



**The Regional Conference on
“Research on Civil Society Organizations: Status and Prospects “**

**Organized by Foundation for the Future and
Funded by the European Commission**

King Hussein Bin Talal Convention Center

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Conference Report

As part of an initiative made by the Foundation for the Future, and funded by the European Commission, the Regional Conference on Research on Civil Society Organizations: Status and Prospects was held under the Patronage of the Jordanian Minister of Political Development HE Musa Maaytah. The event was hosted at the King Hussein Bin Talal Convention Center at the Dead Sea, between January 26th and 28th 2010. It brought together academics, researchers, specialists, and activists from the local, regional, and global social development arena. Together, these parties analyzed and commented on research studies pertaining to the field. Through their analysis participants discussed the current status of Research Studies conducted on Civil Society in both the Arab World and Iran. The analysis brought with it reason for serious revision of the research studies available. It was therefore after five workshops and lengthy discussions that a set of conclusions and points of actions were set. These conclusions are aimed at raising the quality of scientific research relevant to the field. The Foundation for the Future will use these points of action to set an action plan. The action plan will serve as a means to raise the standards of operations of Civil Society Organizations across the region.

Introductory Session

President of Foundation For the Future (FFF), Ms. Nabila Hamza inaugurated the event proceedings by thanking the Jordanian Minister of Political Development H.E. Mr. Musa Maaytah for his kind patronage . She also thanked the Deputy US Secretary of State for her attendance. She also expressed her gratitude to funding parties, especially the European Union, as it was these generous contributions that made the holding of this conference possible. She then went on to value the importance granted FFF's work by the League of Arab States. Ms. Hamza expressed her hopes that such sentiments would lead to the strengthening of trust between Arab governments and civil society organization, and that on another level it would lead to the formation of true bonds between the Foundation for the Future and Arab governments.

Ms. Hamza affirmed that civil society organizations across the region have gained a new position within social frameworks, a position they had acquired at the onset of the 1990s. They have gained this new acclaim in recognition of their role as key contributors to democratic reform. In her speech, Ms. Hamza also highlighted the qualitative and quantitative developments that civil society organizations had undergone over the years, while stressing the fact that civil society work is not new to the Arab world, but rather it is a social norm that has its roots in the region's history and Islamic history at large. Ms Hamza also gave notice to the new and strengthened position that civil society organizations occupy in the Arab World today, a position that captured the attention of specialists and researchers who also spoke of their accelerated role. She further added that the aims of this particular conference are to broaden participants' understandings of the field as seen across the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) regions. This goal is to be achieved through objective revisions of literature and research studies published about civil societies. This revision is aimed at defining loopholes in the research process and their avoidance in future attempts. Furthermore, the revision is aimed at defining priorities, and founding relevant programs. Ms. Hamza also expressed the fact that there are questions still to be answered. These questions should tackle the future subject matters to be researched, the means and areas needed for improvement, and the methodologies and partnerships to be adopted to enhance roles of civil societies in the region. These are areas that should be looked into despite the availability of good accumulated field experience across the region.

On His Part H.E. the Minister of Political Development affirmed in his speech that the civil society should take on the role of mediator between official government entities and the citizens. He went on to say that the civil society should represent the opinions of the people, their visions, their needs, their opportunities, and the ways in which they believe these opportunities can be secured. The civil society,

he went on to explain, is a key molder of public opinion. H.E. Mr Maayta also alluded to the absence of civil society representation in several other entities regardless of whether these entities are youth forums, trade associations, parties, or women's groups. He stated that our region lacks the true understanding of communication strategy and that it is the responsibility of civil society organizations to encourage group work, accomplishment, and growth through the development of individual capacities via development and training.

The Representative of the Arab Commission for Civil Society, League of Arab States Dr. Farouq Al Amad called for the development of the internal structures of civil society organizations. He stated that this should be carried out as a preparatory step to allow these entities to take on their proper role as full fledged partners and key contributors to comprehensive reform strategies. He added that this step needs to be taken in order to enable these entities to carry out their roles in a easier manner. He affirmed that civil society organizations across the Arab world are capable of self improvement and analysis, and that the need arises for the formation of a database that encompasses these organizations and their scope of work. He also pointed to the fact that these organizations were indeed present in times when official parties were not, and that in instances of occupation their role was really apparent.

Participants in the conference pointed to the Foundation for the Future's response to the urgent need for such an initiative to be made. This initiative responds to the demands of the changes in the region, and it presents with it urgency for the activation of the civil society's contributions, an activation to be made through scientific vision that combines a supervisory and scientific viewpoint in one.

Over the period of two days, over 90 researchers including discussion heads, researchers, and activists analyzed and critiqued the research papers compiled by specialists in the field and as assigned by Foundation For The Future. The papers reflected the condition of civil societies across the MENA region with a special emphasis placed on the areas covered through the organization's scope of work.

The conference comprised an introductory session, five general discussion sessions, and a parallel session in which participants were divided into groups. This group activity was designed to enable participants to come up with conclusive points of actions regarding subjects discussed in the discussion sessions themselves. Specialized sessions were held for the facilitations of discussions regarding the research typology adopted for research studies covering civil society organizations across the MENA region. These traits were discussed objectively from a local, regional, and international perspective. The introductory session served as an entry point to the conference sessions themselves. In it, the state of civil society organizations was looked into in light of retreat of democratic reform

efforts in most countries across the region. The first discussion session served to shed light on civil society research studies that focus on the North Africa and the Gulf region. The second session shed light on research projects that highlighted civil societies in Jordan and Egypt, while the third highlighted research studies regarding civil societies in Palestine, Iraq, and Iran.

The fifth session served to shed light on international research studies that covered civil society activities across the MENA region. Discussions in this session centered around the internationally recognized typology and research methods used in these studies. The sixth session highlighted the medium and short term research policies adopted for civil society research studies. The aim of this particular discussion was to come up with a joint framework that is to develop these policies and their implementation. This session also included a discussion about the long term research policies adopted in civil society research. The aim of this discussion was to foster partnerships between researchers in the civil society fields and their peers in the academic field. The main aim of these discussions was to form a better understanding of the obstacles and gaps hindering the progress of research initiative. A look was taken at how such obstacles and gaps could be overcome, through practice research methodologies in the construction of policies.

In the final session of the conference, participants were divided into four groups. Within their groups they discussed the obstacles hindering civil society research development in the region. Their discussions were based on points mentioned in the discussion sessions themselves, and others highlighted in research worksheets. Through the opinions generated from this exercise, FFF was to construct a medium and long term strategy aimed at supporting civil society organizations, and defining priorities of research topics to be tackled. Its aim is to narrow the gaps found in relevant research initiatives.

Participants' efforts served to devise comprehensive analytical conclusions regarding relevant research projects. On another level participants came up with points of action that serve to develop research efforts to elevate outcomes and civil society status at large and across the Arab World.

It was since the first session, which was headed by Nabila Hamza, and which held the title "CSOs: Status, Challenges and democracy in the Arab World", the agreements and disagreements between theory and practice were defined as points of conflict. To this effect the Executive Director of the Arab NGO Network for Development, Mr. Ziad Abdel Samad affirmed that relationships need to be strengthened between academics and field activists. He explained that this is a must should we wish for gaps between both sides to be bridged. He also stated that the total inventory of research studies conducted across the Arab World in this field is still low, and that the level of dependence on the results issued by research

centers and their use is of low standard as well. He also raised attention to the fact that quantitative and descriptive dimensions within these studies overshadow the studies themselves, and that this seems to be the case in most research studies issued in the past. Mr. Abdel Samad also stressed the urgency of evaluating the performance of civil society organizations. He stated that this is of great importance should civil society organizations wish to overcome obstacles they face in their scope of work and their development. He also defended his belief that the civil society is a key player in countries' joineries towards social reform. He thus called on researchers to support civil society organizations in their political, social, and developmental activities and then evaluate the outcomes.

Mr. Abdel Samad raised attendees' attentions to the need for an analytical study of the factors that negatively affect the work of civil societies. He explained that these factors may be environmental, legal, or authoritative, whereby the government seeks authority over general legislative bodies. Civil societies may also be negatively affected by the general socio- economic situation, a situation which affected most countries around the region, he also explained. The cultural environment, according to Mr. Abdel Samad, is also another obstacle in and of itself, as most social frameworks across the region comprise a diversity of religious and ethnic sects within their demographic makeup, and these sects lack the culture of harmony and tolerance. He also discussed internal struggles existing within civil society organizations themselves, while eluding to the need for creating cooperative networks amongst these organizations and partnerships, and that this point should be a main priority. From another angle, these organizations are also faced by more external challenges inflicted by governmental strains, Mr Abdel Samad explained. He also stated that social development policies put forth by official bodies are also weak in nature. Mr. Abdel Samad also stated that a clear distinction should be made between research studies about the civil society, and research studies for the civil society.

Civil Society's Research Studies Under The Microscope Of Criticism

Contrary to popular beliefs that definition of civil societies is vague, prominent Egyptian Researcher, Dr. Amani Kandil stated that this conflict had long been resolved. Dr. kandil also stated that the year 2010 is in fact the most suited year for specialists to go back and read the literature published about civil societies. She recommended that studies be surveyed from the beginning of the year 1980 with an analysis especially of those published at the beginning of the 1990s, as it was in the 1990s that Arabic research studies were made to highlight issues relevant to civil societies through political science schools. In her paper, Dr Kandil asks if civil societies were in fact able to change political frameworks, especially after they were described as the magic force capable of creating democratic and

developmental reform. She also highlighted the fact that Arab governments were able to reinvent themselves.

Another issue that brought with it long winded discussions was that of the Arab Individuality. The Arab researcher highlighted in her work the importance of taking this factor into consideration, especially since it is a cultural and social aspect of the Arab society. She also criticized attempts to apply Western understandings on Arab experiences, further stating that theories adopted in the past need to be revised. She asks in her work about the validity of western frames of reference and theories when it comes to the evaluation of civil societies of the Arab World and their connection to gradual economic, social, cultural and political development over two centuries. She also stated that it is on a global level that the region is undergoing critical revisions of its past thought structure, a goal that is set towards fostering future advancement, democratic understandings, and frameworks for democratic reform.

The researcher claimed that non-profit voluntary initiatives organized outside the family and official framework and for the benefit of the general public are in fact an echoing of understandings that have existed in the Arab World since the first quarter of the 19th century. The only thing that has changed, in her opinion, is the terminology under which civil societies fall, and the roles expected of them both in political and economic fields.

The researcher also spoke about conflicts pertaining to funding from abroad. She claimed that such funding models pose a threat to the existence of private independently funded organizations, including those specializing in the legal field. She also stated that an organization sustains itself through its human resources and scope of work, and not through funding or the legal environment.. She also asked until when religious, sectarian, or tribal organizations would be banned regardless of the fact that they do play an important role in the social make up of their respected communities within the Arab World.

Case Studies from the North Africa Region And Examples

After the general introductory session, sessions showcased case studies pertaining to countries or regionally based trends, Countries studied in detail include those of North Africa, the Gulf, Jordan, Egypt, Palestine, Iraq, and Iran. In this particular session, local entities from the North Africa region were studied. Differences within the different countries forming the North Africa region were discussed, and the variations within the Gulf Region were also alluded to. The demography of the Gulf region was also analyzed, whereby it was found that most of the Gulf demographic consists of foreigners that in turn form their own closed civil society organizations. Presentations made during the event confirmed the importance of

defining an Arab identity for civil society organizations. Some participants however contested the notion that Arab civil society organizations hold a distinctive Arab/ Islamic feel. They claim that such definitions contradict on the grounds that such claims might in turn conflict with international efforts and documents published about women and minority rights.

Bearing in mind the interventions that affected the conference's proceedings, whether from research availability pertaining to civil society research projects or obstacles affecting the work of civil societies themselves, presentations made at the event showed that civil society organizations all share the same challenges. These challenges limit their activities and their roles. They forced civil society organizations to release similar research projects within similar time frames. However, the projects themselves highlighted the important role played by civil society within the North Africa region. The organizations were especially powerful in the women's rights field and legal fields, and especially in issues pertaining to gender equality and transitory legal affairs. In her research studies, Dr. Rabea Nasri, A researcher at Demos Consulting in Morocco showed that political liberalism in Morocco allowed for civil society organizations to play a more prominent role in the society. This political environment allowed them to act and influence masses more freely. She also stated that the civil society research projects are limited in number, and that they only started to be issued as of the year 1989. She went on to say that most of these projects were issued in the French language, and that she tried through them to analyze civil society activity in the North Africa region only to be met with a different set of individual rules and regulations for each country. She reflected in her analysis the fact that civil society organizations witnessed a boom in the North Africa Region in the 1980s, yet in the 1990s their level of operations varied according to the laws, regulations, and policies of the countries they were operating within.

The researcher also explained that it is the increase in the number of civil society organizations being founded in Morocco, Tunisia, and Algeria that in turn instigated researchers' interest in the civil society field. An interest was especially seen in the role that these organizations can play as catalysts of democratic reform. She explained that it is the initiatives of historians, political scientists, sociologists, and activists, which had led to the analysis of such organizations' work since the onset of the 1980s. She further highlighted the fact that research initiatives were especially of high incidence in Morocco, and that this is a direct result of the political liberalism enjoyed in the country. She also said that research projects were not so advanced or frequent in Tunisia, in contrast, due to a lack in political freedom characterized in the country. Similarly, she went on to say, that in Algeria, research projects were not as frequent as they were in Morocco, and that was due to the effects of Islamic and radicals rivalry on the local political scene.

The researcher also noticed that research projects in Morocco were in fact issued by social activists, while studies in the other two countries were mostly issued by academics.

In his commentary about Dr. Rabea Nasri's paper, Tunisian academic Prof. Haykal Ben Mahfooz from the University of Tunis said that a road map needs to be devised for the track to be taken by civil society organizations. He called for an inventory to be made of such organizations' current structures and systems of operation. He also pointed out that social and legal research studies served to highlight some of the obstacles in order to devise this road map. He further stressed that the independence of such organizations is not only measured in terms of leadership but rather in terms of their relations with other political bodies. He also pointed out that the French occupation of Morocco limited religious activism, and that the French laws passed in the year 1901, were against religious expressions. There, the categorization of civil societies might serve to limit their work scope. In this case, it might work against them, he explains. He also noticed that concentrations on historical incidence were minimal in the research studies themselves as a comparative tool. He also spoke about the analysis of virtual networks since they hold a great effect on the social fabric. He further stressed on the need to develop research studies in terms of quality and especially those studies relevant to the civil society's organizations field. He also called for the re-evaluation of existing research projects in light of the changing political and surrounding environment. In closing he stated that he holds hope in the development of civil society organizations, and that they would soon be able to resolve current conflicts and plan for the future.

The Gulf States and their Dissimilarities

Legal Critique and Researcher at the National center for Studies in Bahrain Dr. Abdel Nabi Alekry, spoke of the stereotypical image adopted about citizens of the Gulf. He claims that people tend to assume that all citizens of the Gulf are the same, an image adopted by their similar national dress. He affirmed that such a generalization is simply not true. He further explained that many differences exist between one Gulf State and the next. However, the official government bodies, across this region, has full control over research centers. Such a structure makes it hard for anyone to know exactly how active civil society organizations within the Gulf are. He further explained that all Gulf States face difficulties when trying to find references pertaining to Civil Societies. This is due to many reasons, the most important being that throughout the GCC States Civil Society organizations are weak .In some states they are few in number while in others they are even none existent. He also noticed that the State official body is in fact responsible for all decisions pertaining to economy, privatization, and future entry into world markets. He also alluded to a mix in understanding between the role of the state as

patron to everything and Civil Societies. He explained that it is this understanding that makes GCC state Civil Society Organizations focus on volunteer work within an Islamic law framework. The state is therefore the main funder of the organization, but other positive changes in the region have led to enhancement of research efforts.

Contrary to the popular belief that GCC states don't have civil society organizations, Researcher Dr. Hussein Shaaban stated that the region has over 10,000 organizations, and a total of 1 million members joining them. He also pointed out that most of these organizations are charity organizations. He also stated that research projects issued about the GCC states should focus on freedom of speech, freedom of opinion, freedom of organization, and freedom of participation. In order to break down barriers caused by the conservative typology of the region and the state centralization, and centralization of state and ruler in some instances.

The Civil Society in Jordan

The next session was headed by Director of the Dar Al Tanmiya in Lebanon, Mr. George Kossaifi. This session analyzed civil societies of both Jordan and Egypt.

General Director of Al Urdun al- Jadid, Dr. Hani Hourani stated that most Jordanian civil society related research studies focus on the jobs and functions of civil societies and their organizations. None of the studies focus on the role played by these organizations for instigating democratic reform or public development. Participants also sampled evidence that shows that Jordanian civil societies hold an increasing significance in the overall social fabric. He also stated that one sixth of the Jordanian population i.e. one million citizens are members of such organizations, which are calculated to be 3200 in total across the Kingdom. These statistical figures affect the political language used in the Kingdom, where civil society organizations are given responsibilities that may even sometimes surpass their current capacities. He also stated that the new open political environment had allowed for new rights for research that were not granted to civil society organizations before. Research studies issued in the past responded to different local and regional demands. They were affected by typology and methodologies adopted in their implementation, he explained. He also concluded that research studies issued in Jordan do not look into the work of civil society organizations in light of democratic reform, and that researchers pay little attention to some of the value systems adopted by civil society organizations including, the banning of violence, and the encouragement of tolerance, and fogginess.

From his end, the Head of the Research and Documentation Unit at the National Center for Human Rights in Jordan Mr. Mohammad Yacoub stated that the total percentage of research studies covering civil society organizations does not exceed 3.12%. Most of these studies were compiled through funding from abroad. He also highlighted the fact that most academics remain removed from the civil society and its main issues of concern and this in turn weakens the relevance of the research studies they compile. He also affirmed that the research studies compiled are in fact responsive to international demands rather than actual society needs. Although the local civil society in Jordan is influenced by cultural and historical developments, research studies continue to revolve around charity organizations. He also affirmed that civil society work is an elitist direction in Jordan, and that most civil society organizations focus their work inside the capital city. He also stated that the relationship between civil society organizations and the government is one centered around fear and anticipation. This is why NGOs focus their work on changing legislations governing civil society organizations formation and work.

Egypt: The Need for New Research Studies

The research studies presented about Egypt were compiled by the Researcher Mahi Khalaf, who was not able to attend. However, Dr. Barbra Ibrahim, Director of the John D. Gerhart Center for Philanthropy and Civic Engagement in Egypt presented and commented on the paper on her behalf. In her presentation she stated that the total number of civil society organizations functioning in Egypt is around 26 thousand, and that some of them have been around since the 18th century. She also highlighted the fact that there is a high availability of research studies about these organizations available in Egypt, and that the information is detailed and available, however, most of these studies are not issued or published. He also explained that these are research studies issued pertaining to the position of civil societies regarding charity work, but she firmly believes that these studies need to be developed further and updated. She stated that the language used in these studies is often academic or descriptive, or technical, and that the need arises to simplify this language in order for these studies to be more approachable to people's comprehension, and for them to become more available. She also suggested that these studies be published on the internet in order for them to be within the reach of interested parties.

The speaker also felt that it is of ample importance to confine the priorities of civil society organizations rather than exciting the agenda of funding parties. She also called for publishing new research studies, studies that deal with the concerns of the civil society, and that serve its development and that support its role in securing democratic and developmental reform.

The researcher also called for societies to benefit from youth capacities available in the community. She also called for a full analysis of the new traits shaping modern Egyptian communities, such as the existence of profit generating private schools which didn't exist prior to the 1980s, and the new understandings of corporate social responsibility. She also called for a full analysis of the pros and cons caused by the fading line between profit generating and none profit generating worlds and the effects of such concepts on civil societies.

The researcher also confirmed that the research studies issued from Egypt are well commended for their diversity, but the time has also come for a change in direction. She also stated that a study has to be made about the trust organizations and their effect on the community. She also stressed a rising need to involve youth in civil society efforts, especially since the youth have been let down in the past by these very parties. A study, in her opinion, needs to be made about the reasons behind the youth's reluctance to join such organizations, and about their preference to form groups of their own that often have a religious typology to them. She asked what would happen once an overlap has been formed between civil societies, family units, and the official governing bodies, and she affirmed that civil society organizations form a secure refuge for youth.

Palestine: A Unique Situation

Researcher, Dr. Jamil Hilal warned against generalizations and stereotyping when describing the Palestinian status of civil societies. He believes that not all civil society organizations are the same. He stated that each civil society organization holds a different vision, different in its degrees of nationalism, different in its budget, and different in its target audience. Not all organizations work to defend democracy or developmental reform as in some cases such goals have nothing to do with the organizations' realities. He also confirmed that the term "civil society" is one ignorant of internal structures of the society, its ideology, and its good. With this analogy it seems as if the civil society organizations are working within a void, or within a total oblivion and protection of and from the society at large and what it holds. He criticized the state's involvement in this world, and he called for the limiting of joint forces between the government and the civil society organizations. He also stated that existing studies about the subject of civil societies in fact limited the scope of the social fabric, so that it does not comprise trade associations, parties, women's' groups, or other group formations. Such research only comprises the work of NGOs, organizations that perform in a vertical manner a specific service without truly bonding with the citizens of the society. It is important, he claims, that research studies tackle the elements that secure equality and justice, and that serve to better explain economic development.

He calls for such studies to state the common good, the distribution of social, economic and cultural, and ethnic capital within the society. And, he also stated that a study has to be made of the impact of external factors on economic growth, and the work of NGOs.

From his end, Dr. Benoit Challand, Research Fellow, Graduate Institute for International and Development Studies in Geneva commented on the research presented by mentioning that the situation and norms adopted in Palestine are in fact unique. He also stated that the situation's uniqueness is worth attention. He further explained that the Palestinian civil societies are key players in the invitation of change pertaining to discussions held. He also affirmed that it is of great importance for funding parties to fully understand the nature and dynamics of the society in this area, so as to avoid experiencing the negative effects of funding on the civil society.

From another angle he also stressed that it is of great importance to ensure that civil societies enjoy their full fledged political independence, while also having free access to knowledge. Such securities will allow it to carry out its role in the best way possible. He also believes that in Palestine the funding parties present themselves as obstacles hindering the work of NGOs.

He further pointed out that it is possible for civil societies to suffer conflicts with the state and that it is of great importance to ensure that such struggles are resolved. The balance between both sides is of great importance, especially since they compliment each other through the roles they play.

Iran: Gaps Between Research Studies And The Roles Played By Civil Societies

In the next session, Mr. Razza Islam from the Faculty of Law at Shahid Beneshti University in Iran surveyed the status of civil societies in Iran. He stated in his presentation that NGOs and Civil society organizations do face challenges in this particular part of the region, and that these challenges are caused by governmental restrictions. He further explained that despite such difficulties, civil society organizations are continually being set up in the region and that these are Iranian specialists who teach Human Rights laws within local universities. Research studies pertaining to civil society organizations are still few in number. The speaker explained that this is due to political strains put on this sort of work, the absence of data, and the organizations' not reporting their activities. Available studies are those compiled by full time researchers or university teams. He further

stated the funders do not always fund such projects, and that it is the government that had funded the work of two research projects.

Research studies issued from the Iranian side are mostly those that discuss issues pertaining to women, children, and youth, i.e. those segments in society that are already considered weak, as explained by the speaker. He also stated that these papers also tackle the roles of NGOs, the legal framework, and the organizational structure of such entities. He also affirmed that the studies are not deeply combined, and that they lack diversity of thought. The studies are set to avoid issues pertaining to transparency and encouragement. They lack depth, as a result of the governing structures there.

Iraq: Civil Society and Islamic Discourse

In the session that followed, a discussion was made about the status of civil societies in Iraq. This session was headed by the researcher Dr. Haidar Saeed, a Research Fellow at the Center for strategic Studies in Jordan who stated that the culture of analytical research studies pertaining to this subject matter is absent in Iraq. He further explained that it is absent due to the fact that there was no true civil society experience in Iraq throughout the rule of the Ba'ath Party between 1968 and 2003. According to the researcher, the only reference to Iraq civil societies was made in Tawfiq Al Madeeni's book with the translated title "Civil Societies and the Political State in the Arab World", which was published in the year 1997. His discussions were focused on the works of political parties in Iraq, especially since it is their work that is closest in typology to that of civil societies. According to him, the political parties were the force behind the establishment of trade associations in Iraq, a development that was made towards the end of the 20th century. He stated that even the trade associations were a means for the Ba'ath Party to seek control, as the works of these associations were implemented under its guidance, its umbrella, and its supervision. It was only after the fall of the party in 2003, that the Iraqi people were faced with a new understanding of civil societies, one that in fact leaves no room for control from upper parties. In this new age, and according to the researcher's point of view, the civil society's contrition are a pivotal force instigating democratic reform. Their working side by side with the state governing parties echoes the US. vision for the country. The US government believed that the state is the source of the obstacles facing Iraq and its strive towards democracy and that it is the civil society that is the catalyst for modernization and reform and not the state. This theory called for weakening the state and strengthening the civil society, a goal that comes with two distinctive results. The first is that the civil society will be the main decision maker, and the

second is that civil societies can openly set up organizations that in turn can play a proactive role in the community.

The speaker also showed that civil society in Iraq, as formed after the year 2003, is not one that works in the charity field, but rather it works in the community field, and for the good of citizens. This direction is taken by civil societies in Iraq, because it is their belief that such work is a means to move forward in the country's democratic journey. Civil Society organizations operate in Iraq so that they are independent from the state, and so that they leave no room for state control. Therefore, most research studies about civil society in Iraq, and which were published in the last decade try to position these entities within the democratic race.

The references these studies are based on, according to the speaker, are mainly those provided by international organizations that held workshops in Iraq in order to support its civil societies, and on newspaper articles published in Iraqi newspapers since the year 2003. The speaker also added that Al Sabah Newspaper, a youth newspaper also issues a weekly supplement about civil societies.

It is also worth noting the references pertaining the viewpoints of Islamic groups in Iraq, who on their part try to adapt to the western understanding of civil societies, explains the speaker. This sector has made efforts to apply civil society ideologies within an Islamic context, and as a first step it has committed itself to the belief that both sides form no conflict of interest with one another. This concept of adaptation, as expressed by the speaker, is new in Iraq, and so he ended his presentation by affirming that civil societies and religious organization compliment each other in their work in Iraq,

Experiences From Around the Globe and a Foreign View

On the second day of the conference, a session was headed by the Vice President of International Center for Not-for-profit Law in USA, Ms. Catherine Shea, while Law Department Chairperson at prince Sultan University in KSA Ms. Emna Chikhaoui was responsible for compiling the content to be discussed. The talk centered around the research studies compiled by international organizations, institutions, universities, and associations. These studies served to offer an international perspective of the different obstacles Arab civil Society Organizations across the Arab region create. These research studies also serve to evaluate the efforts made by civil society organizations, as they operate within an environment that hinders their freedoms. Analyses were made from both the USA perspective and European perspective. This analysis gave a more comprehensive understanding of the studies themselves, and of international research

methodologies adopted. The research methodologies are a great asset to efforts being made in the Arab World. They will help civil society researchers to better determine the priorities of the work flow, and the fostering of partnerships between the community itself or international entities.

Dr. Richard Youngs, Director of Research at Fundacion par alas relaciones Internacionales y el Dialogo Exterior (FRIDE) in Spain discussed the conflicts formed between civil society organizations in the Arab World, and funding parties. He then went on to discuss the role of these organizations as catalysts for democratic reform, stating that it is up to them to use the funds granted them in a quest to set their priorities for the best use of their resources and to achieve their set goals for change. He further stated that at present civil society organizations use their funds to conducted training programs for their team members, and that he believes that this is not of good use. He then stated that it is the responsibility of the fund provider to supervise the use of the funds granted these organizations, and to ensure that these funds are in fact used for setting up developmental projects and initiatives. This goal can not be achieved unless priorities are determined and agreed upon beforehand by both fund providers and organization directors. He further claims that it is up to the organization to determine the scope of its work before hand, so that it can gain funds for a specific purpose, a purpose that would be of benefit to the community. It is the absence of such mannerisms, in the opinion of the research that led to a gap being formed between democratic reform plans and their implementation.

From another angle the speaker also spoke about the status of Islamic organizations. He highlighted the fact that these organizations don't get funding from international entities, and that is a two way conflict. The organizations themselves don't seek funding from their international peers on the grounds that there is a fundamental conflict of ideologies between both sides. He also drove attention to common problems found in such organizations, and how such problems and negativity may hinder the political reform process. He also stated that we can not neglect the fact that funding parties also contribute to such sentiments of animosity. The speaker also called for the utilization of youth powers, and their knowledge of technology. He claims that information technology in such an instance can benefit the youth in order for them to understand the funding parties' interests in the region and the reasons behind it. In his opinion the interest of funding parties lies in the pushing forward of their agenda to change political systems adopted in the region. They tend to use civil society organizations for this purpose, a goal by pushing forward priorities through controlling modes of operation within these entities. He also called in funding parties not to interfere in the agendas of civil society organizations, as they tend to

only define political goals for the organization and neglect its other interests. He also stated that it is up to the funding parties to provide a general fund for the organization. This will enable the organization to utilize this fund in light of changing circumstances and needs. He finally stated that funding parties form long term bonds with civil society organizations, and that they continue to fund projects even if they have nothing to do with the political or social make of the country the organization is part of.

At the end of his speech he spoke about the governing bodies of the region, and their innate assumption that civil society organizations are their enemies of the government. He called for such belief to change, and to include civil society organizations in reform projects, even those done by the government. Such an inclusion will bring countries closer to democratic reform. By working together, civil society organizations can expect more support from their governments.

Project Coordinator, at the Centre for Civil Society Studies at John Hopkins University USA, Ms. Megan Haddock said that the Middle East Region is full of opportunities. However, the opportunities are met with a lot of challenges as well. She came up with this conclusion after 25 years of civil society research. She also pointed out that it is the civil society that form a high percentage of growth to the national economy. She also wondered why there are no statistics pertaining to this sector (The none profit sector) while there are statistics pertaining to other sectors forming the state economy. This is the fact while it is true that 56% of this sector comprises of employees, i.e. people who get paid, and 44% are volunteers. She also explained that in Canada the larger numbers of people working in the agricultural sector are volunteers. It is with this understanding that a statistical study needs to be done of the number of volunteers versus the number of people working in the field. This is important should one wish to get a true understanding of the field dynamics. She closed her talks by stating that the scope of work is still not yet defined. And, she advised on creating a definition for voluntary work whereby it is defined as the work in which people “It’s unpaid un compulsory through which a person gives up his time for a family cause or an organization,”

From his end, Prof. Augustus Richerd Norton, a Professor of International Relations and Anthropology at the University of Boston in USA, stated that he was in the region during the Lebanese Civil War and towards the end of the Cold War and that his presence in the region has led him to believe that people are not enjoying their basic rights of political freedom. This situation is inflected by leaders who seek security and continuity of their positions, so it is up to the Civil Society Organizations to find common grounds between their work and the work of the society in order to sustain themselves and a secure social climate.

About the research topics to be tackled, the speaker stated that it is not required to create a historical account of civil societies, nor is it required to list their achievements. He then went on to say that he thinks it is unwise to limit activities of political and religious groups, stating that they are part of the democratic process and the community growth at large. Reform can only occur when all the sectors of civil society are taken into consideration. According to him, there is a need to revise the research projects compiled over 20 years ago. These can be built on successful models documented in them. He also suggested awarding the best project, and to use these models to empower societies further. He also stated that civil societies studies in the past concentrated on the relationship of society and state while today they concentrate more on creating a powerful society at large.

As for Mr. Beniam Gebrezghi, Programme Specialist with UNDP Civil Society Division (HQ) he called for an inventory on all civil society assessments, UNDP could together with partners spearheaded such an initiative. He also thought that it is imperative that successful examples be used to inspire current works. He affirmed that this information needs to be available to all, and for the benefit of all. He also encouraged UNDP Country Offices to facilitate and broker space between civil society organizations and governments, and to support initiatives such as participatory civil society assessments. He ended his talks by encouraging partners in the academia, civil society and donors to come together in developing a joint platform on civil society-led assessments.

Dr. Brenda Gainer , President of Elect, An International Society for Third Sector Research (ISTR) in Canada stated that civil society organizations and research studies should not be concerned with only compiling information but rather with instigating change. To this effect, she stated that her organization holds a two year conference especially for this purpose. She went on to say that her organization is concerned with brining about change and that it is also working to foster more concrete links between civil societies across the region. Her organization also conducts a conference every two years in which it looks at the latest studies issued about civil societies, and it takes into account the latest trends used for best practices. She also strived to raise attention to discussion points such as the lines drawn between civil societies and the workforce, nationalism and globalization, and the self evaluation of civil society organizations within their role to instigate social reform and justice, She also shed light on research projects that deal with civil societies, and yet are mistaken for sociology studies such as those relevant to deportation, youth, refugees etc,

Corporations within Civil Societies

The last intervention within this field was granted to Ms. Rasheedeh Justo from Global Entrepreneurship Monitor from Spain, who spoke at great lengths about corporate social responsibilities. This field was practiced based on the realization of companies of the important role played by corporations. She further stated that it is important to study the curricula taught at business schools, and how well they tackle the ethics relevant to this issue. She shed light on the existence of a willingness by corporations to contribute to the not-for-profit sector, or the less fortunate sector, the sector which forms the wider segment of the society. She also stated that a conflict arises when defining the civil society within business schools. She added that she once compiled a report about pioneering works in business and pioneering social initiatives and their effect on local economies. She categorized countries in this effect, yet she noticed that no existing categorization exists for pioneering works in social arenas. She further explained that in countries where economies are prosperous the youth are more active within the community and are more willing to be part of organizations of a social nature.

She ended her talks by stating that it is of ample importance that civil sectors benefit from business sectors in order for them to succeed. This is true should they wish to manage operations, projects, and activities in a proper manner. There still however, remains a gap between the language of communication used between both sides where common grounds of understanding are required. To this effect she called for the involvements of activists and researchers to narrow the gap, and to reduce the effect of funding parties on civil society work. This will lead to the creation of civil society organizations with a framework for business.

Scientific Research for the Service of Social Change

The second session from the second day was titled "Bridging Research and Policy in Political and Social Change". The session was headed by Margery Denials, Executive Director at the International Society for Third-Sector Research in USA.

In this session, Dr. Rami Khouri, Director of Issam Fares Institute for Policy and International Affairs- AUB, highlighted the need for researchers to consider political structures adopted in countries studied. He explained that they should consider the effect such structures have on the decision making process and the work of civil society organizations. He further affirmed that research studies do contribute to the political process, and he also spoke in detail of the "Research and its Effect on Politics" program, explaining that Such a program gave birth to four

initiatives, each benefiting a different sector namely: youth, refugee camps, food relief systems, and political systems. Finally, he also spoke of the work done by political activists and their effect on political and social change.

From his end, Mr. Ajoy Datta, Research Officer at the Research and policy in Development (RAPID) in the UK, affirmed that knowledge plays a great role in politics. He highlighted the fact that this role is important as it is instrumental in capacity and knowledge building capacities within organizations. He further stated that knowledge can be enhanced through research, and especially those research studies conducted locally as such studies tend to change directions of thought. He also wondered about the gaps present between research studies available and their reflection of the local political scene. He also asked about the power of change that research centers are capable of. He also called for the encouraging of local research initiatives. About the gaps present between researchers and political figures, he linked this gap to the researchers' tendencies to concentrate more on results rather than focusing on their use in the political process. He also stated that research centers need to take into consideration the roles played by political parties, government, and non government organizations, and that they should be part of the political game, should they wish to be effective. He also spoke of the roles played by Think Tanks in certain countries within the political processes, and how such structures contributed to decentralization in Argentine and Bolivia. He also expressed a need to study the roles of such structures on political and social structures, and research, and the way in which researchers promote their work. Furthermore, he stated that in Bolivia, research has affected politics and this is a trend that took over 60 years to develop so that today it is present based on a structure, a framework, and a plan.

From her end Ms. Razia Shariff, Head of Knowledge Exchange Team at the Third Sector Centre in the UK, highlighted the importance of placing a plan or the evaluation of civil societies. She also spoke of the importance of human resource capacity building, stating further that in the UK three prominent sectors exist within its social make up. These sectors are the private, the public, and the social sector. She also mentioned that there is a current absence of research studies that highlight effective resource use. This absence caused economic and social centers to fund researches in this direction. She also highlighted the work of social sectors and the relationship between academics and their influence on politics. She also called for an exchange of knowledge, and that change should be felt by the people. She also highlighted the limitations of academic knowledge, and how such knowledge should be transferred effectively within our knowledge of the political structure of their place of origin and of course the purpose of research studies conducted.

From his end, Mr. Jacob Mati, Civil Society Index Researcher (CIVICUS) in South Africa, stated that for over 10 years attempts have been made to create an index for civil society representations, and that academics and researchers are still trying to understanding the impact of civil societies. The need, according to him, arises for the formation of an understanding of the productivity of civil societies. However, civil societies in the region are evaluated according to western research principles. Researchers try to instigate change, while evaluating the work of civil societies in a none-partial and none-bias manner. He also stated that researchers should evaluate the contributions of civil societies and civil participation. Strengths and weaknesses should be determined within the challenging environment that civil society organizations operate in within the region.

From his end, Mr. Steven, Director at Syracuse University in USA, stated that those international non-governmental organizations that work to serve the special interests and agendas are in fact a large part of the problem faced by civil society. He also stated that in his opinion civil society activists have become more aware of such tendencies. He also stressed the importance of creating databases for distinguishing such tendencies. He also spoke of the database established by the Open University of Maxwell. From another angle, he affirmed that current efforts lack organization and it would be more useful to publish and discuss such efforts. He also stressed the importance of indexing research conducted by the institutions. In closing, he stressed the need for scholars to understand the environment in which they are operating, the leaders of organizations, and other pressing issues/ He highlighted that most of the research efforts reflect good intentions but that the environment may not be supportive enough to turn those intentions into facts on the ground. He also highlighted a need to integrate the knowledge of academics and the results available to organization leaders so that this knowledge is available in the hands of the latter.

Conflicts of Interest between Funding Parties and Civil Societies

Following the discussion sessions, participants were divided into discussion groups. Through these discussion groups they discussed problems that arise from the conflicts of interest present between funding parties and civil society organization. The aim of this session was to identify gaps and to instigate recommendations.

The First Workshop main focus was on “Research and its Relations to Civil Society Organizations, the State, and the Society” The discussions served to highlight the fact that countries differ from each other, and that the relationship between civil society and the state is not necessarily related to struggle, and that it is also not linked to the conformation to legal frameworks only. It was shown in this workshop that the conflict between these sides is not always to be regarded as

negative. Scientific research plays an important role, as it is a means to provide facts and figures that in turn can influence policy change. The existence of positive law enforcements may, in turn, serve to provide freedom of expression, but it does not lead necessarily to the formation of strong ties between the state and civil society. When asked: What to do? Participants called for the terms state and civil society to be clearly defined. The implementation of this need requires the development of models for each of the States and their civil society organizations. Thus, there is a need for multiple platforms, including political and sociological approach for dealing with studies that tackle relationships between civil societies and state. In conclusion, the importance of empirical research on sources of funding for civil society organizations was stressed, as well as the importance of studying the factors affecting the relationship between state and society, funding parties, media and security services. The participants also stressed on the importance of building partnerships between academics, decision makers, representatives of civil society, and that together all these parties work to identify gaps available in the current framework. The bridging of these gaps will serve as a means to allow the identifications of research priorities.

The Second Workshop titled “Research on the relationship between CSOs and Donors: Identifying gaps and recommendations” dealt with the current relationship between funding parties and civil society organizations whereby, a need to fix such relationships was expressed. It was stated that the nature of the relationship civil societies hold with funding parties should be studied. In this session, participants also looked at ways in which such research can serve to help civil society organizations to develop capacities, and how these developed capacities may serve to influence the agenda of funding parties. Participants also discussed the importance of redefining the relationship between the donor and the services provided by civil society organizations, and how the latter could get funding without losing its independence. The participants stressed that donors need to adopt a participatory and all inclusive policy that takes into account the needs and priorities of each region or country. However, some participants expressed their belief that civil society organizations do not have the capacity to influence the agenda of the funding parties. As, funding is provided in accordance to three factors namely: The funding parties’ own political agenda and the issues for which they work. The measuring criteria, and finally, assumptions that fog their true understanding of the political and social fabric they are operating within.

Participants stated the need for a new system of operations to be devised where funding parties and civil societies manage their relationship whereby the latter is given rights to develop its own agenda. They also supported the notion that funding parties need to adopt a participatory approach when thinking about setting out their priorities for countries in the region. Although some participants believe that civil society organizations will not be able to influence the choices of donors,

but others believe that donors compete among themselves to find a suitable partner at the local or regional level. This competition would provide an opportunity for civil society organizations to exercise their right to determine the agenda or its alteration.

The workshop also highlighted two points of action relevant to the issue of funding party support. The first was to propose a study that examines support models, and its effectiveness on civil society work. And, the second called for lessons to be learned from some organizations that have succeeded in attracting donor funds on a regular basis. Participants were also asked to find ways in which to benefit from successful experiences of some non-governmental organizations in providing permanent financing. They on their part asked how such organizations can elevate their level of experience to become more able to change the agenda of the funding parties.

There is a need to assess the impact of funding parties' interventions on the beneficiaries, with reference to the presence of feedback from at least 20 years of experience in the field from the funding side, and especially in the area of democratic reform in their own country or region as a whole. Participants believed that it is time to stop at these experiences and to form a critical analysis of them. They also called on the Foundation for the Future or any other independent entity to facilitate and organize the sessions for an open dialogue between civil society organizations and funding parties, and that these sessions should be based on scientific methodologies.

It has also been noted that there is a recent rise in Arab criticism towards foreign funding parties. This made some of the parties in funding countries think that the Arab civil society does not want such aid. Such aid was in some cases halted so as not to waste of taxpayer money. It was also stated that some donors had also tarnished the image of the relationship between the funder and the beneficiary, because of the political positions taken, or the result of a long history of mismanagement. Such traits make some civil society organizations find difficulty to associate themselves with such actors. It was recommended in this context, that a study on this issue be made, and that donors seek to correct the image they have earned in the eyes of their beneficiaries.

The flow of funds to support the Arab funding organizations, civil society and political parties was another issue of discussion. However, research available on Arab funding parties is still minimal. Research is needed to compare the funds provided by Arabs in comparison to funds provided by the Western World in terms of conditions, methods and policies. In conclusion, it was found that the wealth and raised level of discussion, requires further detail.

The Third Workshop titled "Research on measurement tools for CSO effectiveness and impact: Identifying gaps and recommendations" served to highlight that the issue of measurability and accountability was raised several times throughout the conference. The repetition further highlighted the importance for research availability on the third sector in the Middle East. It also showed that there is no data that can be applied as a model for all situations, and that a combination of approaches needs to be adopted for studying each civil society individually. With regard to quantitative and qualitative research methodologies currently used, participants felt that the dependence on a single approach would lead to misleading results,. Thus, the need for emphasizing the adoption of the two approaches together needs to be considered. It was further stated that effects can not be measured without consideration of social structures and frameworks in given countries, as organizations do not exist in a vacuum. And, therefore, negation of social context and political and economic circumstances will lead to wrong conclusions to be made, and devoid of any indicators of effectiveness. Also the human resources and financial capacity of the organizations are an integral part of the measurement criteria, should the strive for stable and accurate measurements be made. And thus before they resolve to think of the findings and methods of measurement, one must first and foremost ask questions. Thus, it is imperative to think first of the question of impact assessment when designing projects for example:

- What do we measure, Projects, organizations, third sector?
- What kind of impact do we measure?
- Do we measure the impact of treatment of each topic, or each project as an intervention?
- Do we look at the impact of mechanisms - impact on the beneficiaries?
- Do we look at the impact of the concepts, and if so what is the point that must be achieved?

Finally, the Fourth Workshop addressed the issue of "Research as a tool to improve effectiveness of CSO: Identify gaps and recommendations." The focus of this meeting was to address a number of problems. The first was the challenges facing the Middle East and North Africa. There are different circumstances experienced by different countries. This fact stipulates the assessment of situations that are shaping different civil societies. Thus, it became necessary to search for mechanisms available that can be adopted for the development of positive civil society organizations, and that enables civil society to influence the policies of the countries they are formed in. These mechanisms include:

- Media, which helps generate knowledge, and greater efficiency

- The participation of people within the community
- Training of activists
- Production and dissemination of the contents of research reports
- Follow-up and control of governments to ensure completion of trends / changes
- International institutions such as the United Nations / ambassadors

There is a debate about the level of reliance on institutions and international parties. And it is imperative in this context to emphasize the importance of finding local capacities. Still, the United Nations could play a role in legitimizing international standards and in compelling governments to abide by international conventions it has ratified. It can also help ensure that the impact is subject to increase with tougher measures such as:

- Contribution to policy-making in the research, in the integration in the path, and determining the outcome.
- Issuing systematic reports by civil society organizations, in order to exercise real influence on governments.

The Workshop also tackled the question of how the study of evidence-based policies can be effective. The answers came from the participants as follows:

1. When policy makers are open to research results. As for the less open societies, where governments are less responsive, then it is necessary to identify pressure groups, or think in a way conducive to the exercise of this pressure.
2. The adoption of a reliable source of research, or evidence of valid and consistent. The agreement was made between the participants that at least open-minded communities need to be considered. And, this depends on the evidence that would lend legitimacy. This conclusion has been made in this context, of sensitive issues such as racial discrimination, and minorities. They must be considered for actions regarding these issues, and not merely the process of expressing an opinion.
3. The belief that a long path lies ahead before agreement may be reached between researchers and policy makers.
4. Time is a crucial element in this area. It should encourage policy makers to take decision in a timely manner. This in turn requires awareness and coordination with the agenda of Governments. Here, once again the importance of regular reports to provide information concerning this agenda needs to be made available

5. Development of specific recommendations, no time is available for politicians and decision makers to choose between options.
6. Researchers need to pay attention to the demands and needs of research users.
7. Providing signs are within reach.
8. Policy commitment and the swap.
9. Reliance on internal research, or at least a joint research to be more receptive of all.
10. The need for human resources able to deal with the situations to accomplish the desired results.
11. Campaigns should be related to some of the issues or the results that have been reached. This needs to strengthen civil society organizations, levels of coordination and solidarity with each other to achieve common goals.

Regarding the issues that must be given priority in order to activate the role of civil society organizations, the following has been proposed:

- Research into the issue of common values, which bring together civil society organizations, should be given priority.
- Organizations need to learn how to form attitudes in order to influence decision-making paths.
- Studies need to be conducted on the research studies about civil society organizations as well as the influence of policy makers.
- The capacity of organizations, in terms of their ability to effectively implement the directions for dealing with deficiencies needs to be determined.
- Research needs to be translated into formats that are easily understood.
- Conditions for the development of research in the Middle East and North Africa need to be improved. Some participants noted that the value of research based on new knowledge needs to be raised, with the need to overcome the bad backgrounds and negative attitudes
- Credibility, through advanced research, cooperation with foreigners is acceptable in itself, but it may raise some suspicion when it is observed that the funding is of foreign sources.

- The need to develop a plan of concepts including the various issues that need scientific research, with greater emphasis on the importance of listening to the concerns of civil society and needs to be addressed.

A Conference Combining Seriousness and Boldness

The conference reflected trends of boldness and seriousness in debates that lasted over two days. Below is a rundown of the most important highlights. In the assessment of the performance of civil society organizations the following was made

A problem still lies in the nature of the Arab states as a whole, as they reflect a state of ambiguity on the roles of civil society organizations and their impact when described. However, civil society organizations have also been widely criticized for their performance. Many civil society entities still lack of internal democracy, and they lack of transparency and professionalism. Some of them also maintain their independence from the state without including the rest of the political parties. Participants also stated that civil society in the Middle East and North Africa did not suggest initiatives. Also, some organizations - a belief by more than one side - are moving in line with foreign agendas dictated by the "necessities" of their funding parties. Many of these organizations face difficulties in attracting young people and renewal of leadership cadres. This supports the continued gap between organizations themselves and large segments of society. They, society members, consciously accept the existence of organizations that contribute to the support of autocratic regimes. They put their efforts to the regimes service, instead of working on reform. Some civil society organizations are even hostile to democracy and development, and they cripple such efforts.

Accordingly, it was believed that the legitimacy of civil society was not established enough in the Arab world, especially in countries that have failed in the management of internal diversity, and were involved in sectarian centrifuge components for the culture. Civil society does not live in a vacuum, and it is not an entity separate from the cultural and social surroundings. Nor is it detached from historical context. For all these reasons, one can not study Arab civil fabrics of nations at large, and understand their strengths and weaknesses, but through the study of different level of relations between the components of the third sector of society.

The importance of the role of associations needs to be examined in-depth to evaluate their performance. The case of the increasing involvement by the Arab citizens over the Internet also needs to be studied. The question about whether

such involvement is relevant to the concept of civil society should be asked. The increasing trend of the sports teams that have huge capabilities in attracting young people and guidance was also pointed to. The same can be said about that a number of participants for groups or religious associations. With the assertion that civil society is not homogeneous body, and organizations differ from each other in many things, these are the issues that need to be looked into.

Some expressed surprise towards what they saw as unjustified exclusion of political parties and trade unions from the Civil Society Service, and stressed the need to for such sides to be included within the comprehensive concept, pointing in the same context to the rise of social movements in the Arab world in recent years.

Religion and Charity

Another issue also discussed was the role of religion in the formation of the values that affects the relationship of civil society with citizens, and its overlap with the various components of the modernity of the liberal, establishment of the state system and civic culture. The interventions and experiences over the differences and the diversity of the community were highlighted through religious associations, and the associations' abiding by principle of cooperation. All participants recognized the important role played by these associations, and their broad representation, especially in the fields of charity and social development. In this context, reference was made to the issues of endowment committees Zakat, and their role in providing services to broad segments of people in many Arab countries. Some also referred to the charitable efforts that helped the West to build civil society and support.

Civil Society and the Market

Discussions also addressed the overlap between civil society and the market, and the growing importance of the role of companies and the private sector in society, a role which began to lead to the establishment of networks of associations belonging to society through its dependence on private sector funding and the achievement of its objectives. Participants also praised the efforts of some movements made by some businessmen, and called for the inclusion of dialogue with the private sector within the agendas of civil society.

In the context, some also stressed the importance of the overlap seen between the state and civil society, particularly with regard to cooperation that is supposed to exist between the latter and the legislature and the judiciary.

Views were exchanged on the relationship governing the funding agencies of civil society organizations in the region, and the need for all relevant parties to be aware of the specificities of those local conditions, so as not to cause disharmony between these organizations and their communities.

Academics and Civil Society

A review of the various academic trends served to test the importance of the need to base a research study on practical movement of civil society and not on theory. This requires the need to be theorizing stems from the field, and not a projection of the ideas on the ground. The researcher should also take into account the interests of various parties, and social capital, cultural and economic studies, which contributes to locate effective organization. All participants agreed on the importance of the challenges facing the exchange of knowledge in the field of research on the Arab civil societies paths and experiences.

On the other hand, it was also seen that many of the interventions need to correct the relationship between academics and research centers, and between civil society organizations on the other.

The latter would want to build a partnership with the university researcher and with the various stakeholders, not just to simply be a topic for research. A void still exists for university collaboration in this area. This requires interaction, and the institutionalization of dialogue and cooperation between the parties.

Funding Parties and Civil Society Organizations

The relationship with the funding institutions, as well as how to build partnerships between research institutions and civil society organizations with their counterparts in the Arab world was also discussed. Many civil society organizations strive to define their priorities, and reject the imposition upon by donors. Some are betting on the support of local NGOs with a view to change the policies of the existing systems. But there are those who believe that donors did not succeed in linking their political agenda with the goals of local civil societies. For example, (Dr. Amani Kandil) warned of the total reliance on foreign financing due to the fact that sustainability is very limited in the work of civil society, and that the funding is limited and directed mostly to charity, and not for work concerning human rights.

Recommendations

After two days of work and discussion, the participants made numerous recommendations, including:

- Emphasizing the need for supporting scientific research on civil society issues, and considering this a priority that must be included in the strategies that support this vital sector.
- Creating a search mode in the service of social change and justice, which requires the interaction of researchers with the priorities of organizations of civil society, and start from the needs and problems they suffer from. Encourage research projects related to the study cases.
- Working to bridge the relationship between civil society organizations, academics and researchers, in order to narrow the gap between organizations and universities, and building confidence between the two factors
- Research should be directed to focus on the evaluation of studies that have been completed, and criticism of concepts that have been adopted, with priority given to studies on the development of indicators for measuring the performance of civil society.
- The need to create an observatory following the evolution of civil society organizations in both quantity and quality, and that assists in the establishment of a bank of information on this phenomenon.
- This bank should also include a database of researchers. The need to develop a map of Arab civil society organizations, as well as mapping the risk highlights the challenges that threaten the third sector. The need to conduct a research sector is given priority in the coming years, such as women, and legislation governing the activity of civil society, youth, etc.
- A future partnership with research centers and studies on regional and international levels, to exchange information and experiences relating to the empowerment of civil society. Promote the protection of the memory of civil society organizations by developing mechanisms to document studies that have been completed and to include a bibliography of all Arab countries.
- To document the experiences of these organizations and collect the testimony of various leaders and generations, in order to provide information base to help assess the performance of these organizations. Thinking to organize workshops that combine training and education, and

that work to raise the capabilities of researchers and the beneficiaries of the civil society activists.

- The establishment of a dedicated website, to which the Foundation for the Future with the Arab Network for NGOs, open to the parties wishing to enhance this outlook further.
- The need to update the inventory of institutions and civil society organizations at the regional level, as part of the dissemination of information that constitute an essential condition for scientific research.
- Work on the study of the official discourse on civil society, and analysis of mechanisms and purposes, and its implications for the direct or indirect state and civil society institutions.
- The importance of studying the values prevailing in the region's communities, and linking this to the behavior of leaders of organizations and its members, and to understand the communication difficulties faced by their relationship with the public at large.
- Examine the various problems concerning the question of trends in external financing, and its repercussions on the future of organizations and their effectiveness, and its implications for setting priorities, and building employees, and its impact in particular on the values of volunteerism, transparency and credibility.
- Examine the effect of dynamic media on a dynamic civil society, and adapt their roles both in terms of support or work to weaken. Deepen partnerships between research centers in the Arab world with those in the West. And not to have the objective of the tradition of Western organizations, and vulnerability, but for the domestication of their experiences, and create interaction with them by virtue of intersections between the various local and global spaces, and the completion of joint studies.
- Thinking about the possibility of a dialogue and cooperation with religious charities to raise their performance in development work in its destruction.

Urgent Priorities

In light of this large number of recommendations, which was one of the bright spots of the Conference, a sign of success, you find the Foundation for the Future is now called upon to focus its work during the next phase of progress in the following tasks:

- Develop a mechanism to achieve the link between the research plan of the institution and the needs of civil society, and through the construction of an

Arab network gathering researchers and activists, and aims to develop the capacity of organizations actors.

- Pooling the expertise of some of the research centers and civil society organizations in order to reach a set number of core indicators suitable for evaluating the performance of these organizations and measure their impact on the surroundings.

- Focusing on the organization of training courses specific model enabled the relationship between research and practice. In order to raise the capacity of social actors, and highlight the importance of field studies in guiding organizations, and help them achieve their goals more professional.

- Foster a research sector of civil society organizations relevant to the realization of democratic change, such as women, youth, social justice, and the relationship between the associations and parties, and the role of charities and their relationship to the components of civil society.

- Establishment of an observatory of the Arab civil society, working to develop a map of Arab societies and organizations, and establishes a bank of information.