



Citizens For Syria
مواطنون لأجل سوريا

Syrian Civil Society Organizations Reality and Challenges

A research based on the results of capacity
assessment of Syrian civil society organizations



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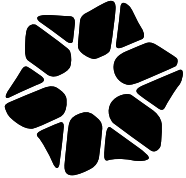
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Index

1. Executive Summary	6
2. Recommendations	7
3. Terms and Definitions	9
4. Introduction	12
5. Research Objectives	13
6. Research Significance.....	13
7. Sample and Methodology	14
7,1 Data Sources	14
7,2 Study Sample	15
7, 3 Data collection and Examination mechanism	16
8. Results and Analysis	17
8,1 First Level: (Sampled Society Characteristics)	18
8,1,1 Motives of Organizations	18
8,1,2 Geographical Distribution of Syrian CSOs Based on Areas of Control	19
8,1,3 Year of Establishment	20
8,1,4 Regional Distribution of Organizations	21
8,2 Second Level (General Analysis)	22
8,2,1 Organizational Structure	22
8,2,2 Funding and Financial Structure	27
8,2,3 Organization Identity	28
8,2,4 Obstacles and Demands	29
8,3 Third Level (Partial Analysis)	31
9. Results and Analysis	37
10. References and further readings	38

Citizens for Syria (CfS):

Citizens for Syria e.V. is a nonprofit organization that was founded in 2013 in Germany and operates in Syria, its neighboring countries and Europe. The Organization believes that Civil Society is the true guardian of democracy, stability and sustainable development.

CfS aims to establish a network of Syrian activists and organizations dealing with Syrian affairs in order to support nascent initiatives and civil organizations by backing and developing their projects, pairing them with international partners, and exchanging expertise between respective activists.

The organization will provide support and consultancy to NGOs interested in working in Syria by pairing them with trusted local partners and offering follow-up services for any undertaken projects upon request.

One of CfS's main objectives is providing assistance in building local networks and partnering them with organizations that specialize in the same field.

CfS is currently working on building a map of the Syrian Civil Society Movement that includes all organizations and initiatives founded in Syria, its neighboring countries and Europe, in order to examine the fields in which they operate and their level of efficiency in managing projects they previously undertook.

CfS's mapping process is not only limited to surveying the current status of these organizations, instead it strives to examine the way in which these organizations' work has evolved since their founding, providing insight into the aspects of their past performance that could benefit from the assistance and support offered by CfS.

CfS strives to serve as a direct link between donors and parties interested in Syrian Civil Society, and Syrian organizations by securely delivering data on a platform that was exclusively developed for this purpose, in addition to organizing meetings and publishing reports based on collected data.

CfS believes in mutual support and the sharing of knowledge, and executes its projects in evaluating administrative needs and providing sustained support to Syrian organizations through training, guidance and technical support by utilizing its wide network of researchers, trainers and volunteers working across Syria, its neighboring countries and a number of European states.



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1. Executive Summary:

Syrian Civil Society witnessed a rebirth following the uprising that erupted across Syria in 2011 after decades of stagnation and decadence that limited the scope of its activities to charity work.

Between 2011 and 2017 alone, the number of founded Syrian CSOs surged to exceed the total of registered organizations in the country since 1959.

As violence began to intensify across the country, the majority of CSOs were founded to address pressing demands on the ground, chief among them were issues related to the documentation of violations and coordination of aid activities. CSOs also served as a way to create jobs for displaced youths, particularly in neighboring countries.

Another effect of the conflict on Syrian Civil Society was ending the monopoly of the country's two largest cities, Damascus and Aleppo, on CSOs, as they began to spread to neighboring countries and most Syrian provinces, with the exception of the ISIS-held Raqqa and Deir Ezzor, where only a few number of organizations are active due to the persecution faced by activists working in areas controlled by the extremist group.

These organizations began to establish networks and alliances that support one another in advocacy activities and response coordination, and at times formed wider coalitions of these networks in order to enhance their collective performance.

Due to the ever increasing number of Syrian CSOs that were being founded, CfS resolved to conduct periodic mappings in order to continuously document the status of Syrian Civil Society, enabling it to detect organizational trends, tendencies and growth factors, which in turn allow all the various Syrian Civil Society stakeholders to better understand its properties and develop more suitable policies when dealing with its organizations.

This report demonstrates all three different sectors of the Syrian Civil Society: Organizations that operate in either government-controlled, opposition-held or democratic self administration (DSA) territories (northeastern Syria).

CfS relies on a large team spread across all of the aforementioned areas, conducting first-hand interviews with workers of organizations sampled in this study.

The state of ongoing war and prevalent repression in all regions, especially those controlled by the government, has in full or in part prevented the CfS team from documenting all existing CSOs in Syria. This mapping is considered the first of its kind in Syria, and additional surveys are planned by CfS in the future that would allow for further in-depth documentation of this vital sector.

2. Recommendations

For Syrian organizations:

- Raising the level of governance: Syrian CSOs are required to raise the level of transparency, accountability and representation on all echelons of their administrative entities. All of the aforementioned requires that the CSOs in question undergo basic training in drafting hierarchies, policies, procedures and mechanisms of enacting them. Most important of all is the separation of powers in these organizations by keeping the board of directors separate from the executive branch in order to raise the level of accountability and transparency.
- Increasing the level of transparency by developing departments for monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning (MEAL), all of which was not paid proper attention in the organizations that were sampled in this study. This requires awareness programs that stress the importance of such departments and provide training in their respective fields. Additionally, a policy of transparency must be emphasized through the publishing of financial reports or by stating organizations' intervention policies.
- Increasing the level of representation for women in a way that mirrors Syrian diversity across administrative bodies on all levels, in addition to thoroughly investigating the reasons behind the low levels of participation of women in managerial levels in Syrian organizations.
- Increasing the level of independence for Syrian CSOs that largely rely on governmental and international grants, and emphasizing the need for these organizations to launch profit-oriented programs that increase their financial independence and pushes them to engage in charitable work instead of pro bono activities. Additionally, the position of Fundraising Officer is almost nonexistent in most organizations, reflecting a mentality of total reliance on donors for designating funding resources.

For organizations working in the fields of development and relief:

- Raising awareness of civil work culture and the principles of humanitarian intervention, in addition to promoting a human rights centric approach when designing and executing projects.

For international backers:

- Raising the level of coordination with local administrative bodies, especially local councils of the supporting international parties
- Increasing support for building institutions whether it be through a core fund aimed at consolidating the structure of the organization or by effective training and constant guidance, particularly for local CSOs inside Syria.

- Fair distribution of funds that is based on the respective financial needs of the various Syrian regions
- Cooperating with Syrian CSOs as equal partners which entails their inclusion in the process of formulating general directives, transcending the role of project executors.
- Supporting communication and networking among Syrian CSOs regardless of their respective geographical areas of operation.
- Accepting Arabic-language applications and employing Arabic speakers
- Improving communication with nascent organizations and initiatives, particularly those operating in Syria.
- Supporting networks and coordinating parties that include several organizations and granting them the required attention

For local administrations and governments of neighboring countries:

- Building standardized mechanisms to register organizations and declare their respective activities in a way that doesn't limit their activities or jeopardize the status of its members or beneficiaries.
- Neighboring countries: Draft laws to register Syrian organizations and their staff members.

For the international community:

- Easing monitoring and restrictions on bank transfers for Syrian civil institutions, particularly those that are formally registered in neighboring countries and Europe, in addition to regulating outgoing and incoming financial transactions between these organizations to parties located inside Syria.
- Backing the presence of the nascent Syrian Civil Society in negotiations dealing with Syria's future through the inclusion of its representatives in any talks concerned with the issues of political transition, development and the process of rebuilding the country.

3. Terms and Definitions:

Civil Society :

The term “Civil Society” according to the World Bank refers to the wide array of non-governmental and not-for-profit organizations that have a presence in public life, expressing the interests and values of their members or others, based on ethical, cultural, political, scientific, religious or philanthropic considerations. Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) therefore refer to a wide array of organizations: community groups, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), labor unions, indigenous groups, charitable organizations, faith-based organizations, professional associations, and foundations.”

On the other hand, researchers like prominent intellectual Dr. Azmi Bishara believe that the term “civil society” extends well beyond the limits of the strict definition of NGOs, especially considering the state of political enlightenment that spread in communities across the region as a result of the Arab Spring protest movements. However, for the purpose of this study, we will adopt the World Bank definition of CSOs, which encompasses all non-governmental, non-partisan and non-profit organizations.

Civil Society Organizations:

or the purpose of this research, we decided upon the following definition for “the Syrian Civil Society Organization”: A Syrian CSO is every non-profit, non-partisan, non-governmental and non-violent institution that possesses a clear Syrian identity in terms of its managing members being all Syrian citizens. Its main activity is aimed towards the Syrian cause whether it be through endorsement (advocacy), lobbying, providing services to Syrians in Syria and neighboring countries or institutions that target a social or ethnic group of Syrians that include Civil and non-Governmental Organizations in a manner that does not affect its legal standing as to being a Syrian Civil Society Organization.

In the Syrian context, the need for an accurate definition of Civil Society Organizations takes on a very important dimension, due on the one hand to the recent emergence of this nascent society, and on the other to the misconception surrounding it. With the absence of a Central Government, the majority of organizations operating in areas that are outside the control of the government all follow similar operational mechanisms due in part to numerous factors among which the fact that a large number of councils and governing bodies adopt organizational structures that greatly resemble those of Civil Society Organizations. One such example is Idlib’s Directorate of Health (which provides governmental

services), in which the process entails electing a secretary council comprised of the province's doctors that, in turn, appoints the head of the Directorate of Health. Owing to the fact that this directorate has no ties to any governmental party, receives funding independently through donors and is not affiliated with any political or profit-oriented organization, all of the aforementioned signifies that this particular organizational body fulfills the European Union's definition of a Civil Society Organization by being a non-profit, non-governmental, non-partisan and non-violent organization.

However, in addition to the EU definition of a Civil Society Organization, we will use an additional criteria that excludes bodies that undertake roles traditionally associated with governmental organizations for the purpose of this research, and thus excluding from this mapping project institutions such as Local, Provincial and City Councils, and Public Services Directorates (health, agriculture, education, etc.).

Civil Initiative:

Comprised of an assembly of citizens who aim to work towards solving a certain issue that hasn't been resolved by official institutions, by partaking in collective activities that aim to pressure the government, or to an urgent matter. Civil Initiatives do not have clear hierarchical structures or titles, their decisions are unanimously determined.

International Organizations:

Organizations that are recognized international bodies or are United Nations subsidiaries.

Government Organizations:

These are organizations that define themselves as being part of the Syrian Interim Government (SIG) or the Syrian Central Government or they are organizations which are directly linked to party groups and ones that have an armed wing or were proven to have been involved in acts of violence, in addition to organizations that supports extremist armed factions such as the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and al-Nusra Front.

Quasi-governmental Organizations:

This term refers to the “Local Councils and Health Directorates”, which represent a transitional and vague structural formation owing to the fact that these types of organizations possess an independent hierarchy and an administrative board or independent supervision and funding. However, they identify as auxiliaries of the Syrian Interim Government (SIG) and its governing bodies which undertake duties that normally fall under the jurisdiction of governmental institutions such as the directorates of health and education.

Social Media-based Projects:

Projects that are solely reliant on social media platforms as their only outlets have not been included in this report due to challenging classification, debatable credibility and inability to create content quality measuring criteria, or establish the level of professionalism for each of the pages, in addition to their influence within the frame of primary research, we are reviewing available information for over three thousand Syria-related pages, among which are four hundred active pages that share original content (do not rely on copying content from another source) to be included in the in-depth report. We are also considering the potential of including them in a separate report dedicated to social media pages and media outlets, additionally there will be a graph on the website that displays data about these initiatives and links to them due to their significance, particularly within the domains of both media and advocacy.

Inactive Organizations:

Organizations and media outlets which have not been active for over 6 months since the beginning of this research dated 1/6/2015 or organizations that are only active for a limited period of time.

4. Introduction

Syrian Civil Society first saw its rebirth following the Syrian popular uprising which erupted in March 2011, then descended, less than one year later, into an ongoing armed conflict that is about to enter its seventh year. For decades, the civil society movement was limited to only two forms of action due to Syrian authorities' suppression. The first translates into limited-activity charity foundations that operate under the direct supervision of government institutions (the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor) and under even greater monitoring by the security apparatus, limiting the scope of its projects to causes dedicated to aiding the poor and orphaned. The second was in the form of a more developed civil society compared to the aforementioned, and which is run by non-official government parties and under the direct supervision of the president's wife Asmaa Al-Assad, such as the Syria Trust for Development, Junior Chamber International (JCI) and the Syrian Enterprise and Business Center (SEBC), Governmental NGOs (GONGOS).

As an increasingly-militarized Syrian uprising turned into an armed conflict, the role played by peaceful activists has receded throughout 2012, prompting them to found civil work entities operating in a variety of civil fields to keep up with the growing demand for services, as the control of the central government continued to diminish in a large number of cities and towns across the country. All of the aforementioned created a vacuum that was filled by active Syrians who founded aid and developmental organizations in order to provide people with basic services such as food, clothes, education, health, and sanitation. Additionally, these organizations played an additional role in providing job opportunities to unemployed youths as an already ailing economy grounded to a halt in Syria during the conflict. The geographical distribution of CSOs is most evident in opposition-held areas in the northern part of the country (The countryside of Idlib and Aleppo), Damascus countryside, Dara'a and Quneitra to the south- which witnessed the biggest decline in services, in addition to being frequently subjected to shelling that targets civilian neighborhoods, continued siege, all of which is exacerbated by the militant presence and local councils which do not necessarily coordinate among each other. Most Syrian CSOs have teams working in neighboring countries in addition to being registered there, particularly in Turkey. Civil Society Organizations activity also extends to central government areas and DSA-controlled territories in the northeastern part of the country where the autonomous government allows organizations to be registered under its own supervision.

In areas under government control that witnessed an influx of hundreds of thousands of displaced Syrians, many activists have found themselves face-to-face with the government's ineptitude to provide services, prompting them to create civil society organizations in order to meet the challenges encountered by civil society. The role of these organizations was not only limited to aid work, but it also transcended it to include advocacy and human rights activism despite the narrow margin allowed to practice freedom of speech in these areas.

This report will demonstrate the situation of civil society organizations in all three aforementioned regions, while attempting to mine a vital sector in the structure of Syrian civil society as a whole, as well as examine its fields of activity and the challenges it faces.

5. Research Objectives

We aim to achieve the following goals in our research:

- Identifying the general trends in Syrian CSOs regardless of operation areas
- Identifying challenges faced by CSOs with their different work specialties and areas
- Outlining discrepancies faced by Syrian CSOs according to their fields of work
- Providing a database for donors and United Nations agencies in order to design skill-building programs based on real data
- Providing CSOs with a database in order to identify their priorities on the one hand and pinpoint potential partners in different sectors and work areas on the other
- Providing a database to help organizations distinguish their professional positions within the Syrian Civil Society Organization map

6. Research Significance

The significance of this research stems from it being the first of its kind since the uprising erupted conducted with the aim of documenting civil work in Syria after the conflict began, taking into account the nascency of the Syrian civil society movement and the lack of expertise at its disposal which made the need to study its strengths and weaknesses all the more vital to those working in this field. Tracking this vital sector is also of great importance due to the crucial role it plays during the conflict and its anticipated contribution to post-war Syria after peace is restored.

After the role of the government and the private sector receded, CSOs stepped up to fill in the vacuum, providing aid and education, in addition to executing developmental projects and taking part in human rights activism. All of the aforementioned makes the matter of categorizing and analyzing Syrian civil society an influential issue in peace-building and its durability in post-war Syria.

7. Sample and Methodology:

7.1 Data Sources:

This research aims to include as many Syrian CSOs as possible, therefore the purpose was not meant to incorporate a narrow sample, it was to include as many organizations as possible in order to be representative of all CSOs in Syria. However, this task has proven to be exceptionally difficult due to various factors, most notable being difficulty gaining access into certain areas in addition to security concerns. The data collection process is extremely complicated in government-held areas putting its conductors under great risk of being incarcerated. Similarly, collecting data in ISIL-controlled area is a precarious task. Therefore, the CfS team attempted to depend on the data they had most access to. All the aforementioned considerations have prompted researchers to follow different and various data gathering methods befitting the current reality in surveyed regions, thus the data-gathering process was not only limited to one source (the observer/data collector), but another approach has also been applied by making use of available data that is derived from previous surveys conducted by

CfS, in addition to other information provided by reliable partner organizations.

A team of around 80 people worked on the survey and the cross-examination process, 48 of whom are observers and administrators from the CfS team, as well as a number of temporary observers in some areas, who have all received basic training in the subject of data collection procedures as well as being well-educated on the research's goals. The team members have been all selected based on their previous activities in civil work and their favorable status among local communities and organizations.

As per the main data source from which the information included in this report have been drawn, the process has been conducted by trained members who received sufficient training on the principles of data collection, which consists of fact-checking, cross-examination, and data review. Below we demonstrate the main and secondary sources of the data collection process:

The data has been mainly collected during the period between 1/10/2015 and 21/03/2016, however, the duration of the survey was pushed back until 15/09/2016 in order to ensure all the data from areas that are difficult to access is complete and fully-updated. Additionally, the team worked on refining the data and correcting errors that occurred during the collection stage as well as updating the general data up until the beginning of 2017 when the report was concluded.

Primary Data Sources:

Primary data has been gathered by conducting interviews with the primary data sources, such as organizations, institutions and Syrian work teams

- Direct interviews with organizations: conducted by the observers or the regional representatives, in CSOs' operation areas or in some cases the conferences were held online.
- Immediate Remarks made by the observers: A number of observers are spread across every Syrian province and each local team is managed by a regional official in addition to the Turkey team and the organization's head office. Data is compiled into an electronic platform in order to be examined and cross-examined against other sources, this task is undertaken by the data inspection office, which in turn forwards it to be later processed and presented by the organization's main headquarters in Berlin.
- Info shared by organizations through their official public channels.

Secondary Data Sources:

- Information provided by CfS partners, such as networks and active Syrian organizations
- Available data obtained from previous surveys.
- Electronic surveys and Data harvesting which was applied to Facebook in particular and partially on other secondary platforms.

7,2 Study Sample:

This research includes abovementioned institutions, civil and activist initiatives which have a defined name and an official means of communication, excluding the following organizations (view terms and definitions section)

- International Organizations and their branches in Syria
- Government Organizations
- Quasi-governmental Organizations
- Local Council and Health Directorates
- Social media-based projects (Facebook and Twitter)
- Inactive Organizations

This study examines the results of competency evaluation survey for 748 Syrian organizations that meet the standards of our survey which responded to the survey and answered the majority of the questions (100 questions), while around 200 organizations refused to take part in the study, in addition to 75 organizations we were unable to reach.

7, 3 Data collection and Examination mechanism:

For the purpose of this research Syria has been divided into 3 geographical regions as follows:

- Northern Region: it includes the provinces of Al-Hassaka, Dei-Ezzor, Al-Raqqa, Aleppo, Idlib, Lattakia Countryside and northern countryside of Hama
- The Central Region: Damascus and its countryside, in addition to the provinces of Homs and Hama.
- The Southern Region: Daraa, Qunietra and Al-Sweida'a

Each region has been overseen by one leader and a number of observers who work together as a team in order to collect data from the aforementioned sources and check their credibility. Team leaders also gathered data from organizations based in neighboring countries.

After the observer has completed the data insertion process for one or multiple organizations in a certain region where they are appointed, the supervisor/leader conducts a primary review to ensure that the information is cohesive, reasonable and that all required fields in the table are properly filled. In case of an error the leader returns the document to the observer in order to recheck it. Consequently the info gets transferred to the examination officer who in turn compares it to other available data obtained from different sources which are sometimes lists provided by partners or through referrals from active figures in the region, in the case that gaps are present in the material the examination officer passes it back to the regional team leader in order to reassess it.

The study has also relied on lists provided by partners in addition to a general social media survey results conducted by the technical team based on general internet and social media research techniques, a process that helped locate numerous organizations especially those which operate outside the country, in addition to helping us draw comparisons with available data that was provided by our team and partners.

In order to analyze the required information and compare them with the documents provided by our partners and data published online, a revision has been performed by the following parties:

- Local Observer (primary review during the data collection stage)
- Regional team leader (checking local observers' data)
- examination unit (examining regional team leaders' data)
- Data indexing unit (checks for errors in indexing and classification)

8. Results and Analysis:

This report provides data analysis based on three different levels, as follows:



Analysis of Characteristics of Society under Study:
Outlines the general view of the nature of sampling.



General Analysis:
Including an expanded view of the results on the level of all Syrian CSOs with the aim of explaining the general scope of the civil society: Its realities, challenges and obstacles.

Partial Analysis:

Including a number of comparisons between organizational characteristics based on their respective locations in Syria.



Figure 1: Levels of Data Analysis

First Level: (Sampled Society Characteristics)

The organizational forms adopted by Syrian CSOs vary based on different levels as demonstrated in the figure below, with over 58% of sampled groups titled "Organization", while 18% chose the title "Initiative", and the remaining entities adopted titles such as "Union", "Network", "Movement", "Center" or "Council."

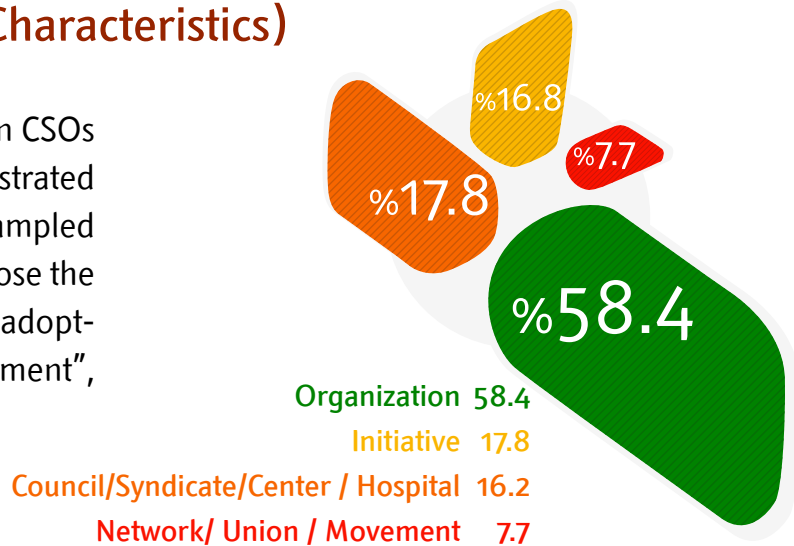


Figure 2: Types of CSOs working in Syria

Motives of Organizations:

The motives that drive Syrian CSOs vary depending on the moral basis on which they operate, as most of them engage in such activities based on humanitarian, societal and developmental interests. Syrian CSOs that work within the field of relief and humanitarian aid make up approximately 40% of all organizations, while 50% take on societal and developmental roles, additionally, CSOs that employ a nationalistic agenda comprise the remaining 10%, meanwhile, faith-based purposes only made 2% of the motives of Syrian CSOs

What was most remarkable here is that a higher number of developmental institutions is present, which reflects a tendency among donors and organizations towards that type of activism rather than aid work. This is due to the fact that the duration of the crisis materialized and there was a growing need to provide resources in the country. It is worth mentioning here that the developmental work tendencies are more popular in besieged areas that are difficult to gain access to in order to deliver aid. In many cases CSO workers expressed their dissatisfaction with aid work due to numerous factors, among which is the fact that this type of activity has created a new breed of dependent communities and helped raise unemployment

rates, especially in opposition-held areas, they have also conveyed their frustration due to difficulty obtaining resources from donors, accompanied by the increasing daily demand for much needed aid.

As for faith-based organization, it has been noted that a few of them actually declare their mostly propagandist motives. Many of our researchers have found that a number of religion-affiliated organizations do exist, although their main field of activity is concerned with aid and development.

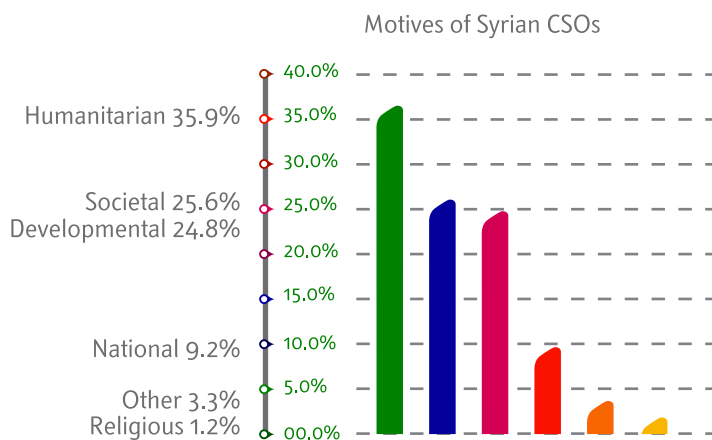
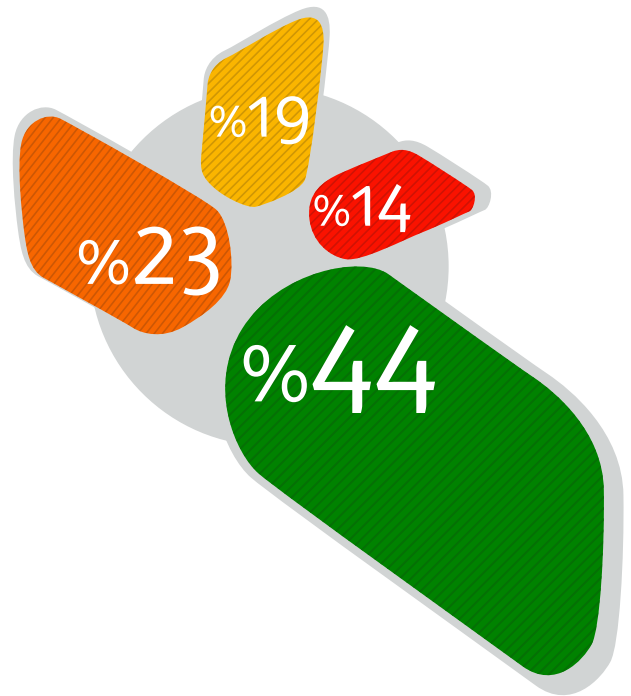


Figure 3: Motives of Syrian CSOs

Geographical Distribution of Syrian CSOs Based on Areas of Control:

The percentage of organizations operating in opposition-held areas is estimated to be around 44% making up the vast majority of such activities, while 23% of these organizations operate outside government-control territories (areas with limited accessibility making this percentage inaccurate), moreover 14% which is the lowest rate, operate within Syrian government held areas, while the remaining portion are organizations working in Kurdish control territory. It is worth mentioning that these percentages lack accuracy due to mainly difficulty gaining access to certain areas and secondly the delicate position of some of these organizations (everyday witnesses the rise and disappearance of several organizations), thus we only consider these numbers as indicators and not as accurate percentages.

These figures cannot be considered neither accurate nor reflective of the real situation due to a number of reasons that were cited previously in the study. However, the numbers do provide a stepping stone to deal with CSOs. For example, Civil Society initiatives are considered to be the main contributors to the service and aid sectors in opposition-held areas, due to the absence of the government. The effect this issue had on CSOs is double-edged, on the one hand, this situation has contributed positively to the growing involvement of civil society and raised its level of professionalism in order to meet the ever increasing needs of local communities. On the other hand, however, the role of civil society, which is underlined in its objective to complement the activity of governmental institutions, has shifted towards substituting official channels rather than the traditional role of supplementing the efforts of state-run agencies. All of the aforementioned demonstrates the effects of the receding influence of the central government and its inability to meet the demands of the general population.



Under Opposition Control	395
Outside Syria Territories	206
Under DSA Control	170
Under Government Control	126
Other	8

Figure 4: Distribution of CSOs based on geographical Map of Control

Year of Establishment:

The figure below demonstrates the fact that the majority of organizations that have been active throughout the period of time since Syria crisis progressed (over 91%) had been established after 2011, after the breakout of the conflict, thus indicating that the majority of them were created as response to societal necessities considering the pressing need to fill the gap resulted from the absence of the state, however taking into account that the number of organizations prior to the conflict in Syria by 2011 was estimated to be around (1074) according to the ministry of social affairs and labor. The majority of pre-war civil work was limited to charities (Orphanages and poverty aid, etc.).

The number of sampled organizations that were founded before 2011 stood at 59, which points to the fact that many of these CSOs shut down after the conflict had started (Additionally, the fact that most of the organizations located in government-controlled areas are inaccessible leads us to believe that the total number is much greater in reality).

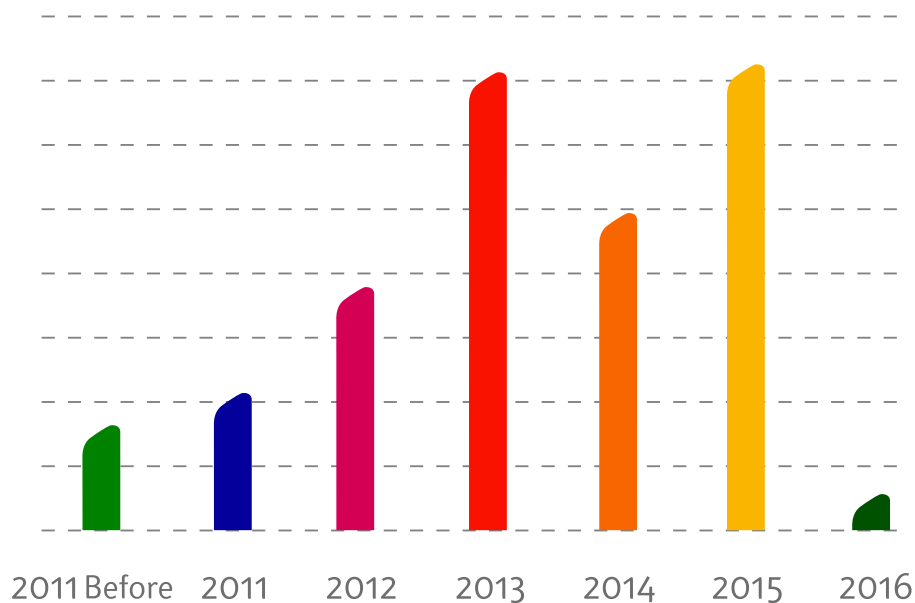


Figure 5: Chronology of Syrian CSOs Establishment

Regional Distribution of Organizations:

Data analysis shows that most organizations have more than one branch or office inside Syrian territories, some have offices outside the country which usually serve as headquarters of the organization, whose main job is to oversee the direct communication with donors. Additionally, the founding members, who are relatively highly-qualified, are based abroad, thus they were responsible for launching these initiatives, setting-up offices, and seeking to provide all the financial support and training for the organizations.

The following map demonstrates the numbers and locations of Syrian CSOs across Syrian territories and neighboring countries. According to statistics over 71% of organizations run offices across Syria, while around 19% of them have branches in Turkey, and 4% run offices in Iraq and Lebanon. A few number of organizations have been registered in other countries, in Europe in particular. It's worth mentioning that the vast majority of organizations operating in opposition-held territories have been registered across

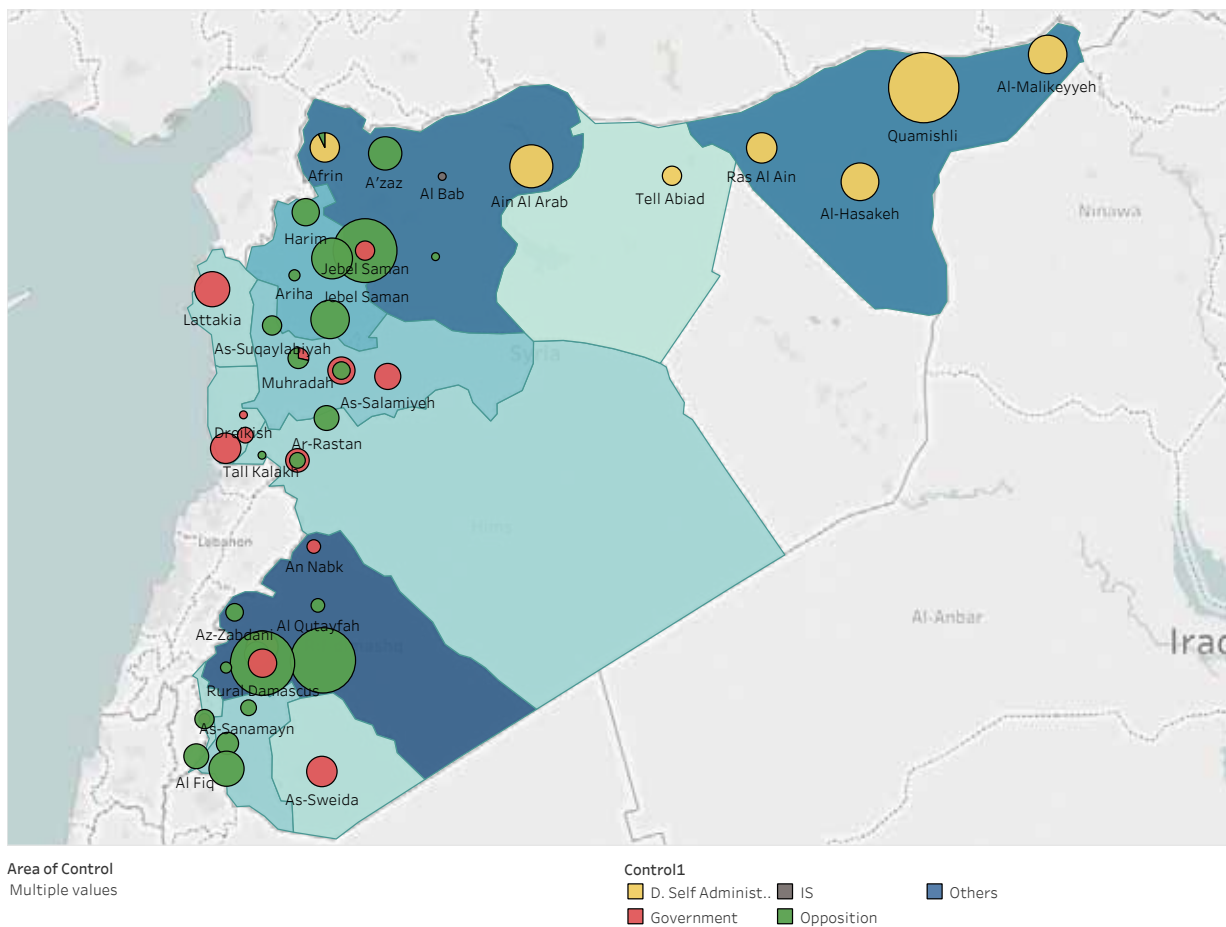


Figure 6: Map of Geographical Distribution of CSOs in Syria and Neighboring Countries

neighboring countries, Europe and overseas, while CSOs that operate in government-controlled areas are only registered in Syria, which renders the need to register abroad unnecessary.

By reviewing and consulting the 2010 records of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor, it is observed that the numbers of registered organizations between 1959 and until 2010 was around 1074, 85% of which were based in Damascus, its countryside, Aleppo, Hama, Homs, Latakia and Tartous. While, only 15% of Civil work organizations operate in the remaining provinces of Raqqa, Deir Al-Zor, Hassaka, Daraa, Sweida and Quneitra. It is evident that conflict dynamics in Syria have contributed to a fairer distribution of civil activities across the country as well as multiplied the number of these organizations.

8,2 Second Level (General Analysis):

8,2,1 Organizational Structure:

Despite the fact that Syrian CSOs employ a great number of qualified staff, many of whom have received professional training through international NGO programs, a large number of these organizations still suffer from inadequate managerial structures.

Data analysis offers a closer look into this dilemma, as it indicates that 42% of organizations currently in operation are not officially registered in the countries where they run activities. This negatively reflects on their managerial and organizational structures, particularly when applying for grants from international institutions, whether it be for funding, training or service support. Data also demonstrates that only 40% of Syrian CSOs have actually elected their governing board members through a real competitive process, while 60% were either appointed or consensually assigned. It is worth mentioning that 25% of CSOs have no women representation among their board members, as the high-stake positions were all occupied by men, while women's presence in these organizations, severely low as it is, is merely restricted to selective or non-essential roles. This presents CSOs with a new challenge that threatens their sustainability on the long term. Due to the nascency of CSOs during the conflict in Syria and the circumstances and benefit-based motives behind their founding in most cases, the organizations in question were not keen on building governing bodies that guarantee transparency and accountability. The low percentage of boards that have volunteer managing councils in place, that supervise the activities of executive bodies and outlines their visions is symptomatic of a larger problem, which presents these entities with a major transparency and accountability challenge that threatens their integrity.

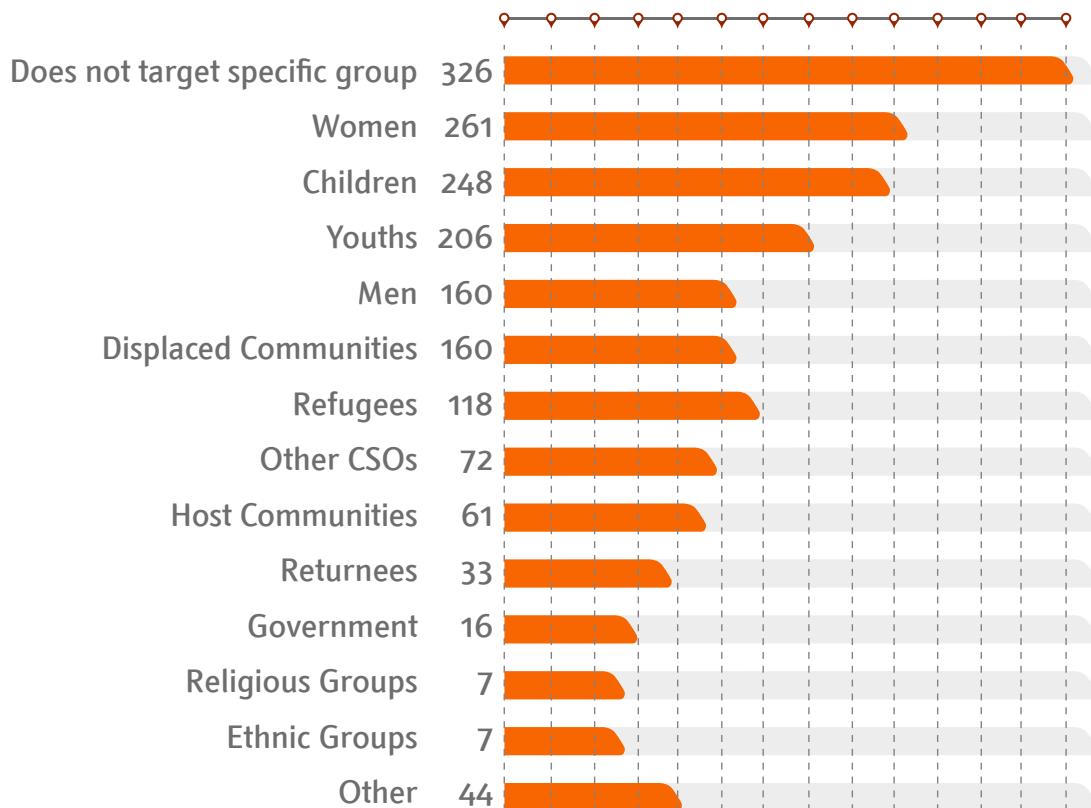
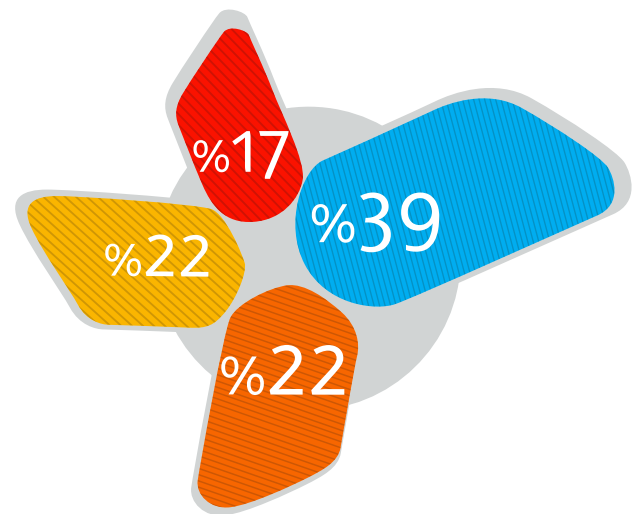


Figure 7: Target Communities of Syrian CSOs

Furthermore, these organizations that work within the field of Syrian civil society domain seem to be quite disinterested in or unable to identify their target groups, which results in a counterproductive approach that manifests in the fact that their mission directive aims to address the entire society across all of its sectors, a conclusion that can be discerned by examining figure (7). What this fact indicates is the arbitrary work nature of these organizations and their lack of vision, which calls for a more structured conduct of work that can be resolved by appointing secretary councils/ management councils whose job is to set forth the guidelines of activities and provide a clear vision as to what governs these CSOs' mission.



Volunteer / Per-Project / Part Time / Full Time

Figure 8: Ratio of Workers in Syrian CSOs based on Employment Type

Also of note is the large number of organizations that target women as persecuted members of Syrian society, due to the oppression suffered by this group throughout the duration of the conflict. However, this is completely at odds with the severely low representation of women, particularly in organizations operating in opposition-held areas, which begs the question about the level of seriousness on the part of these organizations in addressing the issue of women empowerment. All of the aforementioned increases the possibility of dealing topically with this particular problem without addressing its root causes as a way of appeasing donors, according to the researcher.

The vast majority of CSOs sampled in our study claim to employ internal organizational structure that states their vision, mission statement and objectives (80%), while (60%) said their structure is made available to the public. They also claim to have internal regulatory lists that workers abide by to a large extent, in addition to possessing mechanisms and tools to evaluate, supervise and follow-up. However,

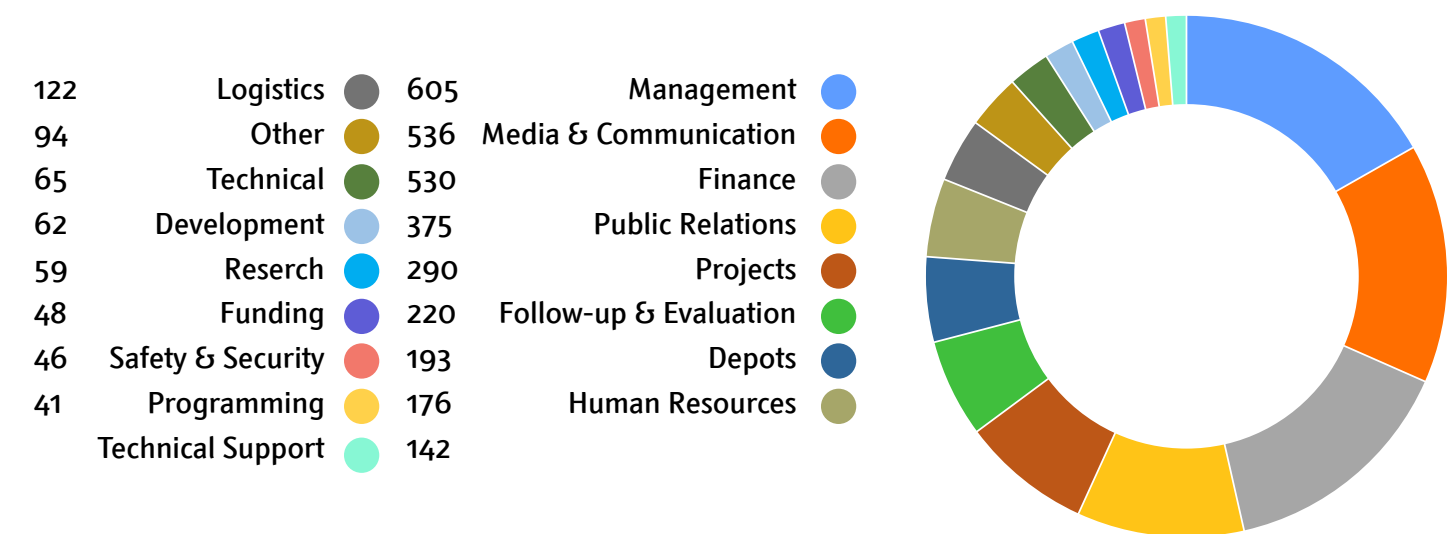


Figure 9: Operational Departments of Syrian CSOs

these numbers are sometimes exaggerated as they do not accurately reflect reality, as deduced from the answers received by the observers from staff members belonging to the organizations sampled in this study in response to their inquiries into this matter. This is yet another example of governance being a major challenge for these organizations.

Syrian CSOs hire administrative professionals in a variety of fields based on their needs. As figure (8) demonstrates we can see the percentages of employees according to their working hours (full time, part time, project-based). By examining the same figure, we also find that 39% of CSOs staffs are unpaid volunteers, which helps in preserving the organization's resources, increases awareness about the importance of volunteer work and emphasizes its positive effects on both the individual and society as a whole. However, the issue of determining the actual number of active staff members in Syrian Civil Society is particularly challenging for researchers due to the fact that a considerable percentage of employees work part-time at multiple CSOs simultaneously.

As an index for the civil work sector, the approximate number of workers in CSOs stands at 69,000, of whom 27,000 are volunteer workers, while 15,000 are employed full-time, and 15,000 on contractual basis, in addition to 12,000 workers that are hired part-time. These are estimates that are obtained by calculating the average of answers we received. We did not factor in organizations that hire a large number of people, such as relief and health NGOs, the number of whose workers could reach up to 5,000 hired either part or full-time.

Regarding the administrative departments that make up Syrian CSOs, figure (9) demonstrates that the typical structure of these organizations includes: Management, Media and Communication, Finance, Public Relations, and Project Management, however, other essential divisions that constitute the hierarchical system of any corporation are absent such as: Programming and technical Support, Research and Development, Funding, Monitoring and Evaluation. Hence, These departments which are the backbone of successful and well-functioning organizations need to be included as well as constantly developed by sponsor foundations.

In the above figure (10), the main and sub sectors in which Syrian CSOs actively operate are demonstrated in detail, 11 of which are primary while 22 are secondary. They are classified below in order of the most recurring field down to the least common, nonetheless it is noted that many of these organizations are active in an array of domains combined:

- Social Services: (aid, emergency, social services, income and maintenance)
- Education and Research: (Research, elementary, secondary and higher level education, in addition to various other forms of education)
- Development and Housing: (financial & social development, training, employment and housing)
- Culture and Innovation: (Culture and art, Sports, Social and Creative expression forums)
- Health: (Hospitals and rehabilitation centers, Nursing facilities and various other health services)
- Law, Advocacy and politics: (Civil & Advocacy organizations, Legal services and political organizations)
- Environment: (Environment and Animal Rights)
- Religious activities.
- Guilds and Labor Groups

- Donors, Mediators and civil work support.
- Other (unclassified)

It is evident according to the chart below that it is possible to divide social activity sectors into three categories based on the number of organizations that operate in each respective field as follows:

-Civil Services Sector: which is the most common among civil activity fields in Syria, as approximately (349) operate within the departments of: (child care, women empowerment and services, family care, self-support and personal individual services, disability support services, adult services, elderly citizens support, in addition to refugee aid, shelters, emergency and swift intervention services, crisis control and maintenance.)

- Followed by a number of middle tier sectors which include education and research related projects (157) development and housing (151), Culture and Innovation (146) and Health (125).

- However, law, advocacy and politics were among the least prominent domains among the sectors (75), in addition to environmental activism (18), Religion (7), leagues and vocational unions (6), donors, mediators and volunteer work support (1), and other sectors.

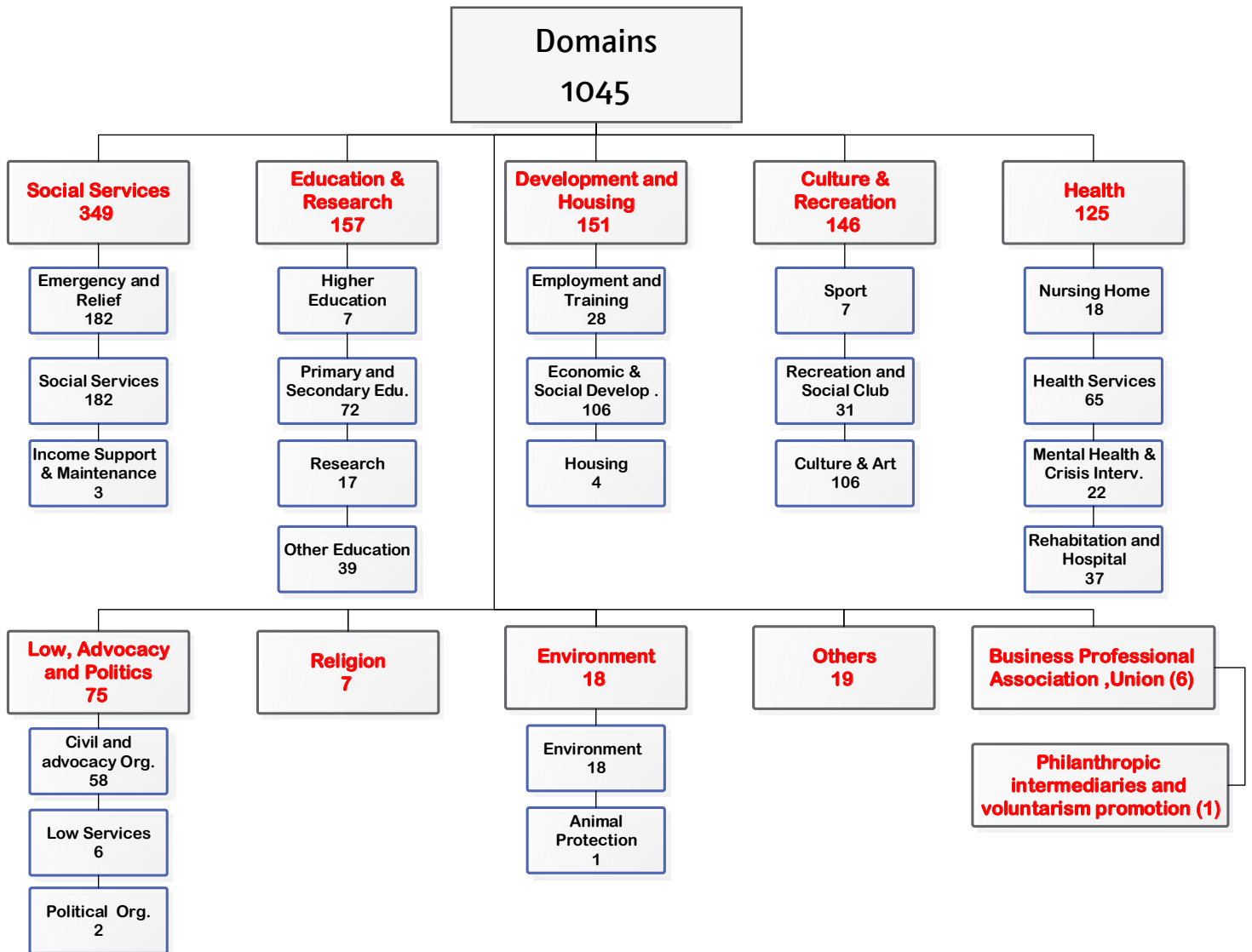


Figure 10: Work domains of CSOs (1045 registered domains of 748 CSOs)

8,2,2 Funding and Financial Structure:

Available statistics indicate that cash payments and money transfer to and from the organization (income/outcome flow) are the most common among financial transactions in Syrian CSOs, followed by a minor reliance on local wire transfer agencies and bank transfers.

This discrepancy in the style of financial management adopted by Syrian CSOs is due to a number of limitations, chief among which is the economic sanctions imposed on Syria by the United States and the European Union which greatly restrict bank transactions, in addition to other factors related to the absence of official and secure and trusted financial service companies, banks or agencies in opposition-held areas.

With regards to Syrian CSOs financial policies and plans, it is evident that the majority of financial cycles are planned on a month-to-month basis (46.1% of all organizations) alternatively, other CSOs pursue a biannual cycle (37.2% of all organizations). In terms of bookkeeping and auditing, it has been noted that 91% of all CSOs maintain financial records and documents.

However, and despite the fact that these organizations have disclosed having effective control systems over their financial records, only 20% of them do actually hire outsourced controllers to oversee their accounting procedures and ensure their records are well-kept. The majority of organizations only depend on their internal accountants and most of the time the organization's own financial department is placed in charge of carrying out accounts and performing financial control. All of the aforementioned point to a real inadequacy in terms of financial management which is considered among the main reasons that make local and international donors reluctant to fund and trust these CSOs.

By examining figure (11), we can surmise the following: (79%) of all Syrian CSOs' incomes are broken down as follows: individuals (31%) or fundraisers (28%) or international NGOs (23%) while the remaining proportion is divided among international GONGOs, international prestigious entities, governmental entities affiliated either with the opposition, the government or external backers.

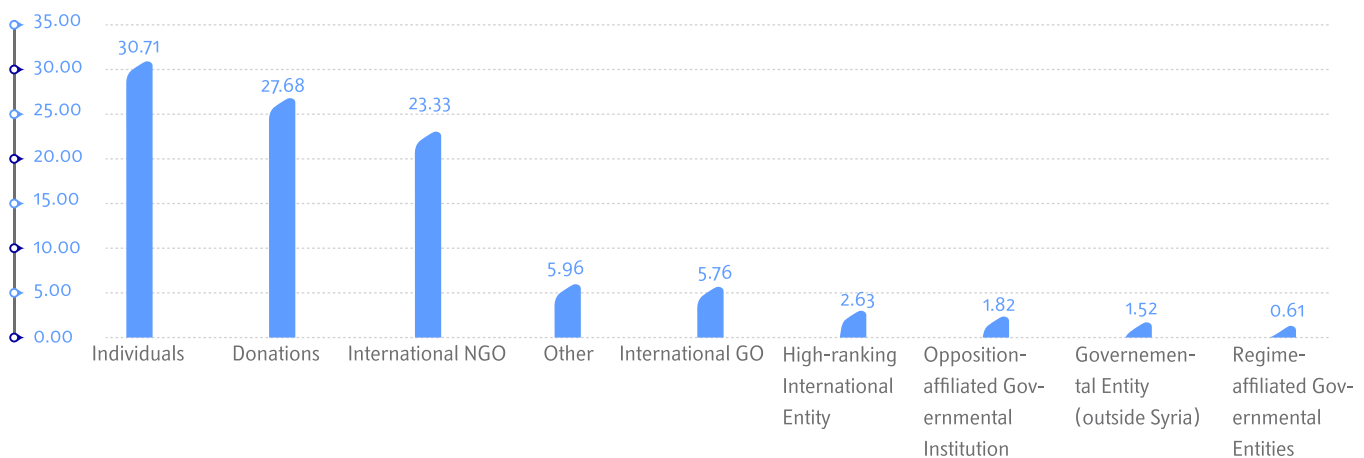


Figure 11: Donors and Funders of Syrian CSOs

Subsequently, this fundamental dependency on individuals and fundraisers to obtain income might cause several complications in the future, as the financial policies of these CSOs do not follow a coherent structure, and most of them do not take on projects that provide a sustainable income that covers the organization's own needs.

Moreover, the policy of self-sufficient funding is completely absent. However, if adopted, it would ensure the stability of these organizations on the long run, even if these plans were introduced gradually by devising efficient arrangements on the medium-run.

Alas, Syrian CSOs are inept in terms of planning and setting up strategies. Evidence of this ineptitude is demonstrated through the data provided by these organizations, as (82%) of those surveyed claimed to implement realistic and effective plans, in addition to substantial strategies, in order to be granted much-needed funding to sustain their durability in the case that direct funding is terminated by donors. On the other hand, (33%) of Syrian CSOs carry out activities that provide enough profit to supplement their income, which is to say that these profits were made by the organization not by one of its members.

8,2,3 Organization Identity:

Syrian CSOs believe they actually represent their target society efficiently, as results demonstrate more than (86%) of all organizations think they do so adequately or in an extremely satisfactory manner. This contradicts available facts which indicate that women representation is low specifically in opposition-held areas. Additionally, women representation is higher in territories where ethnic and religious diversity is prevalent especially in government-held areas.

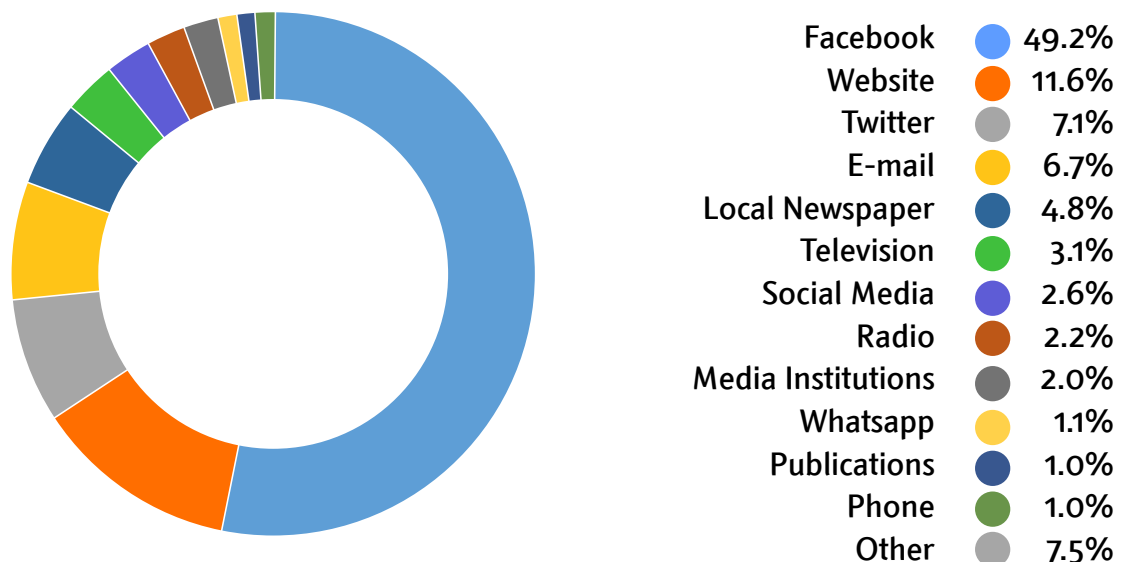


Figure 12: Marketing Methods Employed by Syrian CSOs

Nonetheless, with regards to CSOs' human resources, study results show that more than (72%) of their employees hold university and higher study degrees (Masters and PhD), in addition to a significant number of workers (82%) with vast experience in their areas of expertise who are well-respected among their peers for their excellence in their respective domains, according to the answers provided by sampled organizations. Additionally, 35% of CSOs in this study claimed that a percentage of their employees had attended a number of lectures, workshops and international conferences.

However, with regards to the diversity of employment, it is evident that over (60%) of Syrian CSOs sampled in this study do not hire staff from different ethnic or religious backgrounds, since as mentioned earlier, they all belong to the same sect. It should be noted that the nature of the Syrian conflict has led to a split along sectarian lines, emptying whole regions of inhabitants that belong to certain sects, which is in turn reflected in the make-up of CSOs found in those areas.

When it comes to the marketing methods favored by CSOs sampled in this study, the majority (68%) employ a combination that mixes between advertising activities through an official website and publishing announcements and ads on social media channels (Facebook and Twitter).

8,2,4 Obstacles and Demands:

Syrian Organizations continue to face numerous obstacles due to their complicated and often challenging work conditions, in addition to the monumental amount of effort and the enormous number of beneficiaries in need of urgent help, which exceeds their capacity to cope with the growing demand, particularly in response to the pressing issues that the conflict has given rise to in the last few years. All of the aforementioned is exacerbated when taking into account that most of these organizations are newly-founded and have no previous experience in civil work, coupled with the fact they were thrust in the middle of a multi-faceted and constantly morphing armed conflict, having none of the luxury of gradually coming into grips with the tasks they're expected to perform that other organizations that operate during peacetime enjoy. All of this has forced these nascent CSOs to shoulder burdens and responsibilities so enormous they could have brought even some of the most renowned international organizations to their knees.

Operating in the midst of an armed conflict between multiple warring factions, not only did these Syrian organizations suffer from displacement, migrations, restriction of movement and lack of security and stability, in addition to being under siege and constant bombardment, they also faced recurring problems with regards to the lack of stable funding (24%), all while dealing with logistical difficulties that prevented them from directly communicating with donors. Other obstacles that organizations struggled with were of societal nature, particularly the lack of recognition and cooperation from local communi-

ties. Several organizations contacted by researchers also pointed that the absence of permanent headquarters from which they can run their activities constituted a major obstacle, in addition to the lack of human resources and training requirements.

The following table includes the most important material, financial and technical requirements needed by the Syrian organizations under the current circumstances, in addition to the training needs they could benefit from at this time (in descending order of importance)

	Technical Needs	Material, Financial and Technical Needs
1	Management	Funding
2	Media	Tools and Technical Equipment
3	Project Management	Offices and Facilities
4	Psychological Support	Transportation and Fuel
5	Finance and Accounting	Salaries
6	Communication Skills	Training Experts
7	Organization-Specific Equipment	Office and Headquarters Equipment
8	Civil Work Awareness Campaigns	(Technical Tools (Computer and Internet Connection
9	Child Care	Human Resources
10	Medical and Paramedical Courses	Operational Expenditures
11	IT Software and Programs	Materials
12	Project Proposals and Funding	Training
13	Technical	Official Authorization
14	Human Resources	Facilitation
15	Humanitarian Work	Logistic Support
16	Women Empowerment	Psychological Support
17	Peace-building	Public Relations
18	Teacher Training	Website
19	Art, Theatre and Music	Photocopy Machine & Office Printers
20	Vocational Funds	Media Campaign

8,3 Third Level (Partial Analysis):

This section aims to highlight some comparisons between various Civil Society Organizations operating in Syria according to their locations. These Syrian CSOs have been grouped into four categories according to the different dominant parties, as follows:

- Central Government control areas (126 organizations)
- Opposition-held areas (395 organizations)
- DSA-controlled areas (170 organizations)
- Abroad (206 organizations)

According to the executed analysis, it is evident that the characteristics of Syrian CSOs vary depending on the areas in which they operate, their demands and their work method, thus their respective environments and daily circumstances understandably inform their work.

Plenty are the examples that speak to this fact, among them is the huge discrepancy in the number of organizations officially registered in accordance with the different areas of control, as a larger number of CSOs are registered in government territories and abroad, in contrast with the majority of organizations that remain unregistered in areas under the control of the opposition and the YPG, due to the lack of regulations or any official institutional practices in these territories.

The vast majority of Syrian CSOs did not elect their governing body members, the managing board was either appointed or concurred by the founders, particularly in opposition-held areas, with the exception of organizations operating in Kurdish control zones.

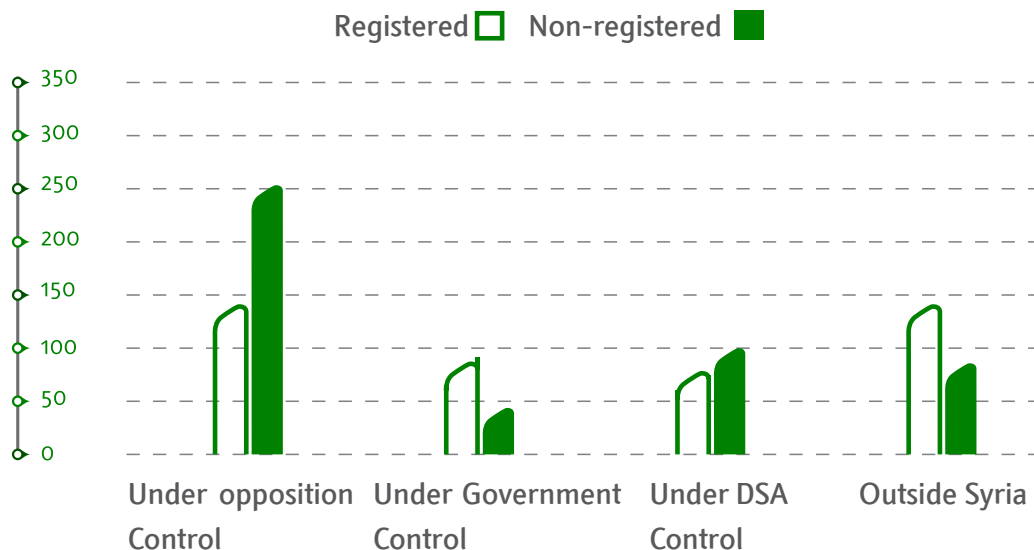


Figure: 13: Ratio of Syrian CSOs Official Registration Distributed Across Areas of Control

Additionally, with regards to women representation on the governing board, (42%) of all organizations in opposition-held areas do not include any female candidates on their board of directors, while only (13%) of CSOs working abroad and less that (5%) of organizations working in Kurdish-control and government-held areas have no women representation on their boards.

Additionally, research results have illustrated that the majority of Syrian CSOs in opposition-held areas

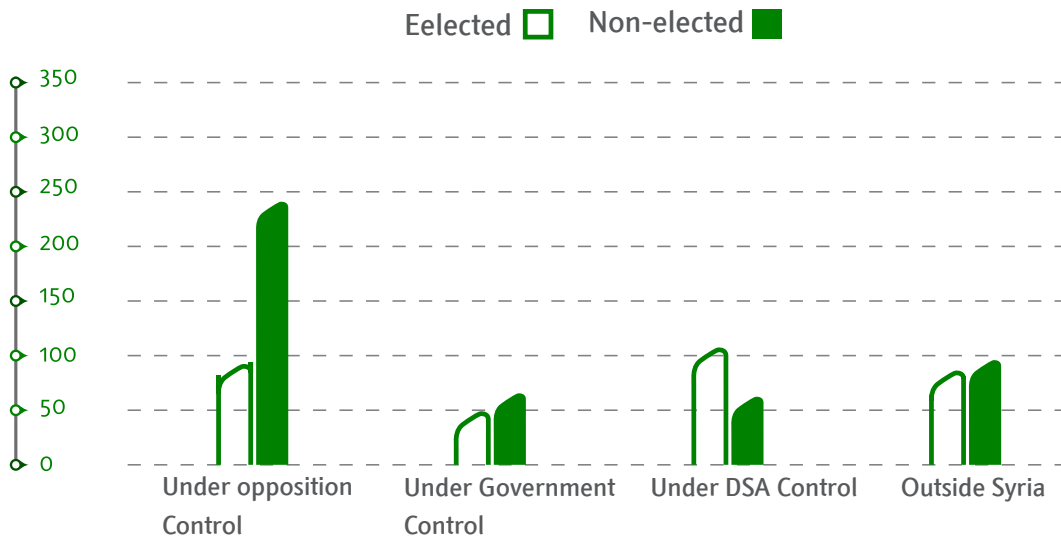


Figure 14: Syrian CSOs Appointment Methods of Boards of Directors Across Areas of Control

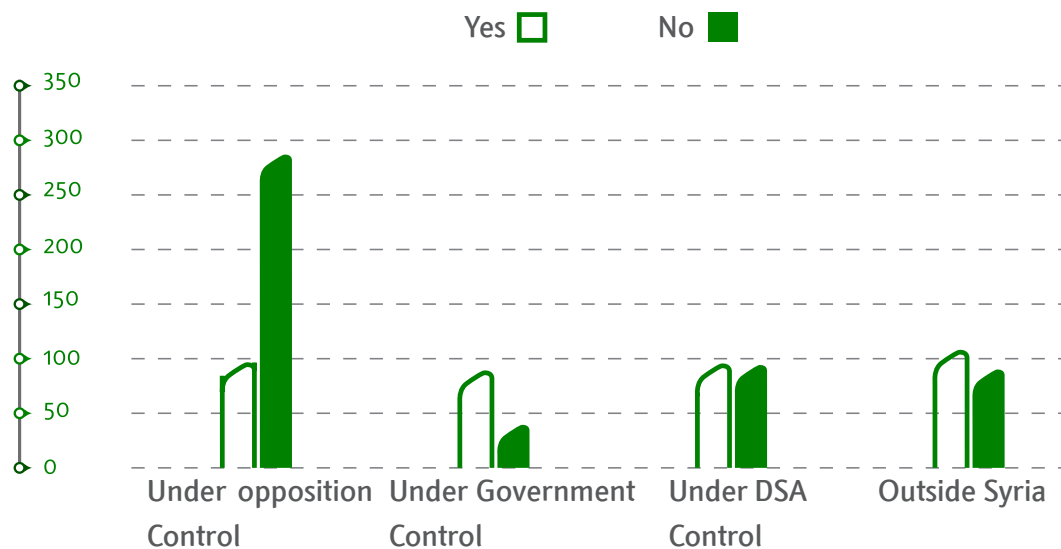


Figure 15: Ethnic or Racial Diversity Ratio Among Syrian CSOs Across Areas of Control

do not hire among their staff any candidates belonging to diverse religious or ethnic backgrounds, unlike other CSOs active in other areas across the country.

In fact, these results do not explain the true motives behind this trend, and the circumstances of certain organizations might severely undercut the pool of qualified staff from which they could hire, or it could be due to the absence of other ethnicities and religions, particularly in areas controlled by either the opposition or ISIL.

Regarding funding-related affairs, we can see according to figure (16) that organizations located in opposition-held areas or central government territory receive funds from either donations, individuals or international NGOs.

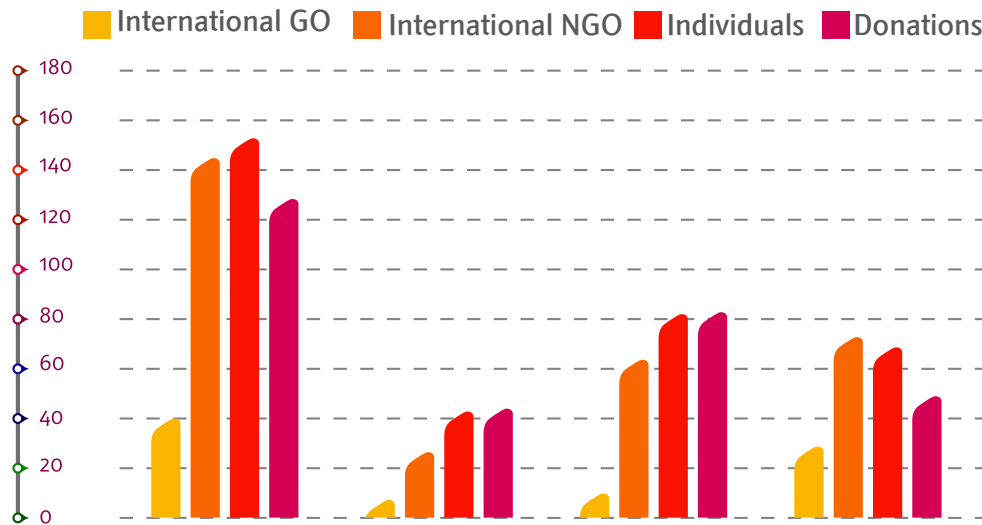


Figure 16: Ratio of Syrian CSOs Donors Across Areas of Control

On the other hand, organizations operating in Kurdish areas mainly receive funds from donations, their own members and less support from international NGOs.

However, organizations working outside Syria receive funding via their members and international NGOs and a minor support from donations. These statistical results lend themselves to the fact that the

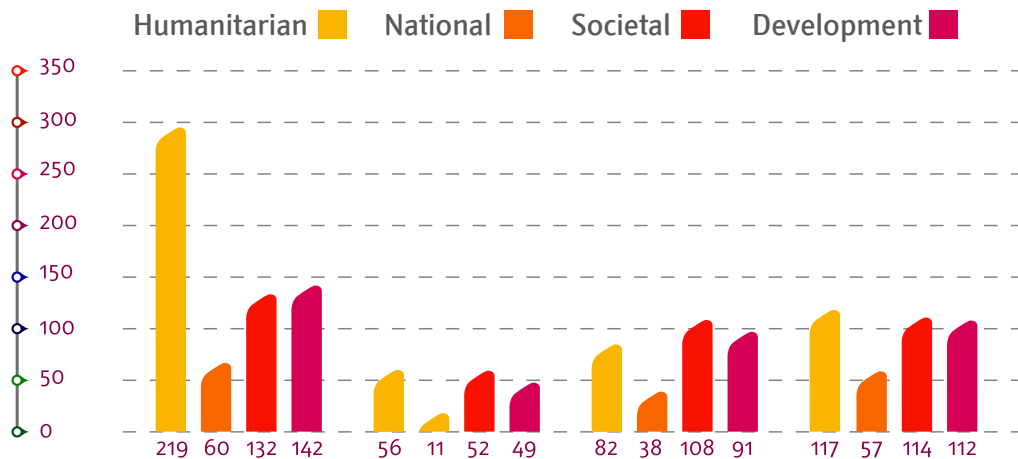


Figure 17: Motives of Syrian CSOs Across Areas of Control

majority of people prefer to send donations to organizations that operate inside the country rather than abroad, however, CSOs working outside Syria have a greater opportunity to communicate with international NGOs.

According to the figure below which demonstrates the motives and goals of Syrian CSOs, these organizations are dominantly driven by humanitarian purposes which make up the vast majority of all motives in comparison to developmental and societal considerations in opposition-held areas. Contrarily, CSOs operating in the remaining areas across the country, focus equally on both humanitarian and developmental and societal activities.

Distribution of CSOs according to provinces:

Both provinces of Damascus Countryside and Aleppo host the majority of CSOs making up around (20%) of all civil work entities inside Syria, followed by Al-Hassaka (15%), Idlib (12%), and Hama and Damascus (6%).

However, a more accurate classification would be the one based on control areas in each province, through which the discrepancy among provinces appears to be more obvious based on the dominant party in that particular area.

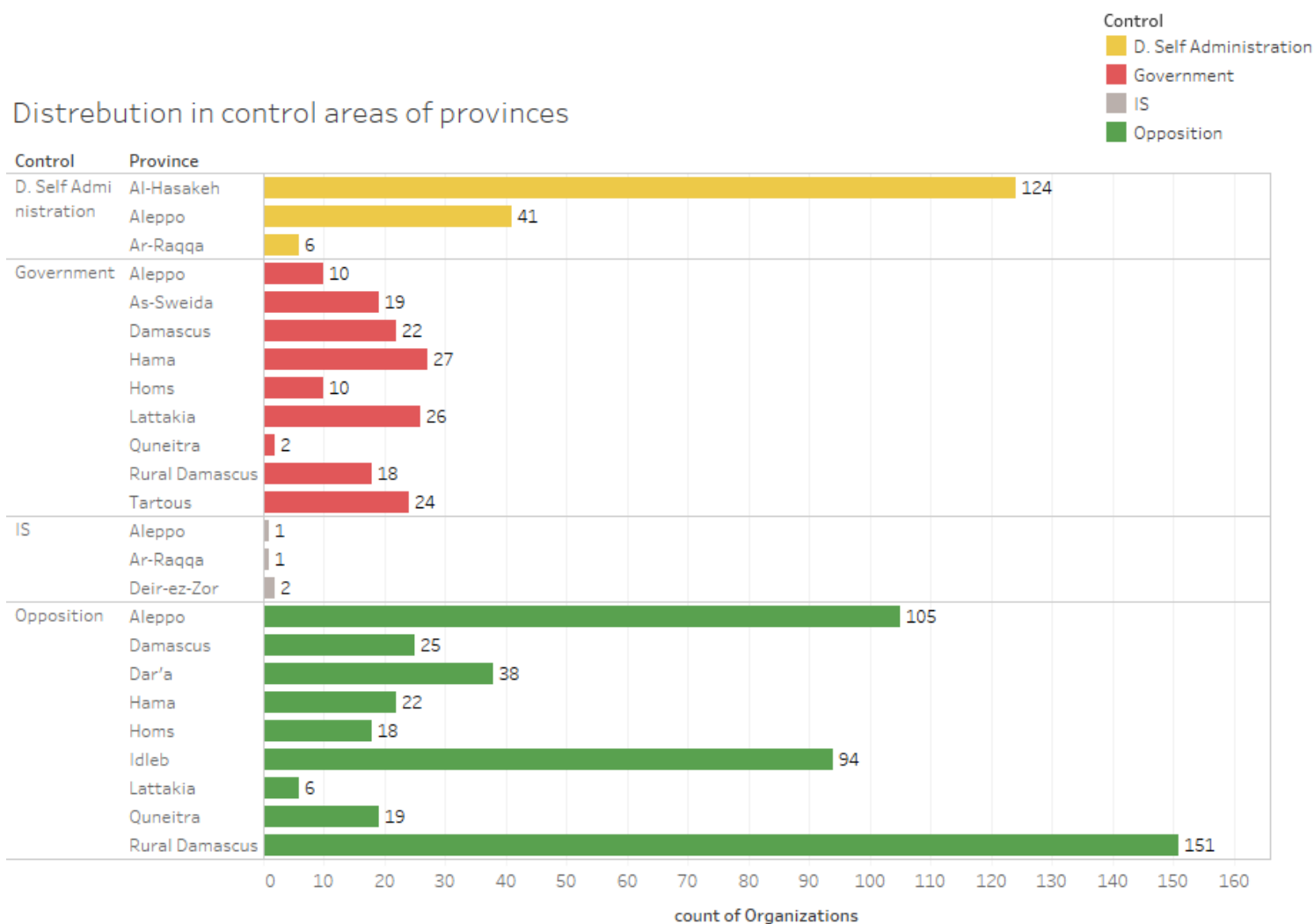


Figure 18: Distribution of CSOs Across Areas of Control and Provinces

CSOs operating chiefly in opposition-held areas were most present in Damascus countryside (Eastern Ghouta), Idlib, Aleppo (the City and both the northern and western country sides), Hama Countryside, while Daraa, along with its western and eastern countryside, in addition to Quneitra are considered to be one whole region.

As for the democratic Self administration areas (Kurdish areas), which are dominantly in the Al-Hassaka province followed by Aleppo and Al-Raqqqa provinces, which include the cantons of Kobani (Ain Al-Arab) and Afrin.

On the other hand, the Syrian government controls continuous stretches of land across almost all provinces, which is why CSOs operating within these territories are equally present in all provinces. Furthermore, it is worth mentioning that there is number of initiatives currently being established however, they haven't all been entirely examined, as well as data of around forty organizations that haven't been considered in this study, the majority of which work in Aleppo.

With regards to CSOs active in ISIL-control areas, they mostly operate discretely or they have established channels of communication with local ISIL directorates in order to contribute to seasonal projects such as vaccination campaigns, which many organizations that refused to be named in the survey participate in.

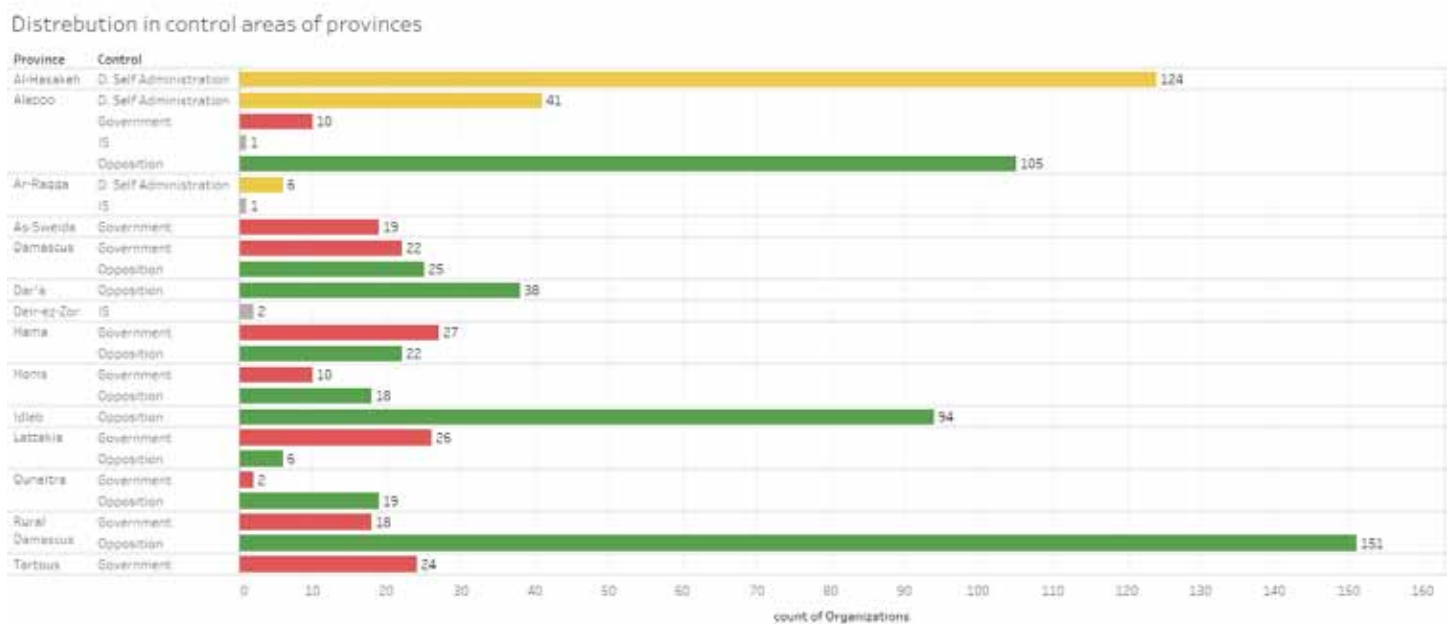


Figure 19: Distribution of CSOs Across Provinces and Activity Zones

As a whole, CSOs do not tend to have a good working relationship with local governing authorities, the nature of ties also varies based on their location, however available data might not be completely accurate due a number of factors such as fear of persecution by local authorities, especially in government-controlled areas. Nonetheless, this data do provide, to a certain extent, a clear indicator as to what kind of dynamics exist between organizations on the one hand, and security and military powers in the territories where these CSOs operate on the other. By examining figure (20), the level of satisfaction appears to be extremely low, as almost 67% of all organizations working in opposition-held areas are not on good terms with local dominant powers, whether it be military factions or local councils, while 60% Of organizations operating in the autonomous democratic rule territories, 46% in central gov-

ernment areas and even 51% of CSOs working abroad do not enjoy a good working relationship with governments of Turkey, Iraq and Lebanon. On the other hand, only 20% to 28% responded by saying they have acceptable ties with the authorities across the country and only 12% assess those ties as being good. Additionally, ties among CSOs themselves and other local organizations were generally described as being either good, very good or at the worst, acceptable.

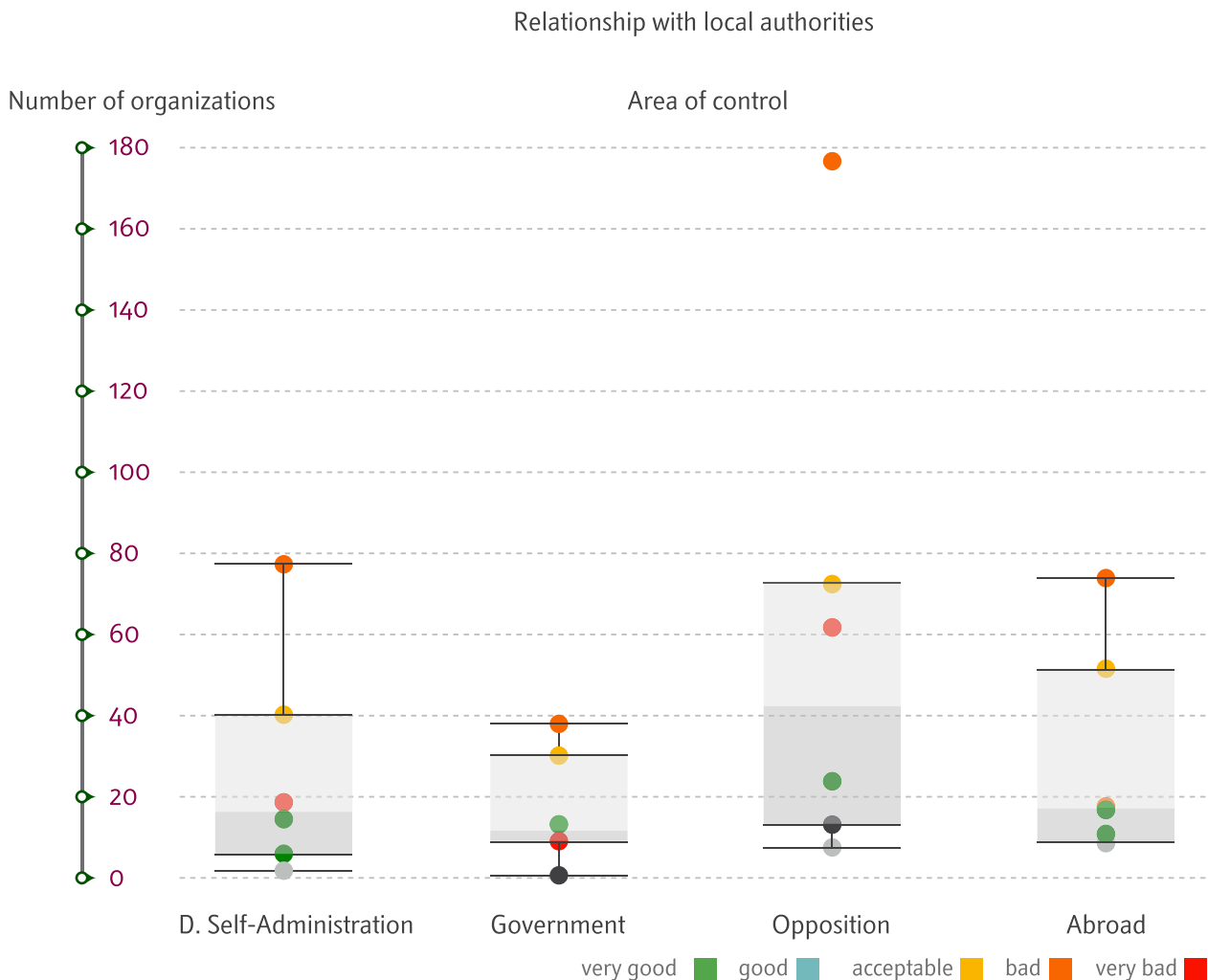


Figure 20: relationship with local authorities

9. Results and Analysis :

Following the exponential growth in the number of Syrian Civil Society Organizations during the conflict, and the great responsibility entrusted to them under the new status quo in the region. These organizations shouldered more burdens than what their limited financial and human resources could have coped with, expounded by the fact that they operate in an environment surrounded by numerous problems and obstacles whose accompanying challenges neither the existing Syrian Civil Society or, by extent, international organizations have been equipped to adequately handle. However, the flexibility and adaptability demonstrated by these organizations in various areas where they have come under pressure by multiple armed authorities deserve further examination.

During the current conflict, Syrian Civil Society has, and likely will continue post-crisis to assume a role that is beyond what is traditionally attributed to this vital nongovernmental sector, which is normally tasked with meeting needs that remain unfulfilled by either the government, the private sector and even all the way down to the nuclear family. However, and due to the ongoing war raging in Syria, the role usually undertaken by the government and the private sector has gradually eroded, both on the level of geographical coverage and the quality of services provided by these two sectors. All of the aforementioned lent additional importance to the role played by civil organizations beyond their contributions to public life, tailoring their tenure instead to meet the growing demand for services, job opportunities and even, at places, create an economic cycle for local societies where all semblance of financial activities was brought to a standstill by the raging war. The active participation by Syrian civil society by virtue of its nearness to the people and the constant networking between its organizations endow it with a vital role in the future of the country through its contributions to the talks on political transition, the process of peace-building and the concerted effort to rebuild Syria.

It is important to note that Syrian CSOs have begun to form active networks throughout the country to assist in advocacy and the process of sharing and exchanging resources and information. Examples of such networks are the Syrian NGO Alliance (SNA), the Syrian Relief Network (SRN), the Syrian Civil Society Coalition (TAMAS), the Syrian Civil Society Organizations Union, the General Union of Charities and Aid Groups, and the SHAML CSOs Coalition, all of which principally operate in opposition-controlled territories (except for TAMAS which runs organizations that cover the entirety of the country). In addition to the aforementioned unions, groups such as the Syrian Networks Federation and the Syrian Civil Society Forum were recently founded in government-controlled territories, in addition to the existing Mobaderoon, JCI and Juzour.

This eagerness to form a coordinated effort calls for a special kind of backing due to the fact that these partnerships lay the foundation for more sustainable and concerted activities, both in terms of resource management and the support such alliances can provide throughout the peace-building process, which can be established through the creation of representative frames for Syrian civil society that ensures it receives proportional and fair representation in the peace negotiations.

While these networks remain active in separate geographical sectors that have come under the control of different parties, it is paramount to attempt to unify these platforms under a shared vision to prevent the splintering of Syrian society.

This report does not set out to examine the shortcomings and violations committed by Syrian CSOs nor the external factors that greatly contributed to the status they hold today. However, it aims to characterize the main needs and difficulties faced by these organizations in order to support this seminal sector in fulfilling its actual role in society, and to serve as a platform for donors to consult when drawing up policies. On the other hand, the position currently occupied by inactive organizations will gradually diminish until they are filtered out by the more professional CSOs that commit to the goals outlined by their mission statements.

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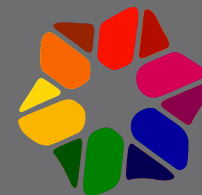
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