



Summary of evidence on strengthening civil society interventions in L&MICs



Understanding civil society

Civil society – defined here as inclusive of individuals, organizations, and formal or informal groups – is essential to maintaining an open society, building democracy and supporting the rule of law. But there are continuous threats to civil society across countries, such as violence, arrests, and excessive surveillance against civil society members (Cooper 2018). And according to CIVICUS, in 2020 only 12.7 per cent of people around the world live in countries with an open or narrowed civic space rating, an important decline from the 17.6 per cent in 2019, and almost 70 per cent of the people live in a repressed, or closed civic space. The funding landscape also adds challenges for civil society organizations. With restrictions on foreign funding for civil society organizations in more than 50 countries (Buyse 2018), accessing funding is a challenge. At the same time, international funders also increasingly demand evidence that their funds are used effectively on interventions that work. This requirement can be difficult to satisfy, especially for organizations without the technical expertise and long-term financial support (INTRAC 2013) necessary to demonstrate this.

The challenges faced by civil society put great importance on the efficient use of limited resources. Thus, decisions about the types of interventions funders support should be informed by evidence on intervention effects, and where such evidence is not available it should be generated through rigorous evaluation as part of program implementation.

To support evidence informing civil society programming USAID DRG Center commissioned 3ie to develop this Evidence Gap Map (EGM) with the aims to a) identify and describe the evidence on the effects of interventions to strengthen civil society in L&MICs, and b) identify potential primary evidence and synthesis gaps.²

Highlights



- A total of 128 studies are included in the EGM. Of these, 116 are quantitative impact evaluations (IEs), 10 are qualitative IEs, and two are systematic reviews.
- The interventions most frequently evaluated are public events providing education on civic values and political processes, general education of civil society members, and networking/coalition building focused on decision-making.
- The most studied outcome categories are citizens' participation in civic life, citizens' awareness of rights and responsibilities, and marginalized groups' participation in civic life.
- Eight per cent of included studies (10 studies) adopted a qualitative evaluation design, focusing on interventions that are less amenable to quantitative IE designs, such as policy and reforms, networking activities on advocacy and education on communications.
- Findings from the one high confidence systematic review suggest that **Citizen monitoring mechanisms** can have positive effects on active participation in the community and **participatory decision-making interventions** seem to have positive effects on physical access to services.
- Only two of the 20 L&MICs rated as 'closed' in the CIVICUS civic space ratings¹ are represented in the included impact evaluations, but most of the studies ($n = 114$) were implemented in countries rated as 'repressed' or 'obstructed'.



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Defining civil society interventions and outcomes

To develop the theory of change and the framework of interventions and outcomes which sets the substantive scope for this EGM, we adapted a conceptual framework developed by the Ministry of Affairs of the Netherlands (MFAN 2019). We consider interventions that:

- strengthen a regulatory environment to allow civil society to operate safely;
- provide support to civil society to make sure they reach the right audience and have the skills and capacities to advocate for their cause;
- provide support to strengthen civil society members' skills to monitor governments' activities, as well as aggregate people in public events to generate discussions on public issues;
- develop civil society members' institutional capacities and technical skills, by providing direct financial or technical support;

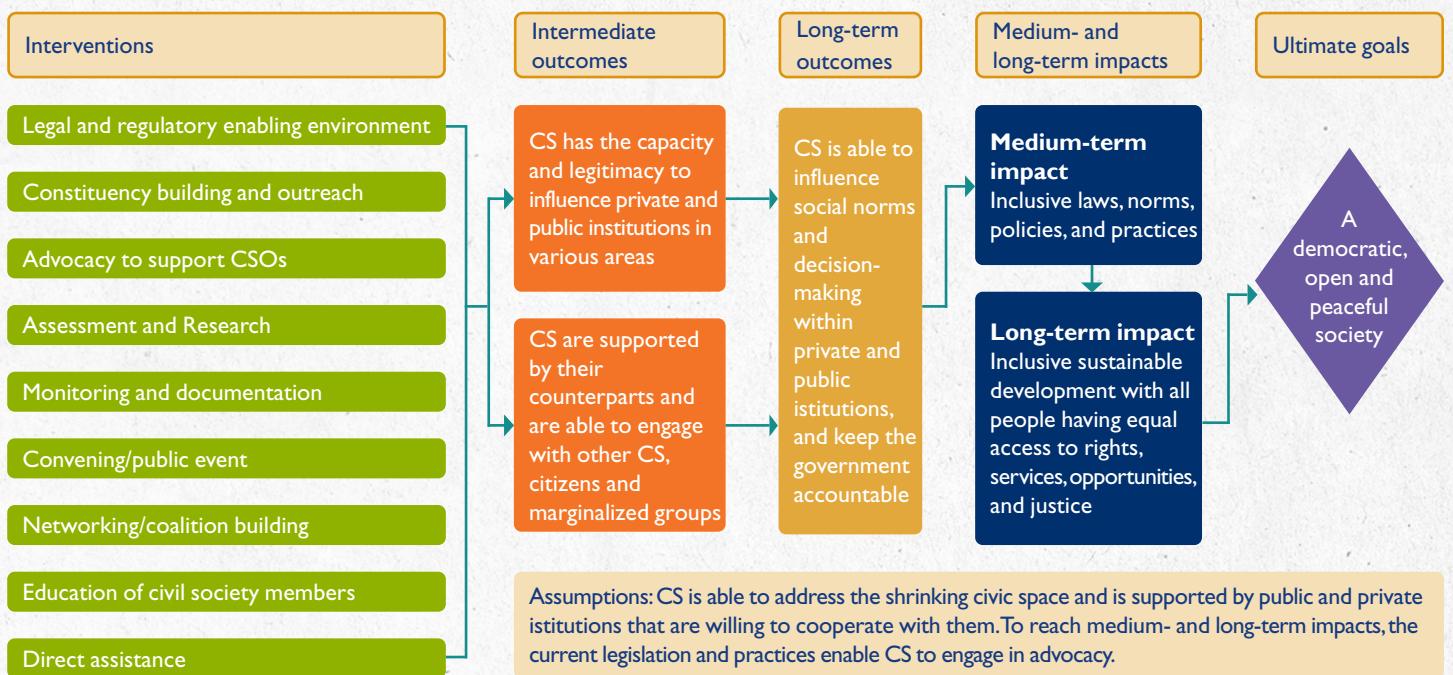
■ create coalitions and collaborations between civil society and the government or other public and private institutions.

These interventions target intermediate outcomes such as civil society being supported by their counterparts, being able to engage with other civil society organizations, citizens, and marginalized groups, and has the power to influence public and private institutions. These improvements in civil society capabilities may influence social norms and decision making within public/private institutions, as well as keep the government accountable.

Finally, over time changes in these outcomes may promote inclusive laws, policies and practices, and an overall inclusive development approach where all people have equal access to rights, opportunities, services and justice. The ultimate goal is a democratic, open and peaceful society.



Figure I: Conceptual framework for civil society interventions



Source: 3ie. Adapted from a policy document of the Ministry Affairs of the Netherlands (MFAN 2019). Note: CSOs in the figure refers to civil society organization, and CS refers to civil society.

Defining civil society interventions and outcomes

Using the above conceptual framework (Table 1), we categorized civil society interventions and outcomes. To allow a systematic and consistent categorization of interventions and outcomes, we ensured that our framework is exhaustive and mutually exclusive.³ As the

focus of the interventions is to strengthen existing civil society, we excluded interventions that develop new civil society groups/organizations, or improve service quality by civil society actors (e.g. health services delivered by civil society).

Table I: Interventions and outcomes included in the EGM framework

Intervention groups

Legal and regulatory enabling environment

- Establishment of policies, laws, and reforms that promote or protect freedom of association and assembly for civil society

Constituency building and outreach

- Membership drives and recruitment activities to encourage participation in civil society organizations

Advocacy to support civil society

- Coordinated set of advocacy activities aiming to promote civil society to the general public and policymakers

Monitoring/documentation

- Monitoring and documenting compliance with rules, regulations, and norms pertaining to civil society

Convening/public events

- Gathering stakeholders with the express purpose of promoting or protecting civil society

Networking/coalition building

- Development of networks or coalitions with the express purpose of promoting or protecting civil society

Education of civil society members

- Knowledge transfer to strengthen capacities to manage civil society and increase its influence

Direct assistance

- Direct technical or financial support to civil society

Outcome categories

- A conducive, open legal and regulatory environment for civil society and labor unions

- An enabling financial environment

- Civil society organizational resilience and sustainability

- Civil society oversight of private or public institutions

- Civil society input to private or public institutions

- Citizens' participation in civic life

- Marginalized groups' participation in civic life

- Dense and diverse civic networks

- Resilience to closing space

- Awareness and trust of civil society organizations

- Partnerships

- Civil society actors' engagement with public information and media

- Citizens' awareness of rights and responsibilities

- Democratic labor and trade unions functionality and rights

Source: 3ie. Note: For the full list of interventions and outcomes studied, please see the final technical report "Strengthening civil society: an evidence gap map" (Berretta et al. forthcoming).

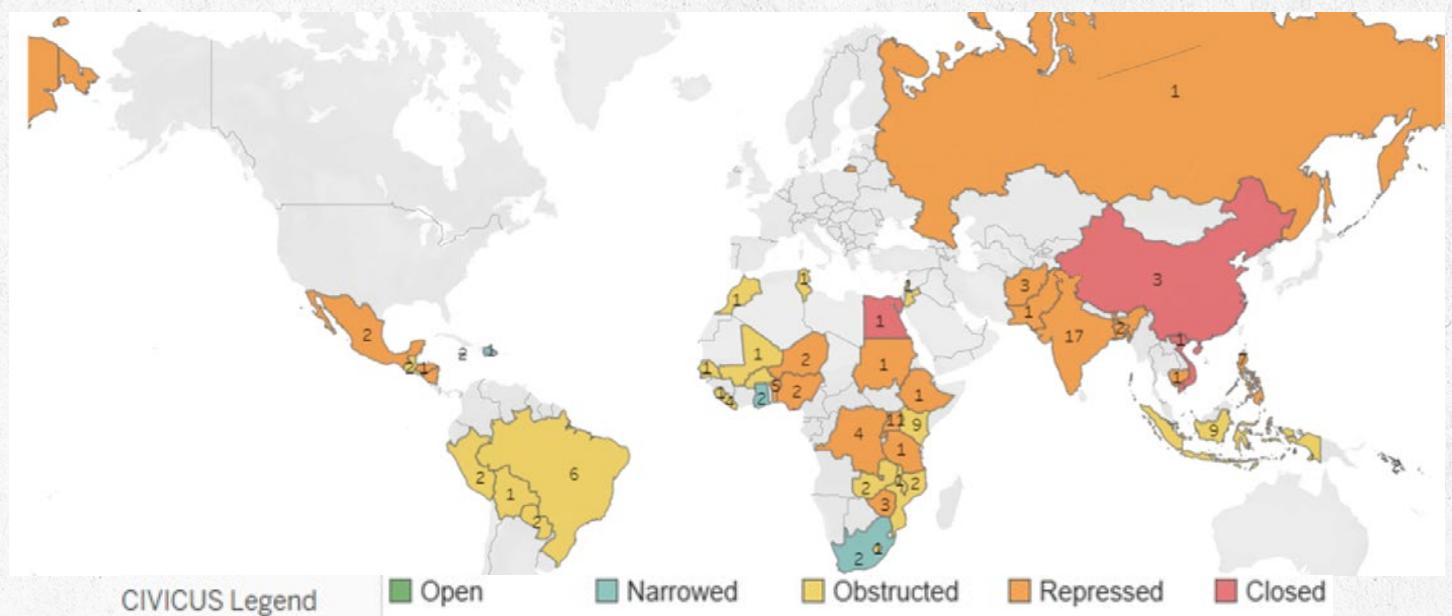
Main findings

We conducted an extensive search of peer-reviewed articles and grey literature, which returned a total of 29,897 records, including grey literature and citation tracking. After removing the duplicates and screening, we included a total of 125 papers (126 studies as one paper included two studies) in the EGM: 114 quantitative impact evaluations (IEs), 10 qualitative IEs, and two SRs. The field rapidly expanded in the early 2000s, but growth has levelled off, with about 13 new studies published a year since 2014. Research is mainly

focused on Sub-Saharan Africa, where 50 per cent of studies are located.

There is limited research from contexts where civic spaces are characterized as ‘closed’, as defined by the CIVICUS civic space ratings for 20 L&MICs. Indeed, only two countries rated as having closed civic spaces - China and Vietnam - are represented in our map (Figure 2). Most of the other studies were implemented in ‘repressed’ ($n = 65$) or ‘obstructed’ settings ($n = 49$).

Figure 2: Geographical evidence base and the CIVICUS civic space ratings in 2021



Source: The data source for CIVICUS civic space rating is the CIVICUS Monitor (2021).⁴ Created with Tableau. Note: Colors on the map indicate the CIVICUS civic space ratings. Overlaid numbers indicate the number of studies per country identified in the EGM.



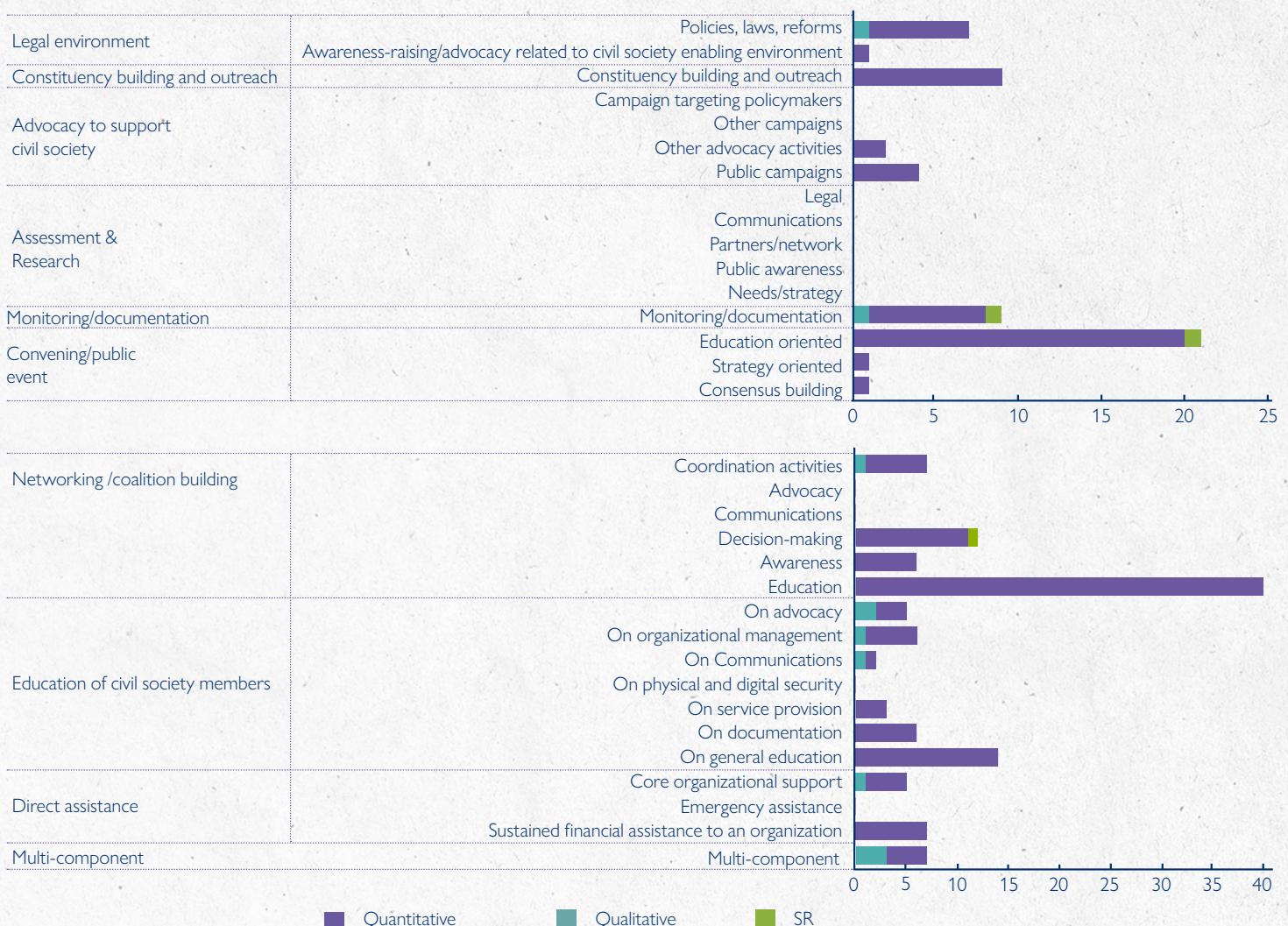
Main findings

The three most studied interventions are networking/coalition building focusing on decision-making (n = 40), convening/public events providing education on civic values and political processes (n = 21), general education of civil society members (n = 14) and (Figure 3). Convening/public events interventions are primarily civic education programs. The general education interventions are mainly related to adult literacy, often for women. The networking/coalition-building interventions are mainly about decision-making projects in which citizens were involved in policy-making decisions, such as participatory budget initiatives. We have also identified seven multi-component studies, whereas in one intervention group two or more components corresponding to the interventions categories of this map were implemented.

Among the studies evaluating the three interventions mentioned above, the most frequently reported outcomes (Figure 4) are the rates of participation in civic life, including marginalized groups, and beneficiaries' awareness of their rights and responsibilities. These outcomes are also the most studied overall in the map.

The qualitative studies evaluated interventions less amenable to quantitative impact evaluation, such as policy and reforms to create an enabling environment for civil society, networking activities to increase advocacy of civil societies, and training on communications. One of them measured the resilience of civil society and sustainability which no other studies measured.

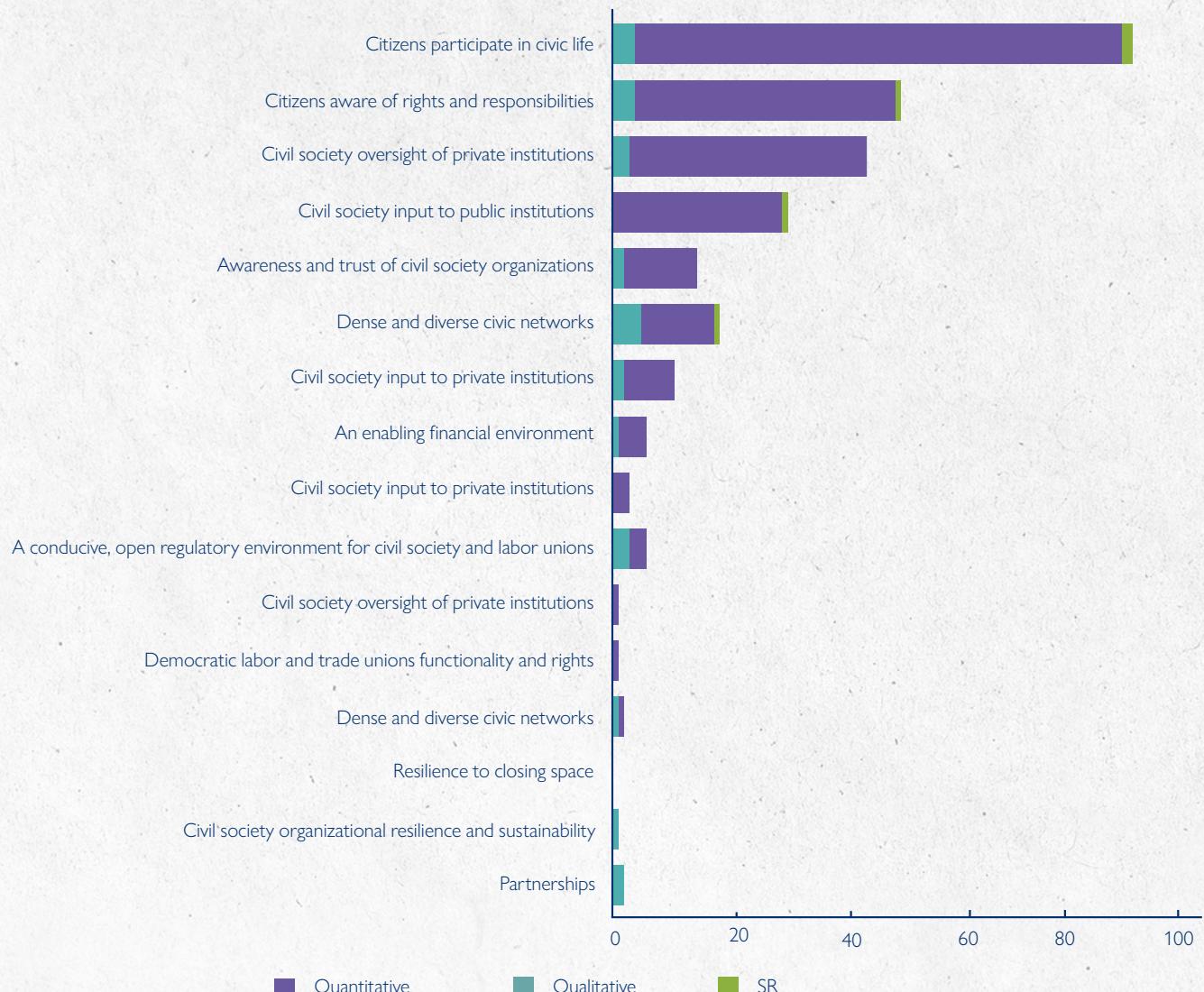
Figure 3: Civil society interventions by study design



Source: 3ie. Note:1) The colored rectangular without a number indicate there one study. 2) Some studies used more than one methodology, which has been reported in this table, therefore the number of studies here is higher than 131, the total number of studies included in the EGM, as one study might be reported more than once.

Main findings

Figure 4: Civil society outcomes by study type⁵



Source: 3ie. Created with Datawrapper

There are a few methodological gaps. Studies identified in the EGM use a broad range of methods to evaluate interventions, including experimental (57%), quasi-experimental (35%), and qualitative (8%) approaches (Figure 3 and 4). More qualitative evaluations (Appendix B) could be done across various intervention types such as education of civil society members on advocacy, civil society-led initiatives to monitor public or private institutions, or networking activities to coordinate civil society initiatives.

More than half of the studies consider equity aspects ($n = 80$) in some ways, with a particular focus on interventions targeting vulnerable populations ($n = 57$). Sex is the most common equity dimension considered ($n = 49$), followed by the place of residence ($n = 26$) and socioeconomic status ($n = 24$).⁶

There is limited meaningful integration of cost evidence (15%) and mixed-methods (39%) in the existing evidence base. Both types of evidence are important for improving the usefulness of research findings for policy and practice. Cost evidence is necessary to determine if effects are actually worth the resources required to achieve them. Mixed-methods evaluations can help to understand beneficiary perceptions of interventions the mechanisms through which interventions work (or not) and to highlight implementation considerations for example. To improve the usefulness of new impact evaluations for developing more effective interventions future studies should adopt a mixed-methods approach, and cost analysis.

Findings from the high-confidence systematic review

Findings from the single high-confidence systematic review (Waddington et al. 2019) included in the map

suggest that **citizen monitoring mechanisms** can have positive effects on increasing active participation ($SMD=0.14$, $95\%CI=0.05$, 0.24 ; 4 studies) and meeting attendance. Effects on outcomes further down the causal chain are varied. Overall, citizen monitoring on average does not appear to improve provider responses.⁷ Several service access and use outcomes resulted positive but on average not statistically significant, including service quality ($SMD=0.19$, $95\%CI=-0.01$, 0.39 ; 7 studies) and user satisfaction ($SMD=0.13$, $95\%CI=-0.04$, 0.30 ; six studies).

Overall, these interventions seem to work better when the following conditions are met: (1) citizens have a direct contact with the front-line service providers; (2) the monitoring

processes and the creation of common knowledge about it is shared between providers and citizens; (3) performance benchmarks are used; and (4) local community organizations are engaged to give voices to community's members.

Participatory priority setting, planning or budgeting interventions may improve physical access to services ($SMD=0.10$, $95\%CI=0.03$, 0.18 ; 3 studies), but there is no evidence for other intermediate or final outcomes. Key factors of success seem to be interventions that facilitate the growth of local civil society, for instance by encouraging citizens to create coalitions increasing capacity for collective action; ensure the buy-in from local front-line service providers for the intervention; and address local barriers to allow vulnerable groups to participate in the intervention.



Promising areas for future research

In addition to helping stakeholders identify relevant literature, this EGM also serves as a starting point in discussing how to build the evidence base. There is a significant opportunity for future impact evaluations and systematic reviews based on the gaps identified here. We suggest several key areas where future work could be useful and also encourage stakeholders to consider their own priorities and interests when reviewing the EGM (Table 2).

There are also methodological constraints that may explain gaps in the evidence base and why certain types of evidence may be limited for some interventions and outcomes. For example, interventions that support assessment and research to allow civil society to improve their activities can have long theories of change that can be difficult to measure, which might be one reason why there are no IEs under this category.

Table 2: Gaps in the civil society evidence base

Type of gap	Suggested areas of research
Intervention where no or a few impact evaluations were found	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Campaigns targeting policymakers ■ Public events focused on strategies development with stakeholders ■ Networking initiatives to coordinate on advocacy, education, communication; ■ Education on physical and digital security ■ Direct assistance on organizational management and on emergency assistance ■ Interventions to support civil society to conduct assessment and research to improve their activities and increase dissemination and awareness of their cause
Outcome measured by none of the studies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Measures of an open and regulatory environment for civil society ■ Measures of an enabling financial environment ■ Levels of civil society organizational resilience
Geography and CIVICUS civic space ratings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Research on interventions implemented in countries with a 'closed' civic space: out of 20 L&MICs rated as 'closed', only two countries - China and Vietnam - have at least one study eligible for our map
Study design	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Quantitative IEs on interventions less studied; Qualitative IEs that clearly state which study designs they used on interventions less studied
Synthesis (systematic reviews)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 'Convening/public event focused on education' (21 studies) on the following outcomes: participation in civic life, citizens' awareness of their rights and responsibilities, and marginalized groups included in civic life ■ General education of civil society members (14 studies) on participation in civic life, citizens' awareness of their rights and responsibilities, and marginalized groups included in civic life ■ Coalition or group development to take part in decision-making process (12 studies) on citizens participate in civic life, and civil society input to public institutions

Using the evidence patterns in the EGM

Evidence Gap Maps are tools for decision-making and can be used to:

1. Inform research agenda-setting.

1. Stakeholders can use the EGM to identify key areas for research, some of which have been suggested above. If stakeholders are interested in the impacts of interventions on specific subgroups, they can apply the filters of the EGM to determine gaps specific to their population of interest. For example, in this map, we find gaps related to interventions supporting civil society in closed civic spaces. Stakeholders interested in specific types of evidence (e.g. cost or mixed methods), or on specific areas where most funding is directed, may wish to specifically commission studies where these are lacking (i.e. advocacy support activities for civil society).

2. Overall, the evidence is scarce and there is a need for more evidence for most of the intervention categories. Many interventions in this space are 'small n' in the sense that the units of allocation are few and the quantitative methodologies typically associated with impact evaluation are not feasible. For such interventions, qualitative impact evaluation methodologies may be the most appropriate approach. Our targeted search for such studies identified very limited literature of ten studies meeting our inclusion criteria.⁸ Additional qualitative impact evaluations on intervention to strengthen civil society that clearly define the evaluation methodology⁹ used could help support evidence-informed decision-making in the field.

2. There is a need for careful consideration of the methodological approaches that may be considered more credible in convincingly establishing causality. While there has been some conceptual work to explore qualitative

approaches that may be applicable within a counterfactual framework (eg: White and Philips, 2012) the extent to which such approaches have been adopted in practice appear limited. The studies identified in this EGM can provide a starting point for reviewing and drawing lessons from practice, to inform future studies.

3. Support policy and program design. Stakeholders considering the adoption of specific interventions may reference evaluations in the relevant row to understand the likely effects of their intervention. Conversely, stakeholders interested in influencing a specific outcome may reference evaluations in the corresponding column to understand which interventions affect that outcome. The hyperlinks to the articles are provided in the online EGM. Stakeholders can use the filters in the EGM to identify interventions relevant to their geographies and populations of interest. For example, we found a limited number of studies targeting youth, so users interested in this group may wish to filter out other age groups.

4. Provide examples of impact evaluations undertaken in a particular context or utilizing a particular method. This can be useful for identifying potential challenges and strategies applied to address challenges that may strengthen the quality of future research. Although research in the field of civil society is challenging due to practical and ethical limitations, the 131 studies in this EGM prove that it is feasible. Stakeholders considering the possibility of evaluating their work may reference evaluations of similar interventions for ideas on how evaluation can be conducted.



Accessing and engaging with the evidence gap map

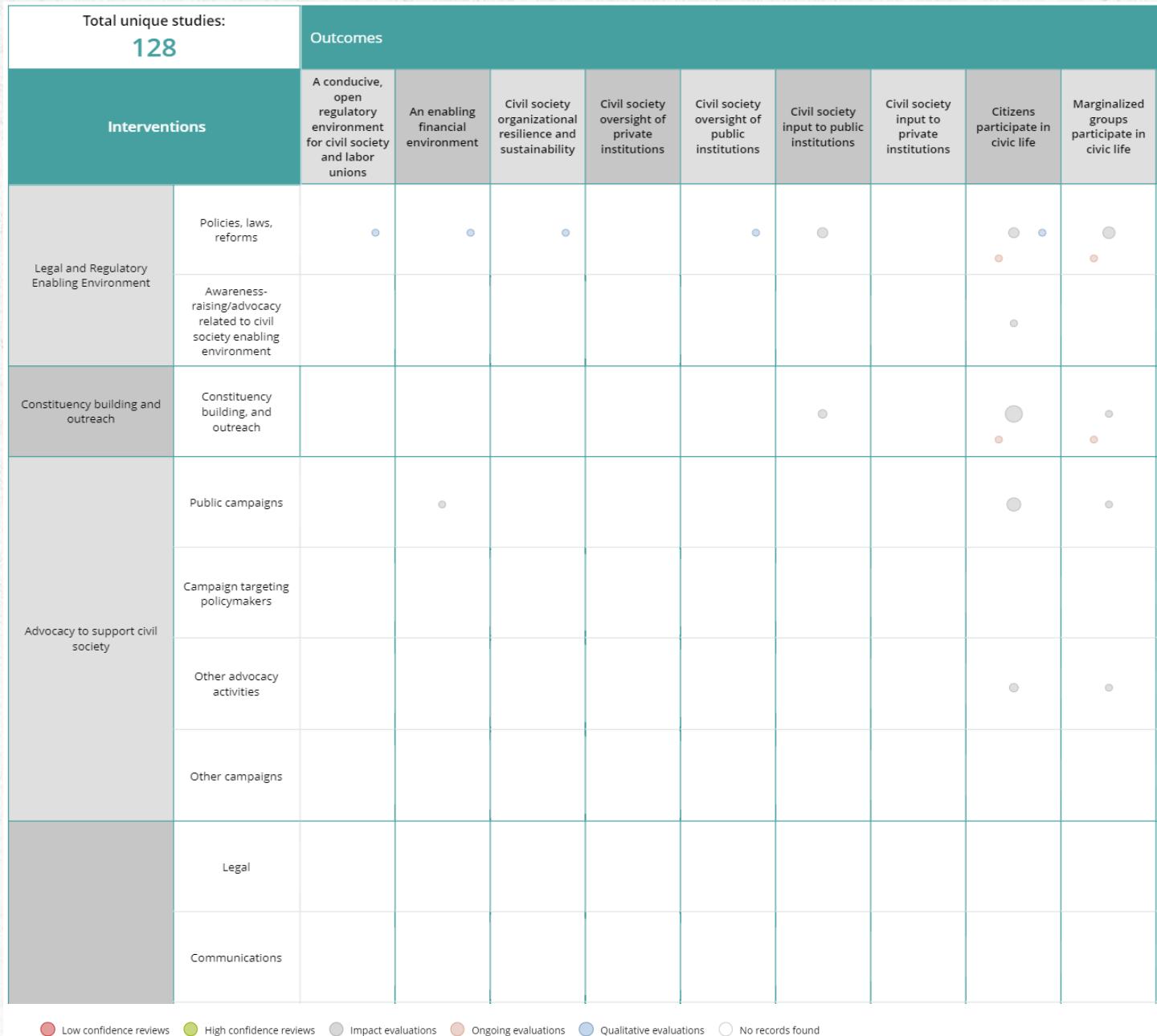
We present the results of the evidence gap map graphically on an interactive online platform.¹⁰ The main framework is a matrix of interventions and outcomes, with grey and colored circles representing impact evaluations and systematic reviews. The systematic reviews follow a traffic-light system to indicate confidence in their findings: green for high, orange for medium, red for low. The color purple indicates

qualitative evaluations. The size of the bubble indicates the relative size of the evidence base for that intersection of intervention and outcome. The interactive aspect of the EGM allows users to filter the results based on key variables, thereby facilitating efficient, user-friendly identification of relevant evidence. The evidence can be filtered by region, country, population, country income level, and study design.



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Civil society evidence gap map



Note: The above screenshot of EGM map is a portion of the EGM map and full EGM map can be accessed [here](#).

What is an EGM?

3ie evidence gap maps are collections of evidence from impact evaluations and systematic reviews for a given sector or policy issue, organized according to the types of program evaluated and the outcomes measured. They include an interactive online visualization of the evidence base, displayed in a framework of relevant interventions and outcomes. They

highlight where there are sufficient impact evaluations to support systematic reviews and where more studies are needed. These maps help decision makers target their resources to fill these important evidence gaps and avoid duplication. They also facilitate evidence-informed decision-making by making existing research more accessible.

About the summary report

The studies on which this brief is based were identified through the Civil Society Evidence Gap Map (EGM) by Berretta and colleagues (forthcoming). The authors systematically searched for published and unpublished impact evaluations and systematic reviews by July 2021 and then identified, mapped, and described the evidence base of interventions that aim to strengthen civil society. The map contains 2 systematic reviews and 130 impact evaluations. The evidence's characteristics are described and mapped according to a framework of 36 interventions and 16 outcomes, with 5

cross-cutting themes. The EGM can be viewed at <https://gapmaps.3ieimpact.org/evidence-maps/strengthening-civil-society-egm>.

This is a summary report of a longer technical report “Berretta, M, Lane, C, Garcia, K, Storhaug, I, Lee, S, Hammaker, J, Adams, L Eyers, J, and Glandon, D (forthcoming). Strengthening civil society: an evidence gap map final report. New Delhi: International Initiative for Impact Evaluation (3ie). It was designed and produced by Akarsh Gupta, and Tanvi Lal.



Endnotes

¹ According to the CIVICUS national civic space ratings: <https://findings2020.monitor.civicus.org/index.html>

² The EGM can be accessed here: <https://gapmaps.3ieimpact.org/evidence-maps/strengthening-civil-society-egm>

³ This EGM was commissioned with five other EGMs on related topics, therefore, there might be overlap with some of the interventions/outcomes. In particular, we expect there will be some overlap with the Human Rights, Good Governance, and Political competition EGMs.

⁴ <https://monitor.civicus.org/>

⁵ Descriptions of these outcomes can be found here <https://gapmaps.3ieimpact.org/evidence-maps/strengthening-civil-society-egm>

⁶ (i.e. providers actions, response perceived by users, public spending, staff motivation)

⁷ The included qualitative study designs are described in Appendix B. As we only included studies that explicitly stated which qualitative evaluation study design was used to ensure consistency in inclusion decisions, there is a chance that this approach would have led to the exclusion of some older papers when terminology was less clearly defined. But as the concept of qualitative impact evaluations is relatively recent we do not think this is very likely.

⁸ Magenta book, Central Government guidance on evaluation, UK HM Treasury, available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/879438/HMT_Magenta_Book.pdf

⁹ The map can be found here: <https://gapmaps.3ieimpact.org/evidence-maps/strengthening-civil-society-egm>

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Appendix A

Types of studies included in the EGM (section extracted from Berretta, M, Lane, C, Garcia, K, Storhaug, I, Hammaker, J, Glandon, D, Adams, L and Eyers, J 2021. Strengthening civil society: an evidence gap map protocol. New Delhi: International Initiative for Impact Evaluation (3ie).)

We included impact evaluations and systematic reviews that measure the effects of a relevant intervention on outcomes of interest, including both selected quantitative and qualitative study designs. The followings are quantitative study designs, which were selected because they are widely used to evaluate intervention effectiveness (Aloe et al. 2017; Reeves et al. 2017).

Quantitative study designs:

Impact evaluations (IEs)

- Randomized controlled trials (RCTs) with assignment at the individual, household, community or other cluster level, and quasi-RCTs using prospective methods of assignment such as alternation.
- Non-randomized designs with either a known assignment variable(s) or a seemingly random assignment process:
 - Regression discontinuity designs, where assignment is based on a threshold measured before intervention, and the study uses prospective or retrospective approaches of analysis to control for unobservable confounding.
 - Natural experiments with clearly defined intervention and comparison groups which exploit apparently random natural variation in assignment (such as a lottery) or random errors in implementation, etc.
- Non-randomized studies with pre-intervention and post-intervention outcome data for both intervention and comparison groups, where data are individual level panel or pseudo-panels (repeated cross-sections), which use the following methods to control for confounding:
 - Studies controlling for time-invariant unobservable confounding, including difference-in-differences, fixed-effects models, or models with an interaction term between time and intervention for pre-intervention and post-intervention observations.

■ Studies assessing changes in trends in outcomes over a series of time points with a contemporaneous comparison (controlled interrupted time series (ITS)), and with sufficient observations to establish a trend and control for effects on outcomes due to factors other than the intervention (such as seasonality).

- Non-randomized studies with a similar comparison group that control for observable confounding, including statistical matching, covariate matching, coarsened-exact matching, propensity score matching, and multiple regression analysis.
- Non-randomized studies that control for confounding using instrumental variable (IV) approaches such as two-stage least squares procedures.
- Synthetic control

Systematic reviews (SRs):

We included systematic effectiveness reviews that describe the search, inclusion criteria, data collection and synthesis methods used (Snistveit et al. 2016). Any evidence reviews, such as literature reviews, that do not adopt these methods will be excluded. We will exclude systematic reviews that are not effectiveness reviews (i.e. that do not aim to synthesise the evidence of the effects of a relevant intervention on priority outcomes of interest), such as systematic reviews of the barriers and facilitators to implementation of a media development intervention. For reviews that include multiple research methods, we will include them if over 50 % of the primary studies include at least one impact evaluation design specified above, or where the effectiveness component of the review was empty (i.e. no eligible studies were identified) and thus no findings on effectiveness are reported.

We will exclude before-after studies or cross-sectional studies that do not attempt to control for selection bias or confounding in any way. Studies that only examine willingness-to-pay for goods, services, process and business models will be excluded.

Experiments conducted in tightly-controlled settings, like those of a laboratory, and studies that measure immediate reactions to a short-term exposure, i.e. studies where implementation and data collection is started and completed within a single day, will be excluded.



Appendix A

Qualitative study designs

We recognize that quantitative impact evaluations can be difficult to perform for some of the interventions we have included in the framework. Therefore, we included a limited number of qualitative impact evaluation methods that clearly try to identify the causal relationship between the interventions and outcomes. This list is based on White and Phillips (2012) and the Magenta Book on evaluation published by the UK government (HM Treasury 2020). The definitions have been developed by using two additional sources (Remnant and Avard 2016; INTRAC 2017a; b; c; d). We only included studies that state, in the title, abstract, or full text, that they used one of the methodologies listed below. We excluded all those studies where it is not clearly stated which analysis has been used.

■ Realist evaluation

Realist evaluations assume that projects and programmes work under certain conditions and are heavily influenced by the way that different stakeholders respond to them. Authors must clearly state a theory tested through an intervention indicating how and for whom a program would work. They compare contexts, mechanisms, and outcomes within a program (not with a control). There is a strong emphasis on the social and historical context and comparison of those who benefited from the program and those who did not benefit (White and Philip 2012). A realist evaluation is therefore not just designed to assess whether a development intervention worked or not. It is designed to address questions such as "What works (or doesn't work)?"; "for whom (and to what extent)?"; "in which circumstances does it work?"; "How and why does it work?" (INTRAC 2017a).

■ Process tracing

Develop a set of (competing) hypotheses lining an intervention to an outcome including how these hypotheses could be (in)validated. Gather relevant evidence to determine which hypothesis most closely matches observed data. In its pure form, process tracing is based around a set of formal tests. These are designed to assess causation. They are applied to all the different possible explanations for how a particular change might have come about in order to confirm some and/or eliminate others. Within the process tracing these different explanations are known as hypotheses (INTRAC 2017b).

■ Contribution analysis

Contribution analysis is a methodology used to identify the contribution a development intervention has made to a change or set of changes. The aim is to produce a credible, evidence-based narrative based on a theory of change that a reasonable person would be likely to agree with, rather than to produce conclusive proof. Contribution analysis can be used during a development intervention, at the end, or afterwards (INTRAC 2017c).

■ Contribution tracing

Contribution tracing is a participatory mixed-method (qual-quant) to establish the validity of contribution claims with explicit criteria to guide evaluators in data collection and Bayesian updating to quantify the level of confidence in a claim. Includes a contribution 'trial' with all stakeholders to establish what will prove/disprove the claim (HM Treasury 2020).

■ The qualitative impact assessment protocol (QuIP)

QuIP studies serve to provide an independent reality check of a predetermined theory of change which helps stakeholders to assess, learn from, and demonstrate the social impact of their work. The QuIP gathers evidence of a project's impact through narrative causal statements collected directly from intended project beneficiaries. Respondents are asked to talk about the main changes in their lives over a pre-defined recall period and prompted to share what they perceive to be the main drivers of these changes, and to whom or what they attribute any change - which may well be from multiple sources (Remnant and Avard 2016).

■ General elimination methodology (GEM)

Scriven's GEM (2008) builds upon his earlier Modus Operandi Method (1976) to provide an approach specifically geared towards substantiating causal claims. The methodology entails systematically identifying and then ruling out alternative causal explanations of observed results. It is based on the idea that for any event it is possible to draw up Lists of Possible Causes (LOPCs) or alternative hypothetical explanations for an outcome of interest. Each putative cause will have its own set of "footprints", or Modus Operandi (MO) – "a sequence of intermediate or concurrent events, a set of conditions or a chain of events that has to be present when the cause is effective (Scriven 2008)" (White and Phillips 2012: p. 38).

■ Qualitative comparative analysis (QCA)

Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA) is a methodology that enables the analysis of multiple cases in complex situations. It can help explain why change happens in some cases but not others. QCA is designed for use with an intermediate number of cases, typically between 10 and 50. It can be used in situations where there are too few cases to apply conventional statistical analysis (INTRAC 2017d).

■ Outcome harvesting

Outcome harvesting is designed to collect evidence of change (the 'outcomes') and then work backwards to assess whether or how an organization, program or project contributed to that change. Outcomes are defined as changes in the "behaviour writ large" (such as actions, relationships, policies, practices) of one or more social actors influenced by an intervention (Wilson-Grau 2015)





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