Stunting Growth:

How Restrictions on Civil Society Hamper Sustainable Development in Asia

JANUARY 2025

ICNL
INTERNATIONAL CENTER
FOR NOT-FOR-PROFIT LAW

Stunting Growth:

How Restrictions on Civil Society Hamper Sustainable Development in Asia

ICNL
INTERNATIONAL CENTER FOR NOT-FOR-PROFIT LAW

Author: Maitreyi Gupta
January 2025

Table of Contents

Executive Summary

As noted by the UN, civil society organizations (CSOs) are indispensable to achieving each of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including poverty reduction, combatting inequality, addressing climate change, and ensuring access to quality education and healthcare. However, as of 2024, seven out of ten people live in countries with restricted civic space.[1] In the Indo-Pacific region, governments are increasingly weaponizing laws and policies to restrict civic space. In India, the Philippines, Pakistan, and Cambodia, restrictive foreign funding laws, national security laws, administrative barriers, and extralegal measures, including intimidation and violence, have forced thousands of CSOs to scale back their operations or close entirely, with profound social, economic and humanitarian consequences. Vulnerable populations, often reliant on CSOs for critical support, have been disproportionately impacted without access to alternative structures.

This study examines the impact of civic space restrictions—generally understood as limitations on the ability of individuals and groups to exercise their freedoms of association, assembly, and expression, and to participate in public affairs—on development and economic goals, with a focus on the SDGs. Through the following case studies, it explores how authoritarian policies have limited civil society's ability to carry out humanitarian activities, while also harming employment, public health, climate and environmental protection, and other critical areas.

IMPACT OF CIVIC SPACE RESTRICTIONS ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS 2030

Civic space restrictions threaten the core principles of the 2030 Agenda to "leave no one behind" and prioritize those who are "furthest behind", as follows:

- **SDG 1 (No Poverty):** Civic space closures undermine inclusive policymaking and government accountability, erode investor trust, and exacerbate social and economic disparity and volatility.
- **SDG 2 (Zero Hunger):** Restrictions enable unchecked land grabs and unsustainable industrial practices, disempowering small farmers and indigenous communities.
- **SDG 5 (Gender Equality):** Women and gender minorities face heightened risk of gender-based violence at home and work, as a result of limitations on their freedom to associate, protest, express themselves, and participate in public affairs.
- **SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth):** CSO closures limit the economic contributions of civil society, and constrain advocacy for decent work conditions and fair labor practices.

- **SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities):** Marginalized groups face diminished essential services from CSOs and greater barriers to mobilizing and holding governments accountable, while CSOs advocating for equitable development risk reprisals.
- **SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities) & SDG 16 (Peace and Justice):** Restricted civic participation hampers inclusive governance, transparency, and accountability, worsening exclusion of vulnerable groups and increasing the risk of corruption.
- **SDG 13 (Climate Action) & SDG 15 (Life on Land):** Shrinking civic space curtails community-led opposition to environmentally exploitative industrial practices, and limits participation in sustainable practices. It escalates threats to environmental defenders, with thousands facing threats and violence.

Civic space restrictions clearly hinder inclusive and sustainable development. This is further examined and demonstrated in the following country-specific contexts.

CASE STUDIES: THE IMPACT OF SHRINKING CIVIC SPACE

In **India**, a restrictive legal framework, particularly the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act (FCRA), has drastically reduced access to funding for CSOs. This has led to the closure of thousands of CSOs and significant job losses in the sector, hindering progress on SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), as CSOs contributed nearly two percent to the GDP and provided critical livelihood opportunities. The COVID-19 pandemic underscored the indispensable role of CSOs in addressing gaps in government services, as CSOs provided food, shelter, medical aid, oxygen, and protective equipment to millions, often matching or outpacing government efforts. Despite this, the 2020 amendments to the FCRA were passed, further constraining CSO operations by banning sub-granting and forcing renowned international organizations like Oxfam and Compassion International, as well as numerous domestic organizations, to close. Ultimately, India's restrictive civic space has—at a minimum—undermined its progress on SDGs 1 (No Poverty), 3 (Good Health and Well-being), and 10 (Reduced Inequalities).

In **Pakistan**, national security concerns have been weaponized to restrict civil society,

leading to the expulsion or reduced operations of many international and domestic CSOs. The impact of civic space restrictions was starkly evident during the 2022 floods, where limited funding and capacity led to a severely inadequate relief response, leaving marginalized people without critical support. Restrictions have highlighted gaps in disaster resilience (SDG 11, Sustainable Cities and Communities) and in SDG 1 (No Poverty) by exacerbating vulnerabilities among populations living in poverty—as well as SDG 13 (Climate Action), underscoring the need for effective climate adaptation practices. Civic space restrictions have also

impeded gender advocacy, and hindered CSO efforts to facilitate access to inclusive and quality education, healthcare, and other essential services in remote areas, undermining progress on SDGs 3 (Good Health and Well-being), 4 (Quality Education), 5 (Gender Equality), and 10 (Reduced Inequalities).

In the **Philippines**, the misuse of anti-terrorism laws and practices like red-tagging have destabilized CSOs. Measures employed against CSOs and activists include freezing of CSO and individual bank accounts, protracted litigation, arbitrary arrests, threats, enforced disappearances and even extrajudicial executions. Restrictions on disaster response organizations have exacerbated the vulnerabilities faced by marginalized communities in responding and adapting to recurring natural disasters, highlighting gaps in SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities) and SDG 13 (Climate Action) response. Further, environmental defenders continue to face threat of reprisals, including intimidation, arbitrary detention, enforced disappearances, and extrajudicial executions, with the Philippines ranked among the most dangerous countries globally for environmental activism, in violation of SDG 15 (Sustainable Use of Land). Limited efforts by the state to address food insecurity, combined with red-tagging of CSOs that work in this area, threaten food security (SDG 2) and poverty reduction (SDG 1), while exacerbating inequalities (SDG 10).

Cambodia's civil society sector has been shrinking rapidly due to restrictive laws, including the Law on Associations and Non-Governmental Organizations (LANGO), and persistent government harassment and intimidation. Many CSOs have shifted their focus from politically sensitive issues of land rights, corruption, and labor rights, to politically safer service delivery initiatives due to risk of reprisal, hindering progress on key SDGs. The government continues its support of unsustainable corporate interests, resulting in land grabs, rural and indigenous communities' displacement, and environmental degradation, weakening progress on SDG 2 (Zero Hunger) and SDG 1 (Poverty Reduction). Environmental CSOs have been restricted, with their efforts to combat deforestation and advocate for sustainable development obstructed, impacting SDG 13 (Cli-

Measures employed against CSOs and activists in the Philippines include freezing of CSO and individual bank accounts, protracted litigation, arbitrary arrests, threats, enforced disappearances and even extrajudicial executions.

mate Action) and SDG 15 (Life on Land). Further, the suppression of labor rights and unions, and discrimination against women, who form 80 percent of the workforce in garment factories, continue unabated, stalling achievements in SDG 5 (Gender Equality) and SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth). Foreign funders have responded by reducing funding for both development aid and trade. These dynamics exacerbate inequalities (SDG 10), poverty (SDG 1), and undermine Cambodia's sustainable growth.

Across these countries, civic space contraction is eroding development indicators like the Inequality-adjusted Human Development Index (IHDI) and the Gender Inequality Index (GII). Marginalized communities are losing essential services and advocacy opportunities across all sectors, impeding progress on all key SDGs. Further, civic space restrictions are compounded by declining international aid flows for human rights and democracy, which will prevent progress on SDG 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions).

This study underscores the need for governments, international development partners, and CSOs to act urgently and collaboratively. Governments must repeal restrictive laws, institutionalize CSO participation in development processes, and protect human rights defenders and organizations, with a focus on inclusive and accountable governance structures. International development partners should advocate for open civic space with governments as a precondition for trade or aid agreements, and provide long-term, flexible funding to CSOs. CSOs must amplify evidence of the impacts of shrinking civic space, foster regional collaboration, and advocate for stronger protections for CSOs, underscoring the importance of multi-stakeholder inclusive partnerships as a precursor to achievement of all SDGs.

1. Introduction and Background

Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and protecting civic space[2] are significant challenges of our time. While development and civic space are widely perceived to be interconnected, there has been little systematic exploration of this relationship. This study seeks to bridge that gap by examining how civic space restrictions undermine sustainable development.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development calls on States to adopt a "transformative vision to development" that fosters "peaceful, just and inclusive societies".[3] Civil society organizations (CSOs) are identified as "key…in the achievement of the SDGs", both by ensuring participation and by addressing the needs of those furthest behind.[4] Development and humanitarian CSOs have directly or indirectly promoted a majority of the SDGs.[5] However, civic space has narrowed rapidly in the past two decades. In the early 2000s, many governments imposed restrictive or burdensome financial regulations on civil society organizations, and in the last ten years, additional restrictions have been imposed—typically legal or administrative restrictions, including mandatory registration, national security laws criminalizing activism, barriers to foreign funding, and burdensome reporting requirements. Extralegal tactics such as stigmatization, threats, and violence, including extrajudicial executions and enforced disappearances, have also been deployed.[6]

This study aims to analyze and draw conclusions regarding the social, humanitarian and economic impacts of shrinking civic space in the Indo-Pacific region, via in-depth case studies of India, the Philippines, Cambodia, and Pakistan. In order to achieve the SDGs, "commitment, solidarity, financing, and action"[7] will be needed to protect civil society and ensure no one is left behind.

A. BACKGROUND: IMPACT OF CIVIC SPACE RESTRICTIONS ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS 2030

The 2030 Agenda to 'leave no one behind' and to 'reach the furthest behind first' is likely to be thwarted—and at the very least, impeded—by closures of civic space. The following section examines the literature and discusses how restrictions on civil society and civic freedoms, including the freedoms of association, assembly, and expression, have impacted various SDGs.

SDG 1: End poverty in all its forms everywhere

Civil society is essential for evidence and advocacy against exclusionary patterns of economic growth.[8] Shuttering civil society can lead to economic losses, due to job and taxation losses in the civil society sector, as well as reduced corporate interest in investment due to lack of independent and reliable economic data from civil society.[9] Although studies suggest that some restrictions

can allow for high economic growth and rapid poverty reduction in the short-term, in the long-term civic space restrictions have been linked to economic crisis, heightened inequalities, and economic volatility.[10]

SDG 2: End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture

A constrained civil society has unfortunately created opportunities for the private sector and government to engage in land grabbing and natural resource extraction without consultation with affected populations, such as small and subsistence farmers and indigenous people.[11]

SDG 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls

Crackdowns on civil society have often disproportionately affected poor and disadvantaged women and female workers. For instance, women human rights defenders and factory workers are often subjected to gender-based violence and intimidation, online and offline, by both government actors and private individuals, impeding their ability to exercise their freedom of association.[12]

SDG 8: Promote sustained, inclusive, and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment, and decent work for all

Restrictions on civil society can impact economic growth, as evidenced in India, where a 2022 survey calculated that CSOs contribute nearly two percent to GDP.[13] Civil society restrictions often lead to substantial job loss in the CSO sector and prevent individuals from accessing livelihood training. They also hinder CSOs and trade unions from advocating for better work conditions and decent work for low-income workers.[14]

SDG 10: Reducing inequality within and among countries

Civic space closures entrench economic, social, and political inequality, as marginalized groups are unable to mobilize and freely express their opinion or hold the state accountable. Further, civil society organizations are essential for providing services to marginalized groups that the government does not reach. With ever more restrictions on foreign funding and administrative burdens, civil society organizations find it increasingly difficult to provide these essential services. Often, civil society actors that advocate for budget transparency or expose corruption face vilification, censorship, intimidation, and violence.[15]

SDG 11: Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable & SDG 16: Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels

Restricted civic space leads to lack of participation and representation, lack of access to information, reduced accountability, and increased corruption.[16] Since 2000, the World Bank has recommended people's participation as a means of poverty reduction and inclusive development. The SDGs also call for governments to ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory, and representative decision-making. Restricted civic space prevents individuals and groups from participating in political, economic, cultural, and social processes at all levels, increasing the exclusion of marginalized individuals, communities, and people living in poverty.[17]

SDG 13: Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts & SDG 15: Protect, restore, and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, halt and reverse land degradation, and halt biodiversity loss

Shrinking civic space significantly impedes the ability of affected communities to protest against exploitative industrial practices by governments and the private sector. Environmental rights CSOs and environmental defenders face threats, violence, vilification and even extrajudicial killings from the state. Between 2012-2023, over 2,100 land and environmental defenders were killed,[18] while countless others were threatened, falsely accused, and imprisoned. This occurs in a context where the climate crisis threatens to push an additional 100 million people into poverty, underscoring the urgency of the protection of natural resources and ecosystems. Combatting destructive practices requires effective participation of indigenous communities and small farmers—key stakeholders who often own or manage these natural resources.[19]

It is evident that civic space restrictions can undermine civil society's ability to serve local communities, and hinder progress toward inclusive and sustainable development.

The remainder of this study focuses on country-specific analyses, examining how these trends manifest in India, Cambodia, the Philippines, and Pakistan.

B. SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

This study examines the impact of civic space restrictions on the SDGs and conducts a country-level analysis of India, Philippines, Pakistan, and Cambodia,[20] to explore how shrinking civic space impacts philanthropic flows, employment, service delivery, infrastructure development, marginalized communities, disaster response, public health

emergencies, and gender outcomes. It concludes with actionable recommendations for governments, civil society, and donors.

The study uses primary research, including 52 qualitative research interviews conducted with service delivery and faith-based organizations at district, national, and international levels, as well as with beneficiaries between September to December 2024. In addition, the analysis draws on a comprehensive desk review of secondary sources, including multilateral and intergovernmental agency reports, academic analyses, studies conducted by other Civil Society Organizations, and newspaper reports.

Developing a holistic analysis of the impact of civic space restrictions remains challenging due to the risks felt by organizations in divulging this information for fear of government criticism of organizational finances or donor wariness. Thus, this study does not aim to represent the full range of the development impacts of restrictive civic space in the Indo-Pacific region; rather, it provides case studies and a theoretical foundation for future research on these questions.[21]

2. Country Analyses of Social, Economic, and Humanitarian Impacts of Civic Space Restrictions

India

Indian civic space has shrunk rapidly, particularly in the past decade. The CIVICUS global index of civic freedoms has downgraded India to the "repressed" category.[22] The Indian Government has increasingly weaponized laws and policies to target CSOs, journalists, and human rights defenders, delegitimizing CSOs as "serv[ing] as tools for the strategic foreign policy interests of Western governments", and as being "anti-development".[23] Among the myriad laws used, the Foreign Contribution Regulation Act, 2010 (FCRA), amended in 2020 during the COVID-19 pandemic, has led to restricted access to foreign funding for CSOs. The 2020 FCRA amendment introduced measures such as lowering the ceiling for administrative expenses covered by foreign funding from the previous 50 percent to 20 percent, barring foreign fund recipient CSOs from sub-granting to other CSOs,[24] and extending the suspension of FCRA registrations from 180 days to up to a year based on a summary enquiry.[25]

The 2020 amendments "restrict the ability of Indian CSOs to access resources, and therefore to associate, and have hampered their ability to serve their communities and carry out essential work… they have only served to debilitate the global, national, and local response to COVID-19."[26] The UN Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association also concluded that the FCRA was "not in conformity with international law, principles and standards."[27]

India's civic space restrictions have had a significant impact, including a sharp reduction in the number of CSOs eligible for foreign funding, heightened financial insecurity for grassroots organizations dependent on sub-granted foreign funds, job losses, and adverse effects on beneficiaries, particularly marginalized communities that rely on CSOs for service delivery, information, and advocacy.

A. CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE CSO SECTOR

CSOs in India play an important role in nearly every aspect of human life, including education, health, nutrition, water, sanitation, women and child rights, disability, citizens engagement, and rural development,[28] thereby contributing to progress on all the SDGs.

A 2023 survey of 515 civil society organizations conducted by CSO Coalition@75[29] underscores this critical role, estimating that the sector's economic contribution increased from about INR 73,000 crore (USD 8.4 billion) from 2008 to 2009, to about INR 3,56,000 crore (USD 41.1 billion), from 2019 to 2020, amounting to 1.94 percent of GDP.[30] From 2019 to 2020, CSO contributions were substantial in education and research (USD 13 billion), followed by culture and recreation (USD 12.6 billion), and social services (USD 4.4 billion).[31] Further, CSOs provide shelter to a million homeless people, work with almost 25 million self-help groups to create livelihoods, and work with government bodies like schools, panchayats and primary health centers, all of which address SDG targets.[32]

Amitabh Kant, the former CEO of government think tank Niti Aayog[33], has acknowledged civil society's contribution stating, "there is nobody better placed than the NGOs, to understand the pulse at the grassroots and engage closely with communities, especially in rural India."[34]

According to the same 2023 survey, based on data from a 2013 report of the Indian Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MOSPI), the CSO sector has created 2.7 million jobs.[35] Among surveyed CSOs, 47 percent reported that CSOs were the primary source of formal employment in more than half the regions where they operate,[36] with 67 percent of CSOs noting that more than half of their personnel came from the communities they serve. Additionally, 64 percent of CSO employees were the sole earners in their households.[37] CSOs also contribute to skill development, with employees' skill levels improving from fair to excellent over five years, alongside employees' socioeconomic improvement, from fair to very good.[38]

B. IMPACT OF CIVIC SPACE RESTRICTIONS ON CSOS

The FCRA database shows a significant decline in CSOs registered to receive foreign funding, from 23,592 from 2017 to 2018,[39] to 16,029 in 2024, with over 20,700 FCRA license cancellations since 2014.[40]

Reasons for cancellations include supposed non-compliance with reporting requirements and activities deemed to be "political", against "national interest" or "economic security".[41] The closures include well-known international humanitarian and human rights CSOs such as CARE India, World Vision, Save the Children, Oxfam India, Compassion International, Amnesty International India, and Greenpeace India, as well as domestic CSOs such as Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative, Apne Aap, Hazards Centre, and Public Health Foundation of India, among others.[42] Further, Indian CSOs like Indian Social Action Forum (INSAF) and People's Watch have been drawn into litigation to contest charges, which has made donors wary, and led to a significant reduction in operations.[43]

Closure or reduction of programs has led to extensive job losses. For instance, CARE India had 4,000 employees, Oxfam In-

Job Creation by CSOs in India

According to a survey and data referenced in a 2023 research study by CSO Coalition@75, the CSO sector has created 2.7 million jobs in India.

Among 515 surveyed CSOs:

47%

reported that CSOs were the primary source of formal employment in more than half the regions where they operate.

64%

reported that CSO employees were the sole earners in their households.

67%

of CSOs noted that more than half of their personnel came from the communities they serve.

dia had 250 employees, and Compassion International had 127 employees at the time of closure.[44] This large-scale employment loss in the CSO sector counteracts SDG 8 on decent work and economic growth—in particular SDG Targets 8.5 and 8.6, on achieving full and productive employment and decent work for all men and women by 2030 and reducing unskilled, uneducated or untrained youth by 2020.[45]

Reduced funding disproportionately impacts grassroots organizations and their staff in rural areas, where job opportunities are limited.[46] AK Singh, founder of Leads Trust, which works with smaller CSOs in Jharkhand, Odisha, and Chhattisgarh, noted that sub-granting restrictions on CSOs would render thousands unemployed, particularly Dalits, tribal persons, and women grassroots workers, including "7000 in Jharkhand alone".[47] Similarly, a former senior program manager with humanitarian organizations noted: "in Odisha, I have personally seen 17 grassroots organizations winding up their operations due to the sudden withdrawal of FCRA-sub-granted funds, as they had no time to transition."[48]

C. IMPACT OF CIVIC SPACE RESTRICTIONS ON BENEFICIARIES

Individual humanitarian organization closures due to FCRA cancellations in India have led to hundreds of thousands being deprived of services.[49]

Compassion International operated for more than 48 years in India, supporting 280,000 children and their families. Their closure was estimated to impact 147,000 children and young adults registered in their programs, as well as 127 staff.[50] Similarly, World Vision India had a presence in over 6,200 urban, rural and tribal communities in 200 districts in 24 states and one union territory in India when they closed down.[51] Oxfam India's FCRA was cancelled on 1 January 2022, hindering its ongoing COVID-19 response. Mission Sanjeevni by Oxfam, among the largest civil society initiatives, provided six oxygen plants and distributed medical equipment and PPE kits in 16 states, safety kits to ASHA workers in nine states, food ration to 576,000 people and cash transfers to 10,000 people. Further, since 2008, they provided disaster relief to millions of people, providing food, water, and shelter kits. They were present in six states in 109 districts, and provided education to 90,000 children, and 11 women support centers to support gender-based violence survivors. They also worked with 40,000 tribal and forest dwellers to support community rights.[52] Their closure, with the termination of Oxfam India's FCRA, ended these programs.

Civic space restrictions have also impacted programs for slum children, as well as tribal and rural populations. A trustee of Bombay Sarvodaya Friendship Center states, "we had three learning centers in Mumbai for children living in the slums. Two of them have been shut down because we cannot pay salaries or rent. We used to serve 700 children, and now we can only support 200."[53] In an example of CSO closures impacting public health, Bombay Sarvodaya Friendship Center provided resources to the local hospital

in Maharashtra's largely tribal Anjanwel district, where they built an operation theatre, paid for four staff and subsidized surgeries. However, due to the non-renewal of their FCRA license in October 2021, their support to the hospital has ceased. According to one hospital employee, "the operation theatre has stopped functioning entirely, and even the doctors…have stopped coming."[54]

Other closures have impacted environmental outcomes. Hazards Centre is a CSO conducting research and advocacy on development policy in land, housing, health, sanitation, and environment.[55] Its closure prevented an agreement with the Indian Council for Medical Research, and with IIT Delhi to conduct a study on pollution levels. According to a board member, "these losses represent missed opportunities to address critical issues at a systemic level."[56]

The reduction in capacity and number of CSOs impedes progress on all SDGs, notably food security (SDG 2), improved health indicators (SDG 3), access to quality education (SDG 4), improved gender relations (SDG 5), and reduced inequalities (SDG 10).[57]

D. IMPACT ON RELIEF AND REHABILITATION DURING COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic led to severe consequences for marginalized and vulnerable groups, including the poor, migrant workers, and elderly, in part due to a chronically under-resourced public health and social protection system. CSOs were critical to filling these gaps, providing relief, and lessening the impacts on the most vulnerable.

The sudden lockdown on 25 March 2020—announced with four hours' notice, and extended until 31 May 2020—made millions of migrant and daily wage workers instantly jobless and homeless. Migrant workers were forced to walk thousands of kilometers back to their villages in what was called the largest exodus since the partition.[58] On 5 April 2020, Niti Aayog wrote to more than 92,000 CSOs seeking help in identifying COVID-19 hotspots, spreading awareness and distributing relief.[59] CSOs responded rapidly, providing humanitarian and material relief, setting up community kitchens, and medical aid camps, providing direct food aid, shelter homes, travel for migrant workers, and a mapping system to help migrant workers match with local voluntary groups and government officials for support.[60]

In total, CSOs provided food to more than 3 million people. In 13 states, CSOs provided more meals than their respective state governments during the lockdown. Further, CSOs provided shelter to 39 percent of the more than 1 million people who took refuge in shelter homes.[61] The Prime Minister and Ministry of Health and Family Welfare recognized the sector's contribution "as vital…in terms of providing food and other necessities to different sections of society".[62] Nonetheless, the government proceeded to pass one of the most restrictive legislative measures against CSOs ever, fast-tracking the FCRA 2020 amendment mere months after this immense response from the sector.

During the devastating second wave of COVID-19, between March 2021 and June 2021, in which there were 300,000 to 400,000 new cases daily,[63] the government was caught unprepared, leading to scarcity in financial and material support for people living in poverty, as well as for patients, who faced dire shortages of hospital beds, healthcare staff, oxygen, protective equipment, and even crematoriums.[64] According to one study, oxygen shortages led to at least 629 deaths between 6 April to 19 May 2021.[65] CSOs again provided significant support during the second wave, procuring and distributing oxygen cylinders, setting up medical camps, and providing food aid, reaching 292,987 people in 73 districts in 17 states through 2.9 million food packets during the second wave.[66]

Unfortunately, the FCRA Amendments created multiple obstacles to the CSO response. The donation platform GiveIndia launched a pandemic response fund, but CSOs that did not have an FCRA license could not receive foreign funding on the online platform.[67] Additionally, multiple foreign donors were unable to distribute oxygen concentrators to their partners in India, because they were unable to open a new bank account in the specific bank branch in Delhi, as required by the amended FCRA.[68] A co-founder of a domestic CSO, Action Northeast Trust stated that she was prevented from supplying oxygen concentrators from foreign donors even to the government, due to the lack of a bank account with that specific branch.[69] At a large hospital where nearly two dozen patients died due to lack of oxygen, "foreign donors [we]re keen to donate an oxygen production plant on its premises, but the lack of an FCRA nod held up the process."[70]

As noted, the FCRA also prevented CSOs from being able to subgrant to smaller CSOs and grassroots groups working on the ground. As a result, groups would be unable to distribute oxygen concentrators received as foreign donations "to organizations working in Nagaland or Arunachal Pradesh, or indeed in rural Uttar Pradesh."[71]

In addition to the FCRA, initiatives like the Prime Minister's Citizen Assistance and Relief in Emergency Situations Fund (PM CARES Fund) acted as obstacles to civic space, siphoning off donations that likely would have gone to the civil society

During the COVID-19 lockdowns, CSOs provided food to more than 3 million people. In 13 states, CSOs provided more meals than their respective state governments during the lockdown.

sector, rather than to an opaque government body that was neither subject to the FCRA nor to any public oversight.[72] As Ingrid Srinath, former director of the Centre for Social Impact and Philanthropy at Ashoka University, explained, the PM CARES Fund effectively "took about a billion dollars out of the civil society spectrum and put into the government system",[73] due to "overt and covert pressure" on donors.[74]

The government's inability to fulfil its obligations around healthcare, food, and livelihood support during the pandemic—in part through its exacerbation of restrictions on civil society—arrested and reversed its progress on several SDGs, primarily SDG 3 on improved health indicators, with interconnected goals of reduced poverty (SDG 1), food security (SDG 2), clean water and sanitation (SDG 6), quality education (SDG 4), gender equality (SDG 5), and decent work and economic growth (SDG 8).[75]

E. CONCLUSION

There are endless additional examples that could be brought to bear to demonstrate both the immense contributions of the civil society sector to development outcomes in India, as well as the socio-economic and humanitarian harms that have resulted from a government crackdown on CSOs. Development in India is a collective undertaking in which CSOs play an integral part. Civil society work needs to be facilitated by assistance from government actors, rather than obstruction.

2. Country Analyses of Social, Economic, and Humanitarian Impacts of Civic Space Restrictions

Philippines

The Philippines has a vibrant civil society, with the third largest number of CSOs per capita in Asia, facilitated by administrative reforms in the 1990s that set up mechanisms for citizen participation in public affairs.[76] CSOs play a vital role, engaging in social and political reform, peacebuilding, and anti-poverty programs.[77]

Unfortunately, civil society has been subject to restrictive laws, targeted attacks, and harassment by both state and non-state actors. In recent years, laws such as the Anti-Terrorism Act, 2020, the Anti-Money Laundering Act, 2001, and connected bodies, including the Anti-Terrorism Council and the Anti-Money Laundering Council, have been weaponized to restrict civil society.[78] Particularly since 2016, human rights defenders are routinely "red-tagged"—a government tactic of "labeling individuals or organizations as communist sympathizers or terrorists without substantial evidence"[79]—a practice which intensified under President Duterte.[80] In 2018, the National Task Force to End Local Communist Armed Conflict (NTF-ELCAC)[81] was established, and has been used frequently to red-tag individuals, including many members of civil society.[82] It continues to receive substantial funding, PHP 13 billion (USD 221.5 million) and 14.6 PHP billion (USD 249 million) in 2023 and 2024 respectively.[83]

For CSOs, these legal and extralegal acts result in burdensome bank regulations, freezing of bank accounts, surveillance, threats, enforced disappearances, and extrajudicial killings of human rights defenders. Between 2015 to 2019, even prior to the Anti-Terrorism Act, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (UN OHCHR) documented the killings of at least 248 human rights and environmental defenders in the Philippines.[84] Lawyers who provide counsel to CSOs also often face harassment and intimidation by state actors. The National Union of People's Lawyers (NUPL), which provides pro-bono support to human rights defenders, has reported a "steady increase" in work-related attacks on lawyers since 2016.[85]

Between 2015 to 2019, the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights documented the killings of at least 248 human rights and environmental defenders in the Philippines.

A. CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE CSO SECTOR

According to government agencies, as of 2020, there were approximately 378,500 registered CSOs in the Philippines. In the 1990s, the sector was among the most dynamic globally, with

CSOs developing inter-sectoral networks to provide services in areas such as agrarian reform, health care, disaster and relief operations, and gender awareness, which continue to operate.[86] Further, in 1991, the CSO sector initiated self-regulation mechanisms, where a large CSO coalition came together to adopt a code of conduct for development CSOs, the first in Asia. Additionally, seven large CSO coalitions established a CSO certification system, the Philippine Council for NGO Certification (PCNC), which was recognized by the government.[87]

CSOs in the Philippines have been highly responsive to changing community needs, expanding their operations to include emergency response, agriculture support, documentation and psychosocial support for families of victims of extrajudicial killings, and COVID-19 relief.[88] Despite funding challenges and stringent lockdown restrictions during COVID-19, CSOs went beyond their remit to support poor and marginalized communities in areas of livelihood, food security, healthcare, and education. According to EON Group's Philippine Trust Index 2021,[89] public trust in CSOs rose to 70 percent in 2021.[90]

B. IMPACT OF CIVIC SPACE RESTRICTIONS ON CSOS

CSOs and faith-based organizations that serve rural and indigenous populations, including small farmers, have been particularly targeted by the government, experiencing red-tagging and other harassment to the detriment of their ability to serve their beneficiaries.

The following CSOs have all been red-tagged by the government: Community Empowerment Resource Network (CERNET), a network of nine humanitarian and development organizations which coordinates funding for grassroots organizations on livelihood, education and health;[91] the Central Visayas Farmers Development Center (FARDEC) which works with farmers on land rights and sustainable food production;[92] and the Leyte Center for Development (LCDE), operating in Visayas, which provides natural disaster management and relief support to serve indigenous and rural populations.[93] Such targeting is typically followed by bank account freezing, intimidation, and violence, with widespread impacts.

FARDEC's staff strength and work have been significantly reduced. While earlier it had 12 to 15 staff members in three locations, now it only has three to four staff in one location, Cebu City.[94] Meanwhile, the red-tagging and bank account freezing of CERNET has led to near collapse of their work: "Our staff strength has reduced from ten to just two. The only thing CERNET does now is defend itself in court. We depend on cash and in-kind support even for our cases. We cannot really fulfil our mandate anymore."[95]

Minet Aguisanda-Jerusalem, head of Leyte Center for Development, provides another stark example of the personal and professional consequences of red-tagging, noting that "in addition to [freezing] Leyte Center for Development's accounts, they also froze

our personal bank accounts…depriving us of access to food and water and electricity. They even froze the accounts of three of our old suppliers."[96] Minet explains that with bank accounts frozen since May 2023, donors have withdrawn due to fear that their accounts will also be frozen by the government.[97]

Systemic targeting of CSOs and faith-based organizations has impacted the populations they serve. Despite providing humanitarian aid, education, health services, and shelter to displaced persons, indigenous, and other marginalized groups, Christian churches such as the Rural Missionaries of the Philippines (RMP)[98] and the United Christ of Church in the Philippines (UCCP) have faced red-tagging and freezing of bank accounts.[99]

UCCP runs a sanctuary in Mindanao, a province with a largely Muslim population, where nearly 1,000 internally displaced peoples (IDPs) reside. The state has continuously targeted UCCP and frozen its accounts.[100] Eventually, UCCP had to close down its Mindanao sanctuary because of criminal charges and harassment.[101]

Similarly, due to trumped up charges, RMP had to close their Northern Mindanao office.[102] RMP noted, "in freezing our bank accounts, the AMLC is only depriving the rural poor of the help and services they deserve, that the government refuses to provide."[103] RMP provides education to tribal children in Mindanao and helped set up tribal schools. The tribal schools are of special significance, as they integrate indigenous culture with a focus on agriculture into the curriculum. Unfortunately, of the 215 schools in Mindanao set up by both the RMP and community members, nearly all have had to cease operations by 2021 due to military attacks and government persecution based on accusations that the schools were affiliated with the communist party.[104] From May 2017 to July 2019, the Save Our Schools Network documented over 500 cases of violent attacks against these schools.[105] Attacks on these institutions, along with higher education initiatives, have led to numerous shutdowns, and indigenous programming being replaced with regular curricula.[106]

Red-tagging has had similarly disastrous impacts on farmers' organizations. In Bohol province, farmers' organization FARDEC had a rice mill which used to buy unhusked rice from Bohol farmers at a fair price to mill and sell, which helped

> In addition to [freezing] Leyte Center for Development's accounts, they also froze our personal bank accounts… depriving us of access to food and water and electricity. They even froze the accounts of three of our old suppliers.
>
> Minet Aguisanda-Jerusalem, head of Leyte Center for Development, on the impact of red-tagging in the Philippines

the farmer community. However, the mill is now closed due to red-tagging and license non-renewal. FARDEC also used to have two award-winning radio broadcast programs for farmers to discuss their demands and aspirations, which are also now inoperative. Also, the Trinidad-Talibon Farmers Association that hosted—and benefited from—FARDEC's rice milling and marketing facilities has been destroyed due to leaders facing death threats, and other harassment from the military.[107]

Another CSO, SIBAT, based in northern Luzon, was building micro-hydropower projects in indigenous people's off-grid communities. Despite being given a special pass to operate during COVID-19 due to its essential services, the head of the organization was red-tagged, and employees were threatened. Due to continued harassment by NTF-ECLAC, two of SIBAT's engineers resigned.[108]

Needless to say, such policies and attacks on civil society have had a chilling effect, as service, faith-based, and other civil society groups fear that they will be accused of supporting terrorism and prevented from continuing their work. The harassment of these CSOs violates the human rights of indigenous communities and impedes progress on the SDGs. Progress in ending food insecurity and ensuring sustainable food production systems (SDG 2, Targets 2.1, 2.3, 2.4) has been impeded, as has inclusive education and effective learning outcomes (SDG 4, Target 4.1 and 4.7). Red-tagging and CSO restrictions also limit the social, economic, and political inclusion of all and representative decision-making (SDG 10, Targets 10.2 and 10.6), and indirectly impact the interconnected goals of reducing poverty (SDG 1) and decent work (SDG 8).[109]

C. IMPACT OF CSO RESTRICTIONS ON NATURAL DISASTER RELIEF RESPONSE

According to the World Risk Index, the Philippines ranks eighth among the countries most affected by extreme weather events and second among Asian countries, with 60 percent of total landmass and 74 percent of residents at risk. Despite its high-risk profile, the Philippines has continued to red-tag and limit civic space for numerous disaster response CSOs. For instance, it red-tagged the Citizen's Disaster Response Network,

“The Philippines ranks eighth among the countries most affected by extreme weather events and second among Asian countries. Despite this, the country has continued to red-tag and limit civic space for numerous disaster response CSOs.

a network of 17 disaster management and social development organizations in Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao, focused on community-based disaster management and operations, often in coordination with government agencies. In addition to red-tagging the Citizens' Disaster Response Center (CDRC), the secretariat of the Network, the government has also red-tagged several of its member organizations, including the Leyte Center for Development, the Ilocos Center for Research and Empowerment and Development (ICRED), Cagayan Valley Disaster Response Center, Alay Bayan-Luson Inc (ABI), and Tarabang para sa Bicol, Inc (TABI).[110]

Leyte Center for Development (LCDE), a 36-year-old disaster preparedness organization in typhoon-prone Visayas, provides livelihood support and other disaster preparedness. In areas where LCDE has provided training, there were zero casualties during Typhoon Haiyan. Over the course of its existence, LCDE has helped 1.1 million people in 6 provinces—almost 20 percent of the population of Eastern Visayas.[111] Yet, LCDE's accounts were frozen in May 2024 after they were accused of financing terrorism. As LCDE's director explains, "we don't know all the beneficiaries. We provide support to the list of residents as provided by the government."[112] At a minimum, they support 600 families and at least 3,000 people each year, but sometimes 10,000 depending on the funding and scale of disaster. LCDE was forced to let two staff go as there was no money to pay them after their bank accounts were frozen. The government's limitation of LCDE's operations will impact at least 3,000 people this year.[113]

In addition to obstructing SDG 13 on combatting climate change, government acts targeting CSOs providing disaster relief and training to indigenous and rural communities impact SDGs on empowerment and inclusion (SDG 10, Target 10.2 on reducing inequalities), access to quality healthcare and services (SDG 3, Target 3.8 on good health and wellbeing), ending hunger and ensuring water and sanitation, particularly for poor and people in vulnerable situations (SDG 2, Target 2.1 on zero hunger, SDG 6, Target 6.1 on clean water and sanitation), as well as poverty reduction (SDG 1) and decent work (SDG 8).

D. IMPACT OF RESTRICTIONS ON COVID-19 RELIEF AND RESPONSE

During COVID-19, the Government's pandemic response was roundly criticized. By January 2022, Philippines registered the highest number of reported COVID-19 cases in the World Health Organization Western Pacific region, more than China or Vietnam.[114] The Commission of Audit found a "pattern of corruption" in the use of COVID-19 funds by the Department of Health where PHP 67.32 billion (USD 1.15 billion) in funds "remained idle and were not translated to health supplies, equipment, and services that were badly needed".[115] Meanwhile, in the 2021 Budget the government allocated PHP 19 billion (USD 324 million) to the National Task Force to End Local Communist Armed Conflict (NTF-ELCAC), known for red-tagging activists and civil society organiza-

tions.[116] Due to increases in unemployment, there were severe food shortages during the lockdowns, with 62.1 percent of households experiencing moderate to severe food insecurity.[117] In September 2020, the hunger rate was 30.7 percent, higher than the previous record of 23.8 percent in March 2012,[118] reversing progress made in poverty and hunger alleviation (SDGs 1 and 2).

While the government did provide some cash and food packets, the amounts were wholly inadequate to meet the needs of a family for a month.[119] Critics of the government were often bullied by the police and asked to stop political activity as a condition of receiving aid.[120] To meet the urgent needs of food security, community pantries were set up throughout the country by volunteer groups and families.[121] However, many community pantries were red-tagged, accused of being communist fronts, and had to temporarily stop their operations.[122] After widespread criticism, the police chief apologized to those who had been accused of having communist ties;[123] however, some community pantries had already closed down due to harassment and threats, as in the case of the first community pantry in Cagayan de Oro.[124]

Additionally, relief workers and critics were regularly harassed and arrested by the police. As noted by the Secretary-General of human rights CSO Karapatan, "the Duterte government [is] exploiting quarantine measures to harass, vilify, and rabidly arrest—even kill—activists. Instead of responding to the socioeconomic needs of the people, these mass arrests will only worsen the plight of the poor. Those who are helping the poor are being put in jail."[125] For instance, in December 2020, relief workers from the red-tagged Center for Genuine Agrarian Reform were held at gunpoint on their way to deliver aid to farmers in Laoag, whom the government had been trying to displace for years.[126]

Throughout the pandemic, the lack of effective support from the government, combined with increased harassment of human rights defenders, hindered equitable access to relief, particularly for people living in poverty, small farmers, and rural populations.

E. IMPACT ON ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION EFFORTS

The restrictions on civil society and targeting of defenders in the Philippines have significant consequences for SDGs related to the environment, in particular SDG 13 on combatting climate change. Despite the best efforts of local and indigenous communities, environmental defenders, and CSOs to protect their local resources, the natural environment in the Philippines continues to degrade as the government fails to protect against climate change and resource exploitation, devoting its efforts instead to persecuting civil society.

According to Global Witness, Philippines ranks as the most dangerous country in Asia for environmental defenders.[127] Between 2012 to 2022, 281 environmental leaders were killed, with at least 90 of these deaths linked to protests against mining operations.[128]

The UN Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights in the context of climate change in their August 2024 report on the Philippines noted that the government's development of mines, hydroelectric dams, and land reclamation projects in violation of the fragile ecosystem of the country has exacerbated the impact of natural disasters, hindered climate change mitigation efforts, and led to mass displacement, harassment and even killings of indigenous community members.[129]

Environmental defenders, including clergy members and indigenous persons, are frequently harassed, red-tagged, often through the NTF-ELCAC, and falsely accused under the Anti-Terrorism Act. Red-tagging of environmental defenders allows developers to proceed without obtaining the free, prior, and informed consent (FPIC) of communities, as required under law.[130] In one case, the representatives of Tumandok indigenous community informed the UN Special Rapporteur that they were intimidated by the military into approving the Jalaur Mega Dam project on their land. Nine members who opposed the project were executed, and an additional 16 were taken into custody, with some still in prison. The UN Special Rapporteur noted that the community lives in "constant fear of further attacks by the military."[131] Additionally, aerial bombings have been undertaken by the military to forcibly remove indigenous communities from their land.[132] Some communities mentioned that they are not against mining if done with their permission and using good environmental practices; however the commonly used unsound mining practices contaminate the water supply, leading to reduction in fishes, increased deforestation, and risk of landslides during heavy rainfall.[133]

The environmental and indigenous rights group Kalikasan states that opposition to mining operations and hydropower dams being built on ancestral lands without prior permission leads to red-tagging of environmental defenders as well as increased military presence—making it difficult to organize and engage with affected communities.[134] After uncovering that watershed degradation, deforestation, and land conversion in the Sierra Madre Mountain Range led to the 2020 flooding which caused USD 862 million in damage and impacted eight million Filipinos, Kalikasan was red-tagged by the government.[135]

"Opposition to mining operations and hydropower dams being built on ancestral lands without prior permission can lead to red-tagging of environmental defenders as well as increased military presence—making it difficult to organize and engage with affected communities.

Other communities, particularly in militarized regions like Mindanao, are fearful of organizing to protect their ancestral lands, noting that martial law had prevented campaigners from gathering information and informing residents of the project's potential impact.[136]

The coordinator of Lilak, an indigenous women's rights organization, gives two more examples of the government violating indigenous groups' land rights through intimidation. In Luzon, indigenous groups were carrying out the longest anti-mining campaign in the country, insisting that the FPIC of indigenous groups be part of the renewal of the 25-year-old financial and technical assistance agreement with the Oceana Gold Philippines, an Australian mining corporation. The agreement had lapsed during COVID-19. The community leaders erected a people's barricade to prevent mining operations but were violently dispersed. In addition to red-tagging, the government filed strategic lawsuits against public participation (SLAPPs) against community leaders whom military personnel would regularly visit and threaten. The community leaders felt intimidated and eventually the mining permit was renewed for another 25 years without any requirement or act of consultation with the communities. In the case of the Kaliwa Dam project in Quezon, FPIC was contractually mandated for the project to proceed; five of the six communities refused to consent, and the sixth agreed only with specific conditions. However, relentless military presence and repeated visits by the project proponents wore some leaders down. There were community meetings conducted by the proponents where a Memorandum of Understanding with the indigenous peoples was developed, which was presented as consent although it was not part of the established FPIC process. This was done during the pandemic when there was no income and food shortage in the community, exacerbating the pressure.[137]

In addition to hampering climate change efforts, these actions clearly increase inequality (SDG 10), exacerbate poverty (SDG 1), and indirectly harm interconnected SDGs.

F. CONCLUSION

As with India, the examples referenced in this section are merely the tip of the iceberg with respect to the threats civil society faces in the Philippines, and the impacts this restrictive environment has on development and the SDGs. Where local communities cannot mobilize to protect themselves and their resources—not even to provide disaster relief without the risk of red-tagging—development outcomes will be undeniably affected. This is particularly the case where restrictions take the form not only of legal restrictions on the operation and funding of CSOs, but actual attacks, stigmatization, disappearances, violence, and extrajudicial killings of defenders and members of civil society.

2. Country Analyses of Social, Economic, and Humanitarian Impacts of Civic Space Restrictions

Pakistan

Pakistan faces ongoing challenges of conflict, frequent natural disasters, and weak governance structures that impede its progress on human development indicators.[138] Compared to other South Asian countries, Pakistan has the highest infant mortality rate and lowest life expectancy in the region, excluding Afghanistan.[139] While the government has expressed its commitment to achieving the SDGs, an International Monetary Fund study highlights critical gaps in public spending on essential sectors such as education, health services, water and sanitation, and infrastructure. The study estimates that achieving the SDGs would require an additional annual investment of approximately 16 percent of GDP by 2030 from both the public and private sectors—an impossibility given the current governance gaps.[140]

In June 2018, Pakistan's regulatory landscape became more challenging[141] when it was placed on the grey list by the Financial Action Task Force(FATF) for inadequate control over terrorism financing, with the threat of blacklisting adversely impacting its ability to attract foreign investment.[142] Partly in response to FATF's recommendations, the government imposed stringent regulations on international CSOs, and deregistered thousands of local CSOs between 2019 and 2020 for non-compliance with FATF regulations.[143] In 2022, the government adopted a policy for CSOs receiving foreign contributions, "Policy for Local NGOs/NPOs Receiving Foreign Contribution-2022" (2022 Policy) which among others, required extensive security clearance for CSOs to get foreign funding.[144]

While aimed at addressing financial regulation, these measures significantly curtailed civil society in Pakistan. Civic space continues to shrink, as CSOs are subject to burdensome reporting requirements and complex approval procedures requiring repeated and time-intensive engagements with government authorities. These bureaucratic hurdles delay the implementation of critical development and humanitarian projects.[145]

These challenges are compounded by a deteriorating security environment for civil society. The UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR) in 2017 raised concerns about "repeated reports of abduction, killings and intimidation of human rights defenders, particularly those fighting for economic, social and cultural rights, allegedly committed in some cases by State agents".[146] The increased insecurity has also prompted donors to withdraw from projects deemed too difficult to monitor, which are often in remote areas, disproportionately impacting marginalized communities, and exacerbating development challenges in Pakistan.[147] Notably, in September 2024, the Lahore High Court set aside the 2022 Policy, invalidating restrictions such as security clearance required for foreign funding approval and the requirement for CSOs to register with Economic Affairs Division. However, the government has appealed the court's decision and the outcome is pending.[148]

A. CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE CSO SECTOR

CSOs in Pakistan have long played a critical role in bridging gaps in public service delivery, contributing to all sectors, including education, training, healthcare, livelihood support, relief and rehabilitation during emergencies, and advocacy on governance, human rights, and peacebuilding processes—thereby supporting progress on all the SDGs.[149]

While there are no current statistics available, the most commonly referred statistic is a 2002 estimate of 45,000 CSOs in the country, focused on education, health services, and lobbying for civic amenities, and employing 264,000 full-time staff, accounting for 1.9 percent of non-agricultural employment.[150] A 2010 statement by the Ministry of Welfare and Special Education noted 100,000 CSOs and community-based organizations, with 60,000 to 70,000 registered CSOs.[151]

As of 2018, Pakistan's CSOs provided education to over 1 million children, maternal and reproductive healthcare to 23 million people,[152] and ran microfinance programs with 30 million users, creating more than 1 million jobs.[153] In 2017, the international CSO sector provided humanitarian relief and development assistance to 34 million people.[154] Further, CSOs have played an important role in promoting universal healthcare in Pakistan. In 2017, hospitals owned by trusts and civil society organizations accounted for 24 percent of the total expenditure of private hospitals.[155] In 2016 and 2017, international CSOs such as Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) provided healthcare services to 38,865 patients and 41,029 patients respectively, and steadily increased their capacity to provide support, including free maternal, outpatient, and emergency health care for residents in remote areas, many of whom lacked access to alternative medical facilities.[156]

CSOs are also important for formal sector employment opportunities. In 2018, according to the Pakistan Civil Society Forum, 10,000 CSOs had 500,000 employees, comprising 1.4 percent of private formal sector jobs.[157] According to the Pakistan Humanitarian Forum,[158] international CSOs directly benefited 29 million people (14 percent of the population) in Pakistan as of 2016,[159] contributing over USD 285 million for development and emergency relief, and employing over 5,000 local staff in 2016 alone.[160]

CSO Support for Education, Healthcare & More

As of 2018, CSOs in Pakistan had provided development support to tens of millions of people, including:

1 million
children provided with access to education.

23 million
people provided with maternal and reproductive healthcare.

30 million
users of microfinance programs, which helped create an esimated 1 million jobs.

In 2018, 11 of the 18 international CSOs forced to shut down by the government (see below) allocated USD 124 million to support 8.7 million beneficiaries.[161]

Thus, CSOs contribute directly to quality education (SDG 4), inclusive healthcare (SDG 3), poverty alleviation (SDG 1), decreasing inequality (SDG 10), decent work (SDG 8), and other interconnected goals.

B. IMPACT OF CIVIC SPACE RESTRICTIONS ON CSOS

Pakistan has implemented various laws governing the registration and operation of both international and domestic CSOs. All CSOs face barriers in registration, fundraising, and bank account operations, while rights-based INGOs face heightened cancellations, scrutiny, and harassment.[162]

In 2015, the Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan cancelled the registration of 23 international CSOs, including prominent organizations like Save the Children, the British Council, and the American Institutes for Research in the Behavioral Sciences[163] (although some organizations such as Save the Children were later allowed to reopen). In December 2017, 29 additional international CSOs were ordered to leave the country.[164] The trend continued in 2018, with the Ministry of Interior ordering another 18 international CSOs to cease operations, and rejecting the registration of 42 local CSOs.[165] Organizations with well-established footprints also faced challenges, as evidenced by 141 international CSOs being required to reapply for registration with the Ministry of Interior, despite decades of operation in Pakistan.[166] Moreover, in October 2018, the State Bank of Pakistan returned funds designated for CSOs to the donor organization, National Endowment for Democracy.[167]

The impact of these measures has been significant. According to the Pakistan Humanitarian Forum (PHF), the 18 international CSOs forced to shut down their operations in 2018 contributed USD 130 million annually in aid assistance. Additionally, 11 of these 18 organizations employed 800 staff directly and 6,000 local staff through partners.[168] Their humanitarian relief and development work assisted 450,000 people in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa and Punjab in 2017.[169] PHF estimates that the annual loss from the closure of all 29 organizations as ordered by the government would reach 350 million annually.[170] While some CSOs were eventually allowed to continue their work, their operations reduced or shifted focus. This restrictive landscape also led to a reduction in foreign development assistance, with funders such as the Swiss, Norwegian, and Swedish governments scaling back their support.[171] Pakistan CSOs have estimated that the full economic impact of these policies could be in the range of USD 1.6 billion. [172]

C. IMPACT OF CIVIC SPACE RESTRICTIONS ON BENEFICIARIES

Restrictions on international CSOs have profoundly impacted their ability to work with local partners, hire frontline workers, and serve beneficiaries, many of whom belong to marginalized groups. A notable example is the closure of two MSF facilities in tribal areas, Bajaur and Kurram Agencies, between October 2017 and November 2018 after they were refused a No Objection Certificate by the government. The MSF agencies had been operating in the area for 14 years, with about 120 local staff, and had provided funds of 27 million in 2016, offering high-quality and free healthcare in areas with limited alternatives.[173]

The burdensome regulatory environment adversely affects local CSOs as well. Organizations working on gender minority issues report that they struggle for years to open foreign remittance bank accounts despite receiving the requisite No Objection Certificate (NOC), while several organizations report never receiving their NOC from the Economic Affairs Division.[174] A staff member from Human Rights Commission of Pakistan noted that "local service-delivery NGOs typically working in women's rights, health, and education are unable to partner with multilateral organizations unless they register with the Economic Affairs Division, hindering their access to resources."[175]

A leader of affected organization South Asian Partnership, Pakistan, explained the impact of such setbacks, noting: "Five years ago, I was running 20 projects with a staff of over 500, and my organization reached 5,000 villages across Pakistan. Now I have just two projects and a staff of 20. We had to close down our provincial offices. We are only operating from one office in Lahore, and as that building belongs to us, we are surviving. This has happened to multiple organizations in Pakistan."[176] He further discussed the impact on beneficiaries: "In 200 villages, we were building infrastructure for use by women and poor farmers, like solar units, canal crossings, canal linings. We had to stop all our projects midway as banks would not release the money without an MoU from the Economic Affairs Division. We applied for three years for the MOU but did not get it… Also, the government has not provided any facilities."[177]

The education sector has also faced challenges. At least nine CSOs that were shut down supported teacher training, student learning, school management, and governance.[178] Plan International, for instance, had reached over 10,080 children with construction of classrooms and provision of IT labs.[179] Since 2005, Catholic Relief Services had built 114 school structures, trained 520 teachers, and provided hygiene training to 6,688 students.[180] Between January and September 2017, before it was shut down, CSO BRAC International operated 1454 primary schools, enrolled 43,495 students, trained 1,347 teachers and graduated 5,493 students.[181] The shuttering of these organizations has disrupted progress on SDG 4 on inclusive quality education and other interconnected goals of poverty alleviation (SDG 1) and reducing inequalities (SDG 10).

Similarly, organizations focused on economic empowerment have had to limit their

work. BRAC International provided 55,273 clients with USD 18.5 million in microloans between January and September 2017,[182] and 3,671 households with its poverty reduction program in Balochistan.[183]

Civic space restrictions have, at a minimum, harmed Pakistan's progress in reducing inequality (SDG 10), inclusive healthcare (SDG 3), and poverty eradication efforts (SDG 1).

D. IMPACT ON DISASTER RELIEF PREPAREDNESS

Pakistan ranks among the most vulnerable countries to climate change, placing 8th out of the 10 most affected countries in the Climate Vulnerability Index of 2019.[184] Recurrent disasters, including flooding, earthquakes, and cyclones, have caused significant damages, with the World Bank estimating that Pakistan suffered USD 18 billion in losses from natural disasters between 2007 and 2017, forcing diversion of resources towards recovery activities.[185]

CSOs in Pakistan historically played a crucial role in providing humanitarian services to disaster-affected populations, notably during the 2005 earthquake and the 2010 floods.[186] Based on experience responding to natural disasters, CSOs developed a network model, coordinating across geographies and issues and working with government agencies. This model continued effectively until 2013, at which point the relationship between the government and civil society started deteriorating.[187]

By 2017, at least nine of the 31 CSOs ordered to leave the country were providing humanitarian assistance, including Save the Children, ACTED, Catholic Relief Services, Open Society Foundations, Malteser International, and Mercy Corps[188] (although some of them were later allowed to continue operations).[189] Their contributions, particularly during the 2010 floods, highlight the magnitude of their impact. In response to the 2010 floods, which affected over 20 million people and caused more than 1,700 deaths,[190] Catholic Relief Services provided aid to more than 1 million people, built more than 50,000 transitional shelters, and assisted 38,000 households with livelihood support.[191] Trocaire assisted 4,750 people through its humanitarian program,[192] and Action Aid aimed to adopt community

CSOs in Pakistan historically played a crucial role in providing humanitarian services to disaster-affected populations, notably during the 2005 earthquake and the 2010 floods.

resilience systems for 48,924 people in 100 communities.[193]

The 2022 floods surpassed even the 2010 floods, causing over 1,700 deaths and USD 40 billion in damages. Unfortunately, the government and local CSOs struggled to provide humanitarian support, hampered by reduced international humanitarian funding caused, in part, by civic space restrictions. The funding was "a fraction of the international humanitarian funding and operational support that was mobilized in 2010".[194] According to the UN Financial Tracking Service,[195] the official humanitarian funding for the 2022 floods totaled USD 267 million by October 2022, versus USD 3.2 billion mobilized in 2010.[196]

As a staff member of the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan explained, "the sudden removal of support and resources from INGO partners means that local organizations are now less equipped to go to remote areas and provide services. The local NGOs are left to fend for themselves, to do their own fundraising, impacting their long-term capacity to provide rehabilitation support."[197]

While the Pakistan Interior Ministry expedited the issuance of No Objection Certificates (NoCs) and Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) for international CSOs, the reduced operational presence of international CSOs limited and slowed the response, as expanding operational capacity takes time. As one expert noted, "this flood has really exposed the diminishing capacity of NGOs, both national and international, in Pakistan. The needs are huge, but capacity has reduced".[198] According to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), the same number of organizations responded as in 2010; however, their scale was significantly reduced, particularly in critical areas like water, sanitation, and hygiene. Challenges such as obtaining visas for technical staff and grassroots coordination further hindered their efficacy.[199]

Moreover, once the emergency flood relief efforts were completed, international CSOs began reporting delays and difficulties in operating due to regulatory and bureaucratic obstacles.[200]

In particular, these civic space restrictions have hampered progress in meeting the SDG target to "build the resilience of the poor and those in vulnerable situations and reduce their exposure and vulnerability to climate-related extreme events" (SDG 1, Target 1.5).

E. IMPACT ON GENDER EQUALITY EFFORTS

Pakistan ranks 145th out of 146 countries in the Global Gender Gap Index 2024,[201] reflecting severe and persistent gender inequalities. The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated gender inequality, with increased domestic violence against women[202] and unequal access to healthcare.[203] Further, law and policy drafting on women's rights is hindered by the Council of Islamic Ideology, a constitutional body tasked with giving legal advice to the Parliament on Islamic issues, which has often stalled progressive laws and

policies including on domestic violence,[204] child marriage,[205] and sexual violence[206], and has a history of drafting regressive and discriminatory laws. For instance, the Council called efforts to ban child marriage anti-Islamic and blasphemous, creating physical and legal risks for activists and CSOs working on these issues.[207]

Pakistan's CSOs have historically played a vital role in reforming women's rights through research, advocacy, and lobbying with the government. During the 1990s, several women's rights CSOs and activists, supported by international donors, campaigned for an increase in spots for women in legislative assemblies, leading to significant success in the early 2000s.[208] Since then CSOs have worked with the National Commission on the Status of Women to draft and advocate for progressive policies, including election reforms for women voters, domestic violence laws, and amendments to adultery laws.[209]

Unfortunately, growing civic space restrictions have severely limited the ability of women's rights CSOs. Requirements such as getting government permission for research and holding public consultations disproportionately hinder CSOs working on women's rights. Moreover, several CSOs that were closed down in 2018 worked on women's rights, conducting awareness raising, advocacy, and service delivery on gender-based violence, food security, livelihood issues, and land and inheritance rights.[210] For instance, Action Aid aimed to promote policymaking on gender-based violence and child marriage,[211] and International Alert was involved in initiating 10,000 study circles to influence people's understanding of gender relations.[212]

The restrictions on CSOs working on women's rights limits Pakistan's achievement on SDG 5 on gender equality, impeding progress on targets of ending gender discrimination (Target 5.1), violence against women (Target 5.2), and ensuring women's full participation and leadership in political, economic and political life (Target 5.5).

F. CONCLUSION

Pakistan's civil space is becoming increasingly restrictive, due to suffocating laws and regulations, and the forced closure of vital CSOs. However, if the September 2024 court order is upheld by the court, it may provide relief to CSOs from these onerous requirements. At present, these measures severely impede delivery of essential services like education, healthcare, and disaster relief, and stifle long-term advocacy for marginalized groups. The government's systematic efforts to restrict civic space threaten to destabilize critical mechanisms and dynamics that enable inclusive development and accountability, undermining progress towards the achievement of the SDGs.

2. Country Analyses of Social, Economic, and Humanitarian Impacts of Civic Space Restrictions

Cambodia

Cambodia's civil society experienced rapid growth in the 1990s,[213] driven by foreign investment and international aid, leading to one of the largest concentrations of CSOs globally.[214] Although CSOs lacked grassroots linkages early on,[215] a more varied civil society has gradually emerged, with domestic and international CSOs, networks, and alliances with grassroots organizations.[216]

Since 2013, Cambodia has been dominated by the Cambodian People's Party, which has systematically restricted civic space, and effectively controls all government structures, including the judiciary and the security apparatus,[217] without regard for the rule of law.[218] Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index ranks Cambodia among the most corrupt countries in Southeast Asia.[219]

Civic space restrictions have intensified social, economic, and humanitarian challenges. The government has granted large-scale land concessions to extractive industries and agribusinesses, often without consulting affected residents, displacing rural and indigenous communities, eroding livelihoods, and stripping indigenous groups of their communal land rights.[220] The manufacturing sector, in particular the exports garment sector, employs over 1 million workers, 80 percent of whom are women.[221] Garment workers face wage discrimination, workplace violence, and harassment,[222] with limited support from pro-government unions, and a restrictive law on unionization that severely curtails freedom of association.[223] As the World Bank states, the Cambodian Government's economic, development, and governance policies have created clear winners and losers, with rapid but inequitable economic growth.[224] These dynamics directly impede SDG 1 (poverty reduction), SDG 5 (gender equality), and SDG 8 (decent work and sustainable economic growth).

A. CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE CSO SECTOR

As of December 2022, 6,109 associations and CSOs had been registered with Cambodia's Ministry of Interior.[225] Additionally, large number of unregistered grassroots organizations operate in the country.[226] A 2012 survey by the Cooperation Committee of Cambodia, a membership-based organization comprising 200 domestic and international CSOs, highlighted the diverse sectors in which CSOs operate, most notably education and training, agriculture and animal husbandry, health, nutrition and HIV/AIDS, and child welfare and rights.[227] In 2012, CSOs had implemented 4,000 projects benefiting 1.3 million people with a focus on education, health, and agriculture.[228]

However, due to civic space restrictions initiated in 2013, most CSOs have shifted their focus to service delivery programs in health and education.[229] In 2020, only seven percent of CSOs engaged in human rights research and advocacy.[230] The total foreign funds available to CSOs in 2020 amounted to USD 365 million, with 80 percent directed towards health, education, community, and rural development.[231]

CSOs, often with foreign funding support, play a critical role in delivering essential services. They often run health clinics and primary and secondary schools, addressing gaps due to insufficient government funding of public health and education. CSOs also support the livelihood of farmers and fisherfolk by providing equipment and information support tailored to these communities' needs.[232] There are also some CSOs that provide assistance on the legal framework pertaining to CSOs, and assist vulnerable populations in challenging the government's development policies, which often favor corporate interests.[233] According to a 2020 Survey of 48 organizations, the key strengths of the service delivery sector were seen as community outreach and proactive efforts to serve the people.[234]

B. IMPACT OF CIVIC SPACE RESTRICTIONS ON CSOS

The Cambodian People's Party has enacted laws, such as the Law on Associations and Non-Governmental Organizations, 2015 (LANGO), the Telecommunications Law, 2015, the Trade Union Law, 2016, and two 2015 election laws, which have been weaponized to repress, harass, and arbitrarily detain civil society, independent media, and the political opposition.[235] LANGO, ostensibly aimed at promoting transparency and accountability among CSOs that receive international funding, has been used to shut down CSOs critical of government policies.[236] LANGO mandates CSO registration, requires all registered CSOs to remain politically neutral, subjects founding CSO members to scrutiny, and imposes burdensome reporting requirements.[237] Cambodia is among the countries with the highest mandatory reporting requirements[238] and most incomprehensible social sector laws.[239]

Since 2013, the government has constrained civil society, particularly on issues of land rights, natural resource governance, and labor rights.[240] A 2015 survey conducted by Cooperation Committee for Cambodia confirms that "organizations promoting democracy and human rights tend to experience more obstacles in their relationship with the government."[241] However, with declining foreign funding, and an increasingly restricted CSO space, service provision by CSOs has also been impacted in recent years.[242] According to a study of CSOs in

CSOs, often with foreign funding support, play a critical role in delivering essential services. They run health clinics, primary and secondary schools, and support farmers and fisherfolk with equipment and livelihood assistance.

Cambodia, service delivery groups were willing to forego 31 percent of their grant income to avoid operating in districts with high levels of government harassment, which they view as a significant obstacle to their work.[243]

A local human rights worker reported that government authorities often use intimidation tactics like monitoring or disrupting meetings and demanding access to events, claiming that CSOs need permission to hold the event, even though they have complied with all legal requirements. As a result, CSOs have modified their event information or divided events into smaller groups to reduce visibility. However, they still contend with the presence of government officials, which creates fear among the staff and beneficiaries and leads to self-censorship. Attendees have been followed and questioned by the police, including being asked to disclose agendas and attendance lists.[244]

The government has also coopted certain CSOs, who are invited to participate in processes such as the localization of SDGs. However, in practice, even pro-government CSOs are frequently excluded from final government decisions.[245] The nature of engagement with the government can depend on issue and geography, as CSOs working on local development activities or women's rights face less resistance than those working on land disputes and illegal logging.[246]

C. IMPACT ON PHILANTHROPY FLOW

Cambodia has relied on significant aid, receiving a total of USD 12.13 billion between 1992 and 2011, with the EU funding about 22 percent and local and international CSOs providing 9 percent.[247] From 2019 to 2022, CSOs received approximately USD 365 million per year,[248] of which approximately USD 100 million was mobilized through official development partners and 260 million through philanthropy flows,[249] benefitting at least three to four and half million Cambodian citizens.[250] Nearly 75 percent of service delivery organizations rely on foreign funding, and domestic support is minimal.[251]

While the civil society sector in Cambodia continues to rely on international donors for a majority of its funds,[252] civic space restrictions have led to a decline, particularly in Western donor funding, in politically contentious areas of democracy, governance reform, and natural resource governance.[253] For instance, in 2023, Sweden, historically a significant donor that had allocated USD 17 million for aid that year,[254] announced that it would halt all new aid to Cambodia by the end of 2024.[255] From 1997 to 2017, Sweden had provided aid of around USD 470 million total,[256] with about 75 percent directed towards strengthening democracy and human rights, including decentralization, education, and civil society.[257] In deciding to limit its investment in Cambodia, Sweden noted that "the democratic space in Cambodia has been severely restricted in recent years. This has made it difficult to pursue broad and close cooperation."[258] Cambodian civil society groups have stated that the funding cut would impact "30 organizations and multilateral institutions and tens of thousands of Cambodians."[259] CSOs like the Banteay Srei Organization, fo-

cusing on women's empowerment, relied on the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) for 15 percent to 30 percent of their core funds, and have faced considerable programmatic challenges due to these funding cuts.[260]

D. IMPACT ON LAND GRABBING AND FOOD INSECURITY

Land grabbing,[261] deforestation, food insecurity, and poverty alleviation among the rural and indigenous communities are among the main human rights challenges in Cambodia. Yet advocacy in these areas is severely restricted.[262] Cambodia's official development strategy focuses on land concessions to agribusiness and large-scale agricultural production in place of small landholders and rural livelihoods, in a context where more than 60 percent of women are employed in agriculture.[263] Its approach to agriculture hinders the achievement of SDG 2 on reducing hunger, as well as SDG 5 on gender equality (explored in more depth below).[264]

The UN Special Rapporteur on human rights in Cambodia and the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR) have highlighted the systemic human rights violations in relation to land grabbing from rural communities, including lack of prior consultation, displacement, ongoing violence and intimidation, and lack of effective remedies for forcibly evicted and displaced communities.[265] For small farmers, these practices lead to forced migration, a shift from farming to precarious farm labor, increased food insecurity, and poverty.[266]

International and domestic CSOs play an important role in documenting and reporting on evictions, illegal logging, and deforestation, providing legal aid and protesting alongside forest-based communities against large-scale development projects.[267] However, CSOs and activists that protest against land grabbing face severe repression from the government, limiting their ability to provide support. For instance, on 5 April 2024, the president of the Khmer Student Intelligent League Association was arrested by the police and, on 6 November 2024 sentenced to four years in prison and fined 420 Euros; they were charged with "incitement to commit a felony" among other charges, after speaking to the media about the eviction of 300 families from their homes in Preah Vihear province, Kulean District for a land concession made by the government to a rubber plantation.[268] Previously, about 40 villagers from Kulean district who had protested against their eviction were arrested and held in pre-trial detention, charged with illegal encroachment; the police had burnt down villagers' homes in several villages in Kulean district.[269] One villager committed suicide due to loss of their land in Preah Vihear.[270]

According to Welthungerhilfe, as of December 2023, one in every five households in Cambodia lacked land ownership,[271] undermining progress on SDG 2, Target 2.1 on ending hunger and ensuring quality food access, and Target 2.3 on doubling "agricultural productivity and incomes of small-scale food producers, in particular women, indigenous peoples, family farmers, pastoralists and fishers, including through secure and

equal access to land". As of 2016, sustaining small farmers required a significant increase in land from the existing 320,600 hectares to 1.96 million hectares,[272] a daunting target given the existing governance priorities and civic space restrictions. These land grabs directly impede SDG 2 (zero hunger), SDG 1 (no poverty), and SDG 13 (climate action). They represent unsustainable development that marginalizes vulnerable populations further, and underscores the importance of civil society in advocating for a sustainable approach.

E. IMPACT ON THE ENVIRONMENT

CSOs and activists protesting against environmentally destructive projects for industrialization face operations closure, arbitrary detention, and violence. Mother Nature, a renowned environmental organization, had its CSO status revoked in 2017; its members have faced repeated arrests.[273] In July 2024, ten members of the group were found guilty of plotting against the government and imprisoned for six years in prisons far away from their families, in contravention of international law.[274]

The Prey Lang Community, a group of local community members who protect forests from illegal logging and deforestation, have been repeatedly restricted from patrolling the area. They have been charged with plotting against the government and insulting the king under the Lèse Majesté law.[275] International support for environmental protection is also shrinking, as evidenced by the US Embassy in Cambodia withdrawing its funding in 2021 for protection of the Prey Lang forests due to "continued and unprosecuted illegal logging and wildlife crimes in the protected area, along with efforts by the Cambodian government to silence and target local communities".[276] Some environmental activists such as Chut Wutty and others have been killed by the military while trying to prevent illegal logging.[277]

Civil society advocacy helps communities fight against activities such as illegal logging, sand mining, and hydropower dams, contributing to sustainable forest management.[278] However, LANGO has been used by government authorities to disrupt meetings and trainings organized by CSOs and CBOs on these issues.[279] For example, the Ministry of Interior issued a letter instructing sub-national level governors to restrict CSO activities, mandating that they acquire permission at least three days in advance for any community engagement, which was later lifted.[280] Researchers and CSOs have also faced restrictions in accessing newly resettled villages, with reports of denied permits and harassment, restricting efforts to collect data on impact of displacement.[281]

With increased foreign direct investment into Cambodia's mining sector and extractive industries and a highly restrictive space for civil society, development in Cambodia is likely to continue to be anything but sustainable. A top-down approach by the government focusing on industrial, large-scale projects has not proven sustainable or in alignment with the SDGs. A robust civil society remains essential to enabling community-oriented sustainable development.

F. IMPACT ON LABOR RIGHTS AND GENDER

Gender gaps persist in Cambodia, particularly in the areas of labor, land rights, discrimination, and violence. There are significant wage and social protection gaps, and limited access for women to economic resources, preventing progress towards SDG 5.[282]

While CSO training and information about jobs and access to credit, implemented in conjunction with government mechanisms such as Women Development Centers and the Cambodian Ministry of Women's Affairs,[283] is encouraged, advocacy on labor rights violations has been suppressed.

Labor rights violations are pervasive, particularly in export garment manufacturing, and disproportionately affect women, who form 80 percent of the workforce,[284] hindering progress towards labor rights (SDG 8, Target 8.8). These violations are exacerbated by a restrictive trade union law which curtails registration, the right to strike, and collective bargaining.[285] The CESCR has highlighted numerous reports of trade union leaders and members being subjected to violence, arrest, and prosecution for exercising their union rights.[286] Human Rights Watch documented 35 cases of union-busting attempts between 2012 and 2015.[287]

Women workers face specific challenges of intimidation, sexual harassment, pregnancy-related discrimination, and wrongful termination, often without access to justice. Further, the dominance of government-affiliated unions prevents women from joining or leading unions,[288] and the suppression of labor rights advocacy yields more violations. For instance, Center for Alliance of Labor and Human Rights (CENTRAL), a prominent labor rights organization that documents violations and conducts advocacy for workers' rights, had a national security audit ordered by the government after it published a critical report on freedom of association violations and poor working conditions in garment factories.[289]

CSOs have also played an essential role in helping women with land titling and ownership in pursuance of SDG Target 5A, to "undertake reforms to give women equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to ownership and control over land and other forms of property, financial services, inheritance

Labor rights violations are pervasive, particularly in export garment manufacturing. They disproportionately affect women, who form 80 percent of the workforce, hindering progress towards labor rights (SDG 8, Target 8.8).

and natural resources, in accordance with national laws." With the support of NPOs, women have led protests against land grabbing for large-scale development. However, the government's insistence on these organizations registering with LANGO hinders their work and activism, exacerbating violations of women's labor rights and obstructing progress toward SDG 5 on gender equality.[290]

G. CONCLUSION

Cambodia's civic space has shrunk rapidly due to restrictive laws and government interference, which impedes civil society's ability to advocate for equitable reforms in land rights and labor rights of vulnerable communities. This systematic oppression renders mechanisms for accountability and transparency ineffective, undermining progress in achieving the SDGs.

3. Recommendations

Civil society organizations are vital for combatting poverty, inequality, gender gaps, labor exploitation, and climate change, as well as contributing to service provision, especially during humanitarian emergencies. However, restrictive laws and policies targeting CSOs have prevented civil society actors from fulfilling their mandate, exacerbating marginalization and further entrenching inequality. With achieving the SDGs in mind, the following general recommendations are presented for consideration.

A. FOR GOVERNMENTS

1. Recognize CSOs as key partners in implementing the SDGs. Institutionalize CSO participation in planning, implementing, and monitoring the SDG agenda.
2. Repeal restrictive laws and policies that hamper civic space, including those that target foreign funding, peaceful assembly, expression, or association.
3. Ensure that regulatory frameworks and their implementation adhere to international human rights law obligations.
4. Provide long-term funding and support to the CSO sector, particularly groups working to assist marginalized communities.
5. Support and recognize the work of rural and community-based organizations in order to strengthen their role in development.
6. Strengthen data transparency and accessibility to enable civil society to hold government institutions accountable. Ensure that civil society and independent media can report on violations without risk of reprisal.
7. Ensure the protection of human rights defenders (HRDs, including environmental and indigenous defenders), and ensure accountability for rights violations.

B. FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS

1. Leverage the role of civil society in the achievement of the SDGs and conduct advocacy for open civic space. In particular, advocate for the inclusion of open civic space frameworks as a condition for providing development aid.
2. Provide long-term, flexible core funding to CSOs, especially those working in repressed or closed countries or in sensitive areas.
3. Support research and evidence generation around the impacts of restrictions on CSOs in development and SDG outcomes.

C. FOR CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS

1. Highlight the economic and development impacts of shrinking civic space on the non-profit sector, with a focus on the disparate impact on marginalized groups, including indigenous communities, small farmers, rural poor, and other disadvantaged communities.
2. Conduct research and provide evidence on the role of CSOs in the achievement of the SDGs and other important development indicators.
3. Collaborate widely across different groups and regions to mobilize and advocate against the narrowing of civic space.

4. Conclusion

The findings of this study underscore the critical role of open civic space in advancing equitable development. Case studies from India, Pakistan, the Philippines, and Cambodia illustrate how a contracted civic space can exacerbate economic and social inequalities, worsen the impacts of climate change and natural disasters, and disproportionately harm the most vulnerable populations.

Democratic governance has long been closely tied to sustainable development. It is increasingly evident that civic freedoms and an empowered civil society play an equally vital role. Governments, international donors, and civil society must collectively commit to safeguarding and expanding civic space to reverse democratic backsliding and destructive development. By fostering collaboration, governments can realize the transformative vision of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development—ensuring that development is inclusive and beneficial to all.

“Democratic governance has long been closely tied to sustainable development. It is increasingly evident that civic freedoms and an empowered civil society play an equally vital role.

Endnotes

1 Civicus Monitor 2024, https://monitor.civicus.org/globalfindings_2024/asiapacific/.

2 The term **civic space** refers to "a set of legal conditions experienced as a lived environment that enables people—whether alone or with others, physically or online—to be active in their communities, to speak out, to organize, to gather together in protest or to help one another, and to participate in the governance of their community, area, or country. These conditions stem from international and regional treaties as well as domestic constitutions and laws, which enshrine people's fundamental freedoms: to express themselves, to associate with others, to assemble peacefully, and to access information." Fund 101: What is Civic Space, Fund for Global Human Rights, https://globalhumanrights.org/commentary/fund-101-what-is-civic-space/.

The term **civil society organization** (CSO) refers to "any non-profit, voluntary citizens' group which is organized on a local, national or international level." As explained by the United Nations, "CSOs perform a variety of services and humanitarian functions, bring citizens' concerns to Governments, monitor policies, and encourage political participation at the community level. CSOs provide analysis and expertise, serve as early warning mechanisms and help monitor and implement international agreements, including Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals". United Nations, Civil Society, Civil Society Unit, Outreach Division, United Nations Department of Global Communications (DGC), https://www.un.org/en/civil-society/page/about-us.

While many terms such as "NPOs" (Non-Profit Organizations) and "NGOs" (Non-Governmental Organizations) can be used, we have chosen "CSO" for consistency and to align with the report's focus on civic space and civil society.

Finally, **civic space restrictions** refer to controls imposed on CSOs and individual activists, including (but not limited to) legal, administrative and extralegal measures such as the use of restrictive funding and national security laws, excessive reporting regulations, reprisal threats, arbitrary arrests, and violence including enforced disappearances and extrajudicial execution.

3 UN Report of the Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association to the UN General Assembly, U.N. Doc. A/73/279 (7 August 2018) at para 8, https://documents.un.org/doc/undoc/gen/n18/244/97/pdf/n1824497.pdf.

4 Id. at para 13.

5 The SDGs are also closely linked to the economic and social rights enunciated in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. See supra note 3, at para 76.

6 See N. Hossain et al, Development Needs Civil Society – The Implications of Civic Space for the Sustainable Development Goals Synthesis Report, ACT Alliance (April 2019), https://actalliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/ACT_SynthesisReport_CivicSpace_2019_Final_WEB-Copy.pdf.

7 Key Messages, The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2023: Special Edition, https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/files/report/2023/SDGs_Report_Key_Messages_2023.pdf.

8 N. Hossain et al, Development Needs Civil Society – The Implications of Civic Space for the Sustainable Development Goals Synthesis Report, ACT Alliance (April 2019), at page 52, https://actalliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/ACT_SynthesisReport_CivicSpace_2019_Final_WEB-Copy.pdf.

9 Supra note 3, at para 33.

10 Supra note 3, at para 33.

11 See supra note 8.

12 See supra note 8.

13 A. Sivadas et al, India's Million Missions–75 Years of Service Toward Nation-Building: India's Non-Profit Sector Report, CSO Coalition@75, (2023), at page 107, https://www.defindia.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/India%E2%80%99s-Million-Missions-%E2%80%93-75-Years-of-Service-Toward-Nation-Building_Low-Resolution-1.pdf.

14 Interviews on file.

15 Oxfam Briefing Note, Space to be Heard - Mobilizing the power of people to reshape civic space, Oxfam (July 2018), at pages 8-11, https://oxfamilibrary.openrepository.com/bitstream/10546/620523/1/bn-space-to-be-heard-civic-space-250718-en.pdf.

16 Supra note 8, at page 10.

17 Supra note 3, at para 26.

18 Global Witness, Press Release: More than 2,100 land and environmental defenders killed globally between 2012 and 2023, 10 September, 2024, https://www.globalwitness.org/en/press-releases/more-2100-land-and-environmental-defenders-killed-globally-between-2012-and-2023/.

19 Supra note 15, at pages 8-11.

20 The focus on India, Pakistan, Philippines and Cambodia is to underscore diversity in economic development, size, geography stage of democracy, political system and civic space restrictions and thereby support identification of emerging trends and specific challenges faced by civic society in the Indo-Pacific region.

21 It must be highlighted that the shrinking civic space makes data collection challenging, as several respondents were wary of speaking openly due to fear of reprisals against themselves or their partners, particularly in India and Cambodia.

22 Civicus Monitor Tracking Space: India, Civicus (2024), https://monitor.civicus.org/country/india/. Note that there are five categories in increasing order of magnitude of restrictions– open, narrowed, obstructed, repressed, closed.

23 A. Ranjan, "Foreign-aided NGOs are actively stalling development, IB tells PMO in a report", The Indian Express, 7 June 2014, at https://indianexpress.com/article/india/india-others/foreign-aided-ngos-are-activelystalling-development-ib-tells-pmo-in-a-report/.

24 Note that of the 21,490 organizations licensed to receive FCRA, only around 4,000 received sub-grants. Further, 1,803 organizations reported spending over 20 per cent of the contributions received on administrative costs.

25 See International Center for Not-for-Profit Law, India's 2020 FCRA Amendments Impact on Association, (July 2021), https://www.icnl.org/post/analysis/indias-2020-fcra-amendments-impact-on-association. See also International Commission of Jurists, Briefing Paper: India's Foreign Contribution Regulation Act: A Tool to Silence Indian Civil Society Organizations, (12 November 2020), https://www.icj.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/India-FCRA-Briefing-Paper-2020-ENG.pdf.

26 International Center for Not-for-Profit Law, India's 2020 FCRA Amendments Impact on Association, (July 2021), https://www.icnl.org/post/analysis/indias-2020-fcra-amendments-impact-on-association.

27 See UN Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association, Info Note: Analysis of International Law, Standards and Principles Applicable to the Foreign Contribution Regulation Act 2010 and Foreign Contribution Regulation Rules 2011, (20 April 2016), https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/FAssociation/InfoNoteIndia.pdf. In 2022, the Indian Supreme Court in Noel Harper v. Union of India however, upheld the constitutionality of the 2020 Amendment to the FCRA 2010, observing that "foreign contribution can have material impact in the matter of socioeconomic structure and polity of the country" and that "the presence/inflow of foreign contribution in the country ought to be at the minimum level, if not completely eschewed", noting that "indiscriminate receipt/inflow and more so utilization of foreign contribution had been threatening the sovereignty and integrity of the country itself". See Noel Harper v. Union of India, Supreme Court of India, (2022), https://indiankanoon.org/doc/63476467/.

28 Supra note 13, at page 84.

29 Research was undertaken by a group of Indian civil society members and groups to demonstrate the immense contribution of civil society to the nation in 75 years of Independence.

30 Supra note 13, at page 107. Notably, NPO/CSO contribution is half the contribution of the IT sector in India which has been the poster boy of the growth story and has received enormous concessions from

the government.

31 Supra note 13, at page 50.

32 Supra note 13, at page 11.

33 Niti Aayog serves as the apex public policy think tank of the Indian government, tasked with catalyzing economic development.

34 Ingrid Srinath and Ashish Karamchandani, "India's recovery depends on the state of its social sector. Government must come to its aid", The Times of India, 18 June 2020, https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/blogs/toi-edit-page/indias-recovery-depends-on-the-state-of-its-social-sector-government-must-come-to-its-aid/.

35 Supra note 13, at page 31.

36 Supra note 13, at page 39.

37 Supra note 13, at page 39.

38 Supra note 13, at page 39.

39 Centre for Social Impact and Philanthropy, Estimating Philanthropic Capital in India, 2021, Ashoka University, (2021), at page 39, https://csip.ashoka.edu.in/research-and-knowledge/.

40 FCRA Dashboard, Ministry of Home Affairs, https://fcraonline.nic.in/fc_dashboard.aspx.

41 International Center for Not-for Profit Law, Briefer- India Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act (FCRA), (7 July 2021), https://www.icnl.org/wp-content/uploads/FCRA-Amendments-Briefer-7-7-21.pdf.

42 D. Tiwary, "Explained: What is FCRA, the law related to NGO funding?" The Indian Express, 14 July 2022, https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/everyday-explainers/what-is-fcra-ngo-funding-mha-explained-8026895/; Scroll Staff, "Centre cancels foreign fund licence of NGO Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative", Scroll, 27 April 2022, https://scroll.in/latest/1022728/centre-cancels-foreign-fund-licence-of-ngo-commonwealth-human-rights-initiative.

43 Ingrid Srinath, Working Paper: COVID-19, corporatization and closing space: The triple threat to civil society in India, Working Paper Series, No. 22-206, London School of Economics and Political Science, Department of International Development, (2022), https://www.econstor.eu/bitstream/10419/251599/1/1796392847.pdf.

44 Supra note 13, at page 39.

45 UN Sustainable Development Goal 8, UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, (2015), https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal8#targets_and_indicators.

46 Kunal Purohit, "Empty beds, lost jobs: The price of India's crackdown on NGO funds" Context-Thomson Reuters Foundation, 12 July 2024,

https://www.context.news/money-power-people/empty-beds-lost-jobs-the-price-of-indias-crackdown-on-ngo-funds; Also, interviews on file.

47 "FCRA Being Used to Crack Down on NGOs, But Why No Transparency on PM-CARES?" The Wire, 25 September 2020, https://thewire.in/rights/fcra-amendment-bill-transparency-ngos-crackdown.

48 Interview on file.

49 India Development Review, The most accurate data on FCRA today, (23 April 2019), https://idronline.org/the-most-accurate-data-on-fcra-today/.

50 Compassion International, Press Release: Compassion International Begins Withdrawing Its Operations in India, 1 March 2017, https://www.compassion.com/news-releases/withdrawal-from-india.htm#:~:text=Compassion's%20programs%20have%20benefited%20more,church%20partners%20throughout%20the%20country.

51 World Vision International, Press Release: World Vision's globally-funded programming in India, 19 January 2024, https://www.wvi.org/newsroom/world-visions-globally-funded-programming-in-india.

52 Oxfam International, Press Release: Oxfam reaction to Government of India's decision to restrict foreign funds, 3 January 2022, https://www.oxfam.org/en/press-releases/oxfam-reaction-government-indias-decision-restrict-foreign-funds.

53 Interview on file.

54 Interview on file.

55 Hazards Centre, Our Mandate, https://hazardscentre.org/our-mandate/.

56 Interview on file.

57 United Nations, The 17 Goals, Department of Social Affairs. Available at https://sdgs.un.org/goals.

58 See Global Call to Action Against Poverty and Wada Na Thoda Abhiyan, Tracking Impact of COVID-19 on Migrant Workers in India, (May 2022), http://gcap.global/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/2.-Impact-of-Covid-on-Migrant-Workers-WNTA.pdf.

59 PTI, "Covid-19: Niti Aayog CEO writes to NGOs for assistance in relief measures", The Economic Times, 5 April, 2020, https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/policy/covid-19-niti-aayog-ceo-writes-to-ngos-for-assistance-in-relief-measures/articleshow/74994183.cms?from=mdr.

60 Supra note 13, at page 20.

61 M. Rawat, "Coronavirus in India: In 13 states, NGOs fed more people than govt did during lockdown", India Today, 12 April 2020, https://www.indiatoday.in/india/story/in-13-states-ngos-fed-more-people-than-govt-during-coronavirus-lockdown-1665111-2020-04-09; P. Muttreja, "We Must Let a Million Flowers Bloom", Think Global Health, 2 November 2020, https://www.thinkglobalhealth.org/article/we-must-let-million-flowers-bloom.

62 Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Press Release: Dr. Harsh Vardhan interacts with Civil Society Organizations/NGOs via Video Conferencing, Government of India, 30 April 2020, https://pib.gov.in/PressReleseDetailm.aspx?PRID=1619601&reg=3&lang=1.

63 U. Samarasekara, India grapples with second wave of COVID-19, Vol. 2, Iss. 6, Lancet, (June 2021), https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanmic/article/PIIS2666-5247(21)00123-3/fulltext?ref=drishtikone.

64 I. Srinath, COVID-19, Corporatisation and Closing Space: The triple threat to civil society in India, Working Paper Series, No. 22-206, London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE), Department of International Development, (March 2022), https://www.lse.ac.uk/international-development/Assets/Documents/PDFs/Working-Papers/WP206.pdf.

65 A. Priya, S. Dash, and K. Ranaware, "The Truth About Oxygen Deaths During COVID Second Wave", Indian Express, 7 July 2021, https://indianexpress.com/article/opinion/columns/covid-second-wave-oxygen-death-coronavirus-cases-7392219/.

66 Neeraj BR, "Overcoming the Oxygen Shortage of the Second Wave", Article 19, 30 September 2021, https://articlenineteeniitm.in/2021/09/30/civil-society-initiatives-during-the-second-wave-in-india/.

67 C. Cheney and A. Byatnal, "Foreign Aid Regulations, Donor Fatigue Stymie India COVID-19 Response", Devex, 29 April 2021, https://www.devex.com/news/foreign-aid-regulations-donor-fatigue-stymie-india-covid-19-response-99778.

68 Interview with Ingrid Srinath: Work with Marginalized Communities Has Taken a Recent Hit, Times of India, 21 July 2024, https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/work-with-marginalised-communities-has-taken-a-hit-in-recent-years/articleshow/111895918.cms.

69 S. Kotecha, "India Covid: How Law Stops NGOs Distributing Essential Aid", BBC, 14 May 2021, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-57095591#.

70 V. Dhoot, "FCRA Rules Hit Overseas COVID Aid to Hospitals, NGOs", The Hindu, 9 May 2021, https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/worry-over-fcra-registration-for-receiving-pandemic-aid/article34516612.ece.

71 S. Yamunan, "Modi Wants Ngos to Help Fight Covid-19. But Their Hands Are Tied by Rules His Government Introduced", Scroll, 4 May 2021, https://scroll.in/article/993897/modi-wants-ngos-to-

help-fight-covid-19-but-their-hands-are-tied-by-rules-his-government-introduced.

72 International Center for Not-for-Profit Law, National Relief Funds in Asia During COVID-19, (February 2024), https://www.icnl.org/post/report/national-relief-funds-in-asia-during-covid-19.

73 A. Byatnal, "In India, prime minister's relief fund for COVID-19 jeopardizes NGO sector", Devex, 16 July 2020, https://www.devex.com/news/in-india-prime-minister-s-relief-fund-for-covid-19-jeopardizes-ngo-sector-97706.

74 Id.

75 The 17 SDGs, supra note 57.

76 Registered Civil Society Organizations and Philanthropic Associations, Asia Pacific SDG Partnership, https://sdgasiapacific.net/sites/default/files/public/advocacy-resources/resources/sdg-ap-ar-0000060-0001-en.pdf.

77 Asian Development Bank, Overview of NGOs and Civil Society, (2008), https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/publication/28972/csb-phi.pdf.

78 In 2020, during the pandemic, the government passed the Anti-Terrorism Act, without public consultation, President Duterte certified it as urgent and promulgated into law within 5 months in July 2020 expanding the definition of terrorism to include acts that "create a serious risk to public safety", and simultaneously empowering the Anti-Terrorism Council to designate individuals as terrorists without judicial oversight, which effectively institutionalized the practice of red-tagging. The 2020 Implementing Rules and Regulations of Republic Act No. 11479, otherwise known as The Anti-Terrorism Act of 2020, https://www.doj.gov.ph/files/2020/news%20articles/IRR%20ATA%202020%20-%20CTC.PDF. See also S. Tomacruz, "Duterte certifies as urgent anti-terrorism bill feared to clamp down on basic rights", Rappler, 1 June 2020, https://www.rappler.com/nation/duterte-certifies-urgent-tougher-anti-terrorism-bill.

79 S. Gupta, Red-Tagging in the Philippines: The Modern McCarthyism Threatening Freedom of Expression, Global Freedom of Expression, Columbia University, (22 August 2024), https://globalfreedomofexpression.columbia.edu/publications/red-tagging-in-the-philippines-the-modern-mccarthyism-threatening-freedom-of-expression/.

80 What is red-tagging and why it is dangerous in the Philippines?, Advox, Global Voices, (27 April 2023), https://advox.globalvoices.org/2023/04/27/what-is-red-tagging-and-why-it-is-dangerous-in-the-philippines/. Since the Communist Party of the Philippines and the New People's Army were declared terrorist organizations under the Human Security Act 2007, individuals and organizations in Philippines have faced red-tagging. See Proclamation No. 374: Declaring the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP)- New People's Army (NPA) as a Designated/ Identified Terrorist Organization Under Republic Act No. 10168, President of Philippines, https://web.archive.org/web/20171215113151/http://www.officialgazette.gov.ph/downloads/2017/12dec/20171205-PROC-374-RRD.pdf.

81 About Us: National Task Force to End Local Communist Armed Conflict, National Task Force to End Local Communist Armed Conflict, https://www.ntfelcac.org/about.

82 P. Nepomuceno, "Truth telling is not red-tagging, NTF ELCAC insists", Republic of the Philippines News Agency, 17 October 2024, https://www.pna.gov.ph/articles/1235756.

83 K. Pena, "Pouring Billions to Fight Insurgency Fire: Questions on NTF-ECLAC Fund Demands Answers", Inquirer.net, 2 December 2022, https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1700492/pouring-billions-to-fight-insurgency-fire-questions-on-ntf-elcac-funds-demand-answers; RG Cruz, "NTF-ECLAC Budget Down Over 20 pct in 2024", ABS-CNB News, 19 September 2023, https://www.abs-cbn.com/news/09/19/23/ntf-elcac-budget-down-over-20-pct-in-2024?utm_source=chatgpt.com; and J. Rita, "Marcos increases NTF-ELCAC's budget from P2.5M to P7.5M per barangay —NSC", GMA Integrated News, 11 November 2024, https://www.gmanetwork.com/news/topstories/nation/926639/marcos-increases-ntf-elcac-s-budget-from-p2-5m-to-p7-5m-per-barangay-nsc/story/?utm_source=chatgpt.com.

84 UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Press Release: Philippines - UN report details widespread human rights violations and persistent impunity, 4 June 2020, https://www.ohchr.

org/en/press-releases/2020/06/philippines-un-report-details-widespread-human-rights-violations-and. See Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Situation of human rights in the Philippines,U.N. Doc. A/HRC/44/22, (29 June 2020), at paras 81-83, https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Countries/PH/Philippines-HRC44-AEV.pdf. The report concluded that "vilification of dissent is being increasingly institutionalized and normalized in ways that will be very difficult to reverse…Red-tagging and incitement to violence have been rife, online and offline.. Persistent impunity for human rights violations is stark, and practical obstacles to accessing justice within the country are almost insurmountable. Human rights advocacy is routinely equated with insurgency, with the focus being diverted to discrediting the messengers rather than examining the substance of the message."

85 USAID, ICNL, and FHI 360, 2021 Civil Society Organization Sustainability Index for Asia, 8th Edition, (December 2022), at page 50, https://www.fhi360.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/csosi-asia-2021-report.pdf

86 Asian Development Bank, Overview of NGOs and Civil Society, (2008), https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/publication/28972/csb-phi.pdf.

87 D. Songco, The Evolution of NGO Accountability Practices and their Implications on Philippine NGOs, International Center for Not-for-Profit Law, https://www.icnl.org/wp-content/uploads/Philippines_philacc.pdf.

88 Supra note 85, at page 50.

89 The Philippine Trust Index is an annual quantitative study which aims to determine the level of public trust on five key institutions in the country – the Church, government, private industries, non-government organizations, and the media.

90 Executive Summary, Philippines Trust Index 2021: Rise and Respond, Eon Trust, (December 2021), https://www.eon.com.ph/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/2021-Philippine-Trust-Index-Executive-Summary.pdf.

91 UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders, Joint Communication: Philippines: terrorism-related charges against human rights defenders affiliated with anti-poverty network CERNET, (15 November 2024), https://srdefenders.org/philippines-terrorism-related-charges-against-human-rights-defenders-affiliated-with-anti-poverty-network-cernet-joint-communication/.

92 See M. Cepeda, "Philippines: Govt. declares NGOs Oxfam and Farmers Development Center as fronts for communist terrorist groups", Rappler, 6 November 2019, https://www.rappler.com/philippines/244252-red-tagged-oxfam-nccp-slam-military/ and Karapatan, Press Release: KARAPATAN denounces freezing of Leyte NGO's bank accounts, May 2024, https://www.karapatan.org/media_release/karapatan-denounces-freezing-of-leyte-ngos-bank-accounts/.

93 In the Philippines, the Visayas has several indigenous groups, who face land rights challenges and vulnerability to natural disasters, particularly typhoons.

94 Interview on file.

95 Interview on file.

96 Interview on file.

97 Interview on file.

98 Rural Missionaries Philippines is a national humanitarian organization, diocesan in character, of women and men religious, priests and lay people.

99 C. Lawton, "Missionaries in Philippines experience ongoing persecution", Vatican News, 4 July 2023, https://www.vaticannews.va/en/church/news/2023-07/hilippines-missionaries-wcc-persecution-red-tagging.html.

100 "Protestant council condemns freeze of Church's assets in southern Philippines", LiCAS News, 2 April 2021, https://philippines.licas.news/2021/04/02/protestant-council-condemns-freeze-of-churchs-assets-in-southern-philippines/.

101 Interview on file. See also, Karapatan, Press Release: Rights group backs UCCP vs closure attempt on its Davao compound, https://www.karapatan.org/media_release/rights-group-backs-uccp-vs-closure-attempt-on-its-davao-compound/.

102 Interview on file.

103 "Philippine government freezes bank accounts of Rural Missionaries", Sunday Examiner, 14 February 2020, https://www.examiner.org.hk/2020/02/14/philippine-government-freezes-bank-accounts-of-rural-missionaries/news/asia-news/the-philippines/.

104 M. Nolasco and T. Vina, "Lumad Schools and the Right to Education', Inquirer.Net, 5 June 2021, https://opinion.inquirer.net/140876/lumad-schools-and-the-right-to-education. Also, even the evacuee schools called the Bakwit schools, which are makeshift mobile schools set up by volunteer schools for tribal children to continue their education have been targeted with red-tagging and violence.

105 Military operations in Lumad schools were legalized through Memorandum Order 221 in 2013, issued by the Department of Education's former secretary Armin Luistro. The order enabled the military to enter and occupy schools as part of a supposed counterinsurgency plan.

106 Interview on file. See also supra note 104.

107 Interview on file.

108 Interview on file. See also F. Lumampao et al, Gender and Renewable Energy in The Philippines: A community-based microhydro project in Kalinga and a PV-battery charging station in Southern Leyte, Collaborative Research Group on Gender and Energy (2006), https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/57a08c6b40f0b649740011e8/R8346_finrep_lumampao.pdf. Notably, SIBAT was awarded by the UN International Fund for Agricultural Development (UN - IFAD) for Best Performing Project in Climate Mitigation Response.

109 The 17 SDGs, supra note 57.

110 Citizens Disaster Response Center, Press Release: On the recent redtagging -The Line Has Been Crossed, 6 November 2019, https://www.cdrc-phil.com/the-line-has-been-crossed-cdrc/.

111 Interview on file.

112 Interview on file.

113 Interview on file.

114 World Health Organization, COVID-19 Situation in WHO-Western Pacific Region, https://experience.arcgis.com/experience/e1a2a65fe0ef4b5ea621b232c23618d5.

115 Supra note 85, at page 47.

116 J. Cuenca, Analysis of the 2021 President's Budget, Philippine Institute for Development Studies, (December 2020), at page 14, https://pidswebs.pids.gov.ph/CDN/PUBLICATIONS/pidsdps2035.pdf. Further, in 2023, the Government restored the budget of the taskforce of PHP 10 billion PHP known for red-tagging activists and civil society organizations. See also supra note 86, at page 47.

117 I. Agdeppa et al, Impacts of COVID-19 Pandemic on Household Food Security and Access to Social Protection Programs in the Philippines: Findings from a Telephone Rapid Nutrition Assessment Survey, Sage Journals, 24 February 2022, https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC8883167/.

118 Social Weather Stations, 17-20 September 2020 National Mobile Phone Survey – Report No. 2: Hunger at new record-high 30.7% of families, Social Weather Stations Statistics for Advocacy, (27 September 2020), https://www.sws.org.ph/swsmain/artcldisppage/?artcsyscode=ART-20200927135430&fbclid=IwAR1ue6qNtV89apgxfaTw15F4PMM3snOEJ5BrGhtpfBiSjSyqgbwLznIawa4.

119 Interview on file. See also T. Garcia, "Zambo City starts distribution of food packs", Republic of the Philippines News Agency, 31 March 2020, https://www.pna.gov.ph/articles/1098376.

120 M. Beltran, "The Philippines' Pandemic Response: A Tragedy of Errors", The Diplomat, 12 May 2020, https://thediplomat.com/2020/05/the-philippines-pandemic-response-a-tragedy-of-errors/.

121 JC Gotinga, "Food pantries for hungry Filipinos get tagged as communist", Al Jazeera, 24 April 2021, https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/4/24/food-pantry-for.

122 Id.

123 F. Luna, "PNP apologizes, says it 'means no harm' against community pantry organizers", Philstar Global, 20 May 2021, https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2021/05/20/2099620/pnp-apologizes-says-it-means-no-harm-against-community-pantry-organizers.

124 H. Gomez, "First Cagayan de Oro community pantry stops operation due to red-tagging", Rappler, 21 April 2021, https://www.rappler.com/philippines/first-cagayan-de-oro-community-pantry-stops-operation-due-red-tagging-april-21-2021/.

125 Supra note 120.

126 N. Aspinwall, "As hunger rises, Philippine authorities take aim at farmers and rural activists", The New Humanitarian, 20 April 2021, https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/news/2021/4/20/food-hunger-and-covid-19-in-the-philippines.

127 Global Witness, Standing Firm- Our Inspiration: Names of Those Murdered in 2022, (15 September 2023), https://www.globalwitness.org/en/campaigns/environmental-activists/standing-firm/.

128 Id.

129 Report of the UN Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights in the context of climate change, Ian Fry: Visit to the Philippines, U.N. Doc. A/HRC/56/46/Add.2, (9 August 2024), at paras 12-14, 22-24, https://documents.un.org/doc/undoc/gen/g24/102/23/pdf/g2410223.pdf.

130 GIZ, Assessing Free and Prior Informed Consent Implementation in the Philippines, (April 2013), at pages 4-5, https://www.giz.de/en/downloads/giz2013-en-assessing-free-and-prior-informed-consent-fpic-phillipinen.pdf.

131 Supra note 129, at para 50.

132 Supra note 129, at para 49.

133 Supra note 129, at paras 5 and 26.

134 Human Rights Watch, Press Release: Philippines: Officials 'Red-Tagging' Indigenous Leaders, Activists, 26 January 2023, https://www.hrw.org/news/2023/01/26/philippines-officials-red-tagging-indigenous-leaders-activists.

135 International Union for Conservation of Nature, National Committee of the Netherlands, Press Release: Dangerous red-tagging of environmental defenders in the Philippines, 15 December 2020, https://www.iucn.nl/en/news/dangerous-red-tagging-of-environmental-defenders-in-the-philippines/.

136 N. Aspinwall, "China-backed dam threatens Indigenous people in the Philippines", Al Jazeera, 19 January 2020, https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/1/19/china-backed-dam-threatens-indigenous-people-in-the-philippines.

137 Interview on file. See also S. Vera, "Undermining the people's will: Another 25 years of injustice for Didipio", Northern Dispatch, 12 August 2021, https://nordis.net/2021/08/12/article/feature/undermining-the-peoples-will-another-25-years-of-injustice-for-didipio/; M. Ramos, "Indigenous Filipinos fight Kaliwa dam project on their land", Context, 30 March 2023, https://www.context.news/money-power-people/indigenous-filipinos-fight-plans-to-build-a-dam-on-their-land.

138 A. Jones, Insecurity and instability: The political landscape for NGOs in Pakistan in 2013, Humanitarian Practice Network, (7 March 2013), https://odihpn.org/publication/insecurity-and-instability-the-political-landscape-for-ngos-in-pakistan-in-2013/.

139 On the HDI index, out of 193 countries and territories, India presently ranks 132nd, Bangladesh ranks 129th and Sri Lanka 73rd on the HDI index while Pakistan ranks 164th. According to UNICEF 2022, Pakistan's under-five mortality rate is 61 deaths per 1000 live births (compared to Bangladesh at 28.8/1000, India at 29.1/1000, Afghanistan at 57.7/1000, Sri Lanka at 6.5/1000, Nepal at 27.3/1000). See https://data.unicef.org/country/pak/. According to WHO in 2021, Pakistan's life expectancy at birth

is 66 years (compared to Bangladesh is 73.1 years, Afghanistan at 59.1 years, India at 67.3 years, Nepal at 70 years, and Sri Lanka at 77.2 years). See https://data.who.int/countries/586.

140 F. Brollo et al, Pakistan: Spending Needs for Reaching Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), International Monetary Fund ELibrary, (29 April 2021), https://www.elibrary.imf.org/view/journals/001/2021/108/article-A001-en.xml.

141 Fatalities in Terrorist Violence in Pakistan 2000-2019, South Asia Terrorism Portal, https://www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/pakistan/database/casualties.htm.

142 S. Karim et al, "Pakistan on FATF's grey list: what, why, and why now?", Dawn, 5 July 2018, https://www.dawn.com/news/1418143,

143 M. Ashfaq, "NGOs bear brunt of govt's drive to fulfil FATF requirements", Dawn, 30 November 2020, https://www.dawn.com/news/1593118.

144 Policy for Local NGOS/NPOS Receiving Foreign Contributions – 2022, Ministry of Economic Affairs, Government of Pakistan, available at https://www.icnl.org/wp-content/uploads/NGOPOLICY2022.pdf.

145 Shandana Khan Mohmand, The Implications of Closing Civic Space for Sustainable Development in Pakistan, IDS Working Paper 521, Institute of Development Studies, (2019), at page 20, https://opendocs.ids.ac.uk/articles/report/The_Implications_of_Closing_Civic_Space_for_Sustainable_Development_in_Pakistan/26427697?file=48076615.

146 UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, Concluding Observations on the Initial Report of Pakistan, U.N. Doc. E/C.12/PAK/CO/1, (20 July 2017), at para 13, https://documents.un.org/doc/undoc/gen/g17/217/93/pdf/g1721793.pdf.

147 Supra note 145, at page 12.

148 W. Sheikh, "LHC sets aside govt policy to regulate NGOs' funding", Dawn, 8 September 2024, https://www.dawn.com/news/1857644.

149 Irfan Mufti, Best Practices of CSOs Adopted by Government: Narrative on Balancing NGO-Government Relationship,

Towards Cohesive Civil Society in Pakistan: Collection of Research Articles on CSOs' Contribution Challenges & Trends, 2019, at page 12, https://www.academia.edu/39618508/Towards_Cohesive_Civil_Society_in_Pakistan_Collection_of_Research_Articles_on_CSOs_Contribution_Challenges_and_Trends_Main_Publication.

150 Social Policy and Development Center, Social Development in Pakistan Annual Review 2001, Oxford University Press, (2001), https://www.spdc.org.pk/assets/upload/AR-4.pdf.

151 Supra note 145, at page 34.

152 Supra note 145, at page 24.

153 Supra note 145, at page 24,

154 Civicus, Press Release: Pakistan shuts down and kicks out 18 International NGOs, with 20 others facing expulsion, 13 December 2018, https://www.civicus.org/index.php/media-resources/media-releases/3670-pakistan-shuts-down-and-kicks-out-18-international-ngos-with-20-others-facing-expulsion.

155 Sustainable Development Policy Institute, Policy Research Institutions and the Health-Sustainable Development Goals, Building Momentum in South Asia: Pakistan Country Study, IDRC, (August 2017), at page 34, https://idl-bnc-idrc.dspacedirect.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/be142c9b-3d72-43dc-9005-6ea24b97ca34/content.

156 Medecins Sans Frontieres, Statement: Closure of MSF project in northwest will leave thousands without healthcare, 10 November 2017, https://www.msf.org/pakistan-closure-msf-project-northwest-will-leave-thousands-without-healthcare%C2%A0%C2%A0.

157 Supra note 145, at page 17.

158 Pakistan Humanitarian Forum is an umbrella organization of 45 INGOs collectively representing

INGOs with the Government and UN Agencies.

159 Open Society Foundations, Press Release: Open Society Foundations Seek Clarification on Pakistan NGO Ruling, 11 December 2017, https://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/newsroom/open-society-foundations-seek-clarification-pakistan-ngo-ruling.

160 Id.

161 S. Toppa, "As Pakistan cracks down on NGOs, civil society questions next step", Devex, 10 January 2018, https://www.devex.com/news/as-pakistan-cracks-down-on-ngos-civil-society-questions-next-steps-91840.

162 Pakistan: Civic Freedom Monitor, International Center for Not-for-Profit Law, 3 December 2024, https://www.icnl.org/resources/civic-freedom-monitor/pakistan.

163 S. Rana, "British Council among NGOs facing license cancellation", The Express Tribune, 30 July 2015, https://tribune.com.pk/story/929678/crackdown-british-council-among-ngos-facing-licence-cancellation. However, Save the Children was reopened two weeks later.

164 N. Baqi, "Pakistan orders 29 INGOs to leave country within 60 days", The Express Tribune, 14 December 2017, https://tribune.com.pk/story/1583668/Pakistan-orders-29-foreign-ngos-leave-country-within-60-days.

165 "Government kicks out 18 INGOs after rejecting final appeal", Dawn, 6 December 2018, https://www.dawn.com/news/1449827. On 14 September 2018, the Ambassadors from Australia, Canada, European Union, Japan, Norway, Switzerland and United States of America wrote a letter to the Ministry of Interior asking for the reasons for expulsion of the 18 INGOs.

166 Dr. Aslam and Peter Jacob, Defining National Interest in Human Development, The Impact of Pakistan's INGO / NGO Policy 2015, in the Economic, Developmental and Relational markers, Center for Social Justice, (2019), at page 10, https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Vi5rytcBOt1mPRBZ3uCBQB8f8BoRpjaS/view?usp=drive_link.

167 Id, at page 9.

168 Supra note 145, at page 23.

169 Supra note 145, at page 23.

170 Supra note 145, at page 23.

171 Supra note 166, at page 10.

172 Supra note 166, at page 10.

173 Supra note 156.

174 Interview on file.

175 Interview on file

176 Interview on file.

177 Interview on file.

178 Supra note 145, at page 31.

179 Supra note 145, at page 31.

180 Supra note 145, at page 31.

181 Supra note 145, at page 31.

182 Supra note 145, at page 34.

183 Supra note 145, at page 34.

184 Disaster Risk Reduction in Pakistan - Status Report 2019, UN Office of Disaster Risk Reduction, (2019), at page 6, https://www.preventionweb.net/files/68260_682307pakistandrmstatusreport.pdf.

185 Id.

186 See United Kingdom Humanitarian Innovation Hub et al, Floods in Pakistan: Rethinking the

Humanitarian Role, (November 2022), https://humanitarianoutcomes.org/sites/default/files/publications/pakistan_floods_1122.pdf.

187 Supra note 145, at page 32.

188 Supra note 145, at page 32.

189 M. Khan, "Pakistan's 'paranoia' over Save the Children", BBC, 25 June 2015, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-33269680.

190 Pakistan: Flood Impact Assessment, Government of Pakistan Finance Division, https://www.finance.gov.pk/survey/chapter_11/Special%20Section_2.pdf.

191 Supra note 145, at page 32.

192 Supra note 145, at page 32.

193 Supra note 145, at page 32.

194 Supra note 186, at page 3.

195 The UN Financial Tracking Service (FTS) is a centralized source of curated, continuously updated, fully downloadable data and information on humanitarian funding flows. https://fts.unocha.org/content/what-financial-tracking-service-fts-and-how-use-it.

196 Supra note 186, at page 13.

197 Interview on file. The Lahore High Court's September 2024 decision has invalidated the requirement for registration with the Economic Affairs Division, however the outcome of the government appeal is pending.

198 Supra note 186, at page 8.

199 Supra note 186, at page 8. The Lahore High Court's 2024 decision may provide some relief to CSOs, depending on the outcome of the appeal, but other civic space restrictions and diminished funding will continue to impede disaster preparedness efforts.

200 US Department of State, 2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Pakistan, (2023), https://www.state.gov/reports/2023-country-reports-on-human-rights-practices/pakistan/.

201 I. Aslam, "Pakistan's dismal position in gender gap report calls for action", Dawn, 6 July 2024, https://www.dawn.com/news/1844081.

202 See Asian Development Bank, Gendered Impacts of the COVID-19 Pandemic in Central and West Asia: Lessons Learned and Opportunities for Gender-Responsive Public Investments, (December 2023), https://www.adb.org/publications/gendered-impacts-covid19-central-west-asia.

203 A. Cheema et al, How did Covid-19 affect women's autonomy and access to healthcare in Pakistan?, Institute of Development Studies, (17 August 2021), https://www.ids.ac.uk/opinions/how-did-covid-19-affect-womens-autonomy-and-access-to-healthcare-in-pakistan/.

204 "Govt recommends referring domestic violence bill to Council of Islamic Ideology", Dawn, 6 July 2021, https://www.dawn.com/news/1633531.

205 Kate Ng, "Pakistan bill aiming to ban child marriages shot down as 'anti-Islamic' and 'blasphemous'", Independent, 16 January 2016, https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/asia/bill-aiming-to-ban-child-marriages-shot-down-in-pakistan-as-antiislamic-and-blasphemous-a6815576.html.

206 "CII rules out DNA as primary evidence in rape cases", Dawn, 23 September 2013, https://www.dawn.com/news/1044879.

207 Supra note 205.

208 Aurat Foundation, Citizens' Campaigns for Women's Participation in Local Government Elections 2001 and 2005, Aurat Publication and Information Service Foundation, https://www.af.org.pk/Citizens%20Reports/Citizen%20%20Report/Citizens%20campaigns.pdf.

209 A. Khan, Are the walls of civic spaces closing in on women in Pakistan?, Mahbub ul Haq Research Center, LUMS University, (11 August 2021), https://mhrc.lums.edu.pk/are-the-walls-of-civic-spaces-

closing-in-on-women-in-pakistan.

210 Supra note 145, at page 30.

211 Supra note 145, at page 30.

212 Supra note 145, at page 30.

213 Dustin Barter, Eviscerated to Revolutionary: Rethinking International Aid and Civil Society in Cambodia and Myanmar, Journal of Contemporary Asia, (15 Aug 2024), https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/00472336.2024.2387232#d1e438.

214 Id.

215 C. Malena et al, Linking Citizens And The State: An Assessment Of Civil Society Contributions To Good Governance In Cambodia, World Bank, (2008), page ii, https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/398781468222011480/pdf/491470WP0Box331BLIC10CCSA1Eng1Final.pdf.

216 R. Bottomley, The Role of Civil Society in Influencing Policy and Practice in Cambodia, Oxfam Novib, (August 2014), at page 20, https://lib.ncdd.gov.kh/storage/app/public/test_library/CAT_10077_1/2014-Role-of-Civil-Society-in-Influencing-Policy.pdf.

217 M. Gemzell, Cambodia: Shrinking spaces versus empowerment of communities, Stiftung Asienhaus, (October 2017), at page 12, https://www.asienhaus.de/uploads/tx_news/2017_Cambodia_Shrinking_spaces_versus_empowerment_of_communities.pdf.

218 US Department of State, Cambodia 2020 Human Rights Report, March 2021, at page 7, https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/CAMBODIA-2020-HUMAN-RIGHTS-REPORT.pdf#page=7.

219 Corruption Perceptions Index, Cambodia 2012-2023, Transparency International, https://www.transparency.org/en/countries/cambodia.

220 Report of the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Cambodia to the Human Rights Council, Assessing protection of those at risk of being left behind, U.N. Doc. A/HRC/42/60/Add.1, (2 September 2019), at para 44, https://documents.un.org/doc/undoc/gen/g19/260/26/pdf/g1926026.pdf.

221 International Labor Organization, Cambodia Garment and Footwear Sector Bulletin, Issue 8, (December 2018), https://www.ilo.org/sites/default/files/wcmsp5/groups/public/%40asia/%40ro-bangkok/documents/publication/wcms_663043.pdf.

222 C. Hunter et al, Gender Equality Deep Dive for Cambodia: Common Country Analysis, UN Cambodia, (2020). See also Human Rights Watch, Work Faster or Get Out: Labor Rights Abuses in Cambodia's Garment Industry, (March 2015), https://www.hrw.org/reports/cambodia0315_brochure_web.pdf.

223 Human Rights Watch, Only 'Instant Noodle' Unions Survive, (21 November 2022), https://www.hrw.org/report/2022/11/21/only-instant-noodle-unions-survive/union-busting-cambodias-garment-and-tourism.

224 Cooperation Committee for Cambodia, CSO Contributions to the Development of Cambodia, (2011), at page 13, https://www.ccc-cambodia.org/en/resources/ccc-publications-and-reports/publications/cso-contributions-to-the-development-of-cambodia-2011.

225 "Over 6,100 associations and NGOs recorded in Cambodia as of December 2022", Khmer Times,12 January 2023, https://www.khmertimeskh.com/501218514/over-6100-associations-and-ngos-recorded-in-cambodia-as-of-december-2022/.

226 "Cambodia Has Nearly 5,000 NGOs, INGOs, and Associations", Khmer Times, 19 December 2014, https://www.khmertimeskh.com/53277/cambodia-has-nearly-5000-ngos-ingos-and-associations/.

227 Cooperation Committee for Cambodia, "CSO Contributions to the Development of Cambodia 2012- Opportunities and Challenges", 2012, at page 8, available at https://www.ccc-cambodia.org/backend/web/uploads/resource/media/CSO_Contributions_Report_2012_EN-58ba7ab272a44.pdf.

228 Supra note 227, at page 7. The sector employed 43,000 individuals, of whom over 10,000 were women, and 800 were persons living with disabilities.

229 Anti-Corruption Resource Center, Non-state actors and anti-corruption work in Cambodia: Gaps, opportunities, and synergies, (2024), at page 8, https://www.u4.no/publications/non-state-actors-and-anti-corruption-work-in-cambodia-gaps-opportunities-and-synergies.pdf. See also USAID et al, 2017 Civil Society Organization Sustainability Index for Asia, 4th Edition, (November 2018), https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/2022-05/2017-CSO-Sustainability-Index-for-Asia.pdf.

230 Cooperation Committee for Cambodia, CSO Road Map 2020 – 2025 for Cambodia Study, (2020), at page 28, https://www.ccc-cambodia.org/en/resources/ccc-publications-and-reports/researches/cso-road-map-2020-2025-for-cambodia-study-2.

231 Cambodian Rehabilitation and Development Board Council for the Development of Cambodia, Development Cooperation and Partnerships Report 2022, Royal Government of Cambodia, (March 2022), at page 15, http://cdc-crdb.gov.kh/en/officials-docs/documents/eng_dcpr_2022.pdf.

232 Asian Development Bank, Civil Society Briefs: Cambodia, (November 2011), https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/publication/28965/csb-cam.pdf.

233 USAID et al, 2017 Civil Society Organization Sustainability Index for Asia, 4th Edition, (November 2018) at page 34, https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/2022-05/2017-CSO-Sustainability-Index-for-Asia.pdf.

234 Supra note 230, at page 30

235 Supra note 232.

236 International Center for Not-for-Profit Law, Civic Freedom Monitor: Cambodia, 12 September 2024, https://www.icnl.org/resources/civic-freedom-monitor/cambodia#analysis.

237 FIDH, Press Release: The Dangers of LANGO, 8 July 2015, https://www.fidh.org/en/region/asia/cambodia/cambodia-the-dangers-of-lango; see also supra note 232.

238 Centre for Asian Philanthropy and Society, Doing Good Index 2022- Assessing the Health and Well-being of Asia's Social Sector, (2022) at page 37, https://caps.org/work/our-research_doing-good-index-2022.

239 Id, at page 62.

240 K. Romeas et al, Supporting indigenous peoples' fight against hydro-power projects to protect their right to land and citizenship, Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development, (2018), https://apwld.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/2019_CJ-FPAR_Country_Brief_Cambodia_HA.pdf.

241 Cooperation Committee for Cambodia, Social Accountability in Service Delivery in Cambodia, (2015), at page 11, https://cdri.org.kh/storage/pdf/wp102e_1617792667.pdf.

242 P. Schroder and S. Young, The Implications of Closing Civic Space for Sustainable Development in Cambodia, Institute for Development Studies, (2019), at page 23, https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5e57de72e90e0711053b1f6e/Cambodia_civic_space__sustainable_development_1__1_.pdf.

243 J. Springman et al, The Effect of Government Repression on Civil Society: Evidence from Cambodia, International Studies Quarterly (2022), at page 3, https://dukespace.lib.duke.edu/server/api/core/bitstreams/ee2a305c-2350-4b73-ba98-c1f3d9ce1de1/content. This is specifically for NGOs that do not have established relationships with central government ministries or local officials.

244 Interview on file

245 Supra note 233, at page 34.

246 USAID et al, 2018 Civil Society Organization Sustainability Index for Asia, (2019), at page 26, https://www.fhi360.org/wp-content/uploads/drupal/documents/resource-csosi-2018-report-asia.pdf.

247 Supra note 242, at page 11.

248 Supra note 231, at page 15.

249 Supra note 231, at page 15.

250 Supra note 227.

251 Centre for Asian Philanthropy and Society, Doing Good Index 2020-Profiling Asia's Social Sectors: The Path Forward, at page 61, (2020), https://caps.org/work/our-research_doing-good-index-2020.

252 Supra note 213.

253 C. Lay and N. Eng, State Regulations and Elitisation: A Study of Civil Society Elites in Indonesia and Cambodia, Vol.8, Iss. 3, Politics and Governance Journal, page 105, (2020), https://www.cogitatiopress.com/politicsandgovernance/article/view/3005. At the same time, funding from China has increased exponentially in the areas of foreign investment, trade, infrastructure projects and tourism. See Prak Chan Thul, "China signs new aid agreements with Cambodia," Reuters, 11 January 2018, https://www.reuters.com/article/us-cambodia-china/china-signs-new-aid-agreements-with-cambodia-idUSKBN1F00IJ.

254 N. Sun, "Sweden Phasing Out Development Aid to Cambodia, Spurring Anxiety", VOA News, 15 February 2024, https://www.voanews.com/a/sweden-phasing-out-development-aid-to-cambodia-spurring-anxiety-/7489486.html.

255 Id.

256 B. Vann, "Why Sweden Chose to Shut Its Embassy in Cambodia", The Diplomat, 9 December 2020, https://thediplomat.com/2020/12/why-sweden-chose-to-shut-its-embassy-in-cambodia/.

257 Id.

258 Supra note 254.

259 Joint Letter to the Prime Minister of Sweden, Forum Civ, (18 January 2024), https://forumciv.org/sites/default/files/2024-01/Brev%20fr%20kambodjanska%20orgs%20jan%202024.pdf.

260 Supra note 254.

261 Land-grabbing refers to long-term leases of land obtained by private companies.

262 Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Cambodia to the Human Rights Council, Situation of human rights in Cambodia, U.N. Doc. A/HRC/54/75, (20 July 2023), https://www.ohchr.org/en/documents/country-reports/ahrc5475-situation-human-rights-cambodia-report-special-rapporteur.

263 S. Bresney et al, Water, gender, and poverty in Cambodia's Stung Chinit watershed, SEI Perspective, (2 December 2019), https://www.sei.org/perspectives/water-gender-poverty-cambodias-stung-chinit-watershed/.

264 According to ADHOC, over 770,000 Cambodians—nearly 6% of the population—were affected by land grabbing between 2000 and 2013. By late 2012, at least 2.6 million hectares of land had been granted as ELCs, a 16.7% increase from 2011. ADHOC, Land Situation in Cambodia 2013, (April 2014), https://www.adhoccambodia.org/report-land-situation-in-cambodia-in-2013-2/; https://lib.ncdd.gov.kh/storage/app/public/test_library/CAT_10077_1/2014-Role-of-Civil-Society-in-Influencing-Policy.pdf.

265 Supra note 262 and Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, Concluding observations on the second periodic report of Cambodia, U.N. Doc. E/C.12/KHM/CO/2, (27 March 2023), https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2023/03/un-committee-economic-social-and-cultural-rights-issues-findings-cambodia.

266 Supra note 242, at page 22.

267 Supra note 242, at page 22.

268 International Federation for Human Rights, Urgent Appeal: Cambodia: Koet Saray sentenced to four years in prison, 18 November 2024, https://www.fidh.org/en/issues/human-rights-defenders/cambodia-koet-saray-sentenced-to-four-years-in-prison.

269 "After clash, evicted Cambodian villagers hiding in forest, fearful of arrest", Radio Free Asia Khmer, 21 March 2024,https://www.rfa.org/english/news/cambodia/villagers-forest-03212024161823.html.

270 Interview on file.

271 Welthunger Hilfe, Blog: Land Grabbing in Cambodia, 11 December 2023, https://www.

welthungerhilfe.org/news/latest-articles/land-grabbing-in-cambodia.

272 Davies, Jack, "Smallholder farmers to face land shortage, study finds", The Phnom Penh Post, 15 August 2016, https://www.phnompenhpost.com/national/smallholder-farmers-face- land-shortage-study-finds.

273 S. Strangio, "Cambodian Court Sentences Environmental Activists to Hefty Prison Terms", The Diplomat, 3 July 2024, https://thediplomat.com/2024/07/cambodian-court-sentences-environmental-activists-to-hefty-prison-terms/

274 Id.

275 Human Rights Watch, Press Release: Cambodia – Free environmental activists, 22 June 2021, https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/06/23/cambodia-free-environmental-activists.

276 Gerald Flynn, "USAID redirects funding in Cambodia as future of Prey Lang Wildlife Sanctuary hangs in the balance", 5 August 2021, Mongabay, https://news.mongabay.com/2021/08/usaid-redirects-funding-in-cambodia-as-future-of-prey-lang-wildlife-sanctuary-hangs-in-the-balance/.

277 M. Blomberg, "Indigenous rangers expand footprint in Cambodian forest besieged by illegal logging" Heinrich Boll Stiftung, 25 January 2022, https://www.boell.de/en/2022/01/25/indigenous-rangers-expand-footprint-cambodian-forest-besieged-illegal-logging#:~:text=Chut%20Wutty%20became%20Cambodia's%20best,southwestern%20Cardamom%20Mountains%20in%202012.

278 Supra note 242, at pages 2-3.

279 Interview on file.

280 V. Doura, "NGOs may operate without restriction", The Phnom Penh Post, 28 November 2018, https://www.business-humanrights.org/en/latest-news/cambodia-ministry-of-interior-lifts-an-advance-notification-requirement-for-civil-society-before-organising-its-events/.

281 Supra note 229.

282 Supra note 242, at pages 2-3.

283 Supra note 242, at pages 24.

284 Supra note 221.

285 Trade union law, https://ngocedaw.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/Draft-of-Trade-Union-Law-Eng1.pdf.

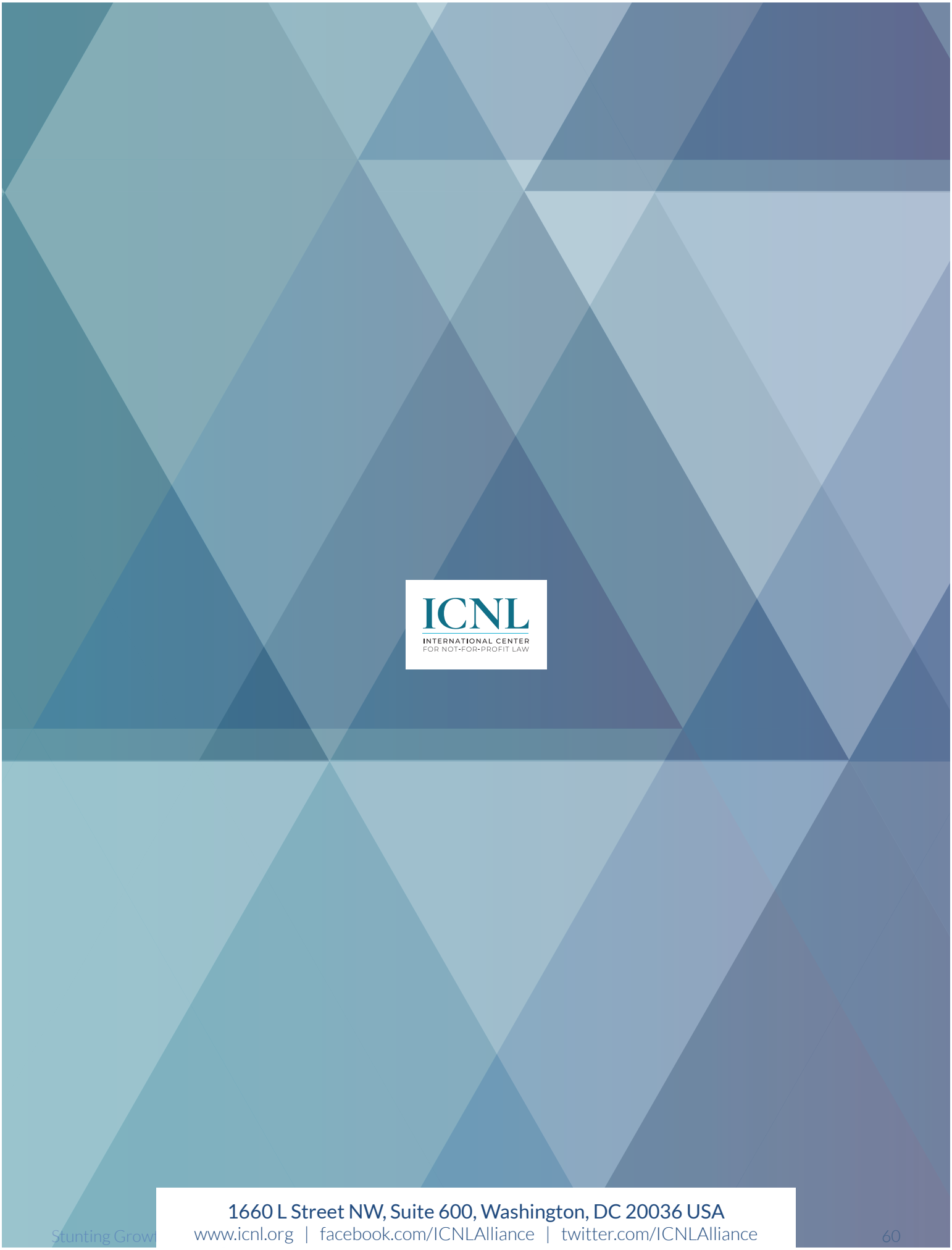
286 Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, Concluding observations on the second periodic report of Cambodia, U.N. Doc. E/C.12/KHM/CO/2, (27 March 2023), https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2023/03/un-committee-economic-social-and-cultural-rights-issues-findings-cambodia.

287 Supra note 223.

288 Human Rights Watch, Combating Sexual Harassment in the Garment Industry, (12 February 2019), https://www.hrw.org/news/2019/02/12/combating-sexual-harassment-garment-industry.

289 Business and Human Rights Resource Center, HRD Attack: Center for Alliance of Labor and Human Rights (CENTRAL), 15 July 2024, https://www.business-humanrights.org/en/latest-news/center-for-alliance-of-labor-and-human-rights-central/.

290 Supra note 242, at pages 24.



1660 L Street NW, Suite 600, Washington, DC 20036 USA
www.icnl.org | facebook.com/ICNLAlliance | twitter.com/ICNLAlliance