyed CSOs in Gaza indicated as the changing donor agendas, related to ever changing framework conditions and the lack of funds for long-term initiatives as a major obstacle. The almost exclusive focus on relief work does not only entrench economic dependency in Gaza, but also redirects CSOs' efforts from playing a constructive role in governance and policy dialogue towards project implementation and service provision. Moreover, since a large part of resources for emergency and relief are managed by international agencies and INGOs, local CSOs tend to remain in a dependent condition and do not even influence the agenda setting and the identification of priorities. Such conditions create for CSOs a kind of "comfort zone" in which resources are assured, as well as protection from political threats.

- Additionally, during focus group meetings, individual interviews and questionnaires, it became obvious that the focus on emergency and on service delivery also tends to increase the competition between International agencies and INGOs, on the one side, and local NGOs, on the other side: when the main interest for an organisation is to carry out "activities" and to keep its organisational mechanism functional, financial resources become the most important factor. CSOs therefore tend to focus their efforts on the above mentioned function rather than developing their role as a counterpart and partner for the Government in the development process, in monitoring the public performance or in handling policy dialogue. Moreover, the focus on emergency interventions and services by international organisations in Gaza implies that their contribution in terms of innovation, facilitation of access to information, knowledge and capacities, political support and others tends to be very limited.

- Almost 25% of respondents to the questionnaire indicated the policy framework as a major issue for CSOs' activities. The presence of a de-facto government composed of one political faction, and the conflict situation between this government and the PA, creates a situation in which the "rule of law" is virtually suspended and in which different legal systems co-exist in an uncoordinated way. In fact, CSOs in the Gaza Strip are subject to the regulations of local authorities, while at the same time they should simultaneously respond to the Ramallah-based government and its regulations. This creates uncertainty for organisations.

- Finally, a further issue that is particularly relevant in the Gaza Strip is the difficulty of defining an identity for civil society organisations that would allow them to play a stronger governance/policy dialogue role. CSOs face dilemmas regarding their cultures, their activities, and their position within a conflict-laden political environment. While a secular tradition exists in Palestinian CSOs, faith based organisations increasingly emerge and tend to create different social spaces. Dialogue among the different "souls" of civil society remains difficult and thus construes a main obstacle in opening-up a structured dialogue with other actors. The dilemma related to CSOs' activities revolves around the provision of emergency service provision vs. developmental orientation, policy dialogue, and governance. In addition, the question arises at what level and for whom activities should be carried out. Regarding their own position in a conflict-laden political environment CSOs face the dilemma to assume a "safeguarded" neutral position, concentrating on delivering services, instead of assuming a confrontational or dialogue strategy vis-a-vis governmental authorities[35].

The division between the West Bank and East Jerusalem is not a new phenomenon. It was already a key matter of concern in the 2011 CSO mapping. However, also in this case some new elements are emerging, generating new issues discussed in the focus group and individual meetings involving CSOs operating in Jerusalem.

- The first element is the "sharpening" of Israeli occupation practices. Even if there were no changes in the regulatory system regarding the Palestinians' life in Jerusalem (identity cards and permits, check points, municipal law and services, etc.), the recent period has been characterised by an increase in the actions aimed at enforcing anti-Palestinian regulations (e.g. demolitions of houses, increased surveillance in daily life, deteriorating service provision, sanctions for administrative irregularities, etc.). This situation influences the CSOs in Jerusalem, in three main ways: increase in demands for services and support; worsened working conditions for CSOs which are required to respect the regulations set by the Israeli municipality and to pay Israeli taxes; peoples' attitudes and positions are increasingly polarised and radicalised, so that the space for organisations engaged in non-violent activities decreases.

- A second key issue is the de facto **legal uncertainty** of the status of East Jerusalem. Despite its status as an occupied territory, East Jerusalem is fully incorporated into Israeli urban planning activities and there is no effective opposition by Palestinian authorities or CSOs, or even by the international community, to this situation. Thus, even the few strong Palestinian organisations working on urban governance and urban planning find themselves in a difficult situation since they are forced to formulate their actions/proposals within the boundaries set by the occupying authorities or risk irrelevance.

- Another important element is the **absence of space and interlocutors for advocacy, policy dialogue and governance activities**. Neither Israeli authorities nor Palestinian institutions can serve as interlocutors. Israeli authorities and Palestinian CSOs do not recognize each other's authority and mandate, while Palestinian institutions lack the negotiation/dialogue space with Israeli authorities. For this reason, they are unable to influence the urban dynamics, services and governance regime in Jerusalem. Within this framework, international actors – including INGOs - can assume a stronger mediation role.

- A fourth issue is **the increasing isolation of CSOs in Jerusalem**. Most large NGOs have had to leave Jerusalem and establish their offices in Ramallah or in Bethlehem, and active CSOs in Jerusalem tend mostly to be charitable societies involved in the delivery of services (child care, education, housing, health, elderly care) and small – weak - grassroots organisations. The isolation of CSOs in Jerusalem risks creating conflicts among CSOs themselves: Jerusalem Union Charity Societies left the Palestinian Union, because of differences in the perception of the role of the union; the setting up of a network among grassroots organisations in Jerusalem has been supported by international NGOs, with a leading role of an Israeli guided CSO, re-opening the debate on "normalisation" and the role that CSOs might play in this context; different interests emerge among large NGOs (especially among those managing hospitals) and small NGOs.

- A further issue concerns the **legal framework**. CSOs in Jerusalem should register with Israeli authorities[36] or should maintain an "informal" legal status, preventing them to access resources in an autonomous way and situating them in a risky position in front of Israeli authorities. International NGOs often play a key role in assuring access to resources and a safe position for Palestinian CSOs, however very often partnerships tend to create dependency situations as well as fostering the adoption by local CSOs of agendas set by their international partners, further weakening the already fragile local organisations. As already analysed in the 2011 CSO Mapping,

[35] M. Issa, "Palestinian civil society in search of an identity", in Common Ground News Service, February 2010 (www.commongroundnews.org)

[36] However, the Israeli registration would not allow NGOs to access EU funds (EU guidelines on the funding of Israeli entities in territories occupied by Israel since June 4, 1967). The existing guidelines while securing funds for Palestinian CSOs might impact the organisations established in recent time in East Jerusalem, that while registered under the PA, would not have any legal status recognised by the Israeli authorities.

coercive measures against Palestinian organisations include the destruction of infrastructures, the demolition of offices, the forced closure, and fines, as well as the cancelation of permits for entering or residing in Jerusalem. Most of these decisions are adopted for "military reasons", thus not passing through the civil judicial mechanisms.

- Despite the existence of a Jerusalem Governorate, there are not visible initiatives of Palestinian CSOs based in East Jerusalem engaging with the PA related to the improvement of living conditions in East Jerusalem. Most advocacy actions regarding East Jerusalem are carried out by Palestinian organisations based in the West Bank targeting the international community.

<p style="text-align:right;color:blue">The specific issues and stakes in the West Bank and "Area C"</p>

Also in the West Bank specific geographical issues emerged during focus group meetings and merit reporting.

- The separation wall and check points influence the operations of CSOs, creating difficulties to access and movement and forcing CSOs to assume roles more strongly focused on service delivery, particularly in "Area C".
- The increasing power of Palestinian security forces and mechanisms and the increased control over civil society organisation. Both in interviews with individual organisations in different sectors – from human rights to agricultural development, and in some focus group meetings, participants observed the fact that security forces assume a growing role in the management of the CSOs, influencing decisions concerning the approval of CSO registrations, the dissolution of organisations, the establishment of organisations' boards. This is not a new phenomenon. Already in 2010 the undue intervention of the Palestinian Ministry of Interior was identified as an obstacle to civil society development, even involving mistrust among organisations in some territorial areas. However, this phenomenon is considered now to be increasingly important because of regional dynamics (and particularly the crack down on CSOs in Egypt).
  - The isolation and annexation dynamics in "Area C": CSOs often represent the only Palestinian actor able to provide services in those parts of the West Bank classified as "Area C". In such areas three main roles emerge for CSOs, but need to be further developed:
  - that of providing services, including on behalf of the Palestinian National Authority; in this framework a main emerging issue is that of service standards;
  - that of analysing needs and support to public authorities (including village committees) and donors in planning development initiatives;
  - that of supporting service governance, acting as information, communication and advocacy channels between the local population and the Palestinian authorities and as service providers (including for water, sewage and electricity – areas in which services are often provided through the setting of autonomous and joint service agencies[37]).

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4. CSO engagement in governance and policy dialogue

4.1. The evolution of the policy and legal framework (the existing spaces for engagement)

The existing legal framework defines the space for CSOs to engage in governance and policy dialogue. When looking at Palestine, this space has not been clearly delineated (both in the West Bank and in Gaza – where there is also a "local" legal framework established and managed by the Hamas de-facto government). In fact, while the law does not establish limits to the activities of CSOs, the law also does not clearly define the limits for the government authorities' interference into the life of organisations. In addition to that, some features of the existing legal frameworks risk to produce undesired effects, particularly regarding the governance of organisations and the "nature" and functions of organisations.

According to ANSA (Arab Network for Social Accountability), CSOs in Palestine consider the 2000 Law of Charitable Associations and Community Organisations as one of the better laws in the region. It limits government interference in comparison with most other Arab countries. Nonetheless, it leaves some space for government authorities to interfere with CSOs. CSOs have also criticized restrictive implementation practices and the issuance of presidential decrees and regulations that violate the law and hinder the development of the civil society[38]. In Gaza, the de-facto government has issued a new program that assesses the capacities and performance of CSOs that was shared and developed jointly with CSOs, with the aim of fostering cooperative mechanisms between the CSOs and the authorities.

<p style="text-align:right;color:blue">The current legal framework</p>

Freedom of association is guaranteed by Article 26(2) of the Palestinian Basic Law (passed by the Palestinian Legislative Council - PLC in 1996, signed by President Yasser Arafat in 2002 and amended by the PLC in 2003), which states that all Palestinians have the right, both individually and collectively "to form and establish unions, associations, societies, clubs and popular institutions in accordance with the law."

Though a large number of CSOs in Palestine had been created before the promulgation of the Basic Law and before the issuance of the current NGO Law, based on the Jordanian and Egyptian laws, the relevant legal framework for civil society organisations in Palestine is the **Law N.1, 2000, the so called "Law of Charitable Associations and Community Organisations"[39]**. This law regulates the creation and functioning of civil society organisations in the form of "association". Though the law refers to all kinds of "associations", "charitable organizations", "community foundations", networks, platforms and other kinds of citizens' permanent aggregations, all of them are defined identically as "associations"[40].

Both large organisations managing hospitals and educational institutions (as for instance, Bethlehem University and the Children's Hospital in Bethlehem) and very small community based organisations should register in the same way and are under the same regulation.

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[37] See also AFD studies on CSOs in the area C, carried out in 2012 and 2013.

[38] http://www.ansa-aw.net/Home/our-work/freedom-of-association (ANSA - Affiliated Network for Social Accountability in the Arab World)

[39] Palestinian Legislative Council, Law of Charitable Associations and Community Organizations, Law No.1, Year 2000 (www.pogar.org/publications/ other/laws/associations/charlaw-comorg-pal-00-e.pdf)

[40] As a consequence of that, networks and platforms are registered as individual organisations and individual organisations exist that are registered under the name "Union of ....", without any reference at their actual associative mechanisms.

According to Law N.1, 2000:

- Any association should be registered. Associations already registered under other laws before the promulgation of the Law N.1 have to register again.
- An "association" is any institution with "independent legal personality, established upon an agreement concluded among no less than seven persons to achieve legitimate objectives of public concern, without aiming at attaining financial profits to be shared among the members or achieving any personal benefits."
- All registered associations are exempt from taxes and customs duties, but there is no definition of "public benefit".
- Associations should have a board of directors of no more than thirteen persons. Board members should not be paid.
- There are no limitations on the rights of an association. Associations are free to engage in public policy debates, raise funds from foreign and domestic sources, and merge and dissolve.
- The Ministry of the Interior "may scrutinize the activity of any association or organization to ascertain that its funds have been spent for the purposes for which they were allocated" (Article 6).
- Associations can affiliate with foreign or domestic organizations without seeking prior permission
- Foreign associations are free to establish branches in Palestine so long as approval is given by both the Ministry of the Interior and the Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation.
- The government may exercise control over an association's funds in the case that it is dissolved. An amendment to the law per the decision of President Mahmoud Abbas (Decision No.6 of 2011) grants the Ministry of Interior unlimited discretion and authority to transfer the funds and assets of a dissolved organization to the public treasury of the PA[41].
- Moreover, the presence of vague provisions concerning the regulation of CSOs make it difficult to know what actions constitute a violation; potential for harsh penalties and leaving a wide space to authorities to influence CSO life (ICLN, 2014).

The law has been under debate for the last few years. On the one hand, the PA - particularly the Ministry of Interior- has been claiming greater authority and control over CSOs, considering the coordination and accountability of CSOs and of their activities, as well as the legitimacy of their funding mechanisms and of the use of resources not adequately assured by current legal framework[42]. On the other hand, NGOs and charities ask for greater autonomy and for more defined space for authorities' interventions. All consider the current law unable to guarantee the quality of CSO activities and the accountability of CSOs vis-a-vis their constituencies and the public (actually, quality of provided services is more relevant for line ministries than for the Ministry of Interior, which is mainly concerned by security related issues). Furthermore, the lack of capacity of line ministries to monitor service delivery is often "substituted" by the politically/security motivated control regime carried out by the Ministry of Interior (in contradiction with the letter of the law).

Moreover, the current law often produces paradoxes in the creation and management of CSOs, for instance:

- the proliferation of "NGOs", since all autonomous organisations should be registered, so that all can compete for the same sources of funding and funding became for most organisations the most important dimension (as it was also emerging from questionnaires, where most organizations consider "lack of funding" by far more important than the issues related to constituency, to impact or to service quality);

- the tendency of CSOs to invite persons to be "board members" that are not members of the assembly, making the board a kind of "legitimacy", "fund raising" or "public relations" tool, rather than a real governance body responding to the association's constituency;
- the tendency to have a "formal organisational setting" that is not reflecting the actual functioning of the organisations (leadership, decision making processes, etc.);
- the recent tendency of new organisations to register themselves as "non-profit companies" so as to gain more autonomy, more freedom in defining their governance mechanisms and to limit control by the government.

The debate on the formulation of a new law is in progress – including thorough discussions among the Ministry of Interior and CSO representatives[43] - although no proposals have been made public. There is a widespread fear among CSOs – which has been discussed while the mapping study was carried out - about the fact that the Government would foster the adoption of a new act based on the Egyptian law, which allows for greater control over the CSOs and their funding mechanisms[44].

The Commission for Civil Society Organisations

In 2014, a "Civil Society Organisations Commission" was established by presidential decree. The President selects the members of the Commission who report only to him. The Commission is autonomous from ministries (including the Ministry of Interior) and currently there are not structured communication mechanisms between the Commission and the Government.

The rationale of the establishment of the Commission was to improve communication between the public sector, the private sector and civil society. However, up to now, as reflected in interviews carried out with both CSOs and public sector representatives, the Commission is viewed with a certain suspicion or at least with some scepticism about its functions.

The Commission has a three-fold mandate:

a) to guarantee the free work and independence of CSOs from both the Government and the "donors' agendas";

b) to actively foster the communication among sectors, in the light of the Palestinian Development Plan;

c) to support the strengthening of the volunteerism that was widespread in the past but has been decreased significantly after the First Intifada.

The Commission is expected to work through programs and projects. Foreseen programmes concern human rights, good governance, capacity building, youths. Particularly the Capacity Building Programme foresees the training of 180 NGOs on proposal writing, management and other basic capacities and would offer also financial resources and technical support in addition to training.

In order to carry out its activity the Commission is establishing cooperation agreements with civil society platforms and coalitions, as well as with universities.

The Commission will have a journal (the first issue will focus on the NGO law) and a website.

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[41] *The decision states on amending Article (38) of the Law as follows: "1- In the event an Association or Organization is dissolved, a paid liquidator is appointed who prepares an inventory of its funds and assets. After the liquidation process is complete, the Ministry shall transfer all association or organization monetary and in-kind funds and assets to the Palestinian National Authority or to a Palestinian Association similar in its objectives. Salaries, rewards and rights of employees of associations or organizations shall not be subject to transfer."*

[42] *Government representatives claimed in 2013 that resources channelled through CSOs by international donors exceed those channelled through the government itself. CSOs denounced such statements as devoid of any real basis and as an attempt to create mistrust against them.*

[43] *http://www.icnl.org/research/monitor/palestine.html*

[44] *According to the Egyptian Law on associations, all international funds should be approved by the government bodies. This led most Egyptian Human Rights organisations to register themselves as a "firm" rather than as associations.*

Between 2006 and 2008, following a broad based consultation, which involved more than 250 NGOs, the NDC (NGO Development Center), with the support of the World Bank, formulated a "Code of Conduct for NGOs"[45]. Such a Code sets the ethical values and principles with which NGOs should comply, namely:

- Compliance with laws;
- Priority for longer-term development agenda (in line with the national agenda without any normalization activities with the occupier);
- Participation;
- Networking and Coordination;
- Transparency;
- Accountability;
- Equality and Inclusiveness;
- Prevent Conflict of Interest;
- Influence and Effectiveness;
- NGO's Integrity;
- Dispute Resolution.

The code has been further consolidated by the wide dissemination activity among NGOs and Charitable Associations involving the main umbrella NGO networks (Palestinian General Union for Charitable Societies, Palestinian NGO Network, National Institute for Palestinian NGOs, Palestinian General Union for NGOs – Gaza[46]) creating the "Code of Conduct Coalition".

Manuals and guidelines on the Code of Conduct have been prepared and diffused. Currently about 650 organisations have adopted the Code of Conduct and are involved in a set of capacity building activities and in the building of a compliance mechanism, carried out through the cooperation between the NDC and the Charities unions and NGOs networks. Considering the whole number of registered organisations, the number of those involved in the application of the "Code of conduct" is small, but if only the "active" organisations are considered, and those that can be defined as NGOs more than as CBOs, the number appears to be a relevant one[47].

In the West Bank and Gaza, other relevant laws are those concerning cooperatives, sport clubs and microfinance institutions:

- Cooperatives are registered under the Ministry of Labour, and include both production cooperatives and saving and credit cooperatives. Cooperatives currently constitute the main "chain link" between CSOs and the private sector/economic activities; however, they are more often considered beneficiaries or as vehicles for reaching target groups, rather than as "actors" and partners in policy dialogue and local governance, both by large NGOs and by the Government itself.
- Sport groups and sport federation are registered and regulated under the Ministry of Youth and Sport[48]. They constitute a diverse pool of organisations, which in addition to youth and sport

activities, are often involved in cultural activities, and in some cases in the "project committees" or consultation committees existing at village/local level. Particularly in recent years youth sport clubs (including informal youth groups) engaged in activities focusing on governance of the territory such as the demonstrations for more concrete/stronger PA action against the wall and the management of "hearings" by local authorities[49]. Despite their widespread composition and relevance, these organisations hardly participate in the formal "civil society community" debate.

- Micro-finance institutions (MFI) have been established mainly between 2013 – 2014, after the promulgation of the law on micro-finance requiring micro-credit activities to be exercised by organisations under the control of the Ministry of Finance and a specific authority. The new law also requires them to deposit capital for being registered. Before this law was promulgated most micro-credit organisations were registered as "NGOs". After the promulgation of the new law some organizations maintained their status as an "NGO", continuing to carry out training, technical assistance and incubation of enterprise as well as "promoting the financial activities" of the MFIs, while others registered as micro-finance organisation carrying out financial operations. These roles often put organisations in a difficult situation, since a conflict of interest can easily arise between the function of an organisation lending money or promoting the credit and one promoting the interest and perspectives of communities. Moreover, CSOs supporting micro-finance activities are often more vulnerable to public authorities restrictions, and accordingly tend to avoid any conflict with them which might emerge when participating in governance related actions[50].

In both "Area C" and East Jerusalem, Palestinian CSOs are also subject to Israeli regulations. Israeli law does not require the registration of all groups and organisations and furthermore, the Israeli Supreme Court recognised in 2009 the "freedom of association" as fundamental human rights. Nevertheless, organisations, in order to carry out activities that involve resources, are required to be authorised by the Israeli "Registrar of Associations", under the Israeli Ministry of Justice. Associations and NGOs established in the territories under Israeli authorities are mainly regulated by three laws:

- the Law of Associations (1980), which regulate NGOs, corporations and cooperative associations;
- the Criminal Law, and particularly the "Prevention of Terrorism Ordinance" (1984), the "Law implementing the interim agreement in the West Bank and Gaza Strip" (1994) and the "Law on the prohibition of Terror Funding" (2005);
- the laws concerning the practice of professions, requiring professionals to belong to professional associations.

Under the Israeli law, associations can be dissolved based on a court order. However, measures against Palestinian associations are often based on arbitrary choices, based on so-called security considerations. This has been a main factor for organisations to move out from East Jerusalem. Since in most cases organisations prefer not to register themselves under the Israeli Law, many of them cannot receive or manage financial resources in East Jerusalem, which in turn requires the intervention of international NGOs or even Israeli NGOs. The cooperation with Israeli NGOs is considered a very sensitive issue, since it is perceived as a kind of "normalisation" action.

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[45] http://www.ndc.ps/PDF/Code_of_Conduct.pdf
[46] Currently (November – December 2014), the NGO network in Gaza is not participating in the coalition.
[47] The World Bank, Social Development Notes. Social Accountability Innovations in the NGO Sector in West Bank and Gaza, June 2012
[48] An example of these activities is "Ruwwad, The Palestinian Youth Empowerment Programme". This is a project carried out by the Ministry of Youth and Sport in cooperation with local sport club and with some national NGOs, with the support of USAID and the American "Education Development Center" (http://www.ruwwad.org/).

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[49] Interviews with researchers involved in the analysis of social accountability activities in Palestine; meetings with youth organisations.
[50] STEM-VCR, 2013; interviews with micro-finance institutions and NGOs.

Although most CSOs in Palestine are engaged in service delivery, however, there are few examples where CSOs are engaged in governance and policy dialogue. These include CSOs initiatives engaging public authorities at central and local levels and the participation of CSOs in "invited spaces" initiated by the public authorities themselves.

The NGO Strategic Framework for NGO sector (2013-2017)

In May 2013, the NDC launched the **"Strategic Framework for the Palestinian NGO Sector 2013-2017"**. The strategic framework was developed through consultation among CSOs in the West Bank, East Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip. The strategic framework identifies the following priority areas as main "strategic objectives":

(1) More effective engagement of NGOs in the process of national liberation and democratization based on internationally recognised legal framework. This objective mainly aims at supporting campaigns against the occupation and at establishing a monitoring mechanism for the Israeli violations of Palestinian rights;

(2) Streamline and effective relationships between the NGO sector and Palestinian Development Partners (This objective supports the creation of working groups on key policy issues, the research on policy issues and the participation of CSOs in consultative committees established by ministries);

(3) Improve access to quality services that are responsive to the needs of the community provided by government and the NGOs. (This objective aims at promoting a rights based approach to service provision, by supporting: standard setting, code of conduct compliance mechanisms, assessment of quality and coverage of services in area C and in areas under the PA control, the introduction of measures for gender equality in CSOs and services; for facilitating youth involvement and leadership; and for increasing people awareness, etc.);

(4) More effective, accountable and transparent NGOs (mainly continuing to work on the dissemination of the "Code of Conduct" and on the establishment of a compliance mechanism)

(5) Secure adequate financial resources for NGOs (by opening dialogue between NGOs and donors, by promoting partnerships with INGOs and by mobilizing new sources of funding; in this framework the creation of a "Social Development Endowment Fund" is foreseen).

As observed in 2013 report of Care International in Egypt on social accountability in Palestine, a "number of social accountability tools were used by CSOs in Palestine such as social accountability indicators in the results framework, transparent and participatory subproject selection processes, participatory planning and needs assessments, citizen's budget, community scorecards, social audits, in addition to some awareness raising workshops on accountability"[51].

These experiences can be organised in different categories, briefly analysed below:
- Policy setting and law formulation;
- Fostering of good governance and public authorities social accountability;
- Improvement of public services delivery;
- Support to decentralisation and local governance;
- Support to the improvement of international cooperation effectiveness;
- Support to international campaigns and policy dialogue at regional and international levels.

Policy setting and law formulation is a traditional area of joint engagement of CSOs and public authorities in Palestine. CSOs contributed to the adoption of a number of laws including NGO laws, the Labor law, and the Civil Affairs Law, as well as the formulation of a variety of policies, including a number of sector strategies (e.g. the Health Sector Strategy, the Agriculture Sector Strategy ...).

Moreover, policy dialogue initiatives with the participation of CSOs have been launched for consultation on economic policies and the Palestinian National Development Plan. Particularly in the process of the formulation of the National Development Plan, about 1300 representatives of CSOs have been involved in some 240 meetings[52]. Though, often these initiatives have been said – both in interviews and in the focus groups – to have had mainly a "decorative" character, since the key elements of policies have not been discussed with CSOs. Another issue to be considered is the involvement of CSOs in developing the sector strategies which underpin the National Development Plan. However, CSOs were not involved in the discussion of general policies or in the preparation phase of the planning process: CSOs did not participate in the development of the planning process itself.

Policy dialogue and advocacy– were identified as usual activities by almost 50% of the NGOs which participated in the mapping, including those who are engaged in service delivery. In fact, the main and most experienced NGOs are often consulted by line ministers on key policies and laws.

The influence of CSOs (particularly NGOs) on public policies is mostly due to the following factors:

- The technical capacity and expertise of NGOs (some NGOs have a longer experience and a stronger knowledge than public authorities on many policy areas: agriculture, health and education), which is normally allowing the NGOs themselves to present evidences in advocating for policies/laws;
- The fact that some NGOs are key players in the provision of certain services, (this is true in the case of child-care or special education and rehabilitation services, that of agriculture and even that of specialised health care), thus it would be impossible to define practical policies without consulting them;
- The historical personal relationships that exist between the staff and leaders of some NGOs and the staff and leaders of some ministries: many large NGOs were created before the establishment of the PNA and have been the places where officers and political leaders started their professional life. Very often, relationships existed between leaders of large NGOs and political leaders, because of their education history and common professional experiences.

While these three factors facilitate the influence of CSOs in the development of national and local policies, they are somehow weakening the recognition of civil society organisations as a policy actor, which is not legitimate by the experience and capacities, but by being a mechanism of citizens' participation. Paradoxically, while the Government recognizes the main CSOs as partners in policy setting, the recognition of civil society in general as a legitimate and autonomous policy actor is very weak.

At least partially, the situation is different for certain issues in which policies touch on sensitive areas, such as security and the respect of civil freedoms or on gender equality and women's rights. In these areas, the policy influence of CSOs is more linked to "windows of opportunity" (as the presence of a certain minister or the international debate on a certain issue) and on the capacity to mobilise networks and the public, including international donors.

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[51] Care International in Egypt, The potential of Social Accountability Interventions in Local Governance in Palestine, Care International - GIZ, 2013

[52] NGO Development Center, Participation of Palestinian Non-Governmental Organizations in Sector and National Planning Processes, December 2013

A common issue discussed in meetings with CSO representatives are the limited "public mobilisation" capacities most CSOs are able to exercise in order to pressure authorities. Another emerging issue discussed by CSO representatives is the fact that capacity to carry out "evidence based advocacy" is only available among a few, more specialised organisations.

In the absence of a functioning legislative council and a public arena for the discussion of policies and laws, influencing policies and legal frameworks is mainly initiated through "direct linkages" with decision makers in the Government.

Fostering good governance and public authorities social accountability

"Good governance" and "social accountability" in recent years have become an increasingly important theme in Palestine, not least due to the interest and engagement of key international actors (e.g. World Bank, UNDP and DFID), and to the importance that was attached to these topics within the international policy arena (see the debate on aid/development effectiveness):

- There are some key CSOs that have been engaged in accountability issues (including the Coalition for Integrity and Accountability - AMAN, the Women's Affairs Technical Committee - WATC, and the Arab Thought Forum - Multaqa) influencing both the establishment of new institutional mechanisms at the national level, and the management of public policies and activities at central and local levels;
- Within the National Development Plan 2011 – 2013, the PA assumed responsibility to increase the role of CSOs in overseeing the performance of public institutions and services;
- A variety of measures have been adopted by the PA for increasing transparency and accountability of authorities and service providers (including CSOs), also based on the efforts of CSOs focused on "good governance". Recent measures adopted in this context include: the creation of the Palestinian Anti-Corruption Commission (PACC) in 2010; the engagement of the Government to formulate an anti-corruption plan; the dissemination of a integrity toolkit among Local Government Units (15 local authorities adopted it, with different modalities, 9 of them established citizens participation spaces, while others only adopted the tools related to administrative procedures[53]).

Initiatives dealing with social accountability currently focus on "corruption" and "malpractices", as well as individual complaints by service users/citizens. While such a focus is likely to positively influence the functioning of public authorities and service providers, it risks to not contribute very much to the advancement of the recognition of citizenship rights (including in decision making on public choices) or to the recognition of civil society as policy actor. As a fact, most social accountability mechanisms set up tend to focus on the public authorities **compliance with laws and regulations (which indeed is not a minor problem in Palestine, if the already mentioned World Bank index on social accountability and government performance are considered)**, more than on effectiveness or relevance of policies in relation to emerging needs.

Improvement of public service delivery

The improvement of public service delivery is another area in which CSOs' engagement in governance and policy dialogue is possible. A strong collaboration already exists in some public service fields, like those of education, health and services for people with "special needs". However in most of these areas the collaboration is mainly focused on service delivery, nevertheless some experiences and emerging collaboration opportunities are noteworthy.

- CSOs have been actively working at introducing and testing methodological innovations regarding the delivery of certain services[54] and in the dissemination of new approaches among public officers, both through formal cooperation with the ministry (often resulting in training activities for public officers and service providers) and through informal cooperation set at local level with service providers. Many of such activities are being carried out by CSOs since 2007 with the financial support of the EU within the framework of the NSA-LA Programme.
- Coordination of activities and the setting of common standards for public services is another emerging area in which CSOs can engage to improve the quality and relevance of service delivery. Currently, except for a few cases in which CSOs play a particularly strong role (e.g. health services, in which referral of cases between public and CSO managed services is common), the setting of standards and the coordination of services have been mainly claimed by public authorities. However, particularly through the establishment of regional coordination bodies for social services (these are being set up in the framework of the EU support to the Ministry of Social Affairs) a new space can be created for "participative standard setting procedures".
- Users committees and committees for improving services are common at the national level, particularly in the education sector. Moreover, the establishment of similar committees in which users discuss with service providers about service quality issues and service delivery features is the focus of some specific initiatives, jointly involving the AMAN coalition and the Ministry of Social Affairs, with the support of DFID, GIZ and other European donors.

A special case in this context is represented women's organisations and services provided to women by both CSOs and public authorities. With the support of the Italian cooperation a network of local "women centers" is being set up. In the West Bank these centers are managed by the Ministry of Women's Affair, but include in their management committees the local women's organisations, so to assure both the coordination among services offered by the different actors and the relevance of the activities of the center itself in relation to citizens' demands. In the Gaza Strip, the centres are directly managed by local councils composed by women's organisations and have local authorities as their main counterpart. Furthermore, services as those concerning women's rights and empowerment represent actual "policy actions" rather than service delivery activities[55]. Support to decentralisation and local governance

Decentralisation is an issue debated for a long time in Palestine. As already discussed, a great number of Local Government Units (LGUs) exists in Palestine, comprising municipalities of different dimensions and kinds, village committees and service delivery/management agencies. While citizens' participation in local government is not formally institutionalised, it became a common practice, even if through a variety of approaches and modalities.

In 2011, the Ministry of Local Government produced a set of guidelines on LGUs' accountability. The guidelines particularly identify four areas for improving citizens' participation: (1) information disclosure through publications of reports and financial statements, (2) consultation through consultative meetings, town hall meetings, complaint boxes and neighbourhood committees, (3) participatory planning and decision making through needs assessments and participation in development of strategic plans and (4) in-kind and financial contributions.

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[53] *CARE Int. – GIZ, 2013*

[54] *Among others: rehabilitation of people with disabilities, technical and vocational training and education, primary health care and mobile clinics, remedial education for children with learning difficulties, etc.*
[55] *As the case of the "Culture and Free Thought Association (CFTA)" in Gaza shows, even education and culture initiatives can be included among policy relevant actions, particularly when promoting cultural change, change in public authority functioning and social innovation.*

Some of these modalities have been actually implemented, as the set of practices briefly presented below.

- **Councils and "coordination bodies"** involving the municipalities and CSOs have been developed in many municipalities (including among others: Bethlehem, Beit Jala, and Beit Sahour, where a large number of CSOs exist). In most cases, these councils have a morph mandate and tend to be more of a space for facilitating communication among actors than a space where CSOs can influence local governance and local policies. This fact often leads CSOs to participate in an irregular way in existing local councils. On the other hand, most councils are managed by municipalities that invite CSOs. This involves both the risk of selecting mainly the organisations that are already collaborating with the public administration or that are closer to it because of political or family linkages and the risk of the councils themselves to be considered closed clubs, in which only selected organisations participate.
- The **formulation of local development plans** is an activity in which both international organisations and local CSOs (as ARIJ, in the Bethlehem governorate) are engaged, fostering the participation of local CSOs – including CBOs – in the identification of local priorities and in the formulation of plans to be submitted to the national Government and to donors. Supported by GIZ, Strategic Development and Investment Plans have been prepared across 134 local authorities. A common feature of most Plans is the fact that they tend to focus on a "list of priority projects" that funding agencies can select, rather than a wider strategy for local development and governance[56].
- Public hearings and committees for influencing local policies are developed with an active engagement of CSOs and aimed at formalising "local development agendas" and at influencing the decisions of local authorities by introducing the perspectives of citizens, represent another set of interventions implemented across many municipalities and villages in both Gaza and the West Bank. In some cases, these committees have also been created in villages located in "Area C" and represent a way for "formalising" demands towards service providers and for opening communication channels between "Area C" communities and the Palestinian Authority. Furthermore, in the framework of the EU NSA-LA programme, several projects have been carried out through the involvement of national and international NGOs focusing on the creation of local committees allowing for the representation of actors that are not normally represented in village councils (e.g. women, youth, etc.).

Experiences of CSO engagement in local governance

The Tajaawob programme works in 6 marginalised communities across the West Bank and Gaza, helping them better organise themselves, collectively plan their priorities, and empower them to advocate decision makers and other stakeholders for more direct responsiveness to their needs and priorities. Moreover, the programme works directly with authorities on piloting mechanisms that would facilitate civic participation and more informed decision-making that responds to public needs. The programme funded by DFID is carried out through the cooperation among the British Council, Miftah, Aman, Palestinian Vision, Oxfam and BBC Media Action[57].

The creation of a **Steering Committee for Alleviating Poverty in Gaza Middle District** is the core of an action funded by the EU and carried out through the cooperation between Islamic Relief and the Civitas Institute. The action engaged in creating a committee that has been comprised of local CBO's, Neighbourhoods Committees, and the municipalities with the support of the Ministry of Local Government.

International aid agencies, particularly GIZ (which supported planning activities involving the participation of citizens' organisations), DFID, USAID and the UN, played a strong role in developing standards and modalities for citizens' participation in local government. This has created a situation in which the actual sustainability of citizens' involvement in local governance is very much in question, as it depends in many cases more on the support of external actors than local action (by local CSOs and the local authorities, as both of them are in many cases more interested in getting financial resources than in assuming a stronger and more effective role in local governance and in increasing their autonomy from the Government).

Support to the improvement of international cooperation effectiveness

A further space for governance and policy dialogue can be identified in reference to international cooperation, with the aim of improving the relevance and effectiveness of international aid to Palestine. In this framework, several activities have been carried out, as reported below:

- Consultation with CSOs have been frequently carried out as a way for improving the EU support to civil society organisations, particularly in the framework of the European Initiative Democracy and Human Rights, in the framework of the NSA – LA Programme, and in the preparation of a variety of "call for proposals". More recently the EU called for consultation initiatives concerning the establishment of the local cooperation strategy for 2013, the Single Support Framework 2014-2015, as well as the "Country Roadmap for engagement with civil society" and the ENPI Sub-committees. In the formulation process of these documents outlining the EU cooperation with Palestine, consultation activities have been carried out in the West Bank and Gaza. Consultation with CSOs has also been promoted in the framework of preparations for the Cairo Conference on the reconstruction of Gaza in 2014 (where Palestinian CSOs had not been invited to by the involved governments) and more in general is a modality of involving CSOs that is practiced also by other donors. However, these consultation initiatives only involve a relatively small number of organisations and are often perceived – both by involved international agencies and by the consulted CSOs – as a kind of "beneficiary consultation" in which the main stake is not the setting of strategies, but the allocation of money so to satisfy the different emerging demands.
- Participation of CSOs in the local aid coordination structure represents another opportunity[58]. However, though the participation of CSOs in aid coordination forums is possible in principle, particularly within the Sector Working Groups (SWG), such participation is very limited. Moreover, CSOs taking part in the SWG meetings do not have the mandate to represent other civil society organisations.
- A third modality for CSOs to influence international aid allocation to Palestine is through regional and international networks and conferences. However, participation of Palestinian CSOs in international and regional networks has been mainly geared towards the recognition of a Palestinian State and the adoption of sanctions against Israeli violations of international law. To this aim, on the one side, Human Rights organisations monitor, document and publish information on violations, related to the obligations of occupying forces, to child rights and more in general human rights, to land and house confiscation and demolition. On the other side, a wide group of CSOs participate in information and advocacy campaigns (as those of boycotting and reducing international investments in illegally occupied areas).
- Another related area is the mobilisation of Palestinians in the Diaspora, not only as a funding source, but as an active actor in innovation, focusing on governance and policy issues. Think tanks can play a role in this framework, together with new organisations like "The Shabaka", a Palestinian-International Think Tank, which involve scholars and development activists who are based inside and outside Palestine focusing on issues related to Palestinian development processes and policies.

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[56] http://www.giz.de/en/worldwide/18104.html
[57] http://www.britishcouncil.ps/en/programmes/society/tajaawob;http://www.tajaawob.ps/

[58] http://www.lacs.ps/

- Finally, CSOs can engage in improving the planning and implementation of aid activities at the local level. A pilot initiative was carried out by the French Development Agency, in collaboration with NDC (NGO Development Center) and a set of specialised CSOs, including YMCA and Riwaq, in "Area C" villages. According to the proposed approach, a CSO provides support to local authorities in setting up their development agenda and in planning and managing interventions that are implemented by other organisations – including both CSOs and private sector. A main concern in this context relates to the risk of tasking CSOs with mainly technical responsibilities, which potentially could also be carried out by a private or public technical assistance provider[59].

In considering CSOs' engagement in "guiding" or improving international aid, a particular concern relates to the lack or the weaknesses of the existing mechanisms in assuring the representation of CSOs in Palestine. Participants in both networks and councils tend to represent just themselves. The representation of CSOs is further reduced by the leadership dynamics existing among CSOs, which were firstly observed in the 2011 CSO mapping, but have been confirmed in the current study. CSO leaders often maintain their role for very long periods and "leaders" tend to be in the boards of different organisations, since through their personal relationship networks organisations can access resources, both from international donors and from local/ national sources.

4.3. Obstacles and facilitating factors

Despite the range of experience of CSOs in governance and policy dialogue mechanisms, such engagement is still weak and often has limited effectiveness. Some specific factors tend to influence, and obstruct, CSOs' actual and effective engagement in policy dialogue and governance. These are briefly considered below.

- The lack of a recognised social space for CSOs in governance and policy dialogue is the first element. Governance and policy dialogue are mainly considered as the space in which political parties and the Government have a role, while CSOs are mainly considered as providers of services. Social representation, social norms, legal framework and administrative regulations, capacity building initiatives, etc. are mainly geared to support and orient CSOs toward better playing this role, rather than supporting their engagement in policy and governance. Even in the public discourse in support of CSOs, the space that is granted for them is that of service providers, particularly for satisfying the demands of the poor and the marginalized population groups that the state would not be able to serve effectively[60].
- Competition and lack of trust among CSOs represents another factor influencing CSO engagement in governance and policy dialogue. With a few exceptions, CSOs tend to work individually, not to share knowledge and information and not to build up a common "front" for facing other actors. Moreover, their dependency/vulnerability from political dynamics at national and local levels and their reliance on personal relationships further increases the tendency among organisations not to engage critically with authorities.
- Limited legitimacy is a further factor influencing CSOs engagement in governance and policy dialogue. Donor dependency, the image of following donors' interests and agendas, the perception of corruption and misuse of funds, the tendency towards the setting of "vertical partnerships" in which the stronger NGOs use local actors as implementing bodies, the personalisation of leadership, the fact that services provided are not always relevant for local needs, are elements reducing the legitimacy of CSOs to actually engage in governance and to contribute to policy dialogue in ways that are other than "technical support".

- The focus on services and the fact that service delivery is the main legitimizing mechanism and the main tool for gaining community support and trust constitute other factors in this framework. Being directly involved in service delivery - on the one hand - situates CSOs in a kind of "conflict of interest" when they engage in governance and policy dialogue, and increases their vulnerability vis-a-vis the authorities, since assuming a critical position could imply consequences for the ability of an organisation to deliver services in a given territory.
- Paradoxically, focusing on human rights can emerge as a further obstacle to engage in policy dialogue and in local governance. Firstly, focusing on human rights can create conflict situations among organisations and the public authorities that make dialogue and critical collaboration difficult (human rights organisations are easily perceived as "opposition forces", since often violations of human rights are related to political conflicts). Secondly, the focus on human rights violations engages organisations in assuming a "legal" perspective, looking at compliance with norms (laws, treaties, etc.) rather than a "political" perspective, looking at the interests of actors and at relations existing among them (including power relationships) and therefore on the advancement of citizens' participation and rights.
- Lack of communication with constituencies represents a key factor influencing CSOs engagement on governance and policy dialogue, as due to the lack of adequate communication with communities and other local actors CSOs are somehow "obliged" to restrict themselves to a technical role. This situation is particularly worrying in the case of small and medium sized NGOs, which – while losing their linkages with their own constituencies and communities – have not developed a strong specialisation and technical capacity to compensate for a lack of constituency. The legal framework allowing CSOs to have a board composed of persons that are not in the assembly is a factor influencing the tendency of CSOs to weaken their linkages with their original constituencies. In fact, very often it is the board that defines organisation's agendas and strategies (not on the basis of consultation of the organisation's constituency, but on the basis of board members capacities and attitudes) and even more frequently it is used as an instrument for facilitating fundraising based on the personal relationships of its members.
- Donor attitudes are often another important factor hindering CSO engagement in policy dialogue and governance. The following attitudes with a potentially negative impact can be identified: (a) the focus on long-term partnerships with a small group of CSOs, which at the same time creates mistrust among the CSOs and limits access to resources for others; (b) the importance given to administrative qualifications for partnership selection, which implies on the CSOs' side a greater focus on administrative capacity rather than on the capacity to represent citizens and to engage in the analysis of their own social realities; (c) the concentration on the organisations having their offices in cities, which implies both a tendency of CSOs to leave their original communities in order to establish more visible offices, and a tendency for initiatives carried out by CSOs to be located in visible places and large cities, where often effectively engaging in local governance and policy dialogue is more difficult, because of the variety of local stakeholders and of the complexity of situations.

Issues related to governance engagement of CSOs emerged during focus group meetings in Gaza

The concept of "empowerment" is too vague and responds to different models and approaches. Each organisation defines it in its own terms. As a consequence a variety of strategies – sometime in conflict with each other – are used in the same places. Often empowerment is reduced to organisational capacity building, without looking at actors' positions and contexts.

A main obstacle is the absence of a national-based strategic development vision to guide joint or coordinated actions among stakeholders and particularly among CSOs and PNA institutions. The Palestinian National Plan is not adequate for providing such a vision. As a consequence, CSOs engage in immediate and simple projects without caring about their linkages with national development priorities.

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[59] Viac C., Lahlou I., Sivalingam I., Schrader R., Carney T., Refining AFD's Interventions in the Palestinian Territories. Increasing Resilience in Area C, AFD, 2014
[60] "The Palestinian Authority is committed to support and partner with civil society institutions. We acknowledge the contribution of the NGOs in the provision of essential social services in particular in the Gaza Strip, Jerusalem and areas where the public sector has difficulties to operate". Dr. Salam Fayyad, Palestinian Prime Minster at the closing ceremony of PNGO III, June 2011

Successful models of CSO networks do exist in Gaza, aggregating different actors based on common causes and interests, both on sector related issues and on advocacy issues.

Weak coordination and synergies among public authorities and institutions is an obstacle for CSOs in identifying their counterparts in policy dialogue and governance.

A general trend exists among CSOs towards working on project-based poverty alleviation interventions, or focusing on emergency and relief. Lack of focus on longer-term development is another factor hindering CSO engagement in policy dialogue and governance, since the possibility to foster change processes is out of the CSOs' guiding paradigm.

Coordination and networking among CSOs is mainly based on personal relationships or political affiliation. Professional relationships and strategic affinities are not a relevant factor in most networking actions.

4.4. Lessons learnt from experiences

Looking at past experiences, we have identified some lessons learned relevant for the future.

- The first lesson concerns the role of international NGOs. While they risk to enter into a competitive relationship with national CSOs when they directly engage in project implementation and in service delivery, they can play a key role in governance and policy dialogue initiatives. Roles that international partners can assume include: facilitating innovation and transfer of approach; information and knowledge from other countries and the international community; facilitating access to funding for organisations that because of legal obstacles and of location (for instance in East Jerusalem or in "Area C") cannot access funding otherwise; creating a safer environment for local CSOs in situations in which conflicts with political authorities or with Israeli occupying authorities can represent a threat for their existence and working autonomy or an obstacle for communication among stakeholders.
- The second lesson is related to the funding mechanisms. The variety of experiences identified and the variety of conditions existing in Palestine show that the possibility to have a plurality of independent and different funding mechanism is both a need and an opportunity. Basket funds would "de facto" result in a limitation of funding mechanisms and of "funding actors" that can partner with local CSOs. On the other side, mechanisms for facilitating access to information about available funding at the local level would be very effective in supporting local governance initiatives as well as "policy dialogue" initiatives. This would be particularly important for increasing the sustainability of the many local initiatives that started with the support of international cooperation agencies. The sustainability of these initiatives is not likely to be based, in the short term, on the use of local resources, but can be based on the possibility for local actors to access new and different funding sources or create a funding mix that is independent from any main donors. Sub-granting proved to be a relevant approach for fostering CBO engagement in governance related initiatives. However, partnership agreements related to sub-granting are to be considered carefully, as in some cases funding based relations create dependency or further reduce the autonomous capacity of CBOs.
- The third lesson refers to the capacity building approach. Most successful initiatives have not just been based on the transmission of knowledge and information through training and workshops, but have included the support to institutional consolidation through a set of follow up activities, including technical assistance and in some cases the provision of resources (including "core" or institutional funding).

5. An analytical view of Palestinian CSOs

As discussed earlier, there are almost 2.800 CSOs distributed across Palestine. According to the table below, 57% of these organisations act exclusively in the local area: a single village, a city where they are based, or, in some cases, a district or a governorate. 28% of CSOs are working within a single whole region and just 14% across the whole of Palestine.

The distribution of activities suggests that, even if all organisations define themselves as "NGOs" and compete for funding, almost 60% of these organisations are more similar to what is called a "community based organisation" or a self-help group set up by a group of people for solving their own local problems, than to NGOs or other intermediary organisations, created to support a wider public interest that is prevalently "different" from the members of the organisation or "external".

Geographical area of CSO activities
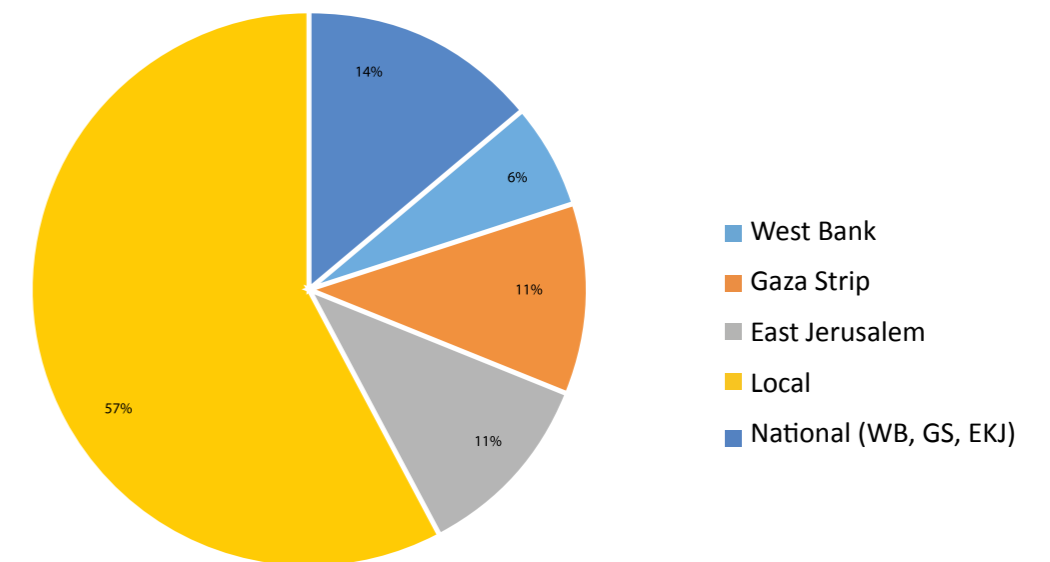
Actually, what has been observed through the focus groups and the questionnaires is that it is very difficult to make a clear distinction between CBOs (and more in general "first level organisations") on the one hand, and NGOs and supporting organisations (or, more in general "second level organisations") on the other hand. In fact, in many cases CBOs tends to develop into "NGOs", even if this would change their functions and nature.

When looking at the sector distribution of organisations, it is possible to observe, as in the following figure, that just 12 % of organisations concentrate on only one sector of activity, while all the others work in a minimum of 2 or 3 sectors. In fact about half of the organizations address 4, 5 or even more sectors. It is common for well-established organisations like NGOs and large charitable societies to specialise on a single sector (related in some cases to the know-how and in some other cases to the kind of services provided), while it is typical of emerging NGOs and of local organisations to engage in different sectors, following the emerging funding opportunities and the need to make the most out of resources and spaces offered by stronger partners (e.g. larger NGOs looking for local partners and implementing agencies) and by donors (who keep changing their agendas according to strategies that scarcely depend on input from local small partners).
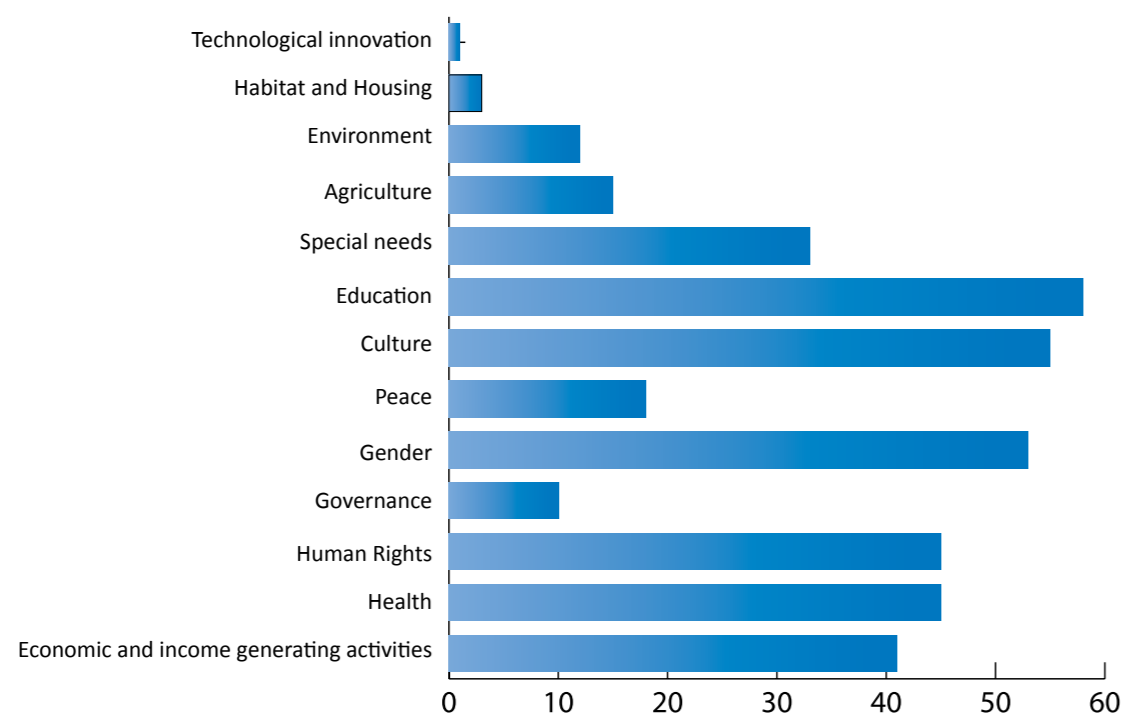
The most worrying issue is the lack of accumulation of knowledge. Unless an organisation is very large, it hardly has the technical capacity to engage in many sectors, which would require the accumulation and production of specialized knowledge.

Sectors and specialization

- 1 sector
- 2-3 sectors
- 4 sectors
- 5 or plus sectors

12%
31%
15%
43%
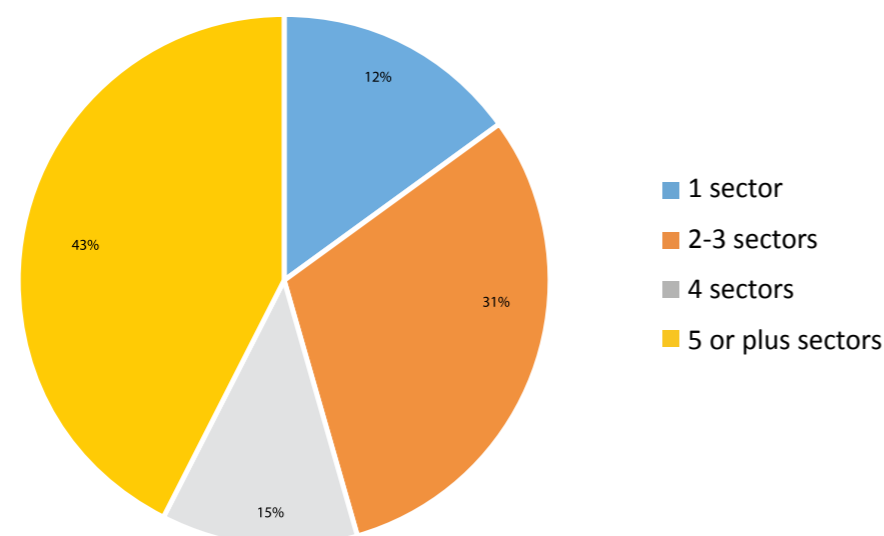
Comparing the current situation with the one of the 2010 – 2011 mapping, it is possible to observe some minor changes that are unlikely to reflect real trends. The percentage of organisations engaged in 5 or more sectors was 50% and now is 43%. Similarly, the percentage of organisations engaged in 4 sectors was 18% and now is 15%. The percentage of organisations engaged in 2 or 3 sectors was 29.5% and now is 31%. A bigger change occurred with those organizations specialised/engaged prevalently in a single sector. The percentage went up from 4% to 12 %. The fact that some activities are now out of CSOs' realm[61] and the fact that some sectors became in recent year more visible (e.g. governance and housing/habitat upgrading) explain this change. As a whole, the differences in sector distribution are probably more related to the activities in progress than to the "vocation" of organisations [62].

Sector engagement of CSOs

- Technological innovation
- Habitat and Housing
- Environment
- Agriculture
- Special needs
- Education
- Culture
- Peace
- Gender
- Governance
- Human Rights
- Health
- Economic and income generating activities

0 10 20 30 40 50 60

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[61] This is the case of micro-finance, which was a sector in which many organisations were active, particularly those supporting agriculture, women and anti-poverty actions.

[62] Among considered sectors, the support to elders and the support to people with disabilities have been included under the category "special needs".

5.1. The dynamics among grassroots and community based organisations

Grassroots and community-based organisations constitute the group of 1st level CSOs. These organisations are characterised by the fact that members and activists are identical with the beneficiaries of actions. This generally means that 1st level organisations are locally rooted, and at the same time carry out activities that are mainly focused on local issues and are being implemented at the local level. In this group, legally registered organisations with a formal statute and a formal organisational setting co-exist with organisations that, while maintaining permanence, are informal in their nature and shape.

In the case of Palestine, also because of existing legal frameworks, most 1st level CSOs are registered, just as all autonomous organisations should be registered. Nevertheless, many organisations exist that are not registered, such as committees and groups that participate in activities carried out under the "umbrella" of other organisations, e.g. under the umbrella of schools, NGOs, local authorities, etc.

The following types of 1st level organisations have been identified by the mapping exercise:

- Charitable societies operating services at the local level;
- Youth groups and parents groups, mainly involved in sports and culture (but also often constituting the basis for other kinds of activities, including those with a more political nature: resistance to the occupation, advocacy vis-a-vis public authorities, setting-up of local committees);
- Local committees for interacting with local authorities and service providers, or for specific purposes as the documentation of damages related to Israeli occupation (in some cases these committees are established with the support of 2nd level CSOs and INGOs);
- Cooperatives;
- Cultural organisations;
- Charitable "faith based" societies, mainly running services (health, education, elderly care, rehabilitation)
- Refugee camp CBOs (involved both in income generation activities and in youth, sport and culture activities);
- Project committees supporting "village committees" in activities related to the acquisition and implementation of external funding.

A further group of organisations that should be included in this framework are the "non-profit companies." They are created to carry out initiatives related to local development, culture, art and tourism. In some cases, these organisations/companies tend to link people to engage in support of communities with small actions, in other cases they create new job opportunities based on "social/political engagement" and "professional capacities".

Youth movements

The 2011 Mapping pointed out the emergence of youth based movements, even if in a shape different from that which can be observed in other countries affected by the "Arab spring". A main focus of the Palestinian youth mobilisation was in fact the "end of the division" between the Gaza Strip and the West Bank. The movement to end the state of division gained most traction in March 2011 and was mainly organised through the use of social networks.

NGOs closely observed this movement with strong interest and various attempts were carried out to support emerging youth groups, particularly among students. However, according to some key persons consulted during the study these attempts did not work as expected. In most cases, committees and groups changed their nature or did not assume a more stable condition. In some cases, committees were somehow a tool used by political factions, in other cases they became the initial stepping stones for young leaders to enter into political institutions/careers.
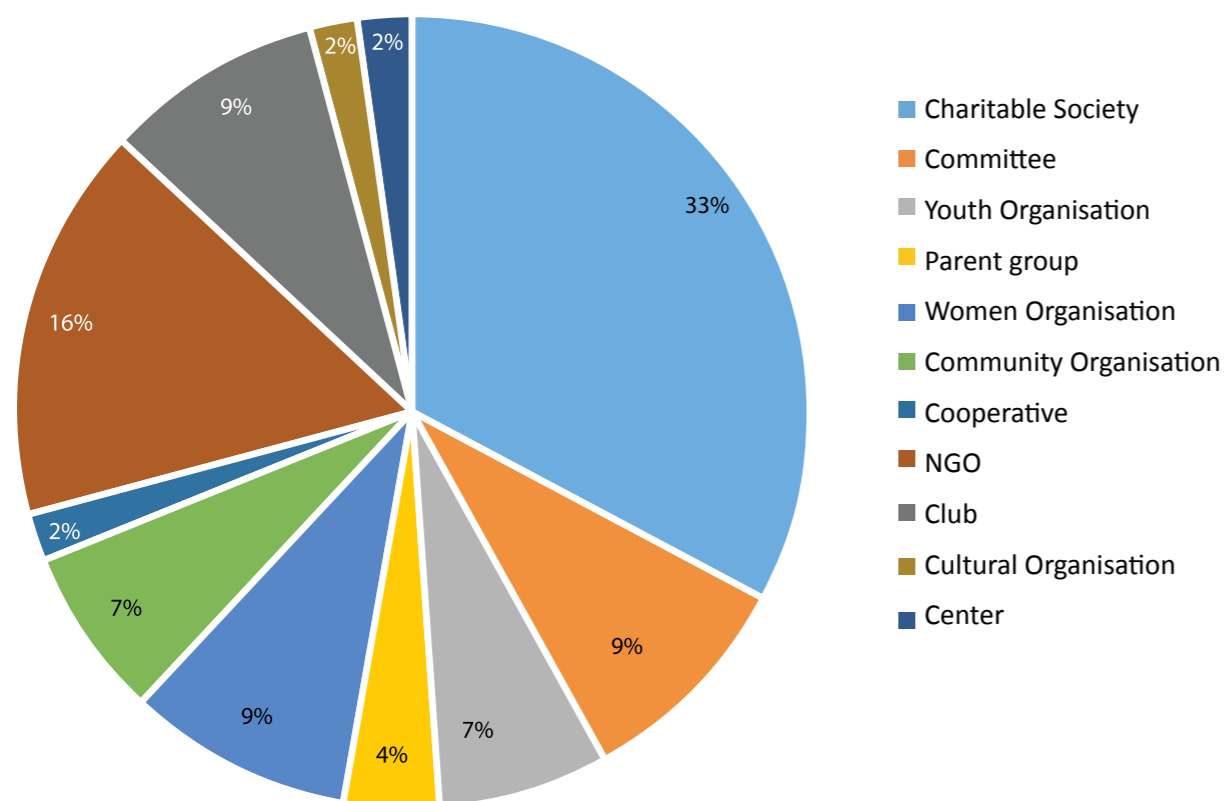
Despite all that, 2014 has been characterised by a number of mobilisation campaigns initiated by Palestinian youth against the wall and the Israeli occupation, leading journalists and scholars into discussions about an emerging "third intifada". A main feature of this mobilisation has been the radicalisation of positions; another important feature was the limited linkage with large organisations and the lack of trust in the political institutions. Somehow, this led to a mobilisation, which was very much geared towards protest and at "solving" local/episodic issues than at generating long-term changes or influencing policies with a well-defined strategy.

What is somehow emerging is the lack of capacity for organised and well-established CSOs to deal with new "movements" and a need for reflection and innovation. The priorities and needs have found their way into strategic plans of some Palestinian NGOs' and think-tanks, but they have been hindered by the prevalent project based and relief/service focused approaches.

Diversity is therefore a main feature of 1st level organisations that reflects the demand of flexible approaches for support to the various initiatives. Most organisations (over 73%) are "registered" as associations or as NGOs, the following self-definition emerges from the analysis of the **45 organisations of this category that filled out the structured questionnaire.**

1st level CSOs - self definition

- Charitable Society — 33%
- Committee — 9%
- Youth Organisation — 7%
- Parent group — 4%
- Women Organisation — 9%
- Community Organisation — 7%
- Cooperative — 2%
- NGO — 16%
- Club — 9%
- Cultural Organisation — 2%
- Center — 2%

A large number of these organisations define themselves as charitable societies. Interestingly enough, however, almost 16% define themselves as "NGOs". These organisations are in fact characterised by a tendency to grow and to enlarge their beneficiary basis along with broadening their spectrum of activities, as also reflected by the fact that despite their limited resources, they feature web-sites and they extend their activities beyond their own locality into surrounding areas or into the district level.

Despite diversity, almost all organisations (44 of 45) have a formal assembly and a board. For the 73% of organisations that are formally registered this is unsurprising, since formal governance bodies are a basic requirement for registration. For the remaining ones this can be considered an indicator of the fact that a prevailing model – based on NGO type organisation – exists.

Despite the variety of local organisations which might be considered as directly or indirectly faith based (based on the support received by the local mosques[63], and based on an analysis of the names of organisations participating in the mapping exercise), **none of the consulted organisations define themselves as "faith based"**. This is probably linked to two different factors: On one hand, there is a secular tradition of Palestinian NGOs (the term Islamic is therefore more related to national identity than to religious identity), on the other hand, after 2007, being a faith-based organisation has been often perceived as a sign of political factionalism.

The below chart illustrates the engagement of 1st level organisations across different sectors. As already pointed out in the 2011 CSO mapping, almost half of the organisations are engaged in 5 of more sectors, while those working in 1 sector are a minority. Engagement across several sectors appears to be very much related to the tendency of 1st level CSOs to work as "implementing partners" for larger organisations, while engagement in one or two sectors is mainly due to the presence of charities managing service delivery in a more "traditional way" (mainly working in health, rehabilitation, assistance to the poor and the elderly).

Sector specialisation of 1st level CSOs

- 1 sector — 11%
- 2 sectors — 20%
- 3 sectors — 11%
- 4 sectors — 13%
- 5 sectors or more — 44%
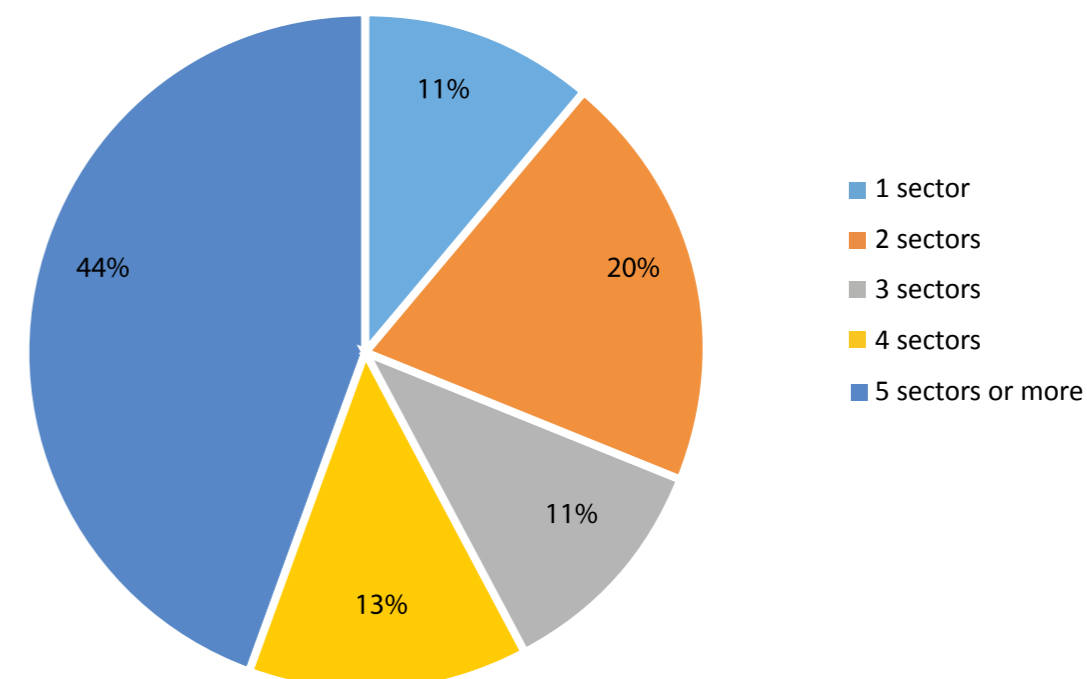
[63] Costantini G., Atamneh J., Quantitative and qualitative mapping of social service provision in the Palestinian Territories, STEM-VCR – AFD, 2012

The below chart presents the sectors in which CSOs carry out activities. The following main observations can be highlighted from an analysis of the sector distribution:

- Firstly, sectors with less donor focus, such as culture and to a lesser extend education and support to economic activities nevertheless play a prominent role for CSO engagement. These are likely to be the sectors in which grassroots organisations autonomously engage.
- Secondly, sectors that are considered "fashionable" and in which engagement would require "specialisation" and qualification are still among the sectors in which a large percentage of 1st level organisations work. These include women (despite the fact that women rights become increasingly a sensitive issue in Palestine) and human rights. It is likely that the engagement of most 1st level CSOs in these sectors is very much related to their involvement in projects carried out by other larger organisations.
- There is another sector in which almost 20% of 1st level CSOs work that is somehow surprising, which is "peace promotion". Engagement in such a sector can have too different explanations: (1) The word "peace" is a fashionable one, and hence CSOs attempt to raise resources by including it in their expertise. (2) Considering "peace promotion" is one of their main area of engagement, 1st level CSOs seem to be unaware of the debate among NGOs and larger organisations on "normalisation" activities.
- Finally, and not surprising – is the presence of sectors where work is mainly related to service delivery: health, support to special needs, education, etc.

Sector engagement of 1st Level CSOs
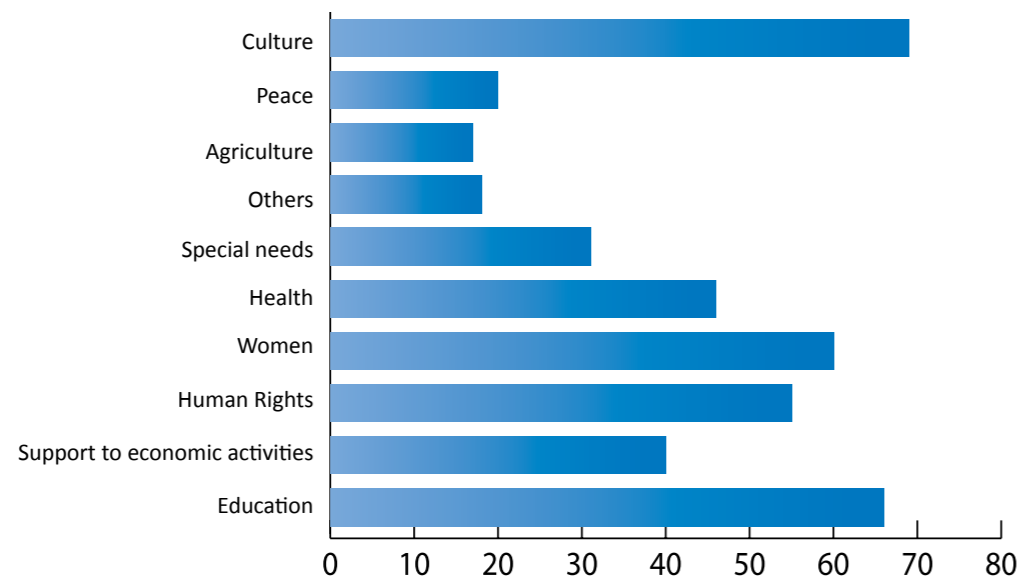
Also looking at prevalent activities of 1st level CSOs, there are no radical surprises in comparison with the 2011 CSO mapping. The prevalent activity is – as it was – service delivery (even if there is a small reduction in the percentage, from 100% in 2011 to 80% in 2014). However, some activities that involve a large number of organisations, such as training, provision of legal support and dissemination of information can also be considered as "service delivery".

Activities practiced by 1st level CSOs
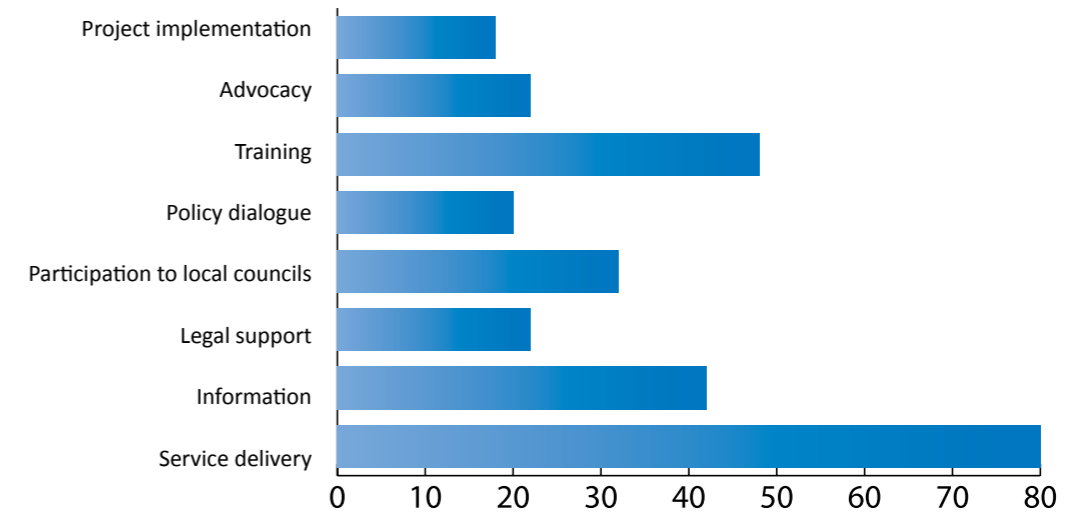
Nevertheless, there are some relevant and positive developments:

- More than 30% of organisations are involved in working with local councils;
- 20% of organisations are involved in policy dialogue activities.

These new developments are a consequence of the fact that, since 2012, local governments in many cases set up councils and coordination bodies involving CSOs. Furthermore, there has been large "consultation" campaigns carried out by public institutions both for the process of developing the National Development Plan and other policy issues. Even if these activities were mainly of a "cosmetic" nature, they have been influencing the identity of CSOs and have started opening up a new social space for CSO engagement in policy dialogue and governance.

Over 20% of organisations provide "legal support". Considering the limited technical capacities of 1st level CSOs, this suggests that cooperation mechanisms exist between specialised human rights NGOs and 1st level organisations. Actually, human rights NGOs often base their action on a large network of partners, including both individual activists and local organisations and committees.

The following figure presents the funding sources declared by 1st level CSOs. About 70% of organisations include among their main funding sources, the members' contributions. This is an indicator of the lively linkage between the organisations and their constituencies. However, if this element is correlated with the fact that most organisations identify the lack of financial resources as a main weakness, this is also an indicator of fragility.

In fact, the other most common sources of funding are international organisations and international NGOs (both provide funding to about 40% of the local organisations), followed by local authorities, Palestinian CSOs and fees from service delivery (each one accounts for a bit less than 40% of organisations) and private sector contributions (a funding source for less than 30% of the organizations).
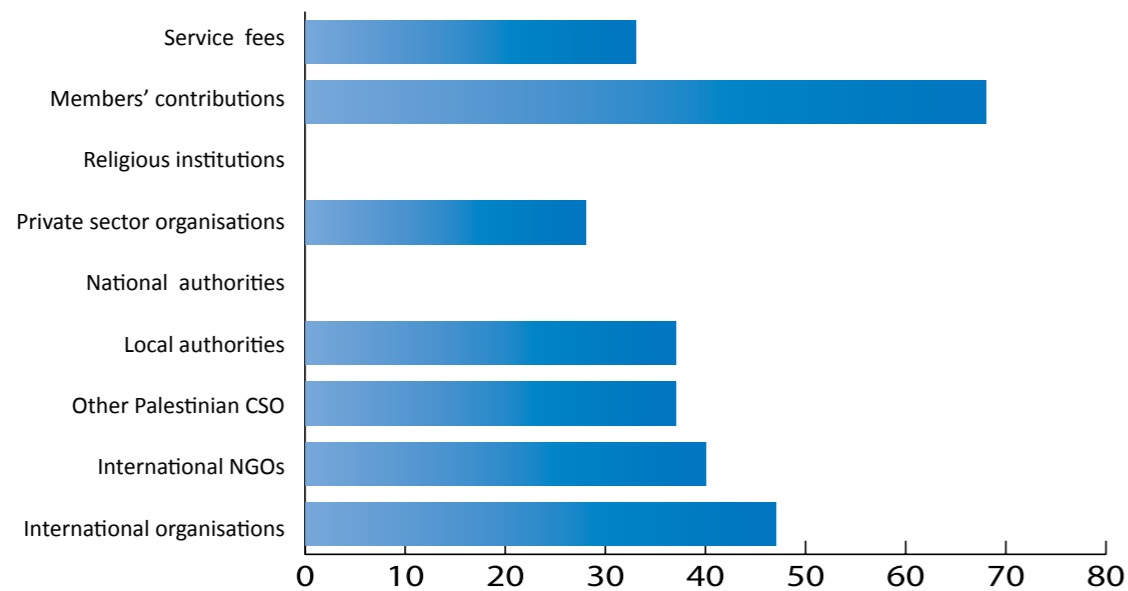
The figures are similar to those of the 2011 CSO mapping. Looking at the chart, some considerations can be highlighted:

a) Most organisations rely on more than one source of funding. This means that dependency on a single partner is limited and their financial sustainability is more likely (and even higher than what the CSOs themselves perceive).

b) International NGOs and International Organisations are identified as sources of funding. This means that these two groups of "donors" tend to overpass the national NGOs and intermediary organisations and to directly enter in contact with 1st level organisations. This has some consequences:
- partnerships are characterised by a large gap in the power structure, capacity, and authority among partners (therefore agendas defined at the international level can easily be imposed on local agendas or get translated into local agendas);
- 1st level organisations tend to assume the features of NGOs, and thus are more keen about their relationships with donors than with their local constituencies;
- 1st level organisations simply play an implementation role;
- 1st level organisations' legitimacy as actors in local governance and policy dialogue decreases, because of their direct association with international actors;
- the effectiveness of international aid risks to decrease, because small CSOs have a stronger tendency to consider funding as more important than the actions made using them (accepting funds in fact allows them to access better human resources, to access equipment and infrastructures, to "grow bigger" and have more authority/recognition by other local actors, including local authorities and political leaders).

c) Service fees and private sector contributions are among funding sources of a relatively small group of organisations (especially if we consider that 80% of organisations are engaged in service delivery). This means that most services provided by 1st level CSO largely depend upon external actors and there is little attention to the sustainability of services. Such issues should be considered when thinking of CSOs as "service providers".

d) Since "service delivery" at the local level is among the preferred targets for "Corporate Social Responsibility", the fact that less than 30% of organisations in this group declare the "private sector" as a funding source is an indicator of the limited extent of cooperation between the private sector and civil society.

Partnerships

The partners of 1st level CSOs are presented in the following table. 41 of 45 organisations responding to the questionnaire declared to have partners. This figure conforms to the findings of the 2011 CSO mapping. It seems therefore plausible that 1st level CSOs have a strong orientation towards entering into partnerships. However, as has been discussed in all focus group meetings, most partnerships in which 1st level CSOs participate are asymmetric ones, involving "stronger partners" that tend to use community based organisations as implementing agents or "local agents".

Prevailing partners of 1st level CSOs are those identified as main funding sources: international organisations, international NGOs and other Palestinian CSOs.

Partners of 1st level CSOs

Over 30 % of organisations indicated public authorities as partners, and over 20% have among their partners the private sector. Considering the fact that organisations partnering with the public sector are more than those indicating the public sector as funding source, it is possible to consider the figure concerning partnerships as a promising one, when it comes to collaboration on policy dialogue and local governance.

Networking

Based on an analysis of participation in networks and platforms, CSO are less inclined to collaborate compared to an analysis based on partners. In fact, while an overwhelming majority of 1st level CSOs state to have partner organizations, those affirming to participate in networks are only about 70 % (which is still a high percentage, but yet significantly lower than those indicated having institutional partnerships).

1st level CSOs participation in networks and platforms
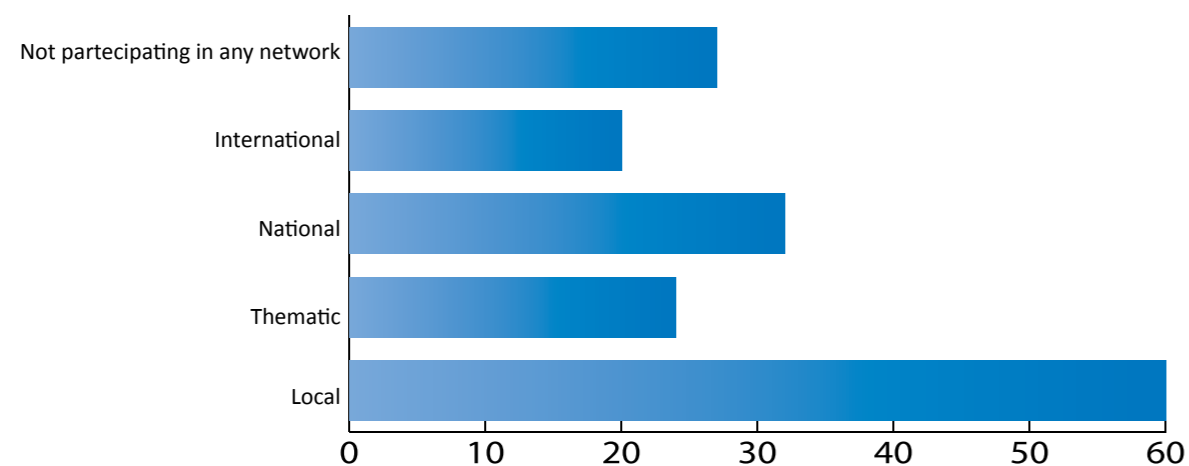
While few organisations participate in platforms and networks, it is interesting to observe that most of those taking part in some platforms or networks are rather involved in local networks and platforms. This is a novelty, and at least partially related to the efforts spent in the past few years on the dissemination of the "Code of Conduct". These efforts, particularly related to the Union of Charitable Societies and the small NGOs involved with PNIN generated a new dynamic at the local level, thereby revitalising local networks that often turned into an important channel for accessing training opportunities.

Based on the discussion in the focus group meetings and in the in-depth interviews, and based on documentation provided, participation in international and thematic networks is strongly related to two demands, notably visibility and fund raising. Thematic networks tend in many cases to depend upon leading organisations and donors, so that when accessing specific networks, CSOs tend to participate in forums involving e.g. UNICEF, GIZ or UNDP. International networks (as the one set in the framework of Anna Lindh Foundation) tend on the other hand not to provide the participating organisation with financial resources, but rather with legitimacy and visibility (through events, websites, etc.). Therefore, small NGOs often perceive networks as a way to be more visible and gain legitimacy via donors, other CSOs, and public authorities.

Other organisational features

Other organisational features related to 1st level CSOs also reflect continuity compared to the 2011 CSO Mapping.

Regarding **institutional features**, as already observed, all organisations tend to adopt the same organisational model, based on that of NGOs. However, not always is the formal structure the real one. In many cases, boards of some organizations are completely external to the organisation, which are mainly used to give legitimacy to the organization in front of donors and public authorities. Additionally, in many cases the assemblies are not really functioning. Both in interviews and in focus groups the fact that leadership does not rotate in reality and that there is no space for new leaders has been frequently raised and discussed. The permanence of leaders is both related to internal dynamics (as the weakness of democratic decision-making processes) and to external ones, namely the dependence on access to funds based on personal relationships and trust.

Regarding capacity and human resources, most organisations rely on the capacity of volunteers. Out of the 45 organisations that responded to the questionnaire, 9 have full time employees, while another 5 have part time paid workers. Lack of staff is considered a main weakness by many organisations.
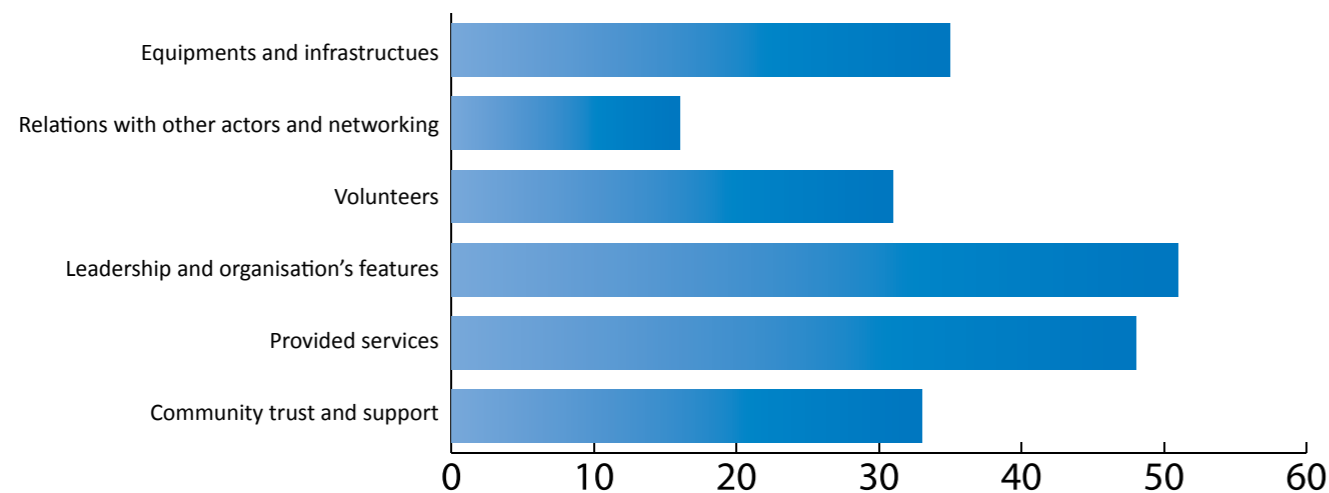
Several factors influence organisations' perception concerning their lack of staff:

- The competition for staff among organisations, to which INGOs are also contributing, is leading to a situation in which national and large local NGOs can offer better positions than smaller ones;
- The tendency to engage in many sectors, which implies greater difficulties in accumulating knowledge and capacities;
- The tendency of 1st level CSOs to assume the characteristics and roles of NGOs, so that recruiting local volunteers is no more covering human resource requirements;
- The focus on service delivery, that requires a continuity and a professional capacity that cannot always be guaranteed by volunteers;
- The tendency to compete with other organisations for funding and for support by external actors, which creates a need for professional work along several tracks (such as proposal writing and communication), but not necessarily involving a better quality of action or a stronger linkage with constituencies.
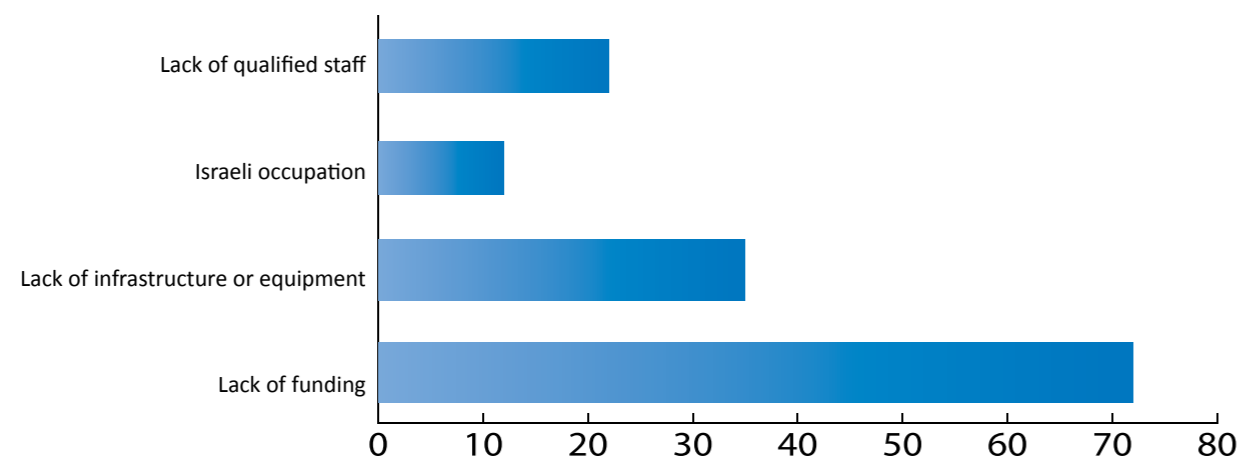
The following two charts present strengths and weaknesses as perceived by the organisations. The identification of their strengths and weaknesses confirm the observations and annotations made above. Most perceived strengths are very much related to the focus on services.

Most perceived strenghts among 1st level CSOs

Two elements however are worth noting.

Only about 30% of organisations consider "community support and trust" an important strength factor. This is a strong indicator that only a minority of organisations link to local communities and constituencies. Therefore it seems that other factors are much more influential/important: The "leadership" or organizations, (that implies easier access to funds, as well as smoother implementation of activities), the "service provided", and the availability of equipment.
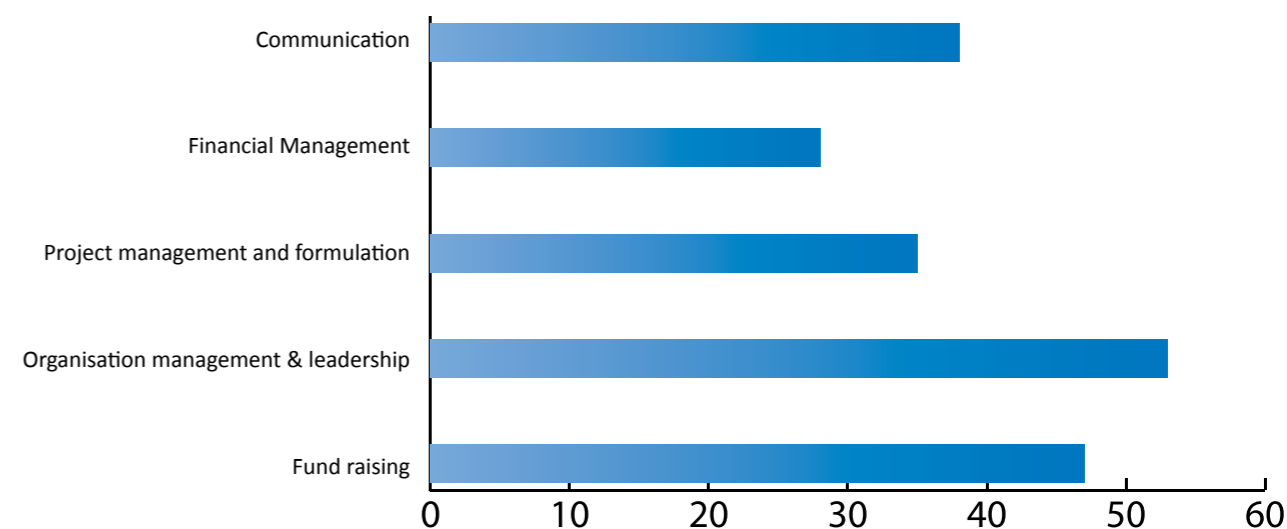
Most perceived weaknesses among 1st level CSOs

Most organisations dealing with difficulties related to the occupation, such as the problems related to access to services or the violation of human rights, consider these circumstances mainly as a factor increasing the demand for their services. Meanwhile, they tend to identify weaknesses as mainly related to the lack of resources for service delivery: lack of funding, lack of qualified staff and lack of infrastructure.
The option to play a role different from that of a service provider, is considered neither a factor of strength, nor of weakness.

The same picture, namely a strong focus on service provision and on fund raising, emerged from the analysis of perceived training and capacity building needs, presented in the following chart.

Main perceived training needs by 1st level CSOs

The main emerging issues for 1st level organisations in Palestine are the challenges to engaging in a more effective way in governance and policy dialogue, with a wider policy space at the local level compared to the national level, and to actively assume a role related to the main issues and stakes considered in chapter 3.

The factors related to the 1st level organisations' ability to provide services are currently at the forefront. However, the main obstacles for CSOs' engagement related to the challenges discussed above are the growing gap between the organisations and their constituencies, which poses the risk of making them indistinguishable from the 2nd level organisations, and less recognised when it comes to the specific role 1st level organizations can play. Not only the fact that 1st level organisations tend to transform themselves into NGOs, but also other actors and organisations tend to look at them as small and weak NGOs. Therefore, these other actors aim at strengthening them as NGOs, while simultaneously trying to "create" other committees, grassroots bodies and community based organisations as reference points for "governance" activities, with the inherent risk of ultimately destroying these 1st level organisations. In the end, these 1st level organisations might end up being unable to play the role of NGOs as a result of structural weaknesses and might find themselves distanced from their constituencies as artificial, "unsustainable" actors.

In conformity with the 2011 Mapping, the main needs of CBOs, grassroots organisation, local NGOs and other 1st level organisations are to:

- ▶ **foster a reflection of the CSO's role at grassroots and local levels;**
- ▶ **foster the recognition of 1st level CSOs as an actor that can take an active part in governance, policy dialogue and development actions, without the need to transform into an "NGO";**
- ▶ **strengthen the existing organisations – instead of creating new grassroots bodies – in playing an active role, by reinforcing their self-consciousness, their analytic capacities, their linkages with communities, and their relationships with other actors;**
- ▶ **avoid actions that would increase competition at local level and the establishment of vertical and unequal partnerships (as the direct intervention of INGOs and international agencies at grassroots level, selecting CBOs as their partners);**
- ▶ **support the actions that organisations tend to carry out autonomously, without imposing new actions that would change the focus and nature of organisations. (This means first of all, for larger organisations, analysing existing conditions and be ready to change programmes and agendas).**

5.2. The dynamics among NGOs and other supporting organisations

Similar to 1st level organisations, 2nd level CSOs are a diverse group that includes NGOs (or more precisely established NGOs which support other organisations, or that support a group of beneficiaries who are different from the NGO's members), charitable societies, non-profit organisations managing large service infrastructures and foundations, think tanks and research groups. Clearly, the general landscape of 2nd level organisations has not changed since the 2011 CSO mapping. It would therefore be useful to present in the following box an analysis of the mission and activities of 2nd level NGOs that was drafted within the earlier report.

Mission and action relevance and coherence of 2nd level CSOs

"In the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, 2nd level organisations are engaged in all sectors, from scientific and technological research and education (particularly focusing on special education or on higher – graduate and post graduate education), to health, agriculture, water and environment, human rights and democracy, gender, youth related issues, peace building, etc. Main sector articulation of Palestinian NGOs may be recognized as follows:

Agriculture, including a small number of large organisations, like PARC providing research and extension services, or the Palestinian Farmers Union, the Union of Agricultural Work Committees and the Palestinian Agricultural Relief Committees (aggregating a large number of local committees and cooperatives); in recent years some new smaller organisations focusing on agriculture have emerged, specialising on organic agriculture or on specific crops and other "development organisations like MAAN are intervening in the sector (for instance fostering the adoption of innovative agricultural practices – as fish ponds – in the context of relief activities).

Children Care, Development and Protection, including organisations working on Education (e.g. Al Muntada – Young Scientists' Club), organisations supporting Mother and Child (ECRC, Mother Guidance & Child Care Society), organisations working on "special needs" (i.e. the Arab Society for Orphans or the Care for Children with Special Needs Society) and organisations working on Child Rights protection (e.g. Defence for Children International – Palestine).

Culture, which include a number of organisations fostering art and culture, with a focus on the promotion and maintenance of the Palestinian cultural identity, on peace culture and on cultural dialogue; in this group organisations such as the Khalil Sakakini Center or the Sabreen Association found their space.

Education, including both organisations that directly deliver education services (such as the "Al-Quds Open University") or the many smaller NGOs managing schools and training courses, particularly focusing on "Community Education" and organisations working on the innovation and improvement of public education (e.g. the Teacher Creativity Center or Alwarid).

Health, in which most organisations have been involved for years in providing primary health care to the Palestinian population and then in recent times have been specialising in the provision of care activities to special groups or in remote areas; organisations include for instance the Health Work Committees (HWC) and the Union of Health Care Committees (UHCC), more specialised organisations as the "Gaza Mental Health Programme" or many rehabilitation and "community rehabilitation" organisations.

Social assistance and development, in which organisations are engaged in supporting the disadvantaged groups or in mitigating emerging social problems (organisations in this sector include for instance ATTA working on aged people, the PFPPA working on family planning, the Palestinian Counselling Center or the Centre for Community Service – Jerusalem or MA'AN).

Human rights, Democracy and Governance, including a large number of organisations working both on legal defence (Addameer, Jerusalem Legal Aid, Al Haq), on advocacy activities (Al Haq, Hurryyat, MIFTAH, etc.) and on Research and Training initiatives (Muwatin, BADIL, MUSAWA).

Environment, mainly including research institutes, such as ARIJ (Applied Research Institute), Land Research Center or the Palestinian Hydrology Group; often the organisations engaged in this sector work with those engaged on agriculture.

Women, including a relatively large number of organisations – ranging from feminist to Muslim women organisations – involved in some main kinds of activities: advocacy on women's rights; education and empowerment of women and of women's CBOs; legal defence and protection of women.

Youth, including organisations involved in organising youth and in advocating the recognition of youth as an actor in Palestinian society; in this framework both are active "old" organisations such as the Palestinian Youth Union and "new organisations such as PYALARA (focusing on Media) or Sharek (focusing on "participation" and integration of Youth in social and political life, as its name indicates).

Peace building is not just a specific sector but an area of engagement of organisations often involved in other sectors[64]; for instance the case of PANORAMA and PalVision, which are involved also in Human Rights and Democracy and in Youth initiatives, or of the Palestinian Hydrology Group, mainly focusing on Water resources.
Source: Costantini G., Atamneh J. et al, Mapping of CSOs in oPt, EU, 2011

Even if the general landscape of 2nd level CSOs has not substantially changed, a more specific analysis is worth the effort, based on the 61 questionnaires collected during the current mapping exercise and the consultation of other sources of information.

A first emerging noticeable element when looking at these organisations is the limited specialisation. As in the case of 1st level organisations (or maybe because 1st level organisations mutate into 2nd level ones) a limited percentage of 2nd level CSOs focus its action on one only sector, while most work in more sectors.

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[64] *"Peace building" activities and NGOs are currently under discussion in the Palestinian civil society. Peace building and particularly "people to people" peace activities are often blamed of risking to "normalise" the situation linked to the Israeli occupation or of producing a false reality, not recognizing the actual situation of the Palestinian territories that suffer of the occupation of main cities, of the separation wall and the blockade of main roads and of the siege of Gaza strip. Also see: Ophir A., Givoni M., Hanafi S., The Power of Inclusive Exclusion. Anatomy of Israeli Rule in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, Zone Books, New York, 2009*

Sector specialisation for 2nd level CSOs

- 1 sector — 13%
- 2 sectors — 23%
- 3 sectors — 11%
- 4 sectors — 20%
- 5 sectors or plus — 33%
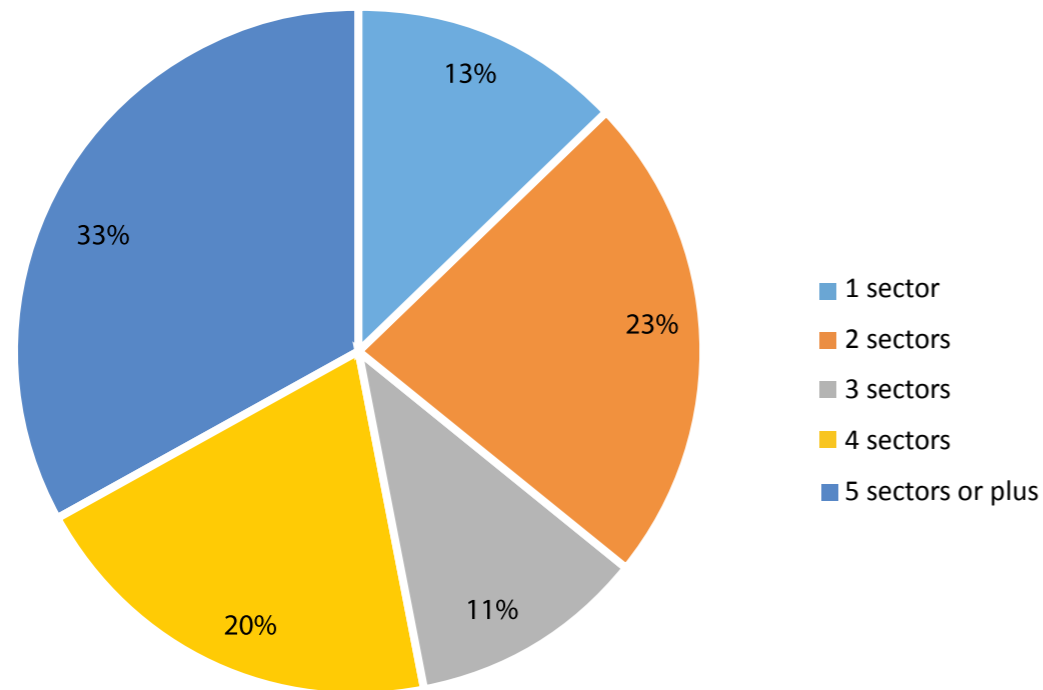
This tendency to intervene in more sectors results from the non-availability of core funding for 2nd level organisations, who instead have to revert to projects and respond flexibly to priorities defined by (local and international) donors. This tendency was already noted in the 2011 mapping. It emerged again in most recent interviews and focus groups. However, in contrast to the illustration above, there is a discernible tendency to develop an integrated approach. Such a tendency can mainly be detected among large and well established NGOs, while it becomes less visible in the case of charitable societies, or in the case of medium and small NGOs. Larger and better-established CSOs often engage only in one or two sectors, in which they are offering services in a permanent manner. The smaller CSOs tend more often to follow the changes in donor agendas and calls for proposals.

Engagement sectors

The following table presents the sectors in which 2nd level CSOs engage.

## Engagement sectors for 2nd level CSOs
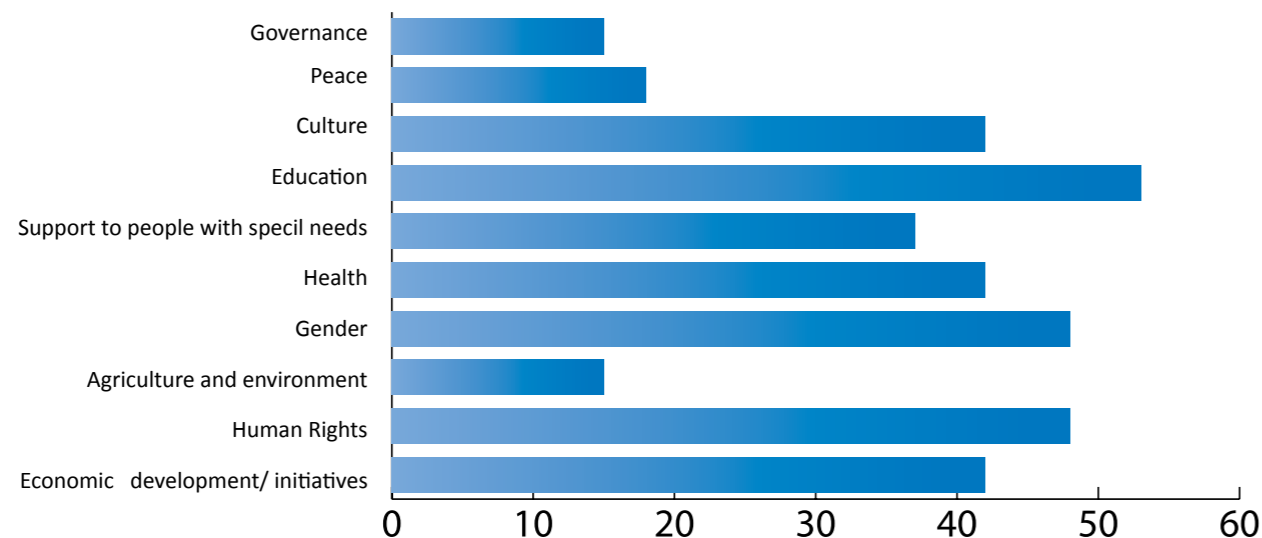
While exact percentages for sector distribution are different between 1st and 2nd level organisations, both have an equal sectoral focus. This clearly indicates that there is a common trend, or more precisely a linkage between large projects carried out by large NGOs and smaller activities in which CBOs are engaged.

While the inclination to specialise or not has not changed in a significant way since 2011, some of the **main sectors of engagement have changed.** Agriculture and environment were the sectors in which almost all organisations were engaged in 2011 (95 % of 2nd level organisations according to the CSO mapping) while now just about 15 % are involved. Exactly the contrary was observed for "support to people with special needs", in which about 25% of organisations were engaged, while now almost 40 % are active in this sector. Other sectors tend to maintain the same level of engagement (e.g. in women's rights/gender, and human rights).

The change in some sectors could be interpreted as a capacity to identify changing patterns of local needs. However, it is more likely related to changes of available funding opportunities.

Type of activities

Types of activities of 2nd level CSOs
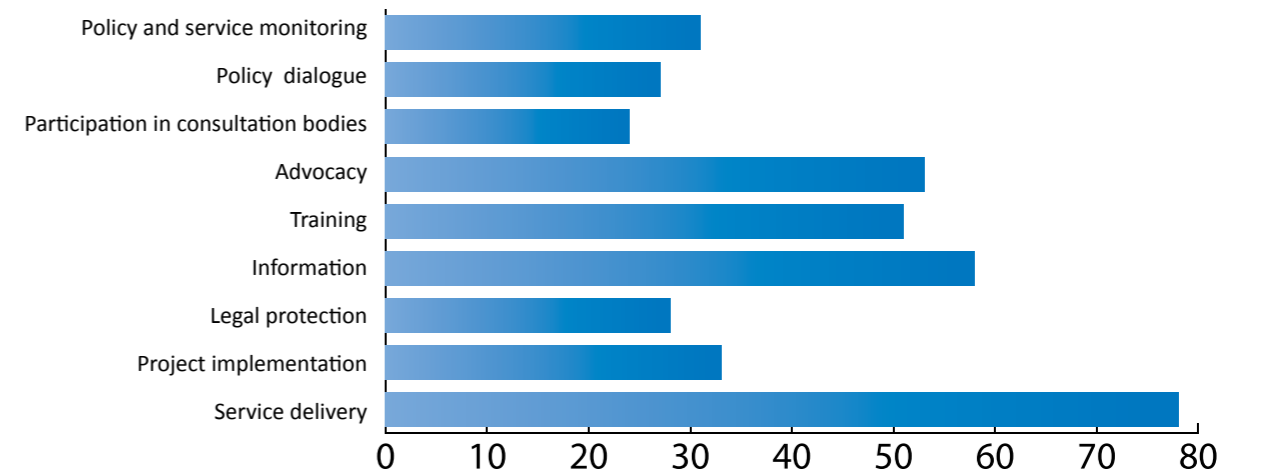
The main modalities of action are presented above. Tendencies among 1st level and 2nd level organisations are not too different. There are just a few changes in comparison with the 2011 CSO mapping. Particularly, the engagement of 2nd level CSOs in policy dialogue and their participation in consultation bodies increased in a substantial manner: from 16% to almost 30%. As already indicated for 1st level organisations, two factors are likely to have influenced such a rise: the donor engagement on involving civil society in "local governance" and decentralisation, and the consultation launched by the Government on national sector strategies and on the National Development Plan.

Despite the growth of engagement in governance and policy related activities, the main activities of CSOs remain the provision of services and project implementation. This is not surprising given that funds are specifically available for these activities.

More than 50% of 2nd level CSOs state to carry out advocacy activities. This is in fact very much related to the participation in "international advocacy" activities, as the participation in the campaigns against the wall, while – according to what emerged in interviews and focus group – the cooperation in advocating for policy change at national level tends to be very limited apart for some very specific issues (for instance gender, persons with disabilities).

Institutional features and organisational consistency

Despite differences among organisations, almost all of them share the same basic organisational features. In fact these depend largely upon the requirements for registration. As illustrated in the following table, most organisations have an assembly and a board (a few do not have an assembly because they are foundations).

Organisational features
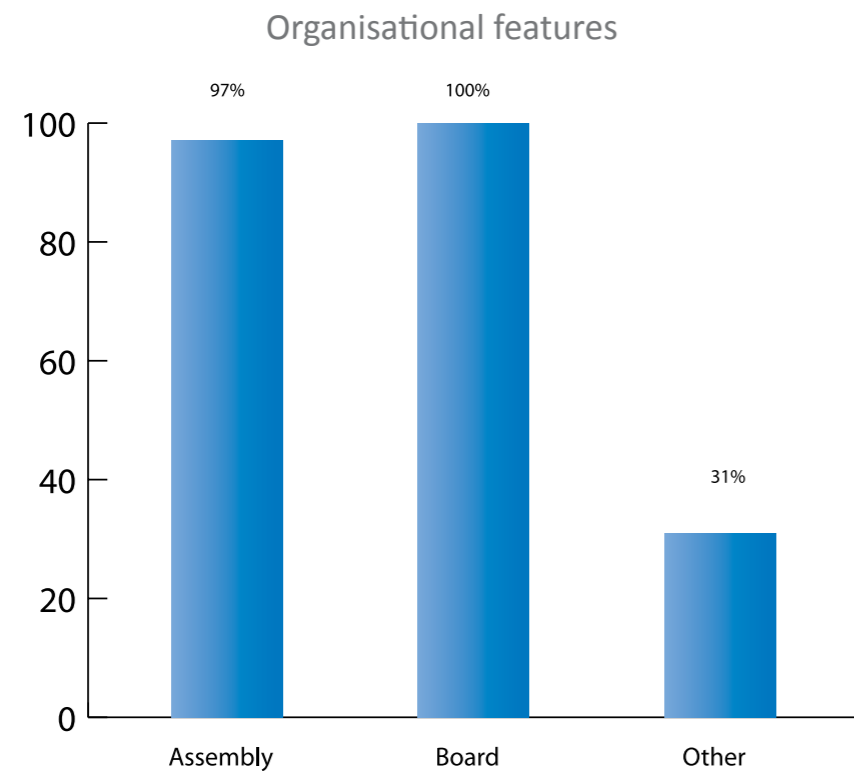
Another factor that induced a standardisation among institutional and organisational features is the dissemination of the Code of Conduct, which involved NDC and the main national CSO platforms. However, despite the fact that most active organisations are formally featuring democratic decision making processes and transparency procedures (more than 350 organisations have their budget published[65]), reality is often different. Leaders cling to their chairs. Boards are composed by people selected because of their relationships in order to facilitate access to funds (so that often the same persons are on the board of different organisations, causing competition among organisations for specific people on the board). Public trust in CSOs continues to be low[66].

In terms of organisational consistency, some strong differences can be observed between 2nd level NGOs and 1st level organisations. 59 of the 60 organisations that answered the questionnaire employ paid staff; in 46 cases, the staff includes full time workers. Organisational consistency is also an area in which differences emerge among 2nd level CSOs: in some cases the organisations that answered the questionnaire have several hundred employees, in others these are just 2 or 3.

[65] CARE – GIZ, 2013
[66] Not only for public authorities, or for the public, but also among CSOs, as emerged in the discussion in focus groups.

Competition for qualified staff is an issue to which 2nd level CSOs often refer. In this case competition exists among CSOs (but it is also possible to observe some cases of circulation of personnel) and with INGOs (that are said to drain human resources from local CSO by offering salaries that no local organisations would be able to offer).

Participation in networks and collaboration among CSOs

Of the 61 organisations responding to the questionnaire, 51 CSOs participate in networks and platforms. This would suggest that there is a relatively strong interest for cooperation. The same conclusion could be drawn when looking at those respondents that declare to have institutional partners (53 over 61). However, when looking at the CSOs who provide support to other CSOs the absolute numbers and the percentages decrease: only about 30% of organisations that answered to the questionnaire provide support to other CSOs, mainly by channelling funds and technical assistance.

2nd level CSOs participation to networks
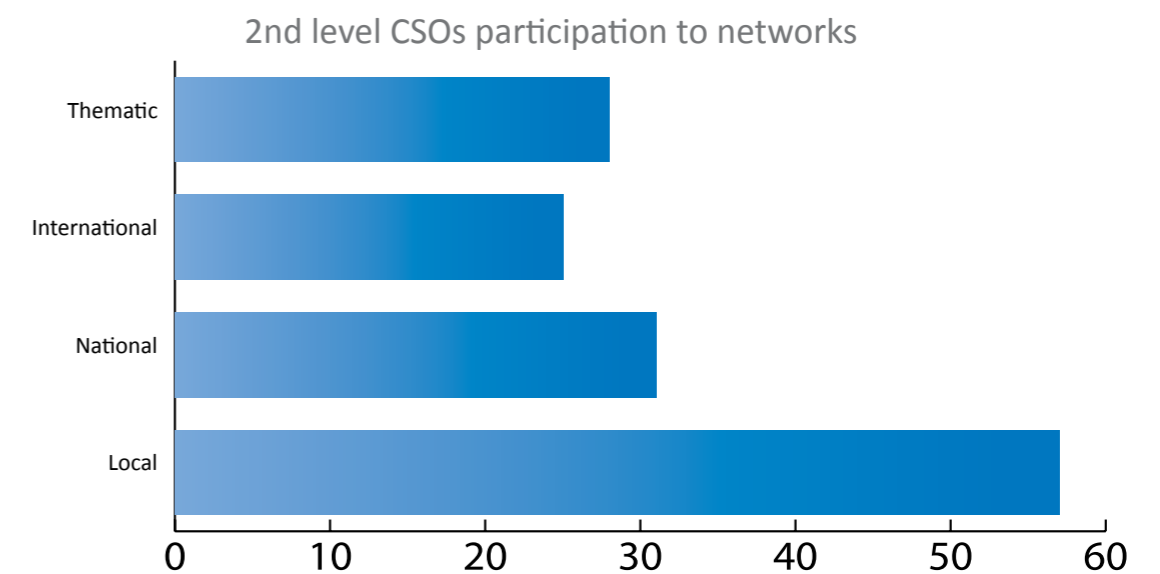
As in the case of 1st level CSOs, the kind of platforms in which most 2nd level CSOs participate are local networks. More than 55% of organisations responding to the questionnaire participate in local networks and platforms. This figure, however, is conservative considering that the Ramallah based national organisations have been intentionally sub-represented in the survey.

Participation in networks and platforms involves a high percentage of 2nd level CSOs. However, as will be discussed briefly, actual active participation is lower. As in the case of 1st level organisations, participation in networks and platforms is much more a way to increase visibility and legitimacy of organisations, or to access information and opportunities, than a way to influence policies.

As the table below illustrates, INGOs and International Organisations constitute the most frequent partners. Institutional partnership with other Palestinian CSOs is also frequent. The above partnership schemes, however, are declining in comparison with the figures of the 2011 mapping, wherein more than 75% of organisations responded to have entered into partnership agreements with INGOs. The comparison between both mapping studies confirms the general perception by CSOs that competition between Palestinian NGOs and INGOs (and even international agencies) has been increasing since 2011.

Partners of 2nd level CSOs
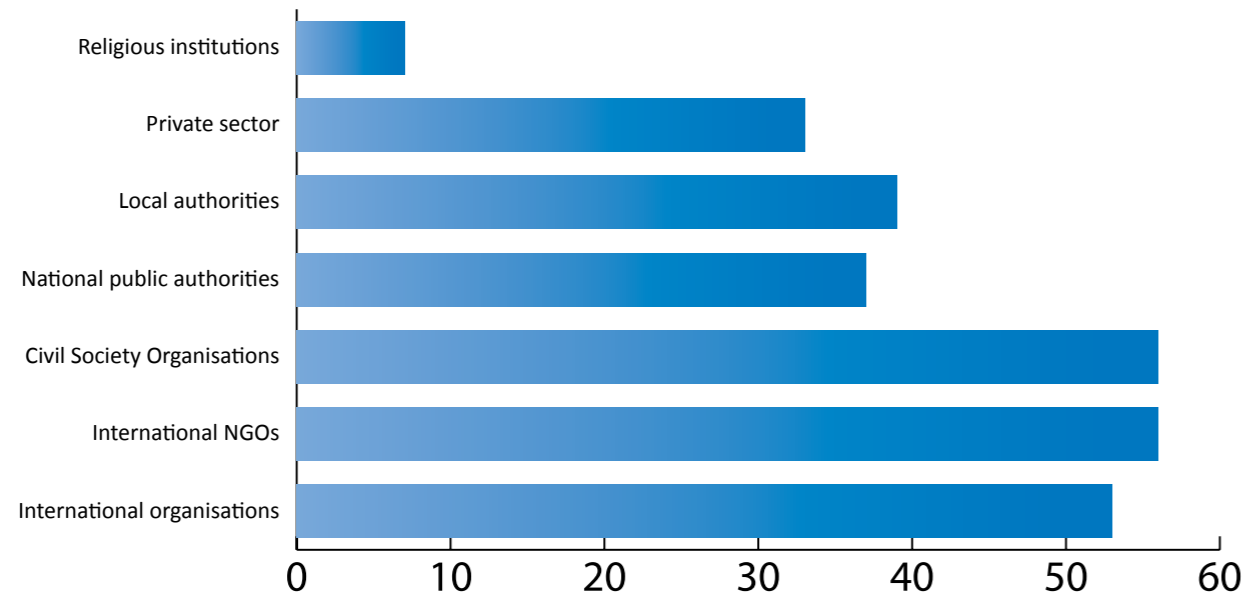
In comparison with the 2011 CSO Mapping, another new element is the collaboration with public bodies and with the private sector, that, although it currently involves a minority of 2nd level CSOs, are increasingly visible, both at local and national level.

The table below presents funding sources. Here 2nd level organisations display a more diversified funding pattern than 1st level organisations. However, the composition of organisations' funding mix is different.
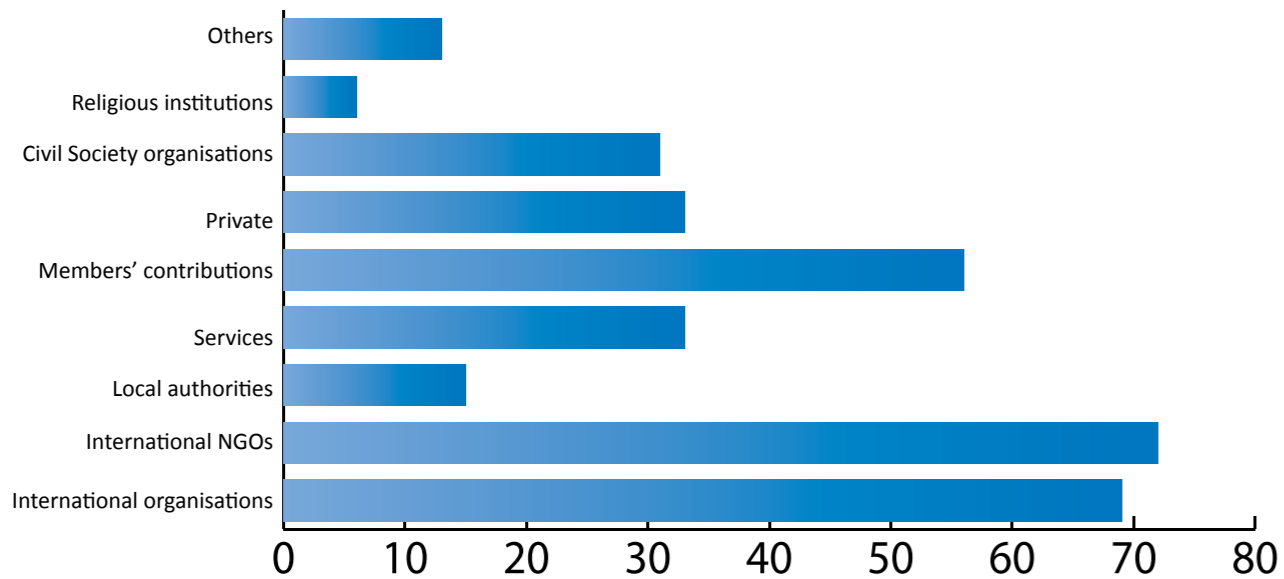
For 2nd level organisations, the importance of members' contributions and of funds from other CSOs decreases, while there is a sharp increase of other sources, namely INGOs, international agencies, and to a lesser extent the private sector.

As discussed in a few meetings with key organisations, some CSOs – particularly those with a strong professional background – are creating spin-off firms for carrying out economic activities. As described by those organizations, this new approach will help increase their sustainability and decrease their dependency on donor aid.

In reviewing perceived strengths and weakness in the following tables, the focus on issues related to service delivery (features of services, staff) is also apparent among 2nd level organisations. Additionally, organisations indicated a stronger attitude to identify their strengths in the way external challenges are faced (partnership, type of activity). Organisational features, such as leadership and available equipment feature less prominently.

When challenges are considered, there is only one factor that is considered as a key weakness by a large number of organisations. This is the lack of funding (mentioned by more than 50 % of respondents to the questionnaire). The decrease of available funding has also been cited frequently in meetings (even with regards to very large NGOs).

Strengths of 2nd level CSOs

Weaknesses of 2nd level CSOs

Bar chart – Weaknesses of 2nd level CSOs:
- Lack of support from public authorities: ~13
- Vulnerability to Israeli occupation: ~19
- Lack of infrastructures and equipment: ~15
- Lack of staff: ~21
- Instability of funding: ~22
- Lack of funds: ~54
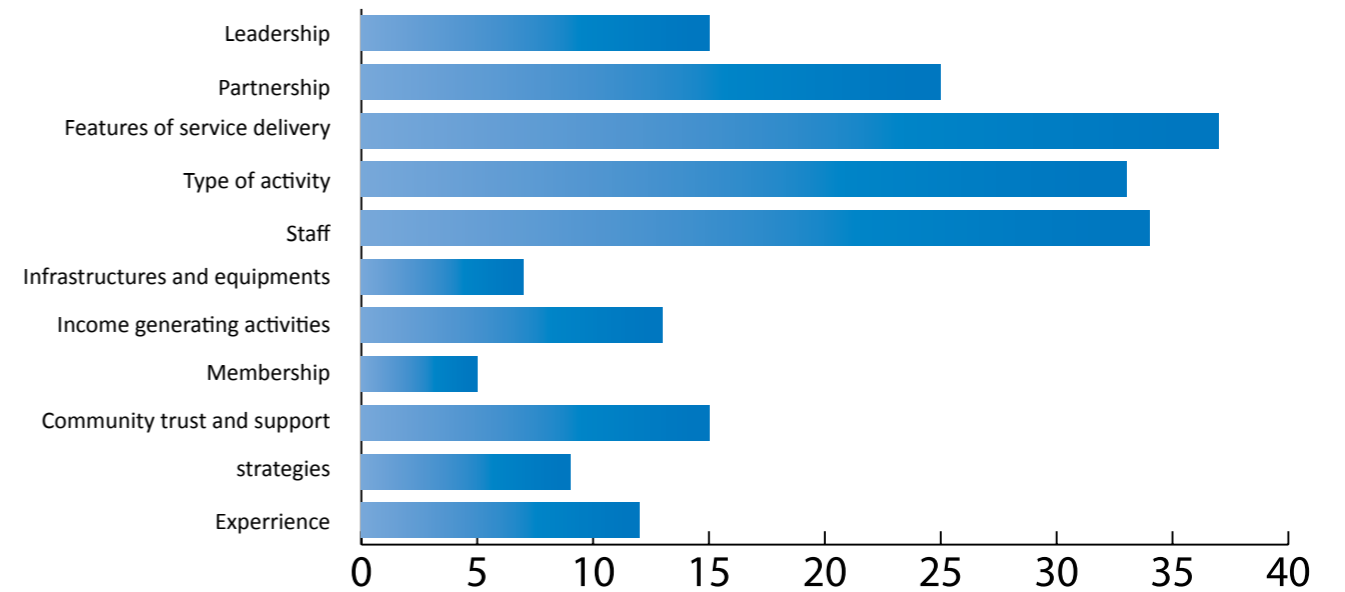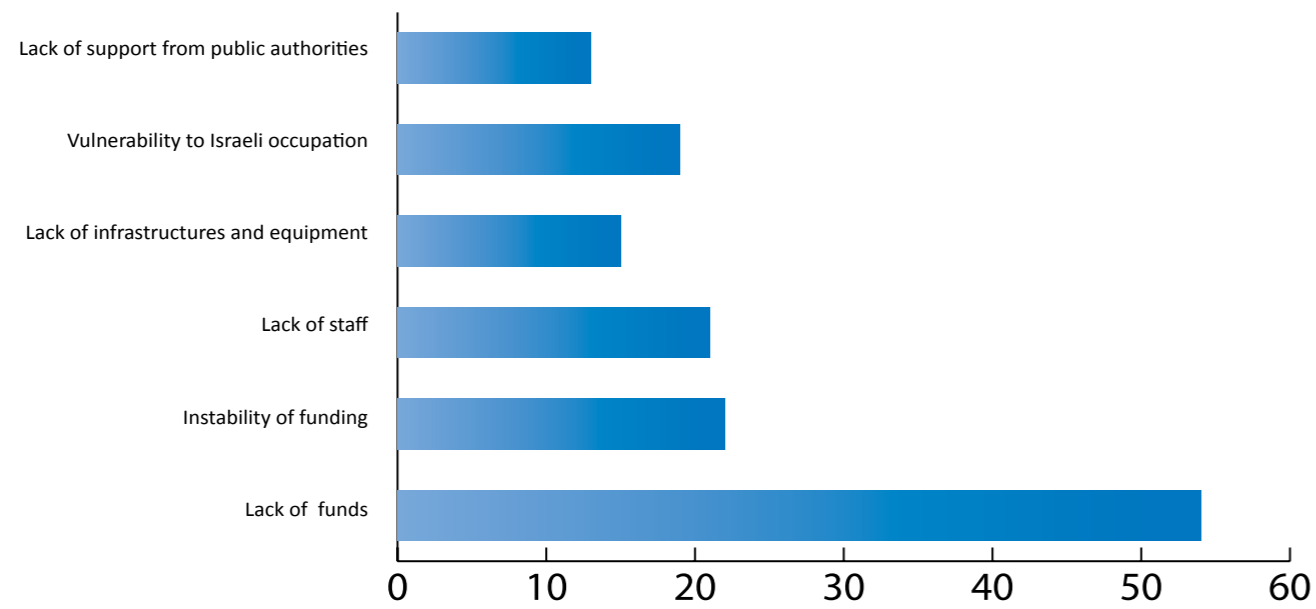
Other weaknesses mentioned include:

- The difficulties created by project-based funding (which creates intermittent flows of resources, resulting not only in discontinuous service delivery, but also in creating difficulties in the relationship with smaller organisations and in the engagement in governance activities, that often cannot be reduced to short-term projects);
- The vulnerability to Israeli occupation measures (including challenges related to access and movement, the destruction of infrastructure and the request to be compliant with Israeli regulations and fiscal systems in the Israeli controlled areas);
- The lack of support from local and national public authorities (including both the lack of policies for supporting CSO actions and the requirement of public authorities de facto hindering the functioning of CSOs).

No meaningful differences in terms of perceived strengths and weaknesses have been indicated by the NGOs in the different regions.

Perceived training needs

The perceived strengths and weaknesses constitute the basis for the identification of training needs for the 2nd level CSOs. Thus, as the lack of funds is perceived to be the main challenge, training in fund raising is accordingly perceived as the top priority training need (over 60% of CSOs listed this training need among the 5 most urgent needs) followed closely by project formulation and management, and then by communication (including for some organisations the use of English 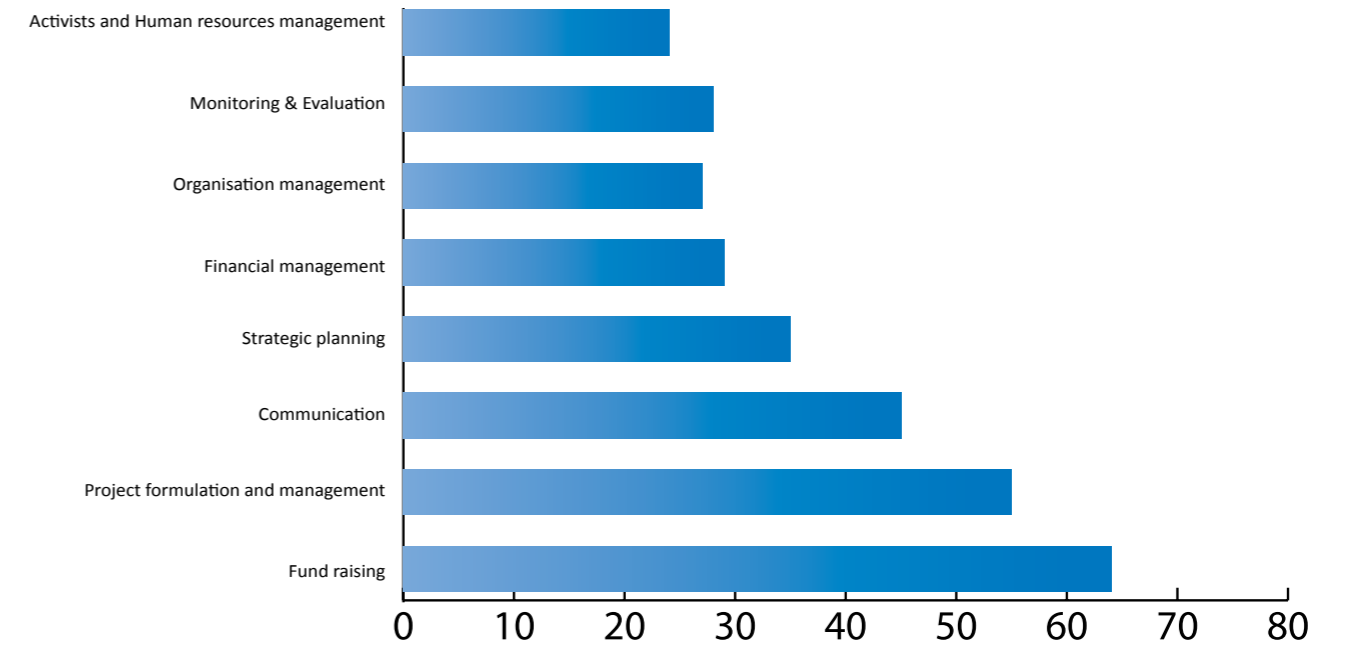language for communication). Among the top priority training needs are also monitoring & evaluation, and the management of activists and human resources.

Perceived training needs by 2nd level CSOs

Bar chart – Perceived training needs by 2nd level CSOs:
- Activists and Human resources management: ~24
- Monitoring & Evaluation: ~28
- Organisation management: ~27
- Financial management: ~29
- Strategic planning: ~35
- Communication: ~45
- Project formulation and management: ~55
- Fund raising: ~64

Transparency and governance issues, that have been frequently discussed in meetings (and that were among the main needs identified also in the 2011 CSO mapping) do not feature among key perceived training needs. A reason for this is probably the fact that many organisations have been involved in activities focusing on internal governance, as those promoted by NDC.

Concluding remarks about emerging needs for 2nd level organisations

Looking at the 2nd level CSOs and at the emerging issues the CSOs are facing, there are needs that can be identified. These can be clustered around these main areas:

- **The definition of CSOs' identity and role: While often engaging in governance and policy dialogue, 2nd level CSOs are still primarily focused on service delivery. While some organisations have developed a specific identify as "service providers", and can to a certain extent be considered more as public institutions than as civil society actors (as in the case of some very large organisations engaged in service delivery), in most other cases the current situation is related to a limited reflection on the role of CSOs, and to the lack of a shared understanding of emerging issues and emerging challenges.**
- **The development of capacities for actively engaging on emerging development issues implies working on knowledge sharing and dissemination (particularly concerning the analysis of social, political and economic dynamics and the identification of relevant actions and innovations), as well as addressing institutional capacities that would allow CSOs to gain legitimacy to actively engage in governance at the different levels and in policy dialogue, not only based on technical expertise, but also on the capacity to represent constituencies. Key elements in this framework are the capacity to engage in coalition and platforms; the capacity to engage with small NGOs and CBOs without imposing agendas, but supporting them in defining local agendas for development; the capacity to engage with public authorities in a critical but constructive dialogue, rather than as "clients" or as "alternatives".**

- **The establishment of an environment for allowing CSOs to actively participate in policy dialogue, local governance and innovation processes through adequate legal frameworks responding to the changing reality of CSOs in Palestine; through fostering the recognition of a legitimate space of interaction between CSOs and public authorities; and through supporting the establishment of stronger bridges and cooperation initiatives among CSOs and other NSAs.**

5.3. The dynamics of thematic and local networks

According to the Ministry of Interior, there are 20 registered "unions" in the occupied Palestinian territory. However, as discussed, while the current NGO legislation distinguishes between "unions" as entity-based organisations with a permanent nature and a legal binding among members, it does not distinguish between a single organisation and a platform or network. Therefore while "unions" are easily registered and then recognised (such as the national and local unions of charitable societies), other kinds of platforms and networks are obliged to register as simple individual organisations or to maintain an informal nature.

The main consequence of such a situation is that in most cases, platforms and networks depend upon the strength of a leading organisation or upon the "urgency" and appeal of a specific issue. It is possible to identify four different kinds of organisations to be considered as "3rd level organisations", namely:

- Campaign-based coalitions (i.e. BDS coalition, the civic coalition for defending the Palestinian rights in Jerusalem, the Stop the Wall campaign);
- Territorial informal platforms, mainly aiming at coordination among organisations in a single location, sometimes set up with the collaboration or following the initiative of a local authority;
- Thematic networks, aimed at discussing common issues and at coordinating among organisations working on the same sector, mainly depending upon the initiative of a leading organisation, a public authority or a donor (sometimes thematic networks have been created in the framework of a specific project);
- professional organisations, that sometime assume a role in establishing standards to which also CSOs make reference;
- Formal unions, established mainly among organisations of the same nature;
- Small networks organisations working together.

As observed in the 2011 mapping study, thematic and local networks are characterised in most cases by a limited institutional and organisational consistency. Only in few cases – as it is the case for the Jerusalem Union of Charitable Societies – do they have an autonomous office and an autonomous organisational body and staff. In most cases their resources are provided by the member organisations. Moreover, in some cases organisations that are not leading the networks or platforms do not participate actively in their management and activities: participation is very much related to the organisations' expectations about the network.

Organizations expect networks to be:

- A funding channel;
- A training and information space;
- A legitimating body;
- A representative in front of other organisations.

Often these expectations are intertwined.

Lack of a clear identity and of a clear function of thematic and territorial networks (except for those focused on campaigns) is a common phenomenon, which frequently lead networks to enter into a competitive relationship with member organisations. This can occur when a leading organisation raises and manages funding for implementing the network's activities, or, in the case wherein the networks are established as registered organisations or as registered unions, when the network itself engages in fund raising and carries out activities that could be implemented out by member organisations.

In a few cases the networks directly engage in policy dialogue and in local governance, especially when they are legitimized to represent member organisations.

Considering the issues discussed above, the following needs emerge for strengthening thematic and territorial networks:

- **The review of the existing legal framework, in order to facilitate the registration of network and platforms, including among organisations having different institutional shapes and mandates;**
- **The support to existing networks to establish functioning structures, also through initiatives aimed at sharing experiences and knowledge; including the support to networks created under donor initiated programmes to became independent and sustainable;**
- **The support to existing networks to define their own development strategies, based on the analysis of expectations of member organisations and on the identification of services/functions that would not generate competition and conflicts, including functions related to advocacy, knowledge production and sharing, information dissemination, innovation dissemination.**

5.4. Dynamics of national and general platforms

While for 3rd level organisations, such as thematic and territorial platforms, no meaningful changes can be observed compared to the 2011 CSO mapping, the situation appears to be different for 4th level organisations.

Some main CSO national platforms exist in Palestine:

- The Palestinian Non-Governmental Organizations Network (PNGO)
- The Palestinian Non-Governmental Organizations Network in Gaza (PNGO-Gaza)
- The Palestinian General Union of Charitable Societies (PGUCS);
- The Palestinian National Institute of NGOs (PNIN).

These organisations were identified in 2011 and are still the most important ones, but while in the past only some of them could be considered as active networks (namely the PNGO in the WB and in Gaza), they are in most cases now characterised by an increased activity. Such a dynamic is partially the result of internal developments, and partially the result of engagement of some of these organisations within the NDC activity of drafting and disseminating the "NGO Code of Conduct".

Palestinian Non-Governmental Organizations Network (PNGO)

PNGO is composed of the leading and older "NGOs" in Palestine, which are grouped into 9 thematic networks or sections. Among the existing national platforms it is the one with the most experience and the strongest organisational structure. In addition to coordinating the thematic networks and launching common advocacy campaigns, PNGO plays a pivotal role in the campaign for the dissemination of the "Code of Conduct" and in the construction of a "coordination committee" among national platforms. In this framework, PNGO is supporting other networks, often as a coach.

Nevertheless, some weaknesses still affect PNGO, including:

- The lack of a functioning communication mechanism, involving not only the most active member organisations, but all of them at the national level;
- The difficulty in getting all member organisations to agree on a common advocacy agenda;
- The lack of interest for an active participation by many of the platform members (strong organisations do not need the platform for lobbying on behalf of their interests, neither for facilitating their access to information nor for capacity building opportunities);
- The risk of entering into competition with member organisations, that often view with suspicion the PNGO engagement in capacity building and training, as well as its relationships with donors.

The Palestinian General Union of Charitable Societies (PGUCS)

The General Union of Charitable societies is the platform composed of the largest number of organisations, with more than 250 charitable societies as members. Despite that, and probably because of the features of the member organisations, which are mainly, if not exclusively, engaged in service delivery and in social assistance activities at the local level, and are in most cases guided by elder persons, this union is the weakest among national platforms.

Not only does the Union have a reduced organisational structure (lack of an autonomous office, lack of an autonomous staff, etc.), but it also lacks

- A clear strategy and functions;
- The actual capacity to communicate (collect and disseminate information) to most member organisations;
- Legitimate mechanisms supporting the leadership, except for the legal status of the organisation and the formal electoral system.

Moreover, an important local union consisting of a broad group of organisations – the **Palestinian General Union of Charitable Society in Jerusalem** – left the general union and is now playing a central role in supporting Palestinian CSOs in Jerusalem.

Nevertheless, the General Union of Charitable Societies is currently engaged in the dissemination of the Code of Conduct and in the work of the "CSO coordination committee" that would constitute a space for development and a better structure.

Palestinian National Institute of NGOs (PNIN)

PNIN – the Palestinian National Institute of NGOs was virtually inactive at the time of the 2011 CSO Mapping but now it has been revitalised and includes medium and small CSOs. Some medium-sized, young NGOs which had engaged in strengthening other small and medium-sized CSOs, has played a key role in the revitalisation of the PNIN. The main challenges emerging regarding PNIN are:

- The central role played by a few more structured and better established CSOs, that risk to generate dependency among member organisations;
- The lack of a focus on the role of small and medium sized CSOs, as the network includes a number of CBOs that tend to adopt a traditional NGO model, actually risking to generate change processes in member organisations, including opening up a gap between the organisations and their communities, developing competitive relationships, both among themselves and with other more structured NGOs;

- The direct engagement of the network in delivering the capacity building activities and the subsequent dependency on a few organisations to carry out these activities; as a result the organisations providing the training could easily be perceived by other member organisations as the "owners" of the platform itself;
- The focus on the development of member organisations, which tends to limit the potential of the platform itself as an actor in governance and policy dialogue mechanisms.

Palestinian Non-Governmental Organizations Network in Gaza (PNGO-Gaza)

The Palestinian Non-Governmental Organizations Network in Gaza (PNGO-Gaza) does not participate in the coordination committee or plays a role at the national level, despite having a long experience and a well-structured organization. The political division between Gaza and the West Bank has been identified as a major challenge for the development of fourth level organisations and is currently the major hindrance influencing the participation of the PNGO-Gaza at the national level.

On the other side, PNGO-Gaza, together with other local networks and platforms, has been involved in the development of the legal framework set up by the de-facto government of the Gaza Strip to regulate CSOs, which also includes measures aimed at supporting their development and measures aimed at limiting the political interference in their activities.

For PNGO-Gaza the main challenges include the need to have a better defined role and to set an agenda allowing for the conciliation of the need to support the development of the platform with the need to avoid conflicts over resources and fundraising with member organisations.

Emerging needs

The following support is required to strengthen the general platforms:

- **Establish functioning structures, involving initiatives aimed at sharing experience and knowledge; and involving networks created under donor initiated programmes to become more independent and sustainable;**
- **Define their own development strategies, based on the analysis of expectations of member organisations and on the identification of services/functions that would not generate competition and conflicts, including functions related to advocacy, knowledge production and sharing, information dissemination, innovation dissemination;**
- **Assist in secretarial tasks, information collection and dissemination, and networking functions, in order to allow for the organisational consolidation of networks (including the identification of fundraising mechanisms that would not conflict with the interests of member organisations);**
- **Recognize general platforms as channels of communication with CSOs at the different levels and as legitimate actors in governance and policy dialogue mechanisms at the national level.**

5.5. Dynamics related to relationships and cooperation with other actors

CSOs are not alone in the governance and policy arena. In addition to the government there are other actors with whom interaction is required in order to enable CSOs to actually play a role in forming the future State of Palestine. The dynamics related to the relationships with these actors are the subject of the following paragraphs.

Local Authorities and APLA

As observed in the analysis of existing spaces for engagement in governance and policy dialogue and in the analysis of dynamics in which CSOs are involved, local authorities are already an important partnership and have created spaces for dialogue and cooperation. Experience of cooperation with local authorities has been collected at different levels in both the West Bank (including the "Area C") and the Gaza Strip, not only for the delivery of services or the implementation of projects, but also for:

- Local development planning;
- Creation of consultation mechanisms;
- Participation in decision making processes;
- Development of social accountability and transparency mechanisms.

Most of these activities have been carried out not only with the support of international donors, but also with the involvement of APLA, the Association of Palestinian Local Authorities. APLA, however, has not assumed a direct role in facilitating or supporting the interaction between the local authorities and the CSOs, but has played an important role in activating communication and knowledge sharing channels among local authorities.

Despite this important role and its creation with a presidential decree, APLA is currently characterised by weakness, resulting mainly from the lack of political support at the government level. This weakness relates to access to financial resources (that are partially provided by the municipalities taking part in the association) and the political space of action.

APLA could be a relevant actor related to de-centralisation and de-concentration of services, including for amending the legal framework of LGUs, the integration and amalgamation of municipalities and service provision agencies, etc. However, APLA currently does not have a clear role because of the government's lack of interest for decentralisation and its tendency to centralise decision making also for local authorities. The limited interest for a participatory decentralisation process is also reflected by the current lack of a policy regarding the relationship between CSOs and Local Government Units, which would need to be defined by the Ministry of Local Government.

Private sector

The main organisations aggregating the private sector in Palestine are the Chambers of Trade and Industry and their national federation. While the chambers are currently involved in a set of activities focusing on local development (as the promotion of "clusters" among local institutions) and on supporting innovation, new entrepreneurship and the development of micro and informal enterprises, limited cooperation exists among the chambers and CSOs. The main cooperation in fact is with ASALA, an organisation involved in support to women's microenterprises.

Beyond this initiative, cooperation also materializes at the project level or at organisational levels involving individual enterprises, mainly as funding sources for service delivery or as partners for the implementation of vocational training activities and employment related activities. A further area in which collaboration exists is that of good governance, particularly on anti-corruption initiatives. Despite this, relationships between sectors are characterised by lack of meaningful interaction and a general mistrust, particularly when large CSOs engage in policy dialogue are involved. Social Corporate Responsibility is often viewed with suspicion as it seen as an instrument for companies, aimed at substituting authentic interest in local development with external communication based on hidden profit motivations. While some initiatives have been carried out jointly between trade unions and companies for addressing labour security issues, engagement on govern-

ance and policy issues between CSOs and the private sector is completely unheard of as of yet. A basis for such engagement could be provided by the Chambers that are already working with micro-finance institutions and CSOs (e.g. in Bethlehem and Hebron).

Trade Unions

Support to the development of labour unions is at the core of the work of certain CSOs (such as DWRC); however, the cooperation has been limited in the past by the lack of independent unions. Recent adhesion of Palestine to international conventions on labour rights is currently opening a new space for cooperation, not only on advocacy on rights enforcement and enlargement, and on training and information collection and dissemination, but also on the monitoring of labour conditions and on the development of local platforms for decent work. Experience from other countries of the region can be taken into consideration for knowledge sharing and transfer.

Academic sector

A strong relationship with the academic sector has been a characteristic feature of Palestinian CSOs for a long time. As already mentioned, some universities (Birzeit, Bethlehem, etc.) maintain strong relationships with CSOs at different levels. Relationships exist with research centers, think tanks, and with specialised NGOs. Many large NGOs involved in service delivery in health, agriculture, special education, etc. provide opportunities for training young professionals and are involved in knowledge sharing and knowledge production activities. Limited relationships, however, exist with the private universities that are being established in Palestine. The creation of "community development" departments and centres, and their direct involvement in project implementation (often in cooperation with international NGOs and international agencies), as well as the direct engagement by university departments in the management of projects [67] generated among CSOs, creates the perception of universities as new competitors rather than as partners.

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[67] As it is the case of the Birzeit Law School, that, in cooperation with the Swedish firm NIRAS, is managing the "Human Rights Secretariat" channelling the funds of a group of European donors to Human Rights NGOs

6. Resources for supporting CSOs

CSOs are an important recipient of support provided by public and private international donors, as well as by local organisations and local private actors (including through individual contributions). However, just a small part of the support is aimed at fostering civil society development and civil society engagement in governance and policy dialogue. Most support tends to target services provided by CSOs, with the aim of directly influencing beneficiary living conditions.

The following paragraphs are not aimed at analysing the whole spectrum of resources supporting CSOs, but only those directly aiming at CS development and engagement in governance and policy dialogue. Moreover, the analysis does not pretend to provide a complete picture of available support (which would require a wider and deeper study) but only to look at the main available resources and resource centers.

6.1. National and local resource centres and technical assistance opportunities

NGO Development Center

NDC has been operational since November 2006. It has a dual mandate: providing technical and financial support to NGOs and the NGO sector.

Established in March 2006 as a spin off from Welfare Association, NDC has been supported by the World Bank through different projects[68]. The process of creating NDC included wide consultation, involving more than 250 NGOs, the main NGO/CSO platforms, and representatives from the public sector, private sector and academia. Since its inception, NDC has mobilized and managed funds totalling over USD 55 million from various donors including the World Bank, the French Development Agency, the European Union, Sweden, Switzerland, Denmark, the Netherlands, Belgium and the Islamic Development Bank[69].

NDC has played an important role in building the capacity of the CSOs' umbrella networks and in providing capacity building and comprehensive programs for developing the overall NGO sector. Additionally, NDC continues to advocate for greater NGO transparency and accountability through the adoption of professional financial and management practices by CSOs. Towards this goal, NDC took the lead in the formulation and dissemination of the "NGO Code of Conduct", through a wide consultation process with CSOs and with CSO platforms. Within this process, NDC engaged CSO platforms in diffusing the code of conduct and in establishing a compliance mechanism for involved CSOs. In order to provide further support and resources to CSOs, NDC is currently managing the Masader portal, which includes a database of almost 1000 Palestinian CSOs[70].

NDC activities include a wide range of grant-making programs, some of which are targeting Area C, Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip. By targeting these areas, NDC is providing services to the most marginalized and vulnerable communities unable to avail of services provided by the PA.

In May 2013, NDC launched the "Strategic Framework to Strengthen the Palestinian NGO Sector", jointly developed by NDC and the four NGO Umbrella Networks, with the aim to provide strategic direction to Palestinian NGOs to effectively address key issues facing the Palestinian society.

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[68] *According to NDC Value Preposition (May 2014), NDC "builds upon the overwhelming success and achievements of the World Bank funded Palestinian NGO Projects. PNGOI and PNGOII established a transparent grant making system for NGOs delivering social services and promoted a culture of cooperation and information sharing among them. This success in combination with the increasing Palestinian demand for a reliable and sustainable NGO service delivery highlighted the need for a permanent organization to support the Palestinian NGO sector beyond the PNGO projects. As a result, the NGO Development Center (NDC) was established and registered in March 2006 as an independent Palestinian NGO capturing nearly ten years of valuable experience and knowledge into the new Palestinian organization."*

[69] *NDC Strategic Plan 2014 - 2018*

[70] *NDC Value preposition, May 2014*

Welfare Association

The Welfare Association is another actor providing funding and technical support to CSOs. It funds more than 200 projects per year and has a network of 160 partners, making it a main funding agency for CSOs in Palestine.

The Welfare Association is an international NGO; it functions as a basket fund which raises resources from the private sector, the Palestinian Diaspora and public donors, and it has a strong informal relationship with the Palestinian public authorities. These conditions put the Welfare Society into an "intermediary" position. The main focus of the WA is to strengthen CSOs (targeting mainly small and medium CSOs) in service delivery functions.

The Civil Society Organisations Commission

The Civil Society Organisations Commission is a new actor in the Palestinian landscape. It has been mandated to look into CSOs' legal framework, while its functions and modalities of work are still not completely defined. Based on its mandate, there is a risk of competition with the NDC.

Other resource organisations

As discussed in the analysis of the dynamics related to 2nd level CSOs and those related to 4th level CSOs (particularly with reference to PNIN), an emerging resource for supporting the development of small and medium CSOs is the engagement of medium CSOs themselves. For this group of CSOs supporting the development of partner organisations is somehow a necessity as it facilitates both the implementation of activities and their access to funding.

Large CSOs tend to support smaller partners by mainly focusing on their administration and implementing capacities, as well as on their project implementation and service delivery, whereas medium CSOs – particularly in relatively peripheral areas - are more interested in creating partnerships that would involve organisations. This strengthens their position both in relation to donors and in relation to public authorities. Moreover, medium CSOs are increasingly engaging in local governance and policy dialogue actions in which the partnership among organisations is a key element of strength.

6.2. The EU Country Roadmap for engagement with civil society

A key actor in supporting CSOs in Palestine is the EU. Even if Palestinian CSOs are in many cases "partners" of international NGOs in EU funded projects, they have increasingly assumed the leadership in these projects. EU support to CSOs has been mainly provided through "thematic programmes" (NSA-LA, EIDHR, etc.) and through some programmes carried out in cooperation with international agencies (as with FAO on [71]agriculture), since 2013 a mainstreaming process has been launched that involves other EU programmes in Palestine. The main framework guiding this mainstreaming process is the "EU Country Roadmap for Engagement with Civil Society, 2014 - 2017", formulated as a response to the 2012 EC communication on "The roots of democracy". The purpose of the Roadmap is to identify long-term objectives of the EU cooperation with local Civil Society Organisations, to develop a common strategic framework for the engagement of EU with civil society at country level, in order to strengthen the local civil society contribution to governance and development of hosting countries, as well as to improve the impact, predictability and visibility of EU actions.

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[71] Even before the EUREP in Palestine set up a strategy based on 2011 CSO mapping, that has been integrated in the Roadmap

Based on the analysis of previous and current EU engagement with CSOs, and on the consultation with both CSOs (which has been carried out in a structured way since 2010) and with EU member states, the following priorities, objectives and indicators have been identified in the road map.

Priorities	Expected results	Indicators	Actions
PRIORITY 1 – LOCAL CIVIL SOCIETY EFFORTS TO ENHANCE THEIR INTERNAL GOVERNANCE, TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY ARE SUPPORTED	CSOs' internal governance structures are transparent and accountable to members/ constituents/beneficiaries; CSOs have developed more adequate individual, organisational and institutional capacities to hold their bodies accountable; CSOs are able to communicate the results of their activities to the public; CSOs are transparent about their programme activities and financial management; CSOs monitor and evaluate the results and impact of their work.	•Level of implementation of the existing NGOs Code of Conduct •Level of NGOs' compliance with the code of conduct (i.e. Percentage of CSOs publishing their governance structure and internal documents and making their (audited) financial accounts and annual reports publicly available) •Existence of a mechanism to report back to the platforms on NGOs' internal governance problems •Transparent NGOs budget processes are promoted by the platforms among their members •Share of CSOs that monitor and evaluate their projects and programmes using baselines and quality indicators •External perception of importance and impact of CSOs activities	a) Analysis: studies, mapping and research b) Policy dialogue, consultation and facilitation (mainly involving EUREP and member states) c) Operational support (following up the implementation of WB support in cooperation with NDC)
PRIORITY 2 - THE FINANCIAL STABILITY OF THE CIVIL SOCIETY IS STRENGTHENED	Fund-raising activities are rooted in CSOs' long-term strategic plans and the core mission of the organisation; CSOs have a diversified funding base, including membership fees, corporate/individual giving and social entrepreneurship.	•Long term funding to civil society is encouraged by EUREP and the Member States, together with Norway and Switzerland •Number of grantees supported through core funding •Pooling mechanisms to support civil society are encouraged •Number of CSOs having received support from multiple sources •Number and types of CSOs having received governmental support •Existence and implementation status of professional tender and grant-awarding systems	a)Policy dialogue with PA and with CSOs b)Setting funding modalities coherent with priorities (duration of grant, follow up grants, core funding, pooling mechanisms)
PRIORITY 3 - THE PARTICIPATION OF CIVIL SOCIETY, INCLUDING	Enhanced CSOs actions in policy dialogues, governance and accountability from the local to the national level;	•Existence of civil society sectoral interest groups mediating between citizens and the line ministries, as well as local authorities	a) Studies b) Structured dialogue through civil society coordination

Priorities	Expected results	Indicators	Actions
VULNERABLE GROUPS, IN PUBLIC POLICY FORMULATION AND MONITORING OF PUBLIC POLICIES IMPLEMENTATION AND DELIVERY ARE STRENGTHENED	Strengthened capacity and coordination of CSOs to participate in and contribute to policy dialogue and accountability processes of public authorities at local and national level; Public institutions recognize the importance of CSOs in improving good governance through CSOs' inclusion in decision making processes; Improved response from public authorities to civil society's requests; Increased documentation, sharing and dissemination of knowledge in specific sectors among citizens.	•Level of involvement of groups representing minorities/marginalised groups/peripheral groups •Existence of sector consultation mechanisms with the civil society organised by the line Ministries and/or the EU and its Member States •Level of responsiveness of government and other organs of the state to the views of civil society and the private sector (i.e. policies impacted by CSOs views) •Level of transparency and access of information to CS and the citizen in general about the public policies proceedings •Level of awareness of marginalised groups/etc. of their rights (i.e. these groups communicate their grievances and proposals for change to the government and legislature)	mechanisms, in the WB and Gaza c) Support to MASADER Portal (NDC) d) Facilitation of sharing practices among Palestinian and international CSOs e) TA to NGO networks f) Support to civilian oversights in justice and security sector g) Promotion of CS monitoring of public expenditure and to local governance and social accountability h) Support to active participation of women, youth and disabled people organisations
PRIORITY 4 - NETWORKING, INTERACTION AND COMMUNICATION BETWEEN LOCAL NGOS LOCATED IN WEST BANK, EAST JERUSALEM AND GAZA ARE SUPPORTED	Strengthened structures of CSOs platforms (networks) West Bank and Gaza; Enhanced capacity of CSOs platforms (networks) to represent the interests of their members; Facilitated experience and knowledge sharing within and among CSOs platforms (networks), particularly with the view to enhance their members' capacities; Enhanced capacity for CSO members at the national and local levels; Stronger impact of CSOs platforms (networks) on the national and local policy-making processes.	•Number of Palestinian civil society platforms supported •Number of CSOs members platforms indirectly benefitting from EU, Norway and Switzerland support •Number of CSOs platforms trained in specific-expertise development •Number of Palestinian civil society platforms supported •Number of CSOs members platforms indirectly benefitting from EU, Norway and Switzerland support •Number of CSOs platforms trained in specific-expertise development	a) Highlight the importance of CS in policy in the EU/PA subcommittees b) Highlight the need for a National Planning Law formalising CSO participation to planning process c) Using LACS to ensure that CS views are taken into consideration d) Support to the development of the Palestinian NGO coordination council e) Sectoral workshops for knowledge sharing with EU grantees

At first glance, the EU roadmap fits the needs and exigencies emerging from the analysis carried out in the previous paragraphs. However, some comments about possible shortcomings and possible further improvements are briefly presented in section 7.3.

It is important to stress the fact that the EU roadmap is not only an umbrella for EU initiatives and actions, but provides a framework for coordinating and strategizing the actions of a wider set of actors, including European member states, plus Norway and Switzerland. In this framework, the EU roadmap creates a completely new situation and can be expected to influence in a significant way CSOs develop.

6.3. Main opportunities provided by international donors

Despite the focus on service provision, there are many opportunities for strengthening governance and policy engagement of CSOs:

- Strengthen CSO technical and organisational capacities
- Support self-regulation and the revision of the legal framework
- Support sector regulation and coordination
- Strengthen networks and platforms at national level
- Monitor human rights and good governance
- Participate in the establishment and functioning of local governance and people participation mechanisms
- Support to small CSOs.

Opportunities are provided by a variety of organisations and through a variety of mechanisms. The main ones are briefly considered below.

The World Bank continues to support CSOs' technical and organisational capacities (focusing on service delivery), sector regulation and coordination, as well as the development of self-regulation mechanisms. Moreover, it supports CSOs' engagement with public authorities in policy dialogue, particularly at the central level. A main mechanism set up to achieving these aims is the NDC.

The **"Human Rights Secretariat"** is a pool-funding mechanism for supporting organisations working in human rights protection and, to a lesser extent, in governance and policy dialogue. Sweden, Denmark, the Netherlands and Ireland contribute to the fund. Originally, the Secretariat was managed by the NDC and was mainly providing core funding to a restricted group of partner organisations. Recently the Secretariat mechanism has been modified. As already mentioned, an autonomous management unit, set up through a contract with a consortium comprising the University of Birzeit and NIRAS, currently manages the project. Moreover, the funding mechanism is now increasingly oriented to provide project-based grants, so to enlarge the number of supported organisations.

DFID is among the main donors involved in the support of CSOs in governance and policy dialogue activities. DFID support is channelled through a variety of programmes, involving international and Palestinian NGOs and supporting initiatives regarding: leadership training, the establishing of users committees, the establishment of social accountability mechanisms for improving social services, and the development of citizens' participation mechanisms in local authorities.

GIZ is another key donor. Its action is mainly aimed at supporting the development of local authorities, particularly those working – in cooperation with Palestinian CSOs, which are organised as networks – on local planning and on the set up of committees allowing for a stronger communication and participation of social actors - particularly youth - in local governance and planning.

Italian Cooperation is traditionally focused on service delivery; however, it is currently engaged in supporting cooperation between national and local public authorities and women's organisations. As already mentioned, local Women Empowerment Centers (Tawasol) have been established in which cooperation among

stakeholders is both geared at improving women access to services and women focused policies (including on gender violence)[72].

The French **Agency for Development (AFD)** is mainly engaged in supporting civil society engagement aimed at increasing resilience in "Area C". As discussed earlier, CSOs are mainly seen as providers of technical capacities, partnering with local authorities (including village councils).

The **Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation** is supporting advocacy and human rights organisations. A key focus is on the civil society engagement in monitoring of rights violations. Moreover, Spanish cooperation supports cooperation among LAs, "peace building" through CSOs actions (including support to Israeli CSOs engaged against occupation practices and actions targeting East Jerusalem) and citizens' participation in local governance, democratic and electoral processes and in the justice mechanisms.

The American **National Endowment for Democracy (NED)** is involved in supporting the establishment of local governance mechanisms, involving local CBOs and committees and local authorities with the support of specialised NGOs.

In addition to the support provided to the "Human Rights Secretariat" the **Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA)** supports CSO development through a set of intermediaries, mainly consisting of Swedish NGOs. These include: the Olof Palme Foundation, Diakonia, Forum Syd, and Kvina Till Kvina. These organisations are both engaged in supporting NGOs through institutional development and through project-based initiatives focusing on democracy and local governance.

7. Conclusions and Recommendations

The main objective of the CSO Mapping study is to provide a comprehensive overview of CSOs in Palestine and highlight some recommendations for interventions to be supported by the EU. To this aim this concluding chapter is structured in 7 parts. The first contains a set of general concluding remarks, looking at the outcomes of the analysis carried out from a perspective that is not directly related to EU actions and policies. The second and the third parts include a short review of the existing strategic guidance for the EU action in support of CSOs in Palestine (namely, the strategy based on the 2011 CSO Mapping and the "roadmap"). The final paragraphs directly deal with the current EU action , considering needs related to the three components of the EU action for CSO development: (supporting the development of a conducive environment; supporting the development of spaces for CSO engagement in governance and policy dialogue, and supporting CSOs' capacities) in addition to the needs related to a better engagement of CSOs in initiatives foreseen within the cooperation between the EU and Palestine (formalised in the Single Support Framework).

7.1. General Conclusion

As has been discussed in previous paragraphs, civil society in Palestine consists of a large number of organisations, strongly diversified, both from the point of their social roots and functions and from the point of view of resources.

The lack of a strategic vision and the lack of a common perception of the roles that CSOs can assume is a key weakness. Other weaknesses are related to the tendency of CSOs to remain "locked" in service delivery function (thus frequently losing the resources, opportunities and spaces for engaging in local governance and policy dialogue. Being locked in service delivery function alone affects the development processes, a better representation of people needs and dynamics, their linkages with constituencies and communities, and the relationships with donors and political actors which are characterized by dependency and sometimes an ill-defined relationship with both of them.

CSOs' weaknesses are the result of internal dynamics (such as those related to internal governance mechanisms) and external ones (those deriving from lack of social recognition or from a partially unsupportive legal framework). Based on these dynamics it is possible to identify some needs that should be considered in fostering a stronger engagement of CSOs in policy, local governance and support to development.

- Despite some tendencies to collaborate and network, there is a prevalent situation of self-isolation by CSOs, which tend to concentrate on their own functioning. Competition often exists among CSOs and in relation with other actors (including NSAs, local authorities, private sector, etc.). There is, therefore, a need to support initiatives establishing bridges among CSOs and between CSOs and other actors, with a special focus on the private sector and local authorities.
- Networks, Unions and Platforms are, particularly at the national level, a group of actors playing a key role for fostering greater engagement of CSOs in policy dialogue and in governance mechanisms; however they are still weak and still have an undefined role, leading frequently to conflicts and competition with member organisations and among "collective organisations". There is a need for supporting networks, unions and platform in defining their specific role and exercise their functions accordingly. Such roles would be mainly related to networking, knowledge management, joint policy agenda setting, and representation in local, national and international fora. Earmarked resources should therefore be allocated to "collective organisations" for fulfilling their roles.
- Existing legal frameworks are not very supportive of freedom of association and for valorising the action of CSOs; they are also a causal factor for a variety of processes related to internal governance of organisations, their relationships with constituencies and their capacity and orientation to cooperate. A review of the legal framework should therefore be supported, so that a new framework more suitable for supporting the different categories of CSOs, facilitating them

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in developing institutional and organisational shapes suitable for performing different roles. In this framework it would also be particularly necessary to facilitate simplified and local registration for CBOs, not demanding them to "become" NGO-type organisations.

- Even if some spaces exist for CSO engagement in governance and policy dialogue, there is a widely perceived situation of vulnerability of CSOs in relation to governmental actors and political parties. Such a perception is a big obstacle for an active, autonomous CSO participation in governance and policy dialogue mechanism. Diplomatic and political support for fostering a wider recognition of CSO legitimacy to engage with public authorities in setting and monitoring policies, services, and democratic processes is a basic need.
- Existing spaces and opportunities for engagement in governance and policy dialogue are very much depending on the direct intervention of international donors and agencies. In order to further enlarge these spaces and make them more common, rather than a "project" or programme, there is a need to include participatory governance mechanisms in all cooperation initiatives, at different levels and in different steps (identification and formulation, monitoring, evaluation) and to include participatory governance mechanisms in all initiatives aimed at strengthening/ supporting public services (monitoring and management committees).
- Palestinian CSOs have been for years the address of a large variety of training and capacity building activities. However, these activities have not always been effective, both because of their targets and because of their approach. In order to make knowledge sharing, technology transfer, information dissemination an effective tool for supporting CSO development a shift is needed from training actions targeting individuals to "institutional capacity development" processes, including long-term assistance and support to involved organisations. Since "engaging in training activities" is very common for CSOs, at all levels, specific measures for supporting such a shift are particularly important and would also result in a change of the relationships among organisations, creating stronger linkages and cooperation.
- Most organisations are involved in service delivery, but their main funding modality is through short/medium term projects. This generates a stress situation for organisations and for institutional partnerships and forces organisations to invest precious resources exclusively into fundraising. Such a focus on fundraising is also an obstacle for engaging in policy dialogue and local governance (as the first is often seen as "not useful" and the latter is normally demanding long term processes to be effective). Strengthening support to long-term initiatives and core funding mechanisms, through different mechanisms at different levels, is therefore a basic condition for allowing a more active and effective engagement of CSOs in governance and policy dialogue, and for an improvement of their quality of action, accountability in front of partners and constituencies, cooperation with public authorities at local and national levels (it will particularly facilitate breaking up the client-patron relationships which often characterize the cooperation among different actors).

7.2. A review of the 2011 strategic recommendations

Based on the 2011 CSO mapping, a set of strategic recommendations were defined, that can be reviewed in comparison with the findings of this study. The recommendations mainly focused on three basic strategies:

- Supporting a shift from service provision to governance
- Supporting the integration of the CSO community and the matching of first and second level organizations;
- Supporting the opening of spaces for local agenda setting

These strategies were translated into a set of objectives and specific measures, aimed at (a) disseminating the capacities for assuming a governance role among CSOs; (b) creating spaces for "policy making from below"; (c) Facilitating policy dialogue (by promoting mutual recognition, creating opportunities, facilitating the dialogue and making it visible); (d) increasing the impact and relevance of sustainable development initiatives in order to increase the legitimacy of CSOs for engagement in policy-making and governance, and finally to increase their linkage with other actors.

Basic requirements for implementing these measures were identified in the improvement of cooperation among stakeholders and in the creation of mechanisms for assuring access of available resources by all stakeholders, namely: first level organisations, second level organisations and third and fourth level organisations.

The proposals made on the basis of the 2011 CSO mapping are still relevant. In some cases, the situation has changed for the better, thus "creating spaces for policy making from below". Now the main focus should be on shifting towards enlarging and consolidating existing spaces, while avoiding the creation of new artificial spaces. In other cases, the situation does not improve in any significant way: an example is the mutual recognition among different actors, which is still limited (even if the situation is more complex than in the past and cooperation is much more visible between line ministries and CSOs). Similarly, access to resources by the different CSO groups is still perceived as a major challenge and continues to be an important factor in undermining partnerships among CSOs, and between CSOs and other actors. On the positive side, third and fourth level organisations witness noticeable improvements, although support requirements remain high even for those institutions.

Recommendations included in the strategy also referred to the implementation of thematic programmes (NSA-LA Programme, EIHRD, Partnership for Peace, Investing in people/Gender, Cultural activities and East Jerusalem). In 2013 and 2014 an evaluation of some programmes was carried out, identifying more specific strategies and actions for improving the relevance and effectiveness of these programmes, however, confirming the general direction which has been provided by the mapping study:

- Supporting initiatives based on people's participation in setting and monitoring quality standards for public services; monitoring of public policies; formulating demands for services and policies (NSA – LA);
- Supporting existing coordination and collaboration platforms on human rights, fostering the public recognition of "unregistered" community based and grassroots organisations; supporting research and monitoring; fostering activities focusing on citizenship rights in daily life (EIHRD);
- Supporting a public discussion on peace perspectives and peace building in order to achieve a common position and voice; improving citizens organisations' capacity to face the threats produced by political divides; support local committees and initiatives and their recognition by occupying authorities; supporting CSOs initiatives for making conflict impact visible and promoting citizens' initiatives to minimise such impacts (Partnership for peace);
- Supporting coalition building among women organisations and the assumption of policy focus in gender actions (Investing in people);
- Sustaining coalition building and the bridging function of cultural activities, including the support to cultural activities as a means to support identity and social change; sustain the use of sub-granting schemes (Cultural activities); and
- Supporting the recognition of Palestinian civil society actors by Jerusalem authorities and opening spaces for negotiation and dialogue on service delivery, with an active mediation and political support role by international actors **(East Jerusalem).**

7.3. A review of the EU Country Roadmap for engagement with civil society

As presented in chapter 6, in 2014 the EUREP promoted the formulation of "the EU Country Roadmap for Engagement with Civil Society, 2014 - 2017". The roadmap integrates both the results of the CSO mapping and evaluation initiatives carried out by the EU and the contribution of EU member states, plus Norway and Switzerland.

At first glance, priorities and actions foreseen in the Roadmap are highly relevant for the findings of this mapping exercise. However, some further recommendations, mainly concerning the implementation of such measures, can be provided based on the following analysis:

- The engagement with CSOs out of thematic programmes still remains peripheral and needs to be strengthened further.
- Priorities emerging in the current situation, which were not so central in the past, for instance, those related to the needs of strengthening the identity and of shared representations, continue to be peripheral (culture, art, habitat are sectors that could assume greater prominence in such a framework).
- Considering advancements in the adoption in the Code of Conduct, the "priority 1" should be aimed at facilitating processes of change and development in CSOs, reinforcing their relations with constituencies and opening the space for emerging leaders. Focusing on the development of compliance mechanisms for assuring good governance, accountability and transparency in relation to the code itself and in relation to external regulations, risks in fact to support the establishment or artificial mechanisms, which would not always reflect actual social processes related to CSO functioning.
- Under "priority 2", it would be crucial to develop mechanisms facilitating access to funding for small and medium organisations engaged in governance, policy dialogue, and in innovative activities (de-facto activities would be those related to the engagement in private sector support and in "Area C"). Moreover, the development of "pooled funding" needs to be carefully evaluated in order to avoid effects that are of concern to CSOs, such as the reduced diversity of funding opportunities.
- Particularly concerning "priority 4", fostering a more direct engagement of CSOs both in the local aid coordination structure and in other exercises involving joint planning activities between the donors and PNA, would increase the impact of actions.

It is important to stress the fact that the EU roadmap is not only including the EU initiatives and actions, but provides a framework for coordinating and strategizing the activities of a wider set of actors, including European Member states, plus Norway and Switzerland. The EU roadmap can possibly create a completely new situation for CSOs in Palestine and can be expected to influence, in a significant way, the CSO development.

Considering that, periodic monitoring and evaluation of the identified actions would be crucial, both for measuring actual advancements and for understanding the processes and dynamics that are generated by these activities. Active participation of CSOs in such activities and the creation of mechanisms for consultation and monitoring at a regional level, involving different stakeholders (including platforms, as well as groups of the 2nd level and the 1st level CSOs) would further increase the impact of the roadmap, and the recognition of CSOs. To facilitate monitoring and evaluation the indicators already included in the roadmap (see the scheme presented in paragraph 6.2) would need to be articulated in two different groups or systems: (1) concerning the activities carried out and the involved actors; and (2) focusing on the change processes that the roadmap is directly or indirectly expected to influence. A further set of indicators, moreover, would be needed, concerning the undesired effects that actions could produce (e.g. conflicts, change in the nature of organisations, changes in the organisations' agendas to align with donors requirements, reduction in the access to funding, etc.).

7.4. Specific indications concerning the three main areas of the roadmap

The roadmap is structured along three main areas. The specific indicators related to the findings of the CSO mapping are presented below. There is not a hierarchy among indications. In fact, they are focusing on the identification of possible support action. If carried out together there would be a cumulative process increasing impact, while adopting only some of them would have a more limited impact on emerging processes.

- Supporting a revision of the legal framework so to take into account the diverse roles of CSOs (e.g.. leaving it up to CSOs to decide about their institutional and organisational setting; registering networks as networks; registering CBOs at local level in a simplified way, etc.);
- Supporting the recognition of CSOs by public authorities as legitimate actors in local governance and policy dialogue, as well as the formulation of a unified governmental policy based on such recognition (the CSO Commission would potentially represent an institutional entrance point to this aim);
- Supporting the general public recognition of CSOs as legitimate actors in local governance and policy dialogue, fostering the dissemination of information on experience of CSO engagement in these fields;
- Supporting the adoption of new funding modalities, including the provision of "core funds" (these would include measures aimed at avoiding the development of relationships characterized by dependency and a client-patron relationship) and the provision of funding for supporting institutional development and consolidation; and
- Supporting the development of diversified funding schemes aimed at supporting different kinds of actors, including measures for facilitating access to funds by weaker actors.
- Improving CSOs capacities
- Supporting the dissemination and the sharing of knowledge on existing experiences of CSO engagement in local governance, policy-dialogue and development planning;
- Supporting capacities concerning needs assessments and policy/service monitoring and evaluation;
- Supporting an analysis of dynamics and processes in which groups of CSOs participate at the local/regional levels, avoiding the implementation of training activities focusing on a standard set of capacities (e.g. on project management, organisational management, administrative management, etc.);
- Supporting "peer to peer" coaching and long-term institutional development partnerships;
- Supporting initiatives involving different kinds of actors and fostering the access to innovative approaches (particularly for 2nd level organisations);
- Fostering the adoption of partnership frameworks clarifying the roles of each partner, as well as the expected results of the partnership from the institutional perspective;
- Fostering institutional development initiatives aimed at consolidating organisations and at allowing them to understand their roles and better define long-term strategies, at the different levels;
- Fostering knowledge accumulation and dissemination roles by platforms; and
- Fostering coordination and agenda setting roles by platforms.
- Indications aimed at improving CSOs engagement in governance and policy dialogue
- Supporting the dissemination and the sharing of knowledge on existing experiences of CSO engagement in local governance, policy-dialogue and development planning;
- Supporting the consolidation of existing governance and policy dialogue initiatives;
- Supporting the creation of new opportunities for CSOs engagement in governance and policy dialogue through the inclusion in EU supported initiatives of monitoring and governance mechanisms in which CSOs are already involved;
- Creating monitoring mechanisms for projects and initiatives supported or coordinated by the EU (including the "roadmap" and the bilateral projects), involving CSOs participation; and
- Consolidating and extending "structured dialogue" mechanism by enhancing the implementation of consultation meetings at regional level.

7.5. Recommendations concerning the sector engagement of CSOs

A key element of the EU strategy on engaging with CSOs is the increase of CSO participation in the activities carried out within focal sectors in the context of the Single Support Framework. As already discussed in the

Palestinian context, these sectors are "rule of law and good governance", "private sector" and "water and land". The specific recommendations linked to the findings of the CSO mapping concerning the above sectors are highlighted below.

Good governance and the rule of law is a sector in which a wide experience exists among Palestinian CSOs. Such broad experience can be identified across different areas of interventions:

- The protection of human rights. In this area a strong platform exists, involving 14 organisations working in the Gaza Strip, the West Bank and in East Jerusalem. These organisations have been mainly involved in the protection of people from Israeli actions violating human rights, but are also working on legal protection of rights violations by Palestinian organisations and Palestinian authorities. The experiences of cooperation also comprise the Palestinian Ministry of Justice.
- Good governance, transparency, the accountability of institutions, and the struggle against corruption. There is a leading actor in this area, which is the AMAN coalition. AMAN was developed in recent years, is cooperating with a wider group of partners, including NGOs and local level CBOs. Other relevant organisations engaged in this area include organisations working on democracy, such as Muwatin and PCPD. A certain overlap exists among these organisations and those working on human rights.
- Citizens' participation in local governance. As already analysed, a relatively large group of organisations work in this area, from AMAN, to the Civitas Institute in Gaza, to the PCS in Jenin or PalVision in Jerusalem and Bethlehem.
- The group of organisations working on gender, and particularly on the recognition of women's rights (family law, personal status law) and on gender violence. Institutions include as – among others – CWLRC.

Considering the justice and security sector, CSOs can be involved in playing four main functions (which are in fact already involving particularly the organisations engaged in the first area briefly considered above:

- Raising the knowledge, capacities, and sensitivity of justice authorities and security forces both on human rights and on social dynamics;
- Informing and empowering citizens so that they would be able to access rights related to justice and security;
- Monitoring processes and providing information to public authorities; and
- Providing services for increasing access to justice and for assuring citizens' security.

Organisations engaged in these areas are mostly well-established and with strong technical and strategic capacities. Their engagement is visible at the central level, fostering interaction and cooperation spaces with public authorities, as well as at the local level, where they support local initiatives involving small local NGOs and CBOs.

Support can be provided to networking initiatives aiming at bridging the gap between CSOs and other actors. Other mechanisms such as: the consolidation of governance/policy-dialogue activities; the delivery of "policy-related" services (as those generating innovation in policies and public activity work, increasing people exercise of rights, and those aimed at public service standard setting, etc.).

Private sector development is a new area of intervention for most CSOs. While they are often involved in supporting income generating activities, they have hardly been involved in the development of the private sector.

The limited intervention of CSOs in this sector was further reduced by the micro-finance law, introduced in 2013.

Main organisations having relevant experience in supporting enterprises and the sector itself are those working at the cooperative level and those working on credit and small enterprise development (such as ACAD and in the specific area of agriculture, the PFU, and ASALA in the field of women entrepreneurship). A few projects have also been supported by the EU, namely focusing on vocational training, on the establishment of relationships between schools and the enterprise/labour market actors (DVV – Sharek), and on the development of small industrial activities for supporting women's access to labour markets (Al Najda in Gaza[73])

Interventions in these areas could focus on:

- Creating and consolidating linkages and partnerships between private sector organisations and CSOs (as in the case of the Palestinian Federation of Chambers and ASALA for supporting a better integration of women enterprises and informal enterprises into the "formal sector");
- Supporting innovative approaches, such as those focusing on the "incubation" of new enterprises and on the support to "green", art, tourism and cultural industries (as in the case of ACAD cooperation with ARTLAB in East Jerusalem);
- Supporting the joint cooperation among CSOs and the private sector in the management of "common goods" such as environmental resources, development of services supporting enterprises, knowledge sharing and dissemination and training opportunities, etc. (for instance by fostering the participation of CSOs in clusters);
- Supporting "Decent Work" and "Corporate Social Responsibility" dissemination actions, as well as actions aiming at supporting the bridging among formal and informal economic activities (thus increasing access to rights for those involved in informal sector); and
- Supporting the creation and development of "social enterprises" and "green enterprises".

Water and Land is, along with agriculture a traditional sector of intervention for CSOs in Palestine. Even if the percentage of organisations engaged in these sectors is decreasing, there is a relatively wide group of specialised organisations. This group includes the organisations engaged in the PENGON network, those involved within PNGO in agriculture (ACAD, PARC, PFU, UAWC, AAA, etc.), organisations engaged in research, and organisations active in the environment sector (ARIJ, Land Research Center, PHC). As in the case of human rights, these organisations are well-established and characterised by a high level of technical capacities.

There is a wide range of experience on which one can build. Among others, the following opportunities could possibly be supported and nurtured[75]:

- Local development planning;
- Establishing users groups for setting and monitoring service standards;
- Introducing new technologies for water sanitation;
- Monitoring water resources and land use (including the monitoring of pollution);
- Monitoring the wall and Israeli occupation of land and water sources;
- Establishing joint service committees, based on participatory processes involving CSOs and LAs; and

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[73] This project - however - was characterised by difficulties in the marketing of products, which actually led the capacity of the installed industrial plant to be under-exploited.

[74] Two main initiatives exist based on the adoption of "cluster approach". One supported by AFD is managed by the Palestinian Federation of Chambers of trade and industry, the other supported by the Italian cooperation and managed by UNIDO is focusing on "cultural industry" in Hebron and is mainly working on the upgrading and upscaling of traditional woodworking industry. In both cases there are not CSOs involved. The experience of Sharek and DVV in supporting the reform of vocational training schools carried out in the framework of NSA-LA Programme can provide indications on how CSOs can be engaged in a significant way in cluster development and functioning.

[75] All the indicated types of intervention have been already tested with the engagement of Palestinian CSOs and the support of EU and EU member state agencies (including Spanish Cooperation and AFD on planning, DFID on the creation of service committees and standard setting initiatives, GIZ on joint service committees, Italian cooperation on cooperatives).

- Supporting cooperatives and groups managing common goods (environment, water, land, etc.) or the production and marketing processes

Furthermore, the water and land sector offers opportunities for establishing cooperation and governance mechanisms involving the government, local authorities and utility providers, CSOs and the private sector. Universities can as well contribute to these mechanisms.

7.6. Recommendations focusing on geographic areas (West Bank, East Jerusalem, Gaza Strip, Area C)

A general need emerging when looking at Palestine's geographical areas: promoting unity and cohesion among groups that are growingly characterised by different interests and needs. To address such need, a key action would be to facilitate the knowledge sharing among the organisations of the different areas. A further action would be to avoid setting up different strategies. Instead, supporting actions that involve the whole Palestinian territory or that have a potential to be up-scaled to the whole of Palestine.

West Bank

In the West Bank, the following specific recommendations are highlighted:

- Extending communication and consultation activities out of Ramallah. Despite the short distances between cities in the West Bank access to Ramallah is frequently difficult for CSOs (particularly small and local CSOs) situated in the north or in the south of the WB. Creating opportunities for communication and consultation outside of Ramallah would also result in the creation of stronger trust among actors and in a better recognition of the role of decentralized actors, who are more than beneficiaries.
- Fostering the improvement of communication among the platforms and networks and the member organisations.
- Fostering the development of "reference" or "resource centers" at the regional level, supporting local CSOs already engaged in providing backstopping services to smaller CSOs or to existing local unions, networks or platforms. Reference centers can be provided with documentation and information to be further disseminated and can be assisted in terms of equipment or opening up of local "libraries" for CSOs, funding opportunities, etc.

Area C

- Fostering the introduction and testing of new approaches based on CSO engagement in the planning processes at village and "village cluster" levels and fostering activities for strengthening the role of CSOs in advocating for services and infrastructure at the central government level;
- Supporting the consolidation of existing committees for service monitoring;
- Supporting the consolidation of initiatives based on the cooperation between local authorities and CSOs;
- Supporting the participation of local CSOs in regional and national unions and platforms.

Gaza

In Gaza, main dynamics are related to the separation from the West Bank, which resulted in the isolation of CSOs, and to the reconstruction process, that at the same time creates opportunities and obstacles for CSOs.

- Supporting the establishment/consolidation of CSO-based monitoring mechanisms concerning the use of funds for reconstruction and the design and implementation of reconstruction activities;
- Supporting the establishment/consolidation of CSO-based targeting and monitoring mechanisms concerning the relief activities;

- Supporting the consolidation of users' committees for accompanying social service provision and the work of local authorities;
- Supporting the development of funding schemes for activities other than service provision and relief;
- Supporting the development of funding schemes targeting different categories of organisations, so to avoid both the establishment of vertical partnerships based on the channelling of funds and the unfair competition among local actors; and
- Fostering the development of "reference" or "resource centers" at the regional level, supporting this would aim at the existing local unions, networks or platforms.

East Jerusalem

In East Jerusalem, the main issues are related to the increasing severity of occupation practices, the worsening of living conditions, the lack of access to services for Palestinians, and to the increasing isolation of local CSOs. Specific recommendations are thus focusing on these issues, which include:

- Fostering initiatives for defining the roles and agendas of CSOs in East Jerusalem, both at the individual level and at the collective level, including through research, dialogue and institution building for medium and long term processes;
- Supporting the establishment/consolidation of CSO-based monitoring mechanisms concerning the provision of services and "occupation" practices;
- Supporting the establishment of negotiation spaces in which a mediation role is played by international organisations and by the Palestinian National Authority;
- Supporting the establishment of mechanisms for the protection of CSOs from Israeli aggression, and the launch of political processes and negotiations for the recognition of Palestinian CSOs by local Israeli authorities;
- Supporting the consolidation of CSO-based targeting and monitoring mechanisms related to relief activities carried out in East Jerusalem and in the Jerusalem refugee camp of Shuafat;
- Supporting the development of funding schemes for activities other than service provision and relief, including new "social entrepreneurship" initiatives in culture, art and tourism, aimed at increasing the resilience and at strengthening the identity of the Palestinian population in East Jerusalem;
- Supporting the development of funding schemes targeting different categories of organisations, so to avoid the establishment of vertical partnerships based on the channelling of funds through large NGOs or through international NGOs and agencies;
- Fostering the development of "reference" or "resource centers", supporting to this aim the existing local unions, networks, platforms, and universities;
- Supporting dialogue initiatives involving Palestinian and Israeli organisations and activists aimed at recognising the damages of occupation and at creating protection mechanisms for Palestinian residents of Jerusalem.

Annexes

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