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BEYOND 2022: CIVIL SOCIETY & TECHNOLOGY

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ABBREVIATIONS & ACRONYMS

CSO

Civil Society Organization

OECD

Organisation for Economic Co-operation
and Development

PBO

Public Benefit Organizations

CLA

Collaborating, Learning, and Adapting

OGP

Open Government Partnership

RBM

Results-Based Management





PREFACE

The humanitarian and development sector comprises a major part of the Kenyan economy and is a significant contributor to our social and human progress. There are around 12,000 active NGOs countrywide, which employ an estimated quarter of a million people. The Civil Society and the wider PBO which includes NGOs, media, academia and a host of other sectors and professions make up an even wider strand within the everyday existence of Kenyan society.

A significant portion of the sector has part-time and volunteer models of human resourcing. The NGO sector alone brought in Ksh.205 billion in donations according to the 2019/2020 financial year cutting across administrative, project-based, programmatic, and overhead expenditures.

Since the 2000s, the sector has derived its onus from the failures of a fairly depoliticized Kenyan society to frame and answer the political question that is at the center of how we organize as a society. This includes the communal resources question, dignity of work, social relations, the mandate of state agencies, and the mobility between the working poor, the poor, the middle class, and the elites in the country.

The drive towards developing a more tolerant, livable, and harmonious Kenyan society lies at the heart of this civil society under broad themes such as cooperation between individuals, the state, and organizations across the board.

The outcomes of this cooperation are the numerous models of CSO collaborations and collective actions that have been imagined and rejigged to respond to 21st-century needs. These collaborations are driven by contestations with the state agencies, pressing human concerns from food to freedoms, ever-cheaper technologies, and the ease of cultural understanding and commonality in this digital era.

The current national priorities such as poverty, inequality, climate change, pandemic, debt crises, minority rights, and healthcare have had a rough path especially now as the country fully reconfigures into the post-lockdown world. Currently, the economy is misfiring, lots of Kenyans who lost their jobs are yet to be reabsorbed into the workforce, the current state is testy towards the CSOs, and the sector has not been able to frame a livelihood question that is at the heart of the collective Kenyan anxiety.

Critical concerns such as economic inequality have widened and created an even bigger challenge in achieving the dream of a more equitable Kenyan society. Players within the civil society spaces are well aware of the cross-cutting nature of such issues and have an even more critical obligation of engaging locally while acting globally to harness the power of networking to reign in these issues.

But, while the sector's deep roots in local communities are not in question, their leverage in the national arena is being increasingly challenged, not just by the state's excesses but also its own failure to calibrate its role in the emerging society.



The social and student activism of the 1980s and the political reform change of the 1990s, framed CSOs as primarily focused on fairness, accountability, human rights-not political power, and representation.

If the primary nature of the 2010s struggle for the Kenyan civil society was the full implementation of the 2010 constitution – a feat that has been impressive though not entirely fulfilled – the clamor for the 2020s will have to be the drive towards crafting an economic and livelihood question for the citizenry and the state.

The livelihood question though goes beyond merely fighting corruption, and increasing accountability in the budgeting and spending processes, it also entails addressing the conversation around the question of work.

The concept of work is the model through which we understand society, contribute to it, and we are able to elicit conversations about the direction society should take. The logic underlying the disparaging and de-politicization of the concept work in both incorporated spaces and public spaces in the country is at the heart of how we ended up creating a civil society in the first place.

Professions that couldn't answer the political question inherent in their respective work sectors found themselves squeezed and under-resourced. Every profession and/or career has an implicit political question that must be answered and regularly revisited. Politics, in this case, is the issue of who gets what, where they get it, how they get it, and who gets to benefit from and within the sector.

Medical professionals who could not articulate the resource question found their sector deprived of medical supplies and medical research; economists and bankers who could not articulate their political question found

themselves financialized and digitized out of the sector in the name of efficiency, and their sector became delineated from actual work, as profits got separated from productivity.

The lawyers, and political scientists who found the democratic clamor too slow, jumped into the political bandwagon in the 2002 and 2007 elections and lost both their professional voice and their ability to negotiate for their respective professions.

The CSO sector therefore can be said to be to a significant degree, the outcome of a society that failed to respond to its political questions. Thus, the international society developed the respective development assistance models in the country as safety valves to absorb the squeezed-out professionals in a highly charged Kenyan society.

The normative nature of clamor for an equitable Kenyan society has to originate from the people who drive and study the society daily such as lawyers, medics, farmers, touts, diplomats, and retailers. Their visceral and intuitive understanding of society every day provides a very efficient crucible for understanding what the Kenyan problem is if we are to agree that there is truly a problem in the first place.

The CSO sector though has developed a sectoral working model that is first and foremost customized for the political processes. And while this model is understandable, even inevitable, it ought to be appreciated that this political focus can easily drive a wedge between the goals of the CSOs sector and the actual concerns of the current Kenyan society.

This chasm is likely to be the resultant outcome of their choosing to take sides in the political processes in the country, many of which tend to be detached from the lived experiences of the citizenry.





THEME I: CIVIL SOCIETY IN AN EMERGING WORLD

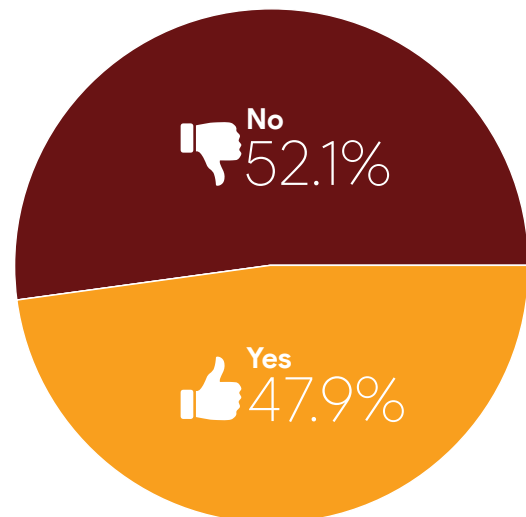
In the emerging post-2022 election, the relationship between the CSOs and President William Ruto's regime evolves from a place of a cautious and rocky start, given the open backing of President Ruto's opponent by a section of civil society.

A few observers link the state vs CSO acrimony all the way back to the sector's support for the 2008 ICC trials in which president Ruto-then a minister-was indicted. This contentious reality presents a broader landscape of changes that Kenyan activists have to take into account and press for even as the new regime settles into power.

Activism in this new Kenyan society has to contend with the then-candidate William Ruto's promise in July 2022 campaign period that his regime will work amicably and partner with CSOs to resolve national issues.

That olive branch extended to the CSOs was much welcome given the need to collaborate on issues such as the drastic shifts in the public mood, and social and health concerns like reproductive rights, and religious extremism. The sector also seeks to institute robust sectoral resilience and Kijiji-driven initiatives.

DO YOU BELIEVE THE COUNTRY IS GOING IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION?



Thankfully, civil society is embracing simulations, future-scenario building, and reappraisal of the old models of critiquing issues such as poverty, state violence, climate change, and economic inequalities.

Within this broadened scope of issues that need to be prioritized lies both new opportunities for crafting a better country but also long-ignored vulnerabilities and human fragilities on matters such as mental health. It ought to be acknowledged that COVID is not history, as it still ravages some regions around the world, even though the radical measures that marked its advent like lockdowns at a global scale are unlikely to be repeated.



Still, COVID's evolution marked a juncture in our history as mankind in a way that minimized certain pressing issues, amplified others, and emerged a few of its own including the mental health epidemic that partly stemmed from the enclosure of humans as social beings under the health directive of lockdown and social distancing.

The quest for an equitable society though did not peter out, in fact, it amplified as issues long ignored around democratic ideals, and access to basic human rights like food and shelter got affected and mainstreamed.

Here in Nairobi, residents of a section of Mukuru Kwa Njenga slum got evicted to pave way for a major bypass road, even as police unleashed extreme brutality under the guise of enforcing the 7pm curfew and social distancing rules among the displaced.

The emerging world in a sense also amplified the digital connectivity and conveniences from paying for parking and fare and buying items using bonga points, as well as individualized models of fighting inequality. Of course, this too extended to social activism as anxious online voices called out the state incompetency, police excesses, vaccine classism, and the COVID-19 billionaires' scam.

This informal model of activism is derived from the blend between amplified individual voices and the virality of social platforms. It is largely built on the works of Paul Rogal Loeb, *The Soul of A Citizen: Living With Conviction in a Cynical Time*.

Rogal's thesis for civil society sought to identify the issues at the heart of society especially when people are doubtful about their ability to make a change. The premise is very critical especially now that the Kenyan civil society titters on a fork in the road to the future, while seeking to define its next journey.

THE RISE OF SELF-HELP ACTIVISM:

Out of Rogal's arguments, has emerged what is now self-help activism as a form of self-organization around a particular, very specific course and driven largely through the large social media following of specific persons and groups.

This approach, as Rogal notes, stems from the highly individualized yet ironically hyper-connected world, in which there is a well-sold belief that the ability to change one's life is highly personalized.

This has reoriented local civic organizations to reshape their courses around more practical and direct actions while focusing on activities that are rooted in issues of direct concern to local communities. The final outcome of this model is the desire to blend personal initiative and collective anxieties all while keeping in mind the social origins of these problems.

The diversity of ever-cheaper platforms and devices provides a wide array of means with which many of these self-help activists can channel and voice their concerns.



ACTIVISM OF ECONOMIC ISSUES:

The unexamined origins of the duality flagged by Rogan stem from the hybrid work models involving part-time working from home and at the office is now a norm across many trades and industries. Many trades and sectors, seeking to cut down on overheads, have adopted partial work-from-home methods by automating a wider portion of their operations.

Civil society too has been a part of this trend by driving a fair share of its initiatives through personality-driven online platforms. Even then, the work of political mobilization, social activism, and petitions cannot be entirely automated, outsourced, or hybridized.

A significant portion of the 12,000 NGOs, the majority of which are embedded within their local communities, and address highly localized concerns face the pressure to derive new models of social work on issues around economics and livelihoods.

And if the economic question has to be worked into the primary aims of the democratic ideals that the civil society seeks to address, then the

role of production, consumption, and distribution has to be precisely framed and vocalized.

A look at the recent survey reflects the non-urban geographical location, and focus of a major portion of the CSOs interviewed for this research. At the heart of the economic fights is the fact that Kenya's economic fortune is mostly linked with a) proximity to urban spaces, and b) closeness to the chlorophyll zone which coincides with the cross-country railway line.

The CSOs pursuit of democratic ideals and an equitable society in Kenya has to address the full implementation of Chapter 11 of the 2010 Constitution of Kenya which addresses devolution and its imperatives. The CSOs therefore ought to have an end game, one that not only addresses political freedoms, but also the creation of an economically and socially equitable society.

The economic boom of the 2000s seems to have petered out in 2014 after which poverty indexes started rising, reflecting an economy whose resource structure was no longer benefiting the mwanachi.



Hence the primary question for Wanjiku for the last 8 years has been primarily and increasingly economic, even as political conversations around BBI, and the 2017, and 2022 election cycles took the center stage including succession politics.

By the latter half of Uhuru’s first term, debt-fueled development as well as debt-fueled subsidies in his last half of the final term came to define the citizen’s conundrum and the challenge with the CSO’s engagements with the state. Huge economic numbers about growth, lower inflation, and infrastructure development obscured the worsening human development indicators that truly mattered to civil society and the wider public.

Currently, the national debt and poverty rates which were on a downward spiral till 2015 have inched upwards on two accounts 1) The redefinition of the livable wage to account for inflation, and changes in prices of basic commodities 2) The major job and income losses occasioned by the lockdown from March 2020.

The list and number of economically vulnerable groups as chronicled by CSOs have gone up, even as the economy partially eased, thanks to the reopening of many sectors of the economy on October 20th, 2021. An even broader conversation revolves around the current economic architecture and its (in)ability to provide livelihood and decent income for many Kenyan workers.

There is a renewed and urgent need by activists and CSOs to front the issue of the state of our resource and production structure, as a country. The derivative could start from the constitutional imperative about equity and distribution of resources but has to go beyond that.

There’s a need for a formal engagement with the institutional levers of economic progress including the Central Bank of Kenya, The Treasury, The National Bureau of Statistics, The Monetary Policy Committee, The World Bank, and the International Monetary Fund.

The lockdown and social distancing measure significantly altered not just global economics, but also local logistical, industrial, and production models, in ways that deprived economically disadvantaged groups and pushed them further into economic fragility



“Doesn’t even support them. Issuing licences to CSOs is also a problem. The Civic space continue to shrink because there’s no freedom of expression, oppression. The current regime is full PR, I foresee nothing being done for the CSOs.”

BETTER COLLABORATIONS & AGENDA SETTING:

In this instance, there’s a need for benchmarking and leveraging across economic-focused CSOs both locally and globally towards framing a robust conversation around economic recovery and equity. Thankfully, here in Kenya as well as around the world, civil society is inching toward bigger collaborations as a means of leveraging each other’s unique strengths. In the continent, Zimbabwe’s Amalgamated Rural Teachers Union



has pushed for economic reforms to address inequalities.

- 📍 In Asia, India’s network of more than 25 Indian civil society groups conducted a series of online meetings to debate new economic ideas. Climate change activists in South East Asia have raised awareness regarding the linkage between the pandemic and environmental degradation. In Thailand, the group WeFair links the problem of economic inequality with the concentration of political power in the hands of a few.
- 📍 In Eurasia, Turkey’s climate-focused CSOs have picked up and harnessed the momentum behind two campaigns-#AdilDönüşüm (#JustTransformation) and #AdilYileşme (#JustRecovery) in an attempt to build ecological issues into Turkish economic models. Across Europe, the pandemic has intensified an existing trend toward local, informal activism, organized especially around calls for new, substantive, European Union (EU) economic policies.
- 📍 In Mongolia, civil society has shifted focus to new forms of support for marginalized communities, such as disabled people whom the state has neglected. In South Korea, more than 500 CSOs formed a coalition to advocate for far-reaching structural changes, to make the country’s economic model more inclusive.
- 📍 In light of Kenya’s current austerity measures and end to the debt-fueled subsidies on basic

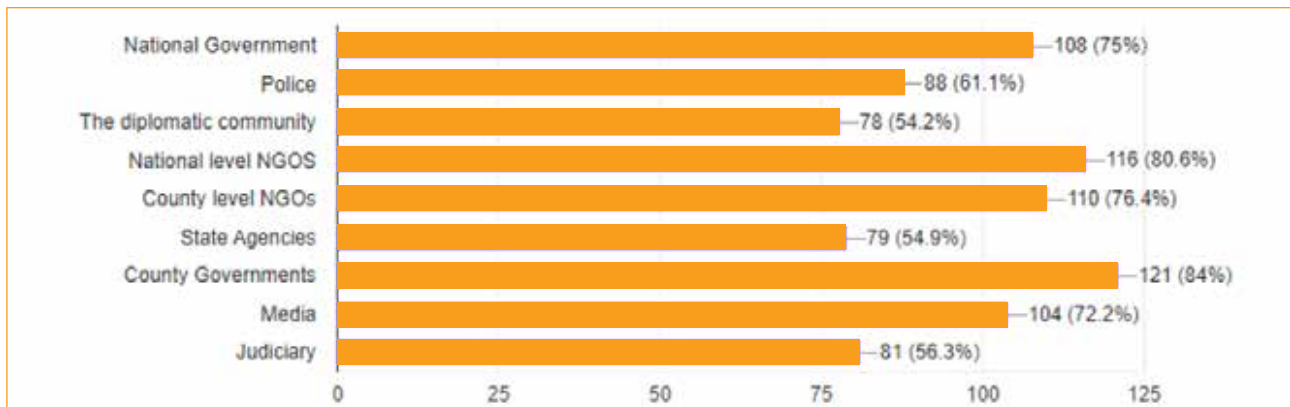
commodities, the local civil society ought to step up their demand for economic equity reliant upon data-based demands, and economically sophisticated arguments against the neoliberal onslaught.

Since the advent of lockdowns; passport privileges, vaccine apartheid, and logistical shutdowns affecting Kenya and the continent, in general, are among the key issues that emerged from the decision to reopen the countries and travel.

In the new emerging world, we are seeing the rise of new pro-democracy voices, and sector-issue civic worlds that link the respective national and regional concerns such as minority rights, and extremism with their particular impacts across different countries and regions.

Key issues emerging out of these that are of concern to civic organizations include the West’s vaccine nationalism, China and Russia’s vaccine diplomacy, and debt-driven geopolitics. The multi-layered and multi-dimensional nature of such realignments within the global architecture of power and diplomacy presents critical dilemmas for many CSOs on how to pursue funding vis-a-vis ideological and diplomatic loyalties.

A majority of local CSOs seem well aware of these complexities and contradictions and are in turn willing to pursue all kinds of collaborations with different parties and partners in the country.





THEME II: CIVIC SPACE AND ITS ADMINISTRATIVE CONCERNS

Our recent annual survey of CSOs covering at least 45 thematic issues which are at the heart of this report, revealed a slow but gradual shift in their key governance structures, digital adoption, and funding models.

The key issue at hand also includes the level of training on digital literacy provided to both staffers and volunteers. Secondly, the centrality of communication with stakeholders and donors, and a grasp of online presentation skills are critical to how the civic space functions.

STAFFING AND HUMAN RESOURCES:

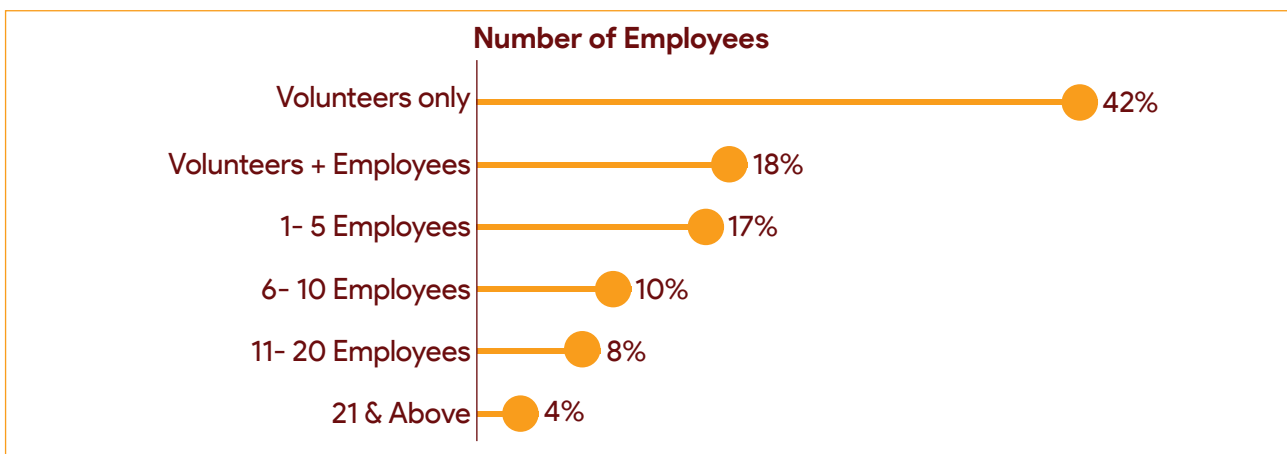
Those that are fully reliant on volunteers have maintained the same form in the last year at

42%, while those reliant upon both volunteers and staffers were 18%.

Those reliant on less than ten employees dropped to 17% down from 46% through a number of these firms took up part-volunteer models.

Fewer than 1% expressed a plan to provide staff training for both the workers and the volunteers. This revealing feature of the sector reflects a worrying trend in which a post-lockdown world meets a sector ill-prepared skills-wise for the emerging realities. One hopes that the sector employees are invested in their own personal development to meet this skill and knowledge

gap that address the demands of the new world. However, it should be of concern that despite lots of opportunities for training, nearly 3 in every 4 organizations within the civic space have not conducted any staff training over the past year.



On the communication front, most civic organizations use WhatsApp, followed by emails, in their day-to-day operations. Some, however, are still using SMS and phone calls, with some reporting to have no social media assets in their organization. The model and structure of digital presence and utilization have stayed fairly consistent over the past year, save for the entrance of Instagram into the civil society digital media tools.

At least one-third of civil society organizations have five or more digital tools including WhatsApp, email, Facebook, Twitter, and website presence. Still, this is a fairly low number for such a highly digitized and hyper-connected society. It is evident that the connectivity is more pronounced among the urban and peri-urban-based CSOs compared to their rural counterparts.

A key anecdote is the lower number of CSOs who merely rely on physical contact with their partners, and stakeholders. This harks back to the inability to hybridize every aspect of CSO engagement with stakeholders and society. Much also ought to be said about the level of engagement these organizations seek to have within the online spaces and their internal responsiveness to stakeholders' concerns and inquiries.

Despite the relative shift back to brick-and-mortar offices, a lot of the services that citizens seek every day, continue to be optimized online, given the convenience and ease of online engagement. This, of course, shapes the ways in which the respective CSOs structure their programs and models of working.

There seems to be a big shift in the geographical scope of many CSOs in the sector. This is in line with the national and global observation that civic organizations are shifting their areas of focus to cope with the emerging trends on global

concerns around climate change, of focus to cope with the emerging trends on global concerns around climate change, gender issues, poverty, minority rights, and inequality. This trend is also partly reflected in the change in the staffing structure of the polled civic organizations as many techs on volunteer-based more agile human resources.

Methods of impact to rank high, owing to how the new thematic areas of focus, and the tools adopted during the lockdown, have shifted methods of executing programs, but also of measuring outcomes. This immediate post-lockdown transitory period provides an effective moment for CSOs to reorient themselves and adopt resilient long-term methods for engaging the respective stakeholders.

Fundraising has proven to be a tough nut to crack for the last 3 years, beginning at the onset of the lockdowns. Only 1 in 10 CSOs said they had been mildly affected by the restrictions, with two-thirds indicating severe dents to their finance and administrative structures.

GOVERNANCE STRUCTURES:

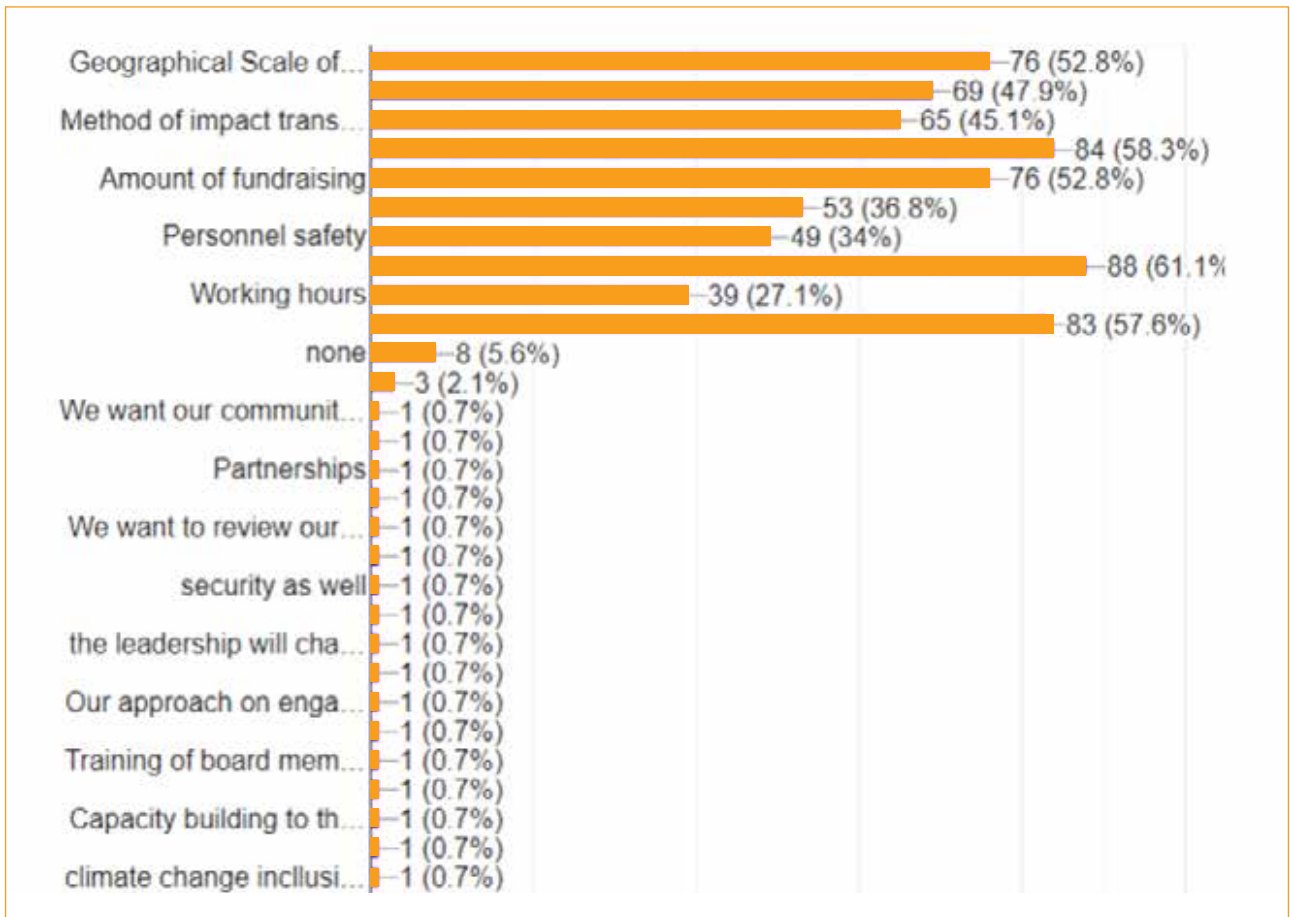
Personnel safety ranks high in line with the fears of a repressive state that has previously clamped down both legally and physically on CSOs. Respondents were near unanimous about a possible hostile posture from the new regime. This fear, it has to be said, partly emanates from the fact that sections of the civil society openly took partisan positions in the recent elections while supporting the incumbent president Uhuru Kenyatta's candidate Raila Odinga who would eventually lose to the current president William Ruto in the August 2022 elections.

Working hours too are shifting, as the reopening of the country created an opportunity for hybrid working models for the volunteers and the staffers.



The future of work, remuneration, nature of work, and model of community engagements seems to have all shifted. This points towards a need for human resource audits to help the respective organizations understand their staffing and skilling needs.

Curiously one in 10 CSOs seems not to have any major governance changes in mind. They have in turn taken a wait-and-see posture as they await to get a clearer picture of the next steps the regime will take in engaging civil society. A few already pivoted to the new points of focus and reoriented their structures to reflect their post-lockdown strategies and project focus areas.





“We do not inherit the earth from our ancestors, we borrow it from our children.”

-African proverb



THEME III: CIVIL SOCIETY IN A POST-LOCKDOWN WORLD, RELIGION AND SOCIETY

When it comes to secularism and theology, it is not the mainstream denominations to which the current regime is looking for loyalty and partnership. While Uhuru was catholic, Ruto who has taken an overly religious posture is evangelical.

As Prof. Wandia asserts, the political logic of enterprise is shared both by the hustlernomics proponents and also interestingly by the independent religious outfits that dot the evangelical landscape. These evangelicals are the same cluster that opens start-up churches everywhere, so they understand, relate to, and integrate the hustler notion, logic, and narrative within their denominational outlook.

A key aspect of the evangelicals' start-up church culture does not place emphasis on their clergy to attend theology school since the clergy is prized more for their mobilization skills, not for their theology.

This cross-cutting theme of enterprise, as a logic for both social-economic growth and religious flourishing, may also be the intuitive factor that drives the self-help activism that we flagged earlier.

KEY CONCERNS:

A growing sentiment in the sector includes the fact that sections of CSO are too close to the politicians and the state structures that they are supposed to be held accountable. Another shared view is that when many of these CSO actors such as churches were affiliating with the political powers the civil society was caught off guard. A criticism leveled at CSOs is that all they do is try to police the state, and the sector, everything is about the constitution, so when the economy is not doing well, and that is what people care about, CSOs can't seem to craft a suitable response.

The anecdotal sentiments on the CSO sector include...they missed the economic situation of the country. What even is the identity of civil society? What are donors paying for? The economic space has not opened up, and meanwhile, new dynasties are coming up. There is the issue of drought and security. Certain sections believe that currently, we are okay but we don't know what will happen because we are on a borderline.

Some are not sure that the political landscape will create a conducive environment for the donors. Shifting donor priorities and the legal framework for non-state actors were of concern, because the current administration may want to control civil society workers.



Some of the sector’s concerns and priorities include:



1. •Food insecurity due to climate change which the current regime should settle down to ensure that they give Kenyans what they promised down.



2. •Unfriendly regime, harsh economy, and capacity building of the staff.



3. •Financial problems and funding may be major problems due to the current economic status and the inflation.



4. •Many organizations may shut down.

PARTNERSHIPS:

Cross-organization partnerships are still the stock in trade for most CSOs, even as self-help activism rises both locally and globally. Three-quarters of CSOs look forward to having some form of collaboration with the state.

Two-thirds will work with the police despite the previously acrimonious relations with law enforcers. No doubt approvals for protests and questions on extra-judicial killings have to be handled in tandem with the policing structures.

The diplomatic community too ranks high as a potential partner given their ability to resource local NGOs as well as amplify their concerns to the state and the international community. Collaborations with national and county NGOs too have been marked as a priority by CSOs. The media and county governments rank high on the radar with nearly three-quarters looking forward to collaborating with the two sectors within the year.

Judiciary does not rank as high among the areas of focus for collaboration by the polled CSOs. This could be driven by the judicial handling of the 2022 electoral petitions filed by the civil society which were thrown out on what the sector considers frivolous grounds.





RECOMMENDATIONS

In light of the key issues emerging out of the post-lockdown world including, but not limited to changing work models, there is an evolving relationship with the state, and generational as well as geographical shifts in the sector. In light of this evolution, the sector needs to reckon with certain realities;



The sector needs to take stock of the political allegiances that defined the players in the recent 2022 general elections. The myth and expectation of non-partisanship by both the public and political players mean the wider CSO world needs to clarify its position on matters of political affiliation.



The hybridization of work and the clear spike in the reliance on and use of volunteers presents both a shift and challenge to the CSOs. The future of the sector depends on how well the sector engages the volunteers and the decentralized working model.



The CSO world needs to articulate the old problems in a new way, drawing new priorities around the ways in which the pandemic minimized or amplified issues such as minority rights, digital safety, food insecurity, conflicts, movements, and healthcare.



The debate about whether the bureaucratization of the sector and programmatization of its work model is 1) unsuited for the new post-lockdown world and, 2) stifling to the organic nature of activism, is one that needs to be explored and put to rest.





Finally, learning the skill of fact-checking, especially within digital spaces. This was a missed opportunity in the recent 2022 elections and the mistakes that the civic space played into in the electoral period. This reality played out on account of the Supreme Court's judgment on the petition filed by the various arms of civil society.







KEY QUESTIONS THAT EMERGE FROM THE RESEARCH

1  How can we mobilize local civil societies to work more effectively on issues connected to the hybridization of work?

2  How can we help CSOs to understand the implication of the post-lockdown world on their mandate and needs?

3  How can we create a new model for collaboration that repairs old wounds and creates new alliances as the new regime takes shape?

4  What are this new world and the model of social relations in light of the social and economic shock of covid and where does the social sector fit in?





CONCLUSIONS



THEMATIC SHIFTS

There is a noticeable change in how old problems are bedeviling the new world, a specter that necessitates a change in how we look to tackle these problems. Is civil society optimized for the new world?



UPSKILLING/RESKILLING

The growth in volunteer-based hybrid work means the need for teaching new skills to the staffers remains high. Unfortunately, the survey indicates little incentive by the CSOs to provide these pieces of training.



WIDER PUBLIC

The wider public is looking to the sector to reorient itself towards helping them answer the economic question and the challenges afflicting households. The economic-focused CSOs have to take a lead on this and engage the various economic arms of the state and the private sector.



MAPPING THE FUTURE

Overall, the CSO world has to define its place in the emergent worlds and rearticulate its mission to the citizens, the state, and the sector players. This to be clear is not just a need for CSOs but the society in totality.

In the end, the emerging picture of the civic space is one of a sector that is at crossroads, with good prospects for progress, if the above critical issues are made into key priority areas by those who provide capacity-building, for the CSOs and the wider civic sector in Kenya.





PIONEER
3253 MAIZE
EXPERIMENT
PLOT THREE
GROUP 3



Building Alliances · Better Lives
pen is a trade name of Poverty Eradication Network

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