

4.4.3. Advocacy Capacity Index

Many civil society organizations as well as donors seek to develop the advocacy knowledge, skills and experience of their members and other nascent groups. But how do we know that the capacity building support is empowering the group to push forward their cause? We can measure what they learned, but how do we know they actually are putting into practice their new skills?

USAID/OTI-funded Lebanon Civic Support Initiative (LCSI) supported a number of advocacy initiatives in Lebanon between 2010-2012, with an objective to enhance civil society organizations' capacity to advocate for local or national issues. LCSI developed an Advocacy Index that measures an NGO's capacity to advocate before and after every advocacy grant. The index assesses the NGO on a scale from 0-6 in five competency areas: coalition building and NGO linkages, outreach, engagement with decision makers, data research and analysis, and policy development. The selection of the five competency areas was strategic and designed to address the main contextual challenges that advocacy programming encounters in Lebanon. For example, the limited access to data and poor data quality were addressed by focusing on data research and analysis as one of the five competency areas.

As Jordanian CSOs share comparable challenges, CSP-Jordan took over the LCSI Index and adopted it to develop a Jordanian version, renamed into the Advocacy Capacity Index and used to measure the changes in CSO's capacity to advocate on issues.

The index measures a CSO's experience in implementing the competency areas rather than theoretical knowledge related to them. Through the use of local advocacy trainers for each grantee, CSP provided technical assistance but also gathered information about where each CSO needs additional training. To enhance the capacity of CSOs in the five competency areas, the CSP developed a number of targeted skills trainings. For example, to enhance data research and analysis, the team developed trainings on conducting focus group.

The index is first used to gather baseline information on the CSOs' advocacy capacity, which is later compared to data gathered after the implementation of each initiative. The CSO representatives fill in a questionnaire and score themselves from 0-6 based on what best describes their capacity in each of the five competency areas. Interviewers afterwards discuss the questionnaire with the CSO and give a final mark for each competency area. An average is counted and the results are shared with the trainer and CSP Advocacy Team.

During 2011-2013, 55 partners have been assessed and the index was continuously fine-tuned for effectiveness. The analysis has shown that on average a CSO's capacity to advocate increased by 1.47% after the implementation of the CSP grant.

The tool has also allowed the Advocacy Team to better assess in which of the five competency areas the CSO needs additional technical assistance.