



PHOTO CREDIT: USAID SAWT ACTIVITY, 2023

STRENGTHENING CIVIL SOCIETY AND MEDIA SYSTEMS (SAWT) ACTIVITY FACT SHEET

2022-2027 • \$35 million • Partners: Internews, Mercy Corps, International Center for Not-for-profit Law

BACKGROUND

Civil society and media are essential for informing and empowering Jordanian citizens to advocate for change on important issues, yet face significant obstacles operating in Jordan. Civil society organizations (CSOs) encounter difficulties gaining the trust of their communities, establishing relationships with the media and Government of Jordan (GOJ), and developing the capacity to coordinate collective civic action. These challenges persist against a tapestry of restrictive regulations that limit CSOs' ability to seek funding, advocate for citizens, or help shape public policy.

The digital media revolution has shifted how Jordanians consume news, with the majority now depending on social media. Challenges are exacerbated by state and non-state actors that spread mis- and dis-information that citizens are ill-equipped to identify and counter. Addressing the challenges of civil society and media is crucial for fostering an engaged and informed citizenry.

PRIORITIES

The USAID Sawt activity, meaning “voice” in Arabic, aims to ensure sustained and informed civic engagement in Jordan through civil society and digital media innovations. The activity works with local partners to enhance the legitimacy of civil society in Jordan by supporting connections between communities and CSOs, and enabling pathways for citizens to participate in policy dialogue and advocacy with the GOJ. Sawt also supports digital media providers to enhance their audience engagement strategies, business models, professionalism, and independence, the goal of which is to increase the production of reliable, high-quality content that meets citizens’ media needs. Sawt has three main pillars:

1. **Advocacy:** Civil society amplifies citizens' voices through national and local advocacy initiatives.
2. **Public policy:** Civil society and digital media have a trusted collective role in the public policy making processes.
3. **Capacity building:** Civil society and digital media have greater organizational and technical capacity to improve and sustain their work and operations.

EXPECTED RESULTS

- Citizens have deeper knowledge of key social and political issues and can better discern accurate information from mis- and dis-information.
- Citizens can advance their concerns at the local and national levels through civic dialogue and advocacy, with the support of CSO networks and coalitions.
- Increased citizen trust in CSOs due to better CSO governance and greater accountability to constituents.
- Enhanced dialogue between CSOs and the government, along with improved government procedures and efficiency, resulting in a better enabling environment for civil society.
- Increased resilience of CSOs and media to operate in a challenging and complex space.