The needs assessment report for Egyptian Civil Society organizations is developed in the context of the “Building Bridges Project: Connecting Civil Society in North Africa”, which is implemented by the National Council for Voluntary Organizations (NCVO), the Arab NGO Network for Development (ANND), and Civicus - World Alliance for Citizen Participation. The project aims at strengthening democratic participation through national civil society networks in Egypt, Libya and Tunisia. It will provide the core training for civil society networks and act as a hub to exchange knowledge on best practice models of engagement. An initial desk review was first written on the nature of the civil society in Tunisia before and after the Revolution, and it shed light on the challenges that Tunisian civil society still faces after the revolution. The desk review has served to set the background for the CSOs Needs Assessment in Tunisia. Later took place the consultations meeting with Tunisian CSOs, during which questionnaires on the needs of local CSOs were distributed to the participants. Accordingly, this report is drafted to include all the findings about civil society organizations’ training needs in the upcoming period. The report will be structured as follows: Section I will offer an overview on Tunisian Civil Society during the Ben-Ali Regime. Section II will tackle the changing context of civil society in Tunisia after the revolution (legislative environment, creation of Ministry of Human Rights and Transitional Justice, and the emerging advocacy networks). Finally, section III will highlight both the challenges faced by Tunisian CSOs in light of the consultations meeting, and the needs of Tunisian CSOs.

The below information on civil society in Tunisia is a compilation of information from reports, articles, assessment reports, blogs and relevant news items in order to present the evolving nature of the civil society in Tunisia before and after the Revolution. In addition, information about current challenges and needs of Tunisian civil society organizations are based on the national consultations meeting with Tunisian CSOs as well as on the results of questionnaires on CSOs’ specific objectives that were distributed to participants during the national consultations.

Number of participants in the Tunisian national consultations meeting: 33 representatives of local CSOs and trade unions (See attached: the report and the list of participants of the National Consultation).

Number of questionnaires with responses: 19
1. Tunisian Civil Society: During Ben Ali regime

In Tunisia, human rights became an important public scene during the 1980s, where new nongovernmental political actors had set the question of human rights on the agenda. Moreover, state repression has given rise to the emergence of transnational human rights networks, thus challenging the legitimacy of the repressive governments (Risse, Ropp, and Sikkink 1999). During the same decade, particularly in November of 1987, Ben Ali ascended to the office of president and remained president until the 14th of January of 2011 when his regime was ousted following a month of people’s uprising.

Ben Ali, at a symposium on democratic transitions in November 1990, clarified his position in relation to civil society: “The state fixes the fundamental framework, creates the climate and provides the necessities for competition and dialogue,” he said. “Civil society should accept these and oppose any acts that go against the national consensus”.

During the 23 years under Ben Ali’s regime, civil society organizations existed in Tunisia but had limited space and independency to operate. That is to say, although the number of voluntary and national organizations exceeded 9,000 (by 2009), they did not show any efficient operation. This was especially the case for human rights groups and associations promoting civil liberties. Most associations were service-oriented and co-opted by the regime, and did not foster the kind of horizontal membership that contributes to a civic culture.

Furthermore, flaws marred the “enabling framework” for Tunisian civil society during the Ben-Ali regime. For instance, although the right to association and assembly were enshrined in the Tunisian Constitution, relevant laws, including Penal Code, Law on Associations and the Law on Public Meetings, Processions, Marches, Demonstrations and Gatherings affected the real practice for independent civil society in Tunisia. In addition, the political parties act was eclectic, whereby a number of Tunisian freedom fighters were persecuted for their affiliations with “unregistered” parties. Major provisions of key laws are summarized below.

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2 http://www.freedomhouse.org/report/countries-crossroads/2012/tunisia#_edn17

**Constitution:** The Tunisian Constitution provides, “Freedom of assembly and association is guaranteed and exercised according to the terms defined by law.” Article 7 of the Constitution states, “the exercise of these rights can be limited only by laws enacted to protect the rights of others, the respect of public order, national defense, the development of economy and social progress.” Through this law, the regime was allowed to blockade and prosecute associations, which left them in a state of struggle for continuity.

Since its independence until the 2011 January revolution, Tunisia was a single-party state (both during the Bourguiba years and Ben-Ali’s regime) where civil society was tightly monitored and controlled. *Tunisia Understanding Conflict* 2012- http://www.sais-jhu.edu/sites/default/files/areas-of-study/files/Tunisia%20Report%20-%20April%202017%20Final.pdf

Despite serious restrictions on freedoms during President Bourguiba’s presidency, the first national human rights organization in the Arab world, the Tunisian League for Human Rights (LTDH – Ligue Tunisienne des Droits de l’Homme), was established in 1976.


**State of Emergency:** Tunisia did not have a standing emergency law until recently. Tunisia’s government declared a state of emergency in January 2011 in response to large protests and demonstrations that forced President Ben Ali to step down from office. The state of emergency allowed the government to prohibit gatherings of more than three people, impose a curfew, and allow security forces to use force to restrain suspects.

**Establishing NGOs:** Tunisia’s Law on Associations (Law 154 of 1959 as amended) allows two or more persons to found an association to carry out activities on a permanent basis, as long as its purposes are not commercial and do not include the generation of profit. Only associations fitting into certain categories are permitted: women’s groups; sports groups; scientific groups; cultural and arts groups; charity, emergency, and social groups; development groups; amicable groups; and associations of public interest. Human rights and democracy groups were not a permissible category, which allowed the state to often deny registration of these organizations.

In order to form an association, founders must submit documents including Articles of Association to the Ministry of Interior. Upon proper filing of the documents, the law requires the Ministry to provide a receipt. The law does not impose a time limit in which a receipt must be issued. Tunisian NGOs have reported that in practice, the government routinely withheld the required receipts, in effect preventing the registration of many independent NGOs. Without the required receipt, NGOs lack evidence that they submitted their required paperwork, and are unable to appeal the de facto denial of their application to register.

An association acquires legal status three months after the filing of its documents and a notice of the association’s establishment is published in the Official Gazette. During this three months period, the association may not carry out any activities, and the Ministry may
disapprove the formation of the association. The Law on Associations permits the Minister of the Interior to issue a decree disapproving the formation of an association if:
  
  - Its goals are contrary to laws and morals or may lead to disruption of public order, or undermine Tunisia’s territorial integrity or Republican form of government; or
  - The founders or directors have been convicted of a felony impugning their good morals.

Any person responsible for operating an unlicensed association, taking part in an unlicensed association, or participating in the operation of an unlicensed association faces both fines and imprisonment.

Foreign associations operating within Tunisia face additional restrictions. Foreign groups must seek approval not only from the Ministry of Interior, but also from the Minister of Foreign Affairs. The Ministry of Interior may withdraw the operating license of a foreign association at any time without explanation or a process for appeal. Anyone who operates an unlicensed foreign association may be imprisoned for up to five years and fined up to one hundred dinars. Anyone who participates in running a foreign association or its affiliates may face imprisonment of up to three years and a fine of up to fifty dinars.

**Restraints on Contacts with Foreign Governments and NGOs:** In June 2010, the Tunisian government amended the criminal code to impose criminal penalties on “persons who establish, directly or indirectly, contact with officials of a foreign state, institution or foreign organization with the aim of inciting them to harm Tunisia’s vital interests and its economic security.”

Based on this law, routine contact with foreign organizations or foreign media outlets could potentially subject Tunisians to imprisonment. For example, a Tunisian civil society representative who criticizes the Tunisian government in a meeting with a potential economic partner, such as the EU, may face a risk of imprisonment.

**Excessive Government Supervision of NGO Operations:** The Law on Associations contains few direct references to government supervision. But the government has routinely employed extra-legal means to restrict the activities of NGOs and of unregistered groups.

**Restrictions on Funding:** First aid and charity organizations may only accept contributions approved by the Minister of Interior, while other associations may only receive subscriptions paid by members or funds extracted from the members. Although the law does not explicitly require prior approval for foreign funding, some groups report that foreign funding has been monitored through the government’s Central Bank, and the government has frozen or confiscated NGO funds for no clear reason. As a result, organizations have limited ability to obtain funds with which they can sustain their operations guarantee continuity.

**Suspensions and Dissolution:** The Minister of Interior “may issue an order suspending all activities of an association in case of extreme urgency, or may ask the relevant court to order the dissolution of an association if its goals or activities undermine public order, or public morals or whose purpose is political.” The Minister may exercise this power upon determination that suspension would avoid “jeopardizing the public order.” Suspensions are limited to fifteen days, but apply to all of an organization’s activities or meetings, so any planned activity within the suspension period would also be suspended. This provision has allowed the government to prevent planned demonstrations, public gatherings, or other
activities seen as opposing the state’s agenda. The Minister of Interior also has the authority to request a court to dissolve an association if it has “seriously breached” the provisions of Law 154 of 1959, or if it “turned out to have objectives, activities or conduct that is contradictory to the general order and morals” or engaged in activities of a political nature.

**Restrictions on Freedom of Assembly:** The Law on Associations and the Law on Public Meetings, Processions, Marches, Demonstrations and Gatherings provide the Minister of Interior tremendous power to regulate the operations of NGOs and impede the right to freedom of assembly. These laws provide the Minister of Interior with the power to oversee meetings, processions, marches, demonstrations and gatherings. A member of the security services is assigned to attend any approved public meeting, rally, or march and has the authority to shut down the event. Furthermore, an organization intending to hold such an event must obtain a permit from the Ministry of Interior at least three days prior to the meeting and submit a list of participants.

### 2 After the Revolution: Changing context for the civil society

A day after Ben Ali’s fall, the Ministry of Interior press attaché announced the registration of over 100 new associations.⁴

According to the Tunis-based Center for Information, Training, Studies and Documentation on Associations, more than 1,300 new associations were created in 2011. Most of these groups, however, require assistance to strengthen internal management and develop the skills necessary to work effectively⁵.

With regard to the CSOs that already existed before the revolution, three different categories can be pointed out:

a) suppressed CSOs striving to survive the old regime;
b) organizations with international affiliations; and
c) those with a charitable and more cultural nature, affiliated with the government of Ben Ali.

The first of these categories suffered considerably from the repressive climate under the previous regime. There was a lack of opportunities and ability to work on a large scale and outside Tunisia, and they also lacked the capacity and the skills due to the government inhibiting their space for self-development. For example, Al-Jaheth Forum, a local CSO established twenty years ago, was forced to implement its activities, such as workshops, debates or forums, secretly inside their premises to avoid clashes with the government. However, after the revolution, they have gained more freedom to implement their activities, hosting experts on leadership, citizenship, and peaceful cultures and conducting open debates to promote active citizenship. As for the organizations with international affiliations, they faced much less problems and, as a consequence, also had much higher capacities. An example is the Arab Institute for Human Rights, which is affiliated with UNDP

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and the European Commission. Despite this bond, the organization’s assets were frozen by the old regime for six months, but it resumed work right after the European Commission intervened to resolve the issue. The last category of organizations connected to the government formed the face of civil society under Ben Ali. Nine thousand of these associations were registered on paper but all of them lacked the essence of independence and political engagement since they were mainly working in charity, culture, and in close cooperation with the old government. Many of these, however, have allegedly changed their ‘face’ since the revolution to be integrated with the new emerging civil society.6

a) Changing legislative environment

Since the revolution, there have been revisions on the legislation relevant to civil society. Initially, the 1959 law requiring organizations to remain apolitical and register with the government has been relaxed. Civil society organizations no longer need to go through the Ministry of the Interior’s laborious registration procedures, but can register at the municipal level.7 Furthermore, the new decree-law on political parties eliminated an article that prevents a party from basing its principles, activities, and programs on religion, language, race, sex, or region. As a result, 134 new political parties have emerged. In addition, a new decree-law on associations was enacted. It eliminated the crime of “membership in” or “providing services to” an unrecognized organization, where this provision was used for imprisonment of opposition activists earlier.8 Since the revolution and until today, a total of more than 3500 associations was established. Furthermore, quite a number of these associations have become influential on the policy-making level. For example, unions in “Union Generale Tunisienne du Travail” (UGTT) have become influential actors in policy-making processes, as well as could exert pressure on the ruling party. UGTT has played a role (and still does) in the preparation of the socio-economic agenda of the ‘post-independence’ (after the recent revolution) state of Tunisia after it has been allowed the policy space by the new decree-law on associations.

On the other hand, the new press code is significantly more liberal as it eliminates criminalization of defamation against state institutions, and of “offending” the president of the republic. Moreover, freedom of the media has been restored as Tunisian citizens have entered into a process of normalization of relationship with the media. The new code will “enable journalists to freely access information, and removes a requirement for prior authorization from the Ministry of the Interior for the publication of certain stories. The draft press code also includes a reduction in the protection and privileges enjoyed by public authorities, including those related to defamation and information related to state security.”9

However, the law maintains defamation as a criminal offense, although it eliminates prison terms as a punishment for it while preserving fines. It also maintains the criminal offense of

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6 Role of Civil Society in Civil Society Needs Assessment Transformation Period: Slovak Experience for Tunisia, Supported by SlovakAid, 2012
7 http://www.freedomhouse.org/report/countries-crossroads/2012/tunisia#_edn17
9 UNHCR, 2012. Available at: http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/publisher,FREEHOU,,TUN,4fce011ac,0.html
defaming religions “whose practice is permitted” as well as the offense of “distributing false
information,” a concept upon which the Ben Ali government used to prosecute many
dissidents and human rights activists.10

Last but not least, there has been an enhancement on the legislative level in regard to
freedoms, and this is largely reflected by the fact that there are no more political detaineness,
only those detained for committing crimes.

b) Creation of Ministry for Human Rights and Transitional Justice

January 2012 witnessed an issuance of a decree whereby a Ministry for Human Rights and
Transitional Justice was created. The ministry is tasked with developing strategies that
treat past violations of human rights based on searching for the truth, judgment and
reconciliation in accordance with the principles of transitional justice implemented at the
national level. This is believed to further promote human rights as well as contribute to
national reconciliation and reinforce the democratic transition. Furthermore, a Technical Committee including civil society representatives was formed after a consultation between the Ministry of Justice and civil society in April 2012. The
technical committee was responsible for drafting a law on transitional justice to be
presented at the National Constituent Assembly (NCA) by the end of October 2012. The
committee has also undertaken a consultation in various parts of Tunisia on issues
pertaining to truth, reparations, trials and reforms. Yet, it is unclear when a transitional
justice mechanism will be put in place to deal with past abuses, and as the NCA’s first year
is over, no significant positive impact of transitional justice on the lives of victims is noticed

c) Other positive developments for Tunisian civil society

Civil Society Organizations have played a very important role in monitoring the elections,
where almost 12,000 volunteers from the youth have participated in the monitoring
process. This step was considered a guarantee of the validity of the elections. In addition,
CSOs have made strong proposals for the constitution, played an essential role in defending
the rights of women, as well as emphasized social and economic rights. Tunisian civil
society still advocates for these pre-mentioned rights to be protected under a legislative
framework.

d) Emerging Advocacy Networks: Post-Revolution

1. “Our Constitution” Network (شبكة "دستورنا")

   Available at:
   http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/asset/MDE30/010/2012/en/e44dcc01-ef8d-4255-935b-
   4d2931b9ce08/mde300102012en.pdf
It is a network founded after the revolution with particular interest in public affairs. It also works in the political field, and trains citizens to work in the form of groups as well as identifies priorities and adjusts strategies with teamwork as the benchmark.\(^{12}\)

2. **National Network of Anti-Corruption (NNAC)** (الشبكة الوطنية لمكافحة الفساد)

It was established after the revolution. Of its important goals:

- a) Reveal and fight off all forms of corruption in all sectors before and after the revolution of January 14, 2011
- b) Help all victims of corruption and provide them with moral and legal support as well as support them through media.
- c) Increase awareness of citizens and civil society organizations about the importance of anti-corruption activities as well as on the importance of detecting its symbols, positions, and mechanisms.
- d) Promote a culture of transparency and free circulation of information.\(^{13}\)

3. **Monitoring Group (TMG) in Tunisia** (مجموعة مراقبة حالة حرية التعبير في تونس)

In 2005, and with the goal of highlighting the serious violations to freedom of expression, including the pervasive internet censorship in Tunisia, 13 members have formed this group to monitor the status of freedom of expression in Tunisia. After the revolution, the group has expanded to comprise 21 IFEX members whose mission is to monitor the challenges facing the country’s transition to democracy while struggling to get rid of old habits from decades of dictatorship.\(^{14}\)

4. **The Tunisian Network for Educational Issues** (الشبكة التونسية للقضايا التربوية)

5. **Associative Network for Tunisian Solidarity** (شبكة النقابي التونسي للتضامن)

6. **Tunisian Network for rights, freedoms and dignity** (شبكة تونس للحريات والحقوق والكرامة)

7. **Tunisian Network for Environment** (شبكة البيئة التونسية)

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3. **Tunisian Civil Society Challenges and Needs In The Aftermath of The Revolution**

1. The majority of CSOs emerging after the revolution were naturally **focused on elections**; the election was the major event in the country and many donors wanted to support it. As a result, several coalitions emerged, with a focus on election monitoring, reporting and voter education. Such coalitions include “Awfiya’ Network, and “Mourakiboun Coalition.” However, after the October elections many young organizations were left with vague missions, poor internal structures, and questions about their role and how to further contribute to their country’s democratic transition. Additionally, many CSOs are finding it difficult to advocate for reform and hold the government accountable. The situation revealed a major challenge in how to transition the role of civil society from

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\(^{13}\) [http://www.turess.com/alchourouk/182454](http://www.turess.com/alchourouk/182454)

\(^{14}\) [http://ifex.org/tunisia/2012/07/04/ifex_tmg/ar/](http://ifex.org/tunisia/2012/07/04/ifex_tmg/ar/)
election observation to advocating for their agendas, especially with issues related to constitution drafting and playing a role in policy-making and decision-making processes.\textsuperscript{15}

2. The main problem that will derail Tunisia’s transition in the medium term is unemployment and economic underdevelopment in the interior of the country. International donors should ensure that \textbf{a large portion of their civil society capacity-building activities have clear impacts on job creation or economic linkages}. Support to local trade associations or entrepreneurship training are among the activities that could bolster local capacity to improve the economic realities from a grass-roots level.\textsuperscript{16}

3. A major aspect of Tunisian civil society that is currently opaque is how local civil society groups are associated with political parties and are being used to build local support, particularly for “Ennahdha”. Organizations with transparency-related missions should investigate how political parties are using local civil society organizations, specifically whether party resources are being used to effectively buy local support.\textsuperscript{17}

4. One of the \textbf{urgent priorities of civil society is the transitional justice}, which is very necessary to deep root the mechanisms of both justice and equity. Furthermore, it is essential to unveil the truth about past violations, tortures and murders, compensate the victims both morally and materially and provide the necessary conditions for national reconciliation which would mean an active contribution to reform the justice and security systems, essential to any stable process of transition towards democracy. One year after the election of the government, nothing much has been done on that issue.\textsuperscript{18}

5. \textbf{Women’s Rights}: One of the primary concerns among Tunisian women activists is the recent success of “Ennahda” in the elections. \textbf{Women are especially concerned that rights achieved under the previous regime may be rolled back by the new government}. There is a need to build in-house technical expertise within women’s organizations on lobbying skills and women’s rights awareness.\textsuperscript{19}

\begin{itemize}
\item Ennahda: Founded in 1981 as the Islamic Tendency Movement, inspired by Muslim Brotherhood
\item Changed name to Ennahda - or "Renaissance" - in 1989
\item Banned by then-President Ben Ali in 1992; regained legal status in March, 2011
\item Won elections in 2011 with 41.47 %
\end{itemize}

\begin{itemize}
\item Role of Civil Society in Civil Society Needs Assessment Transformation Period: Slovak Experience for Tunisia, Supported by SlovakAid, 2012
\item http://www.sais-jhu.edu/sites/default/files/areas-of-study/files/Tunisia%20Report%20-%20April%2017%20Final.pdf
\item by Messaoud Romdhani (member of the Tunisian Forum for the Economic and Social Rights (FTDES). He is in the organizing committee of the World Social Forum-2013 to be held in Tunis from 26 to 30 March 2013.) available at http://www.alterinter.org/spip.php?article3889
\item Role of Civil Society in Civil Society Needs Assessment Transformation Period: Slovak Experience for Tunisia, Supported by SlovakAid, 2012
\end{itemize}
6. Tunisia witnesses a delay in the process of democratic transition, as the constitution has not yet been finalized. In the consultations meeting between Tunisian CSOs, they have expressed their fears of certain formulations that may prevent freedoms as well as of the nature of the constitution to be published later.

7. Institutional Capacities of Tunisian CSOs

Despite the big number of Tunisian CSOs established after the revolution, most of these organizations need capacity building in diverse areas. The table below highlights these specific areas, based on the participants’ answers to the questionnaire:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fields of need</th>
<th>% of organizations needing capacity development</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Financial management</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human Resource management</td>
<td>68%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Programming</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

During the national consultations, Tunisian CSOs conceded that Tunisian organizations in general, and those established after the revolution in particular, are in dire need for capacity building, since they lack the sufficient expertise and knowledge in this regard. Part of this underdevelopment in the institutional framework of Tunisian CSOs stems back to the era of the old regime and the very tight space granted for their development. In this respect, participants have reiterated their need for capacity building in general and in the following fields in particular: strategic planning, organizational, administrative, and financial, as well as individual skills and dispute settlement. On a different note, participating CSOs believe that organizations and associations ought to undergo a self-assessment since some of them act on the basis of rush and enthusiasm, as well as consider funding their basic goal.

Most importantly, the success of the Tunisian civil society will be measured by its capacity to answer the urgent social challenges on an effective and sustainable basis. We should always remember that the revolution was a reaction against poverty, high unemployment and regional inequality.

more training and capacity building on how to work jointly in coalitions and networks.”

There is a need for associations to form a networked grouping in order to put an end to the fragmentation of the association community, a fragmentation worsened by the division between modernists and traditionalists. Many organizations are aware of the need to combine their powers, but there is a lack of willingness to give up sovereignty. As a result, although the new legal framework allows the formal constitution of networks, many collaborating CSOs do not leave the informal stage.

Participating CSOs in the national consultations have arrived at a general consensus on the fact that each association on its own is weaker than when under an umbrella such as a network of associations. Furthermore, they have emphasized the need for each association to specialize in specific fields while networking with counterparts on the floor of common goals. This way the network of associations would possess greater power to influence policies. In this regard, CSOs need to develop a clear understanding of what to collaborate with (their collaboration has to be specific, as in areas they are specialized in and have an advantage in).

9. Absent Youth Civic Engagement: There is lack of avenues for civic engagement for youth. The civic education among the youth is low and their political awareness is insufficient. Long years of oppression did not allow for a culture of civic life to emerge among the Tunisian youth. Additionally, social entrepreneurship is not a well-known concept among youth. This creates an opportunity to focus on engaging youth in social entrepreneurship in response to their limited economic and civic opportunities. On a different note, participants in the national consultations have pointed out their concerns regarding the remarkable fraction of the Tunisian youth (especially young men graduating from universities) that is taking part in regional conflicts, such as fighting in Syria under the name of ‘jihad’. Therefore, CSOs highlighted the need to create an appropriate environment for the Tunisian youth to remain in their countries and engage in productive practices.

10. In light of the national consultations, CSOs have raised the issue relating to people with special needs. In this regard, they emphasized the importance of addressing the needs, rights and specificities of this category of persons in order to enhance their current situation, since they demands reflect ‘true’ needs. This requires a joint effort from CSOs to establish the integrating environment for organizations concerned with people with special needs, by way of networking of such associations.

11. Discrimination between urban and rural Tunisia: During the national consultations, CSOs from rural Tunisia complained from the eclectic treatment rural parts of Tunisia receive when compared with urban areas. For instance, Internet service is not available in the big parts of rural Tunisia. Therefore, the participants have emphasized the need to develop the capacities of CSOs in rural Tunisia to advocate for their rights, since this is believed to be a necessity to ensure real representation. Furthermore, participating

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CSOs have concluded that networking, such as under a national umbrella of organizations, is essential to reach such goal.

12. **Tunisian CSOs’ policy advocacy capacity:** It is difficult to obtain hard facts about CSOs’ capacity in the field of policy advocacy, but relevant circumstances have been analyzed recently and can provide an insight into CSOs’ capacities and the challenges they are facing. The effectiveness of policy advocacy is highly dependent on the relationship between the state and civil society and how they perceive each other. Circumstances regarding the relationship between the Tunisian state and civil society have of course changed significantly since the revolution. There is, nevertheless, also a certain inheritance from the pre-revolution era where CSOs have to deal with; the mistrust between the citizen and the state and between civil society and the state that stems from the previous repression remains. This is an obstacle to establishing proper mechanisms of engagement. Furthermore, Tunisian CSOs are concerned with the lack of transparency and incomplete access to information in public affairs. This is believed to hinder their ability to effectively monitor the performance of public institutions. Thus, although there may also be an acknowledgement of the need to establish such mechanisms on both sides, this has not occurred so far. As a consequence, **the majority of Tunisian civil society remains in a sort of stand-by position to future political developments without taking a more radical stance of cooperation or opposition.** In addition, both state and civil society suffer from a lack of expertise and experience. This leads to further mistrust, since due to this lack, they consider each other illegitimate and incompetent.

In light of the national consultations, the areas of interest in policy advocacy among Tunisian CSOs are highlighted in the table below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subjects of policy advocacy</th>
<th>% of organizations (out of 11)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Civil and political rights</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social and economic rights</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development issues</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women’s rights</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Tunisian CSOs have emphasized the need to incorporate development issues and the social and economic rights of the citizens alongside demands calling for democracy, political, and women’s rights. They strongly believe that a principle catalyst behind the revolutions was the unjust development framework, which was reflected by the unfair economic and social policies that did not stem from the needs of the people, rather from the ruling elite that prioritized international integration over the internal developmental needs. This increased interest in areas of economics and development necessitates an enhancement of knowledge amongst CSOs in areas of policy, and in the monitoring of such policies.
Conclusions on the challenges facing Tunisian civil society after the revolution

1. **Transition of the role of civil society:** from election observation to advocating for their agendas (especially constitution drafting and influencing decision-making).

2. **Unemployment and economic underdevelopment:** constitute impediments to the transition of the Tunisian economy in the medium term.

3. **Political affiliations:** Some local CSOs are affiliated with the ruling political party “Ennahdah”, and serve as local support for it with a ‘civil’ dimension.

4. **Transitional justice:** no significant progress has been made in this regard.

5. **Women’s rights:** Tunisian civil society is concerned that rights of women achieved under the previous regime may be rolled back under the new government.

6. **Delay in the process of democratic transition:** Besides the fact that the new constitution has not yet been finalized, Tunisian CSOs fear that certain formulation in the new constitution may hinder freedoms.

7. **Institutional capacities:** Many associations have emerged after the revolution; only a large share of them has not been effective in advocating for their agendas. This is explained by internal limitations on the institutional level, particularly in the following areas: strategic Planning, qualification of human resources (organizational, administrative, communication and leadership), individual skills, and dispute settlement and the acceptance of others.

8. **Networking and Coordination among Tunisian CSOs:** Tunisian CSOs have conceded the need for associations to form a networked grouping in order to put an end to the fragmentation of the association community, as well as to enhance their influence in policy-making processes.

9. **Youth civic engagement** is absent, not to mention the significant numbers of young men taking part in regional conflicts (Syria).

10. **People with special needs** face difficulties in integrating with societies as well as in getting their voice heard.

11. **CSOs from rural Tunisia** complain from the state’s neglect of the developmental rights of the rural parts of Tunisia.

12. **Policy Advocacy Capacity:** There is a lack of expertise and experience among Tunisian CSOs, especially the emerging ones, in advocating for diverse subjects of policy advocacy, particularly on development related issues through their economic and social dimensions. Also, there’s a lack of transparency and access to information.
Conclusions on the needs of Tunisian civil society

1. **Building Institutional Capacities in the fields of:**
   i. Strategic planning
   ii. Communication with international organizations and fundraising
   iii. Organizational, administrative, and financial
   iv. Leadership and communication
   v. Individual Skills → dispute settlement and accepting others

2. **Networking:** The need to establish an umbrella of sector networks that works on determining the broad lines for the joint work on the basis of abandoning self-centeredness, bringing closer or unifying the goals, and working on the local, national, regional and international levels. The following needs ought to be considered:
   i. Enhancing solidarity and integration of roles in achieving common goals, while preserving diversity and flexibility
   ii. Accumulation of capabilities and resources
   iii. Gaining access to regions and sectors

3. **Policy Advocacy Capacity:** There is a need to enhance the capacities of Tunisian CSOs for advocacy purposes by way of:
   i. Raising awareness among the people on issues related to democracy, the right to development (economic, social, and environmental rights), and gender justice
   ii. Developing campaigning skills
   iii. Networking with media
   iv. Building communication skills → access to policy-makers on the floor of common areas of interest

4. **Specific policy areas of interest:**
   i. **Building democracy:** playing a role in peace building and conflict resolution
   ii. **Monitoring social and economic policies,** particularly on issues related to:
      a. monitoring budget as a means to evaluate public policy (on the national level)
      b. the role of International Financial Institutions (IFIs) in Tunisia (on the international level)
   iii. **Gender justice and women’s rights**