CSO Engagement in Policy-Making and Monitoring of Policy Implementation: Needs and Capacities

Armenia

Yerevan, 2015

Purpose of the Study

To identify and analyse:

- civil society actors' needs and capacities to get involved in policy dialogue,
- the way in which these actors can contribute to specific sectors' policy dialogues.

Types of CSOs

- Public Organizations
- Foundations
- Unions of Legal Entities
- Non-formal groups and movements

Topics

- Overview of CSOs in Armenia
- Legal environment
- Relationships with other stakeholders
- Financial sustainability
- Participation and capacities in policy-making

Methodology

Methods

Document Analysis	• CIVICUS Civil Society Index,
	• USAID CSO Sustainability Index,
	• reports by local CSOs,
	• scientific works,
	• available research data
Research Data Analysis	• survey of 150 CSOs
	• 12 focus group discussions

Survey

- 150 CSOs in the sample
- Stratified sampling layered by regions in proportion to the population size.
- CSO data collected through various Internet sources and through snowball method.

Focus Groups

- 12 focus groups, 2 in Yerevan and 10 in central cities of all Armenian regions,

- 111 CSO representatives and 10 local government representatives from 23 cities and towns of Armenia involved.

Main Findings

CSO Overview

- Political, social and economic environment and CSO operation

- Areas and types of CSO activities

- CSO organizational capacities

- Non-formal groups and movements

CSO Legal Environment

General

- limitations related to freedom of assembly
- restrictions regarding freedom of press and dominance of political influence over some media outlets
- problems with accessing information because of state agencies

CSO Legal Environment

CSO regulations

- obstacles to CSO registration

- ban on entrepreneurial activities for public organizations

- lack of tax incentives for social entrepreneurship and charity donations

- lack of incentives for volunteer work

- lack of clear mechanisms for dissolution of non-functioning organizations.

Collaborations with other stakeholders

Structure	Rate (mean)
1 State authorities	5.61
2 Regional authorities	5.90
3 Local authorities	6.68
4 International organizations	6.89
5 Other Armenian CSOs	7.67
6 Foreign CSOs	4.94
7 Mass media	7.06
8 Business	3.91

1-the weakest, 10- the closest collaboration

CSO collaboration, networks and coalitions

- CSOs do not fully utilize collaboration potential within the sector
- There is lack of information on other CSO activity and available resources in CSO community
- Many coalitions are formed and/or function within grant projects, with support and assistance of international organizations

Collaboration with authorities

- A range of policies, regulations, and agencies exist in the context of CSO-state partnership development,

- Not all of them are considered to be highly effective and sometimes even regarded as imitations

- Many of state-CSO collaboration initiatives are imposed by international agreements and/or initiated within the framework of grant projects

Collaboration with authorities

- According to CSOs, lack of resources or potential for civil society dialogue on the side of authorities together with corruption are main obstacles for state-CSO collaboration.

- CSOs own skills and capacities are also limited in this aspect.

- Lack of trust on both sides and low prioritization of collaboration are other hindering factors for collaboration.

Collaboration with authorities

Obstacle	%	
Authorities do not have enough resources/ potential for civil society dialogue	26.0	60.7
Corruption is an obstacle to the interaction with authorities	12.0	
Authorities do not wish to engage with us	8.7	
State authorities do not trust our organisation	6.0	
Our organisation does not trust the authorities	8.0	
We do not know how to approach authorities and get involved in processes	8.0	20.0
We do not have enough information	6.0	
We do not have enough staff	6.0	
Other		14.0

Collaboration with the private sector

- There is some positive dynamics in terms of CSO-business collaboration, but the use of collaboration potential still remains very low.

- 67 CSOs (44.7% of the sample) have not indicated any type of collaboration. With businesses.

- In regions, businesses more often provide assistance to CSOs, though the monetary value of the assistance is less when compared to Yerevan.

Collaboration with the private sector

Obstacles:

- lack of trust toward CSOs,
- lack of CSR traditions
- limited skills of CSO self-presentation,
- lack of strategic approach
- low motivation in developing partnerships with businesses

Collaboration with media

	How do you inform public on your activities?	%
1	News and press release (newspaper, TV, radio, internet)	82.0
2	Public events (roundtable, conference)	66.0
3	Reports in mass media	46.0
4	Flyers/ leaflets	43.3
5	Public campaigns	24.7

Collaboration with media

- The coverage of CSO activities by mass media is not enough to provide better visibility of and trust toward CSOs.

- Media is more inclined to cover activities of CSOs they know well, and activities that are more visible and related to the topic of the day.

- Few CSOs regard mass media not only as a tool for raising awareness but as a strategic partners

- CSOs need to strengthen their communication capacities to work more effectively with media

Collaboration with media

	How do you collaborate with media?	%
1	Invitation to events for coverage	90.7
2	Collaboration in raising awareness or implementation of public campaigns	44.7
3	Publication of results of studies / analyses	31.4
4	Using media as an instrument for lobbying, pressure on government	24.7
5	Training of journalists	20.0
6	Funding of reports/investigations by journalists	10.0

CSO Financial Sustainability

- The issue of financial sustainability remains a major problem of Armenian CSOs

- 44% of surveyed CSOs assessed the financial sustainability of Armenian CSOs as "bad" and 26.7% of CSOs told that it did not exist at all.

- Answering the question on main difficulties they faced, 68% of CSOs mentioned funding issues

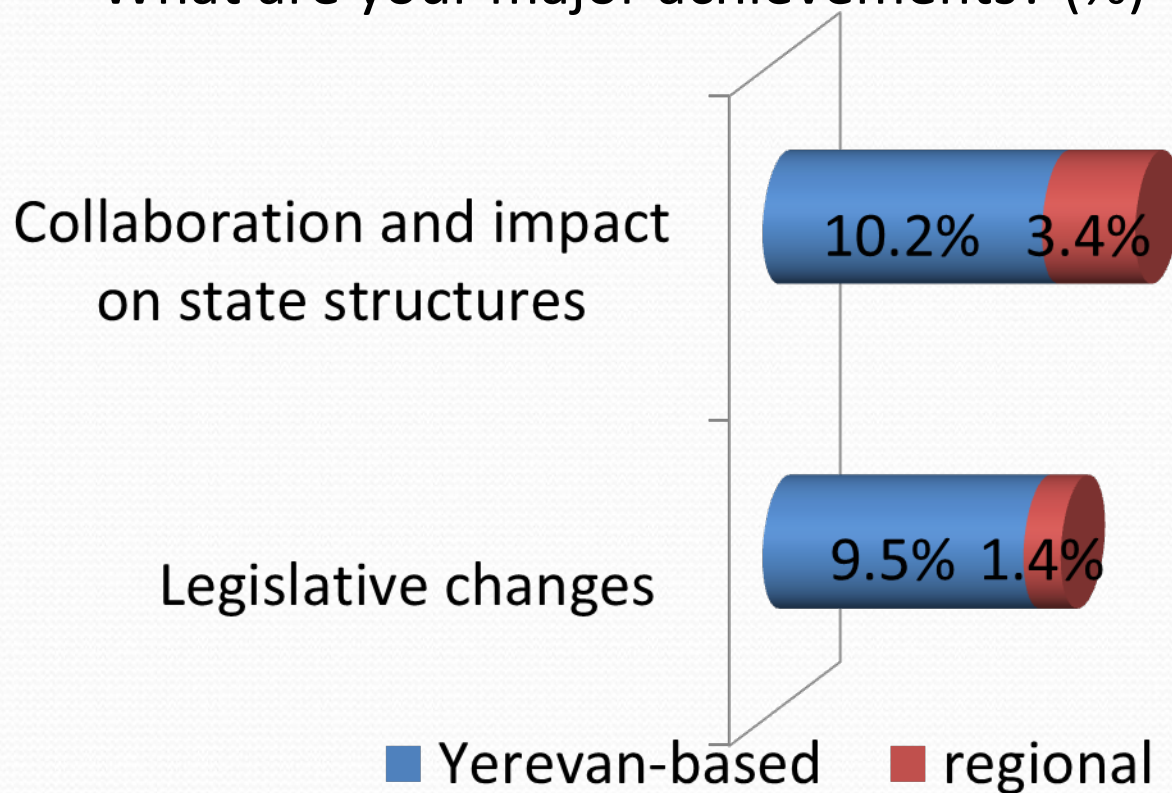- 6.7% of CSOs noted that their problem was lack of fundraising capacities

CSO Financial Sustainability

Three major income sources of CSOs for the last three years:

	Source	Priority			Total	
		I	II	III	N	% of CSOs
1	International organizations	67.3	6.0	2.0	113	75.3
2	Membership fees	6.7	14.7	5.3	40	26.7
3	State funds	5.3	6.7	2.0	21	14
4	Private sector	2.0	5.3	2.7	15	10
5	Donations	7.3	11.3	8.0	40	26.6
6	Service fees	0	6.0	2.7	13	8.7
7	Other	5.3	2.7	1.3	14	9.3

Participation in Policy Making

What are your major achievements? (%)

Collaboration and impact on state structures
10.2%   3.4%

Legislative changes
9.5% 1.4%

■ Yerevan-based   ■ regional

Participation in Policy Making

To what extent do you use the following instruments to achieve your goals? (%)

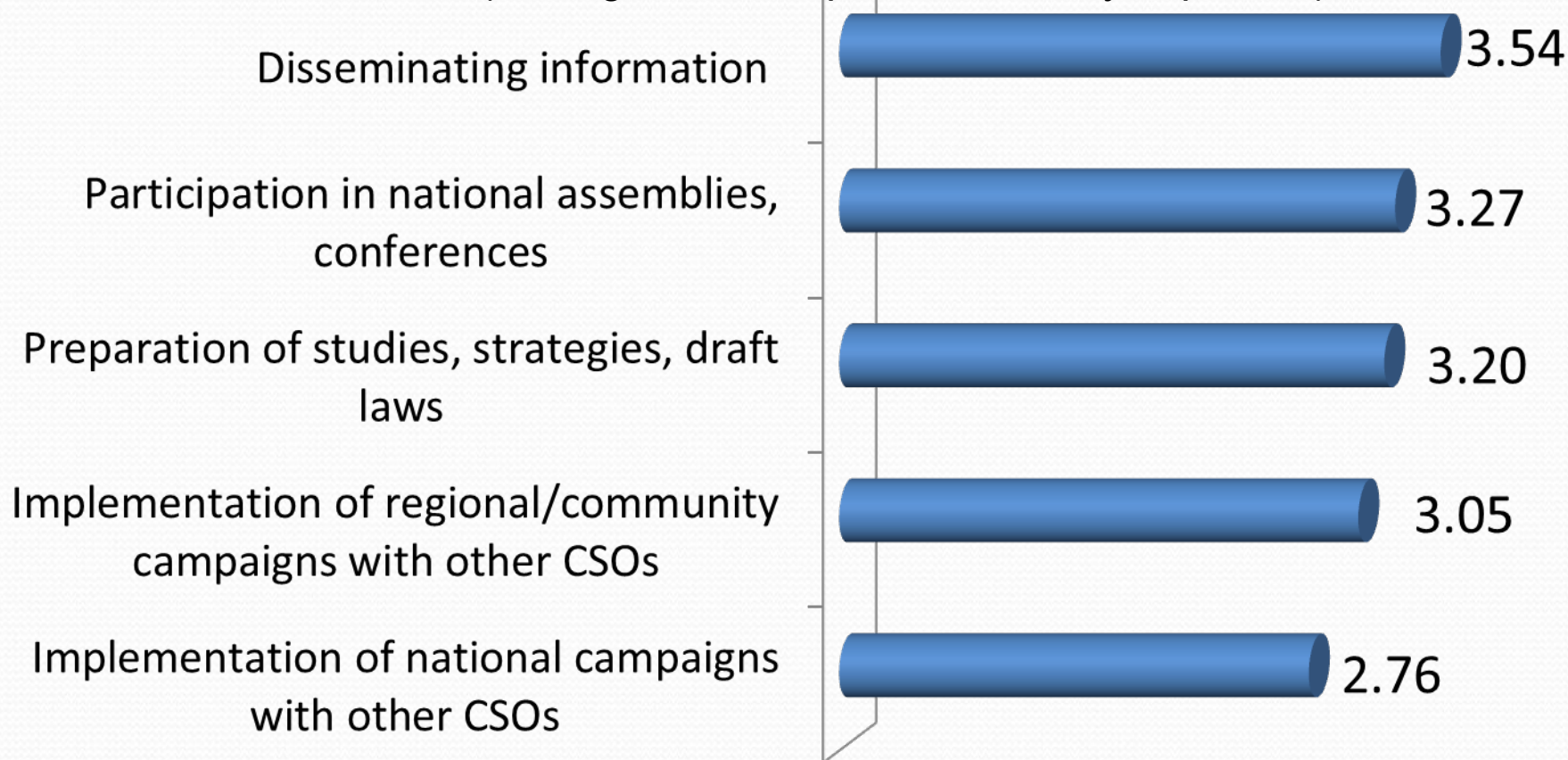|	regularly	often	rarely	never	do not know/ DA
Problem analysis and production of researches and reports	53	25	9	5	7
Dissemination of information	46	36	9	4	5
Citizen education (through trainings, campaigns, etc.)	28	38	20	8	6
Public campaigns and events/activities	17	33	22	16	13
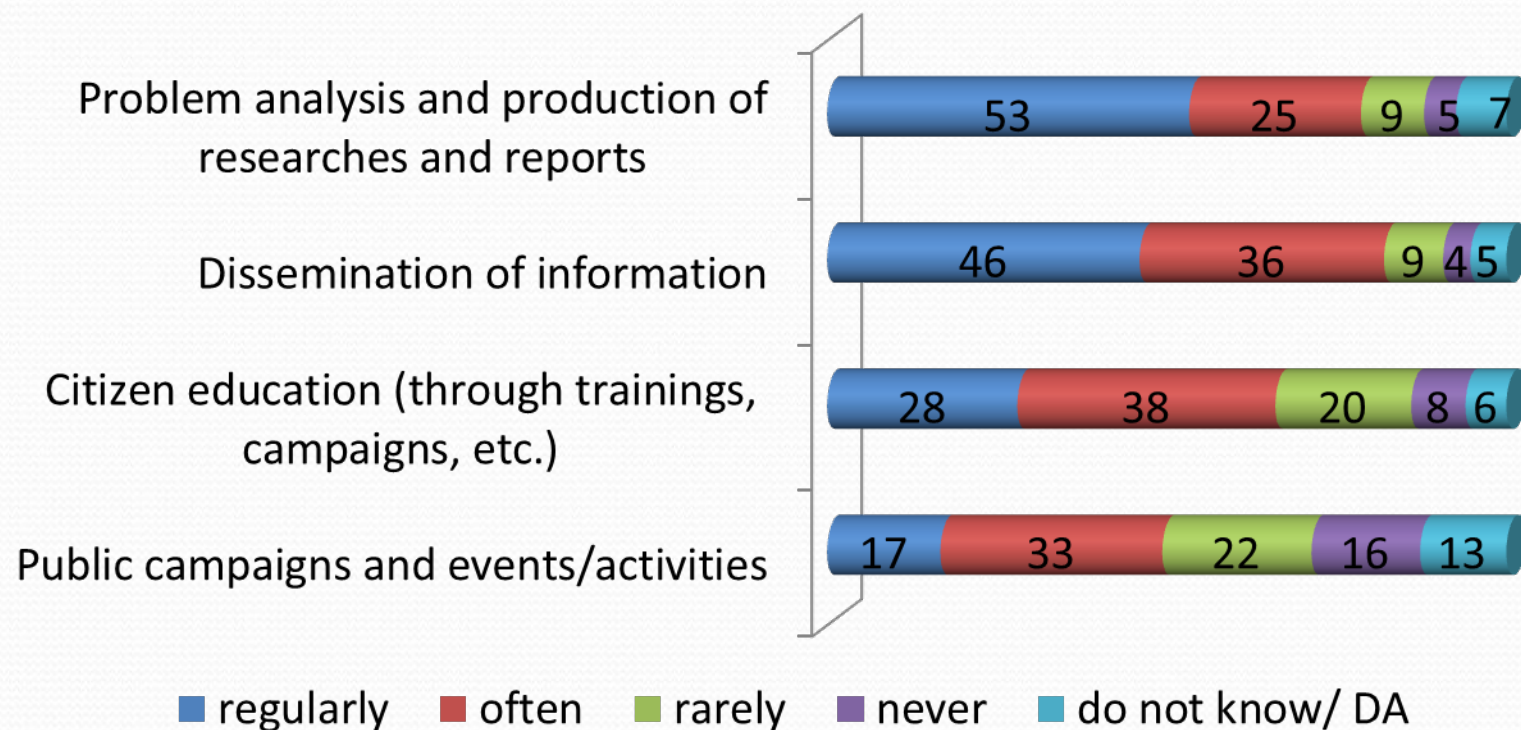
Participation in Policy Making

- One-way activities such as awareness raising and production of reports are more often used by CSOs as a way to reach out to the target audience.

- In general, CSOs are more involved in large scale activities that have little impact on policy change.
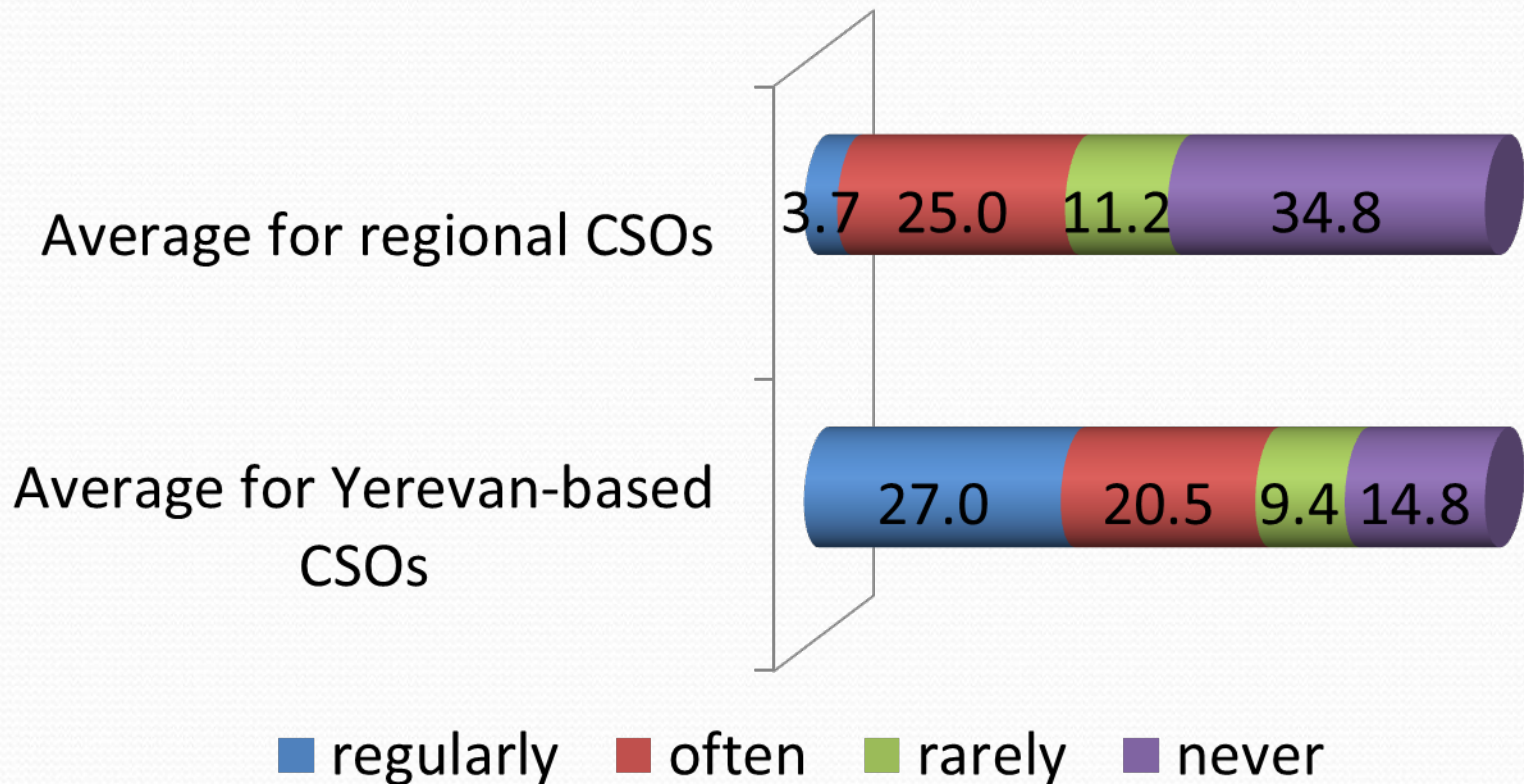
Participation in Policy Making

What are the mechanisms you use to influence public program and policy formulations? (average, 1-not important, 5 –very important)

Mechanism	Average
Disseminating information	3.54
Participation in national assemblies, conferences	3.27
Preparation of studies, strategies, draft laws	3.20
Implementation of regional/community campaigns with other CSOs	3.05
Implementation of national campaigns with other CSOs	2.76

Participation in Policy Making

To what extent do you use policy dialogue to achieve your goals?
(average for various stages of policy development,%)

	regularly	often	rarely	never
Average for regional CSOs	3.7	25.0	11.2	34.8
Average for Yerevan-based CSOs	27.0	20.5	9.4	14.8

Participation in Policy Making

- CSOs have limited expertise and capacity to suggest policy alternatives, as well as lack of capacities in mobilizing large support groups, planning, implementation and follow-up of advocacy campaigns.

- CSOs can succeed if they are consistent in their advocacy activities

- However, the successes observed have not resulted in structural changes but rather achieved temporary solutions addressing consequences rather than root causes

Participation in Policy Making

- Political will of the authorities plays a key role in enabling CSOs to participate in policy formulation and implementation monitoring processes and often defines the outcomes of advocacy campaign.

- It often depends on the discretion of a particular state agency and/or official whether efforts to involve CSOs in policy discussion will be made or not.

Participation in Policy Making

- Public participation in decision-making on local level is enforced by legal regulations;

- However, in most cases it is limited to public awareness and sometimes consulting,

- Full participation and real impact on decision-making process is still on its way of development and largely depends on activity and capacity of local CSOs, including organized community groups.

Participation in Policy Making

- In case of pro-active approach and persistence CSOs are able to have more impact.

"*My experience shows that CSOs can influence state bodies. This is an obvious fact. Throughout years, respect and importance increased toward right, correct and balanced actions of CSOs*" (CSO representative, Yerevan).

Participation in Policy Making

- Constraints related to CSO impact in policy-making are clearly linked with the scope and cause of the advocacy campaigns in terms of going in line with or against state officials' interests

"*All possible reforms, collaboration, relationships with CSOs are reviewed in the context of keeping the power*" (CSO representative, Gyumri).
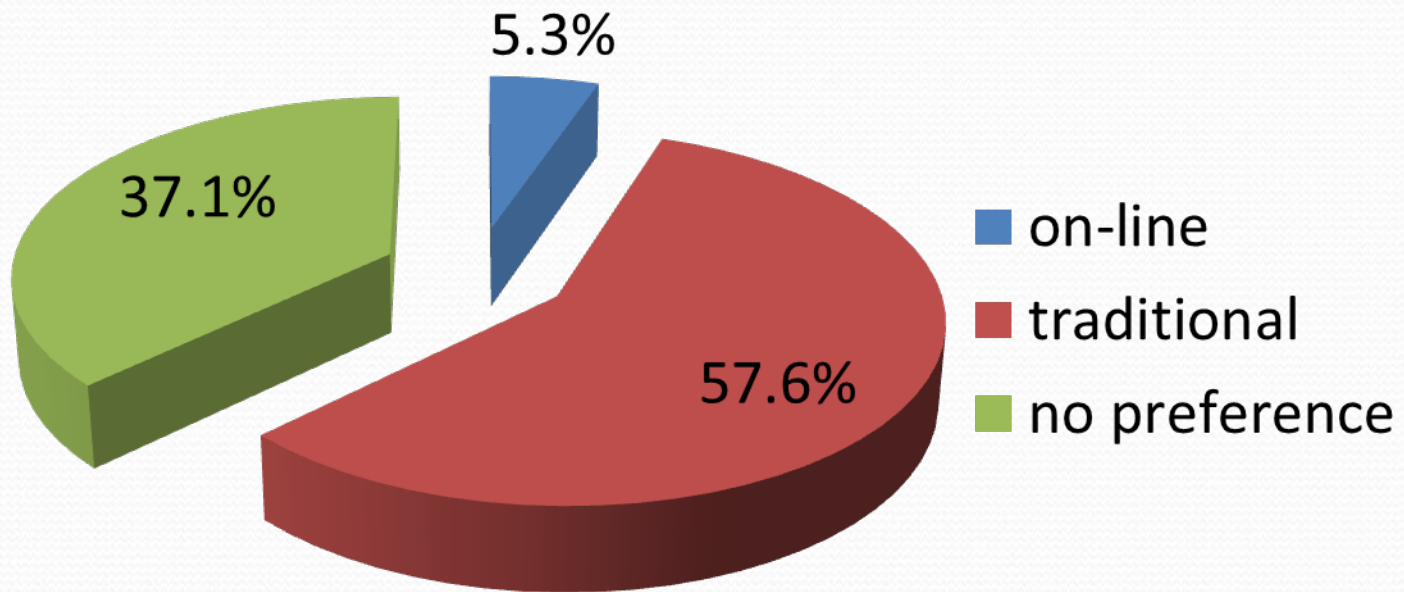
CSO capacity development needs

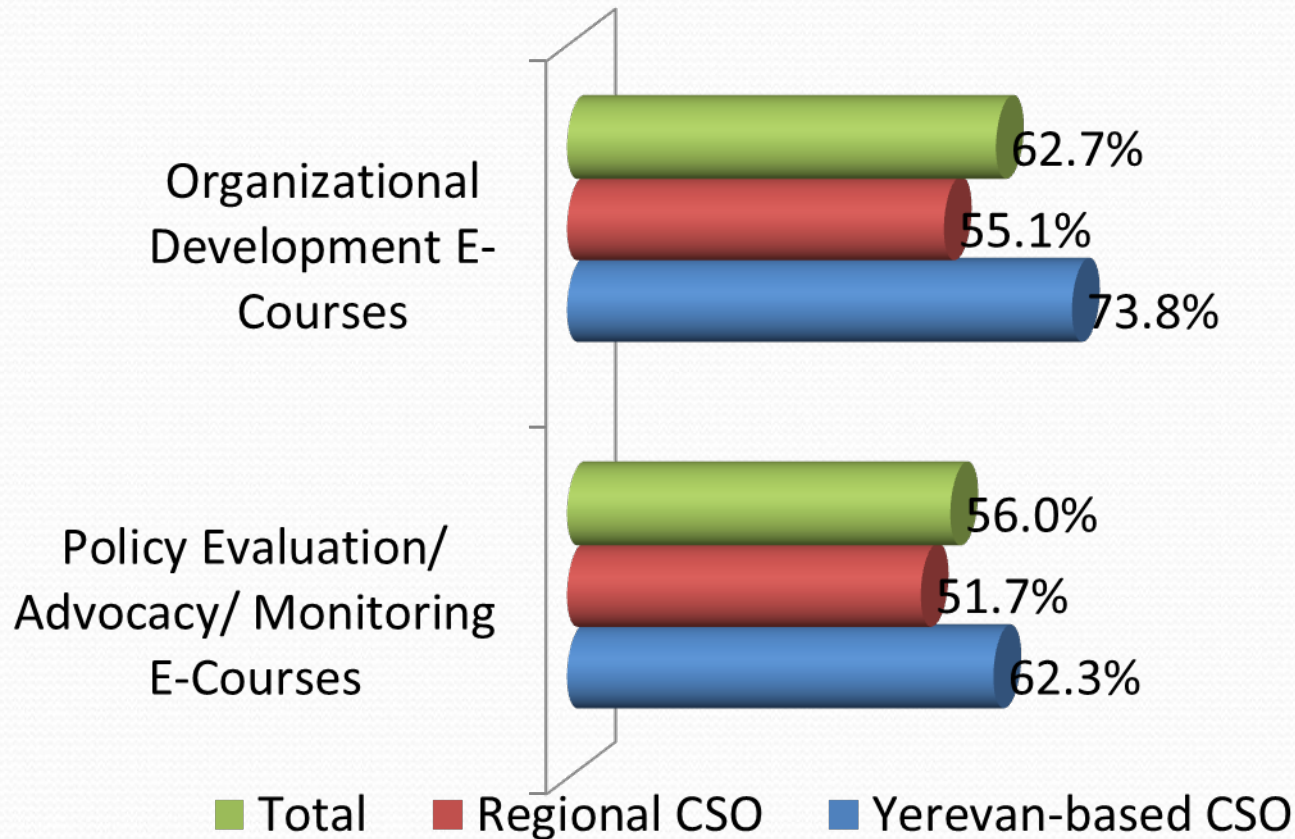Topics most often mentioned by CSOs (quantity)
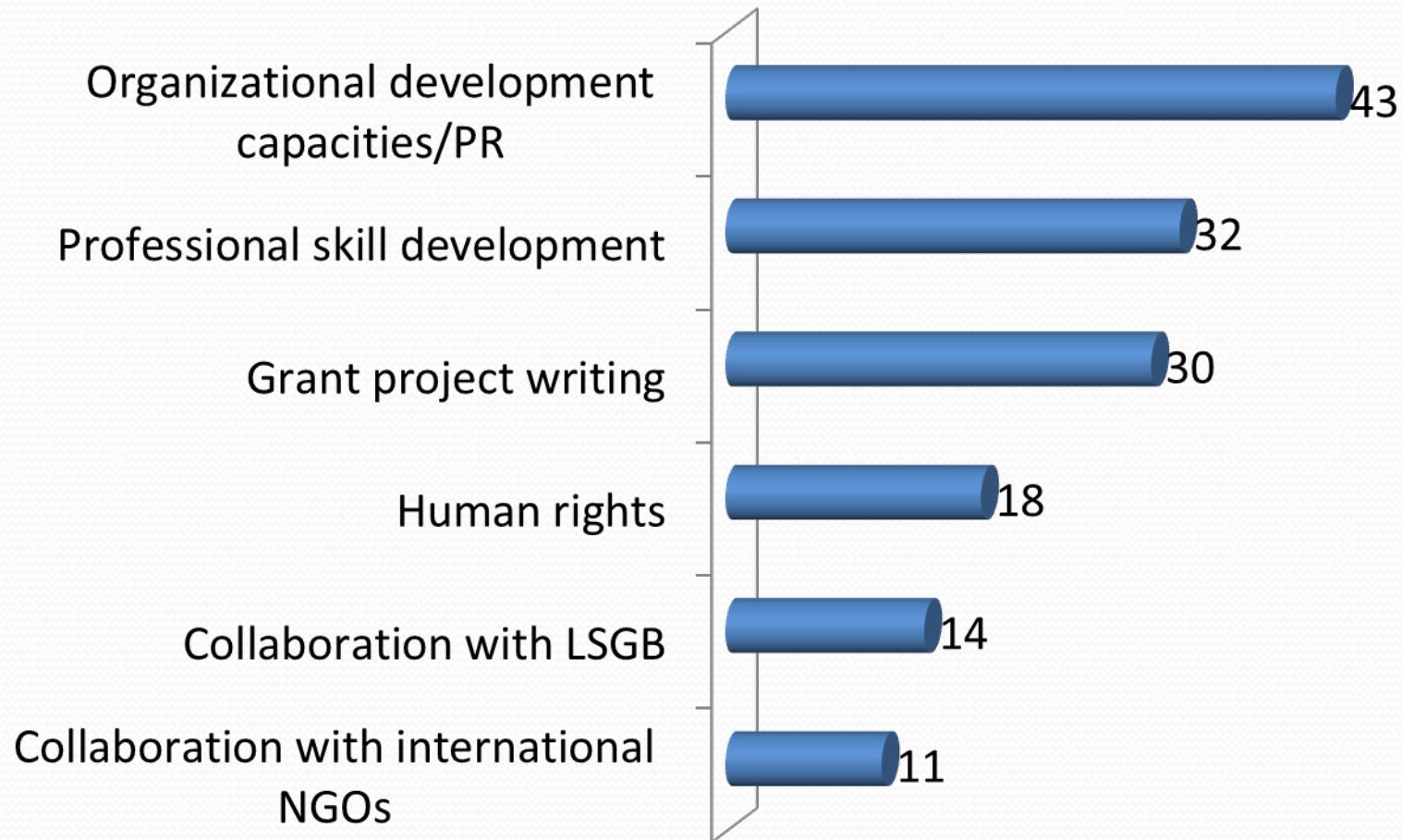
CSO capacity development needs

Preferable training format

- 5.3% on-line
- 57.6% traditional
- 37.1% no preference

CSO capacity development needs

Would you like to participate in...? (%)

Chart: Would you like to participate in...? (%)

- Organizational Development E-Courses
  - Total: 62.7%
  - Regional CSO: 55.1%
  - Yerevan-based CSO: 73.8%
- Policy Evaluation/ Advocacy/ Monitoring E-Courses
  - Total: 56.0%
  - Regional CSO: 51.7%
  - Yerevan-based CSO: 62.3%

Legend: ■ Total   ■ Regional CSO   ■ Yerevan-based CSO

Recommendations: capacity-building

Areas to be addressed (based on findings and CSO suggestions):

- Strategic approach in organizational management, including external relations, fundraising, and policy dialogue,
- Financial management and fundraising,
- PR and communication,
- HR management and leadership skills,
- Collaboration mechanisms/ partnership development,
- Public policy monitoring and evaluation,
- Policy analysis.

Recommendations: general

- Initiatives to increase CSOs accountability and visibility to improve trust towards the sector and collaboration effectiveness
- Dissemination of information on CSO role in policy reforms among CSOs and other sectors to change self-perception of CSOs and perception of their role by public in general
- More collaboration among CSOs, organized, constructive and consistent actions
- More efforts by CSOs to build own capacities, develop skills and train others to enlarge the scope of impact

The report can be found at

MAPPING STUDY

CSO ENGAGEMENT IN POLICY-MAKING AND MONITORING OF POLICY IMPLEMENTATION: NEEDS AND CAPACITIES

ARMENIA

Tatevik Margaryan, Arpine Hakobyan

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