

Hong Kong Civic Society Index 2006

--Summary Findings--

I. Background - what is CSI?

1. CSI was developed by CIVICUS, an international NGO based in Johannesburg. Starting in 2003, the CSI has now been conducted in more than 60 countries / territories. The CSI aims to chart the state of civil society (CS) of a country/city, and its objective is to strengthen CS and its role in governance and development.
1.2 In Hong Kong, the CSI project is co-ordinated by the Hong Kong Council of Social Service (HKCSS), which is a member of the CIVICUS. It is a joint project of the HKCSS, the University of Hong Kong, the Chinese University of Hong Kong and the Hong Kong Polytechnic University. The HKCSS has also invited the Radio Television Hong Kong as a co-organiser to assist in the promotion of the results of the CSI so as to raise public awareness of the state and value of local civil society. Some components of the CSI project have also received funding support from the Committee for Promotion of Civic Education.
2. The research team of the Hong Kong CSI research project consists of:
 - Mr. Chua Hoi-wai, the Hong Kong Council of Social Service (Project Co-ordinator)
 - Dr. Joseph Chan, Centre for Civil Society and Governance, HKU (Research Co-ordinator)
 - Dr. Elaine Chan, Centre for Civil Society and Governance, HKU
 - Dr. Chan Kam-tong, The Hong Kong Polytechnic University
 - Dr. Chan Kin-man, The Chinese University of Hong Kong

Moreover, an advisory group composed of 12 experts from different civil society organisations and different sectors has also been formed to give scores to the state of civil society in Hong Kong. Members of the advisory group include: Mr. Darwin Chen, Mr. Albert Lai, Mr. Michael Lai, Mr. Lau Kar Wah, Dr. Wai Man Lam, Ms. Esther Leung, Mrs. Justina Leung, Ms. Mak Yin Ting, Mr. Charles Mok, Mr. Peter Wong, Mr. Mathias Woo, and Ms. Meilin Wu.

II. What is civil society?

3. Civil society consists of non-profit / non-governmental civil society organizations (CSOs), informal groups and activities, organized and participated voluntarily by people. It is formally defined as “the arena, outside of the family, the government, and the market where people associate to advance common interests.” It includes recreational, cultural, sports, professional, labour, social services, religious, think tank, human rights, community organisations, mutual aid committees, etc.

III Methodology

4. The HKCSI project was started in 2004. During the research period, the following studies were conducted:

- 4.1 Civil society organizations survey - conducted in the period from February to June 2005. Of the 1,132 organizations selected, 802 responded, giving a response rate of 70.85%.
 - 4.2 Civil society stakeholder consultations – in-depth interview with representatives of 28 organizations from all 14 categories of CSOs were conducted.
 - 4.3 Media review - two newspapers and one broadcast media were monitored from the periods May 1 to June 30, 2004; and November 1 to December 30, 2004. The two newspapers being reviewed were Oriental Daily, while the broadcast media being reviewed is the prime time news bulletin of TVB shown between 18:30 to 19:00 each evening.
 - 4.4 Three policy impact case studies – the main themes were the budgetary process, youth unemployment and the legislation of Article 23..
 - 4.5 Corporate social responsibility study – it contains a study of the activities of corporate social responsibility of 10 largest listed companies in Hong Kong through reviewing their annual reports and related documents.
 - 4.6 Secondary data analysis and literature review - the CSI project collects relevant information and research results related to local civil society, and also utilizes results of a social cohesion survey conducted by the University of Hong Kong in 2003 and a survey on civic education by the Committee for Promotion of Civic Education.
5. After analyzing the results of the above studies using criteria stipulated by the CIVICUS, the research team presented the findings to the advisory group, which gave scores and formulated the Civil Society Diamond. The scoring meeting was held on March 25, 2006.

IV. The Civil Society Diamond

6. The diamond consists of 4 dimensions: Structure, Environment, Values, and Impact. Each dimension is further made up of sub-dimensions, which in turn is represented by indicators.
7. The following table sums up the sub-dimensions of each of the 4 dimensions of the diamond:

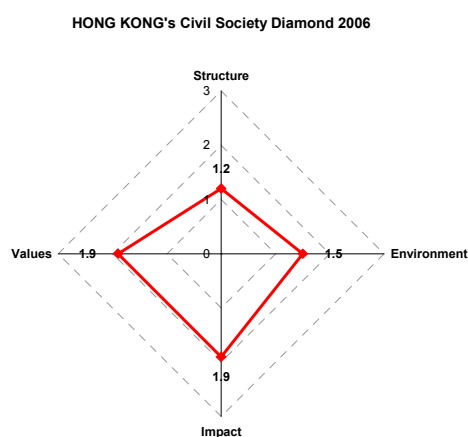
Structure	Breadth of citizen participation
	Depth of citizen participation
	Diversity of civil society participants
	Level of organization
	Inter-relations of CS actors
	CSO resources
Environment	Political context
	Basic freedoms and rights
	Socio-economic context
	Socio-structural context
	Legal environment
	State-civil society relations
	Private-sector-civil society relations

Values	Democracy
	Transparency
	Tolerance
	Non-violence
	Gender equity
	Poverty eradication
	Environmental sustainability
Impact	Influencing public policy
	Holding state and private corporations accountable
	Responding to social interests
	Empowering citizens
	Meeting societal needs

8. The results of Hong Kong Civil Society Index 2006 are:

Structure 1.2
Environment 1.5
Values 1.9
Impact 1.9

(The range of the scores is 0 to 3, with 1.5 being the passing mark.)



V. Discussions

9. The Structure

- 9.1 The structure of CS is rather weak (the score is 1.2 on an index of 0 to 3).
- 9.2 The two weakest sub-dimensions are “depth of citizen participation” and “level of organization.” HK society is not keen on charitable giving, volunteering or joining organizations. CSOs are not very organized in the sense that there are not many federations or umbrella bodies representing individual CSOs, self-regulatory mechanisms are not common, CS support organizations is limited, and international linkages of CSOs are generally weak.
- 9.3 Breadth of citizen participation, diversity of CS participants, and the level of inter-relations among CS actors are acceptable.

10. The Environment

- 10.1 The external environment in which CS exists and functions is neutral; it is neither disabling nor is it enabling (the score is 1.5).
- 10.2 Among the 7 sub-dimensions, the socio-economic context somewhat enables CS development. The legal environment, the political context, as well as state-CS relations tend to be somewhat enabling.

- 10.3 The two weakest parts of the environment are its socio-structural context and private sector-CS relations. The socio-structural context is somewhat disabling because the levels of general trust, tolerance and public spiritedness are rather low. Private sector-CS relations are somewhat disabling for the private sector is perceived to be generally indifferent to CS actors, major companies are seen to be paying lip service to notions of corporate social responsibility, and only a very limited range of CSOs receives funding from the private sector.
- 10.4 Basic freedoms and rights is somewhat disabling, for information rights are not guaranteed by law, and there is rising concern about self censorship in the mass media.
- 10.5 State-CS relation is rather productive chiefly because a moderate range of CSOs receives funding from the government and that CSOs are usually free from government interference. The degree of dialogue between the government and CSOs is, however, wanting, for the government only seeks to dialogue with a small sub-set of CSOs on an ad hoc basis.

11. Values

- 11.1 The extent to which CS practices and promotes positive social values is moderate (the score is 1.9).
- 11.2 “Non-violence” is practiced and promoted rather significantly within CS. There is also a moderate effort to promote tolerance, eradicate poverty, and sustain the environment.
- 11.3 “Democracy” is practiced and promoted in a rather limited way within CS. It is estimated that a majority of CSOs do not practice internal democracy. Although a number of CSOs have been actively promoting democracy, broad-based support for democracy has still not achieved.
- 11.4 CS action to promote and practice transparency, though not limited, could be improved. This is particularly so with regard to making CSOs’ financial accounts publicly available.

12. Impact

- 12.1 The impact of CS is moderate (score is 1.9)
- 12.2 CSOs have done rather well in meeting societal needs; in particular, their effort is more effective than the government in meeting the needs of marginalized groups. CS has also been active in lobbying the government for service provision and in meeting pressing societal needs directly, but its impact in both areas is limited.
- 12.3 CS is basically effective in responding to social interests; there are only isolated examples of crucial social concerns that did not find a voice among existing CS actors. In terms of empowering citizens, CS’s impact is moderate, for it is active but its impact is limited. The only exception is informing/educating the citizens, where it plays an important role.
- 12.4 CS has only limited impact in holding private corporations accountable. Its activity in this area is limited and there is no discernible impact.

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April 3, 2006