



Key Findings from Capacity Building Needs Assessment

Insights drawn from conversations with
19 CSOs for FEF OSC 2025



Why We Did This

- To **understand** CSO strengths and capacity gaps
- To **co-design** tailored, actionable support strategies
- To **inform** a 9-month capacity building roadmap that aligns support with organizational goals for lasting impact



Methodology

- **One-on-one interviews:** with all 19 CSOs using a standardized framework (capturing organizational identity, operations, and aspirations).
- **Gap clustering** to prioritize interventions (e.g., digital tools for project management vs. advanced policy advocacy).
- **Thematic analysis** to identify recurring needs



Cross-Cutting Capacity Gaps Identified

- Digital transformation
- Knowledge management
- Advocacy and Policy Influence
- Project Management Systems
- Resource mobilization
- Safeguarding & inclusion
- HR Systems and Organizational sustainability

Cross-Cutting Capacity Gaps

Digital transformation:

- 85% struggle with outdated or non-existent digital infrastructure affecting financial management, project management and even knowledge management

Knowledge Management

- 80% of CSOs operate without structured systems to capture and share lessons

Advocacy& Policy Influence

- While three-quarters of CSOs engage in advocacy, there seems to be a lack of strategic frameworks to convert grassroots efforts into policy change. Advocacy is often ad hoc and unstructured

Cross-Cutting Capacity Gaps

Project Management Systems

- 68% of CSOs alluded to fragmented project coordination
- Workplans existed only as donor deliverables rather than living tools for adaptive management

Resource Mobilization

- Over-reliance on donors (unpredictable donor funding)
- Grant writing tailored to align with donor priorities is a need

Safeguarding and Inclusion

- While 63% of CSOs prioritize inclusion, few have policies to operationalize these commitments

Cross-Cutting Capacity Gaps

Human Resources Systems & Organizational Sustainability

- A striking contrast between the passion driving CSO teams and the systemic weaknesses in their human resources (HR) frameworks.
- While 89% of CSOs described their staff as highly motivated, only 32% had formal HR systems in place.
- **4 vulnerabilities** this creates:
 - Unstructured recruitment and retention
 - Absence of performance management
 - Limited duty of care
 - Leadership pipeline risks

Monitoring & Evaluation Framework

A Pathway to Impact

- While all 19 CSOs track their activities in some form, **only 22%** have structured M&E systems capable of demonstrating impact to donors and communities.
- The gaps in M&E capacity manifest in **three** critical dimensions:
 1. **Data Collection & Analysis:** Most CSOs rely on manual, paper-based surveys or basic Excel trackers, leading to:
 2. **Outcome Measurement:** CSOs struggle to move beyond output tracking (e.g., "#500 trained") to outcome measurement (e.g. "% increase in girls' school retention")
 3. **Utilization & learning:** Data review meetings don't seem to be a norm and could result in **static programming**, where interventions continue despite evidence of inefficacy or, fund raising barriers where CSOs are unable to articulate impact thereby limiting donor interest

What Comes Next?

- Tailored CB plan/strategy **co-designed** with CSOs
- Webinars, peer learning, technical assistance
- Focus on sustainability, intersectionality, and peer-learning loops/collaborations

