



CIVIL SOCIETY BRIEF MONGOLIA

Civil Society Overview

Prior to 1990, the Government of Mongolia established civil society organizations (CSOs) under the socialist regime; they were known as mass organizations. Well-known examples included the Trade Union, the Mongolian Youth Federation, and the Mongolian Women's Federation. After 1990, these mass CSOs reformed and continued their activities as independent nongovernment organizations (NGOs). Prior to 1992, CSOs were established for political purposes. Notable organizations included the Mongolian Democratic Coalition and the Mongolian Social Democrats movements. Thereafter, CSOs protected common interests of different groups: examples of these included the Liberal Women's Brain Pool, Women for Social Progress Movement, Gender Center for Sustainable Development, and National Center Against Violence.¹ Within the democratic system, civil society movements have become one of the most active parts of the Mongolian society. In the last 2 decades, CSOs have become more diverse; however, the legal and regulatory environment remain the same and do not meet the development needs of the CSOs.



Country Context

Mongolia is a country in East Asia, located between the People's Republic of China and the Russian Federation. Mongolia's land area is 1,564,000 square kilometers; yet with a population of only 3.1 million,^a the country has the world's lowest population density. Mongolia is predominantly a nation of young people with a median age of 27 years. Of its population, 30% are below 14 years old, and only 3.8% are above the age of 65.



▲ **Youth population.** Mongolia is predominantly a nation of young people.

^a National Statistical Office of Mongolia. 2017. *National Statistical Yearbook*.

Meanwhile, life expectancy at birth has increased from 61 years in 2000 to 69.6 years in 2016.^b Approximately 62% of the population live in urban areas. About 95% of the population speak the official language, Mongolian.

Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, Mongolia had a peaceful democratic revolution in 1990, marking the transition to a multiparty system and a move from a centrally planned economy to a market economy. A new constitution was introduced in 1992 and the first election wins for noncommunist parties came in 1992 (parliamentary elections) and 1993 (presidential elections). The country has a unicameral parliamentary system. The president is the head of the state and is elected by the popular vote. He has the right to veto the laws and decisions of the parliament. The prime minister is chosen by the legislature and exercises executive power, and heads the Mongolian cabinet.

In 1990, Mongolia transitioned from a centralized planning socialist system into a democratic and market economy. Initially, the transition to a market economy was tumultuous and the early 1990s were marked by high inflation and food shortages. Herding and agriculture were the traditional base of Mongolia's economic activity. Recent developments of extensive mineral deposits have expanded growth. Wholesale and retail trade, service, transportation and storage, and real estate are other dominant industries of the Mongolian economy.

Gross domestic product growth accelerated to 5.1% in 2017 from 1.2% in 2016, largely resulting in increased mining. Mining-related investments drove expansion in transport, wholesale, and retail industries and transformed the service sector into a major driver of growth, alongside mining. In 2017, the country exported copper, coal, crude oil, iron, hides, fluorspar, other nonferrous metals, nonmonetary gold, live animals, animal products, cashmere, wool, and mineral products totaling \$6.20 billion.^c Mongolia's top five trade partners are Germany, Italy, the People's Republic of China, the Russian Federation, and the United Kingdom.



▲ **Economic base.** Herding and agriculture were the traditional base of Mongolia's economic activity.

^b National Statistical Office of Mongolia. 2017. *Population Growth, Change, Trends*. Report in Mongolian. http://1212.mn/BookLibraryDownload.ashx?url=Dundaj_naslalt_and_ND.pdf&ln=Mn.

^c Mongol Bank. 2017. *Mongolia's Foreign Trade Review*. December. Ulaanbaatar. <https://www.mongolbank.mn/documents/statistic/externalsector/tradebalancereview/2017/12e.pdf>.

The NGO law promulgated in 1997 defined NGOs as not-for-profit, self-governing organizations operating independently from the state and established voluntarily by citizens or by legal persons other than state legislative, executive, and judicial bodies, on the basis of their individual or social interests and opinions.² The law applies to all NGOs, except political parties, trade unions, and churches and monasteries, including international and foreign NGOs operating in the country.

The law identifies two types of NGOs: (i) a public benefit NGO, which operates for the public benefit in the fields of culture, art, education, science, health, sport, nature and environment, community development, human rights, the protection of the interests of specific groups and subsets of the population, and charity and other fields; and (ii) the mutual benefit NGO, which serves its members and pursues activities in the interests of its members.



▲ **Building capacity.** Many larger and more experienced civil society organizations provide training and mentoring services for smaller groups and organizations.

The term CSO refers to organizations such as associations, research organizations, community groups, common interest groups, political movements, and interest clubs. CSOs can be registered as a legal entity under the regulatory framework of the NGO Law (1997) enabling them to receive and report on the funds officially, employ staff, and conduct their activities on a broader scale. At the same time, community groups and social movements may function without registration. For example, savings groups are not registered but are active, well-organized, and accepted by the local government. The use of the term CSO is more recent, and acknowledges all types of CSOs, including NGOs.

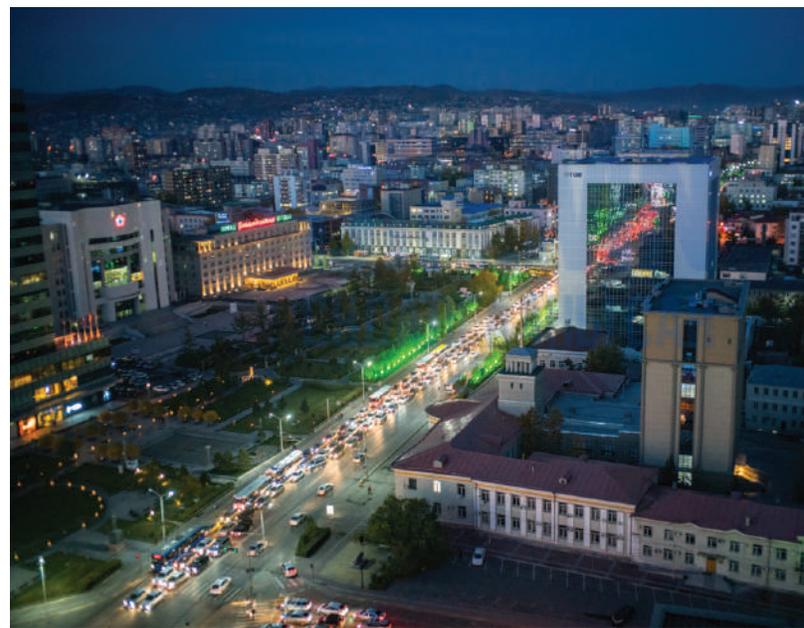
Civil society leaders led the drafting and public discussions across the country regarding state policy on civil society, presented at the National Civil Society Forum, so far the largest civil society event in Mongolia, held 9–10 March 2012. Civil Society Day in Mongolia has been celebrated annually since 2009 on 31 January. On this day, CSOs raise awareness on priority issues of the civil society sector and lead advocacy activities.

As of June 2018, 17,634 CSOs were formally registered at the General Authority for State Registration. This includes 15,241 CSOs for “public benefit” and 2,393 “mutual benefit” CSOs. While the total number of registered CSOs is high, only a small proportion of CSOs have regular and systematic operations. Limited funding opportunities, human resource retention issues, and management capacities have a major influence on CSO survival and successful functioning. Over 80% of the CSOs are based in the capital, and the remaining are registered at the local level.

Local organizations are increasing in number and have strengthened their capacity over time. Community-based organizations (CBOs) are mostly run voluntarily, generally small, and do not have full-time staff. Medium-sized CSOs typically have two to five regular staff as well as volunteers. Women figure prominently at both the membership and leadership levels, accounting for more than 80% of the staff members.

Currently, the General Authority on State Registration updates the statistics of registered CSOs monthly. However, it does not publish information on CSO contact address, current activities, or annual reporting. Only a small proportion of CSOs make their information open to the public through their website or social media channels. Similarly, there are no mechanisms to measure the effectiveness of CSOs or procedures to determine whether CSOs function in accordance with their mandates.³ A lack of information about CSO activities may hinder civil society development by limiting opportunities for the public to establish relationships with CSOs and support their initiatives.

One of the biggest challenges facing CSOs is their limited experience mobilizing funding within the country and internationally. The main sources of CSO financing include membership fees, donations, and donor-financed projects and programs. In addition, CSOs may finance their activities from the income derived from enterprise activities in areas aligned with their mission.⁴



▲ **Urban focus.** Over 80% of the civil society organizations in Mongolia are based in the capital.

As reported by the Ministry of Justice and Home Affairs, CSOs have secured 59.5% of their funding from international donor organizations, 27.9% from individual and private donations, and 12.6% from their own enterprise activities.⁵ Unlike international CSOs, the national and local CSOs do not have core funding and rely mainly on competitive project funding announced by international organizations. The project funding is not regular and taken in some cases for activities deviating from the CSOs' main areas of work, to ensure continuity of operations. Local NGOs would benefit from sourcing funding not only for project specific results but also for capacity building and core resources. There is increasing recognition of the need for CSOs to generate resources in a sustainable manner. In general, mass CSOs have a higher capital, infrastructure, and human resource base than CSOs established since the 1990s. Mass CSOs also have networks of offices and buildings at the national and local levels, which were passed on from the socialist era. In some provinces and districts, the local government provides office spaces to the Veterans' Union and Disabled People's Organizations.

Currently, many larger and more experienced CSOs provide training and mentoring services for smaller groups and organizations, especially rural CSOs and CBOs. Some CSOs function as resource centers and policy think tanks, focusing on knowledge products and capacity building of various stakeholders, including media and government. Research CSOs conduct baseline feasibility studies, and monitor and evaluate donor-funded projects.

Umbrella and Coordinating Agencies for Civil Society Organizations

Over the last 10 years, CSOs have made significant progress establishing umbrella networks and associations for information sharing, protection of their common interests, collaborative interactions, joint project implementation, and pooling resources. The Civil Society Council was established in 2008 as an umbrella organization of all interested CSOs. Civil society has replicated these networks at provincial levels. Provincial CSO networks comprise the branches of the major national CSOs, as well as local organizations that represent the interests of population groups and herders, and promote social change through community-based activities and engagement with the local government.

Within the framework of the Civil Society Council, sector civil society councils were established in 2008 at the ministries of health, education, environment, and defense.

Not every civil society council has worked actively afterwards. The most effective was the Environmental Civil Society Council. The Environmental Civil Society Council brought together more than 600 environmental CSOs, which reached a consensus and signed a memorandum of understanding with the Ministry of Environment to partner on environment-related issues. The Ministry of Environment allocated budget and office space for the Environmental Civil Society Council to promote productive collaboration on environmental issues.

CSOs in the education sector and CSOs working in health organized their own councils, following the path of the environmental CSOs. These CSOs have strong networks and signed memorandums of understanding with their respective ministries. CSOs currently participate in advisory and policy committees of the line ministries, but not necessarily through CSO councils.

In 2006, the Mongolian CSOs established a national coalition Publish What You Pay as part of the international initiative to support and ensure active civil society participation in the implementation of the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative. This coalition serves the public and protects the public interests and operates independently from the government and politics. Citizens Monitor the Budget is another coalition of CSOs, which monitors local and national public budget expenditure.

CSOs often form coalitions, networks, and forums to lobby government on policy and legal reforms. For example, the national forum of human rights NGOs, gender-focused and child rights CSOs was instrumental in developing and securing approval of the Law on Combating Domestic Violence (2016) and the Law on Child Protection (2016).



▲ **CSO collaboration.** Civil society organizations (CSOs) have made significant progress establishing umbrella networks and associations, including among disabled people's organizations.

Key Civil Society Organizations in Mongolia

The following is a list of the principal umbrella and network organizations active in the civil society community in Mongolia. Each network organization comprises individual organizations, which operate in the same sector but have a different scope of operation.

UMBRELLA AND NETWORK ORGANIZATIONS

- All for Education National Civil Society Coalition, <https://www.all4education.mn>
- Citizens Monitor the Budget Coalition, <https://www.tusuv.mn>
- Environmental Civil Society Council, <http://www.mecc.mn>
- Mongolian National Federation of Disabled People's Organizations
- Mongolian National Federation of the Blind
- Mongolian Women's Fund, <https://www.mones.org.mn>
- MONFEMNET National Network of NGOs, <https://www.monfemnet.org>
- Publish What You Pay Coalition, <http://www.taneysel.wordpress.com/>

PROMINENT CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS

- Center for Human Rights and Development (CHRD), <http://www.chrd.org.mn/>
- Democracy Education Center (DEMO), <http://www.demo.org.mn/> and <https://www.facebook.com/DemocracyEducationCenter/>
- Globe International Mongolia, <http://www.globeinter.org.mn/>
- Liberal Women's Brain Pool (LEOS), <https://www.facebook.com/leos.ngo.7>
- Mongolia Elders' Association, <http://www.maep.mn/>
- Mongolian Red Cross Society, <http://www.redcross.mn/> and <http://www.ifrc.org/en/what-we-do/where-we-work/asia-pacific/mongolian-red-cross-society/>
- Mongolian Women's Federation, <https://www.facebook.com/groups/589056484461552/>
- Mongolian Women's Fund, <http://mones.org.mn/en/>
- Mongolian Youth Federation, <http://www.myf.mn/>
- National Center Against Violence, <http://www.safefuture.mn/>
- Open Society Forum (OSF), <http://www.forum.mn/>
- Press Institute, <http://www.pressinst.org.mn/>
- Steps Without Borders NGO, <https://swbm.wordpress.com/corporate-introduction/>
- Training Evaluation Research Institute (TERI)
- Transparency International Mongolia, <https://www.transparency.org/country/MNG>
- Women for Social Progress, <http://www.wsp.mn/>

Women's Civil Society Organizations in Mongolia⁶

Women's CSOs formed in early 1990s stood at the forefront of democratic reforms and promoted women's political, social, and economic participation. One of the first women's NGOs, Liberal Women's Brainpool, promoted equal participation of women in politics. Women for Social Progress focused on voter education and capacity building of women leaders. Liberal Women's Brainpool, Women for Social Progress, and the Women Lawyers' Association pioneered efforts in combating gender-based violence and established the Center Against Violence, later registered as an independent NGO, the National Center Against Violence.



▲ **Women's groups.** Women's civil society organizations formed in early 1990s stood at the forefront of democratic reforms and promoted women's political, social, and economic participation.

Women’s NGOs and leaders played an instrumental role in the development and adoption of the National Program for Women (1996–2020). To increase women’s participation in decision-making, a first women’s NGO coalition was formed before the 1996 elections and the second in 1997, resulting in an increase of parliamentary seats held by women. The MONFEMNET National Network of NGOs, established in 2000, promotes human development and women’s rights issues. In 2007, the network restructured again, establishing its first regular coordinating organization and becoming “open to any civil society organization that is committed to gender justice, human rights and freedom, and democracy.”⁷⁷ In early 1995, the Women’s Information and Research Centre was established specifically to support other CSOs and women’s groups through research and information on women’s and gender issues. Later, the Women’s Information and Research Centre changed its name and became a Gender Center for Sustainable Development. However, in recent years, there is the general perception that the number of gender-focused CSOs may be decreasing because of reduced funding from international organizations, especially United Nations agencies like UNIFEM, which has closed in Mongolia.

Research Organizations and Think Tanks

Research organizations and think tanks are active on a range of issues including social and economic policies and development, human rights, monitoring and evaluation of budget utilization, and effectiveness of donor-funded projects. They support activities such as election monitoring, promoting access to justice, strengthening transparency in natural resource revenues, and increasing citizen oversight of government budgets and expenditures. They also provide a venue for public engagement in policy formulation, implementation, and monitoring processes, as well as advocacy for the transparent and fair management of the country’s abundant mineral wealth. These research organizations are registered under the NGO Law. The Open Society Forum, a think tank, conducts high quality policy research and analysis, promoting public access to information on national fiscal policies, laws, and regulations. It supports civil society capacity development in Mongolia by conducting training, providing grants, and supporting the sector’s institutional development.

Professional Associations

Sector-specific professional associations develop their respective sectors and lobby the government on key issues and concerns. Professional organizations typically have strong technical expertise in their respective areas.



▲ **Contributing knowledge.** Research organizations and think tanks are active on a range of issues, including social and economic policies.



▲ **Professional associations.** Sector-specific professional associations develop their respective sectors and lobby the government on key issues and concerns, including associations of teachers, doctors, construction workers, production business owners, and many others.

These professional associations include associations of teachers, doctors, construction workers, production business owners, bankers, nonbank financial institutions, the confederation of credit unions, art councils, and many others. They perform some regulatory functions of the government, such as rating member organizations, accrediting individual qualifications, and communicating with international organizations. Mining associations and the association of wool and cashmere processing factories are also registered as NGOs.

Government and Civil Society Partnership

In the NGO Law, Article 9 on relations between the state and CSOs says:

- The state shall protect the legitimate rights of NGOs.
- NGOs shall be independent of the state.
- The state bodies may support, financially and otherwise, activities of NGOs.
- Information relating to activities of state bodies, unless it is classified as state secret, shall be open to NGOs.
- NGOs may be involved in drafting and implementing the decisions to be taken by legislative and executive authorities based on their opinion.
- NGOs may make public statements about their positions on decisions taken by state bodies.

A CSO working group was formed in 2011 at the Ministry of Justice and Home Affairs to reform the NGO Law. Subsequently, another working group comprising 60 CSOs was set up under the Cabinet Secretariat by the resolution of the Prime Minister's office to develop the state policy concept on civil society development. The State Policy Concept on Civil Society Development (2012) was an important step toward strengthening the government–CSO cooperation and an important step in social development. The policy concept was expected to set a progressive framework for several fronts, such as reform of the NGO Law, opportunities for implementing state-funded programs for supporting civil society initiatives, and additional space for CSO advocacy (endnote 3). The cabinet subsequently approved the draft and passed it to the parliament for discussion. Due to change of the government, the parliament discussion on the policy concept was put on hold and remains in a draft form. The Ministry of Justice and Home Affairs set up a working group in 2017 to revise the NGO Law and rename it to the Law on the Non-Profit Legal Entity.

Following the amendment to the Public Procurement Law⁸ of Mongolia passed in June 2011, many CSOs were elected as members in bid evaluation committees and monitored government-funded projects and programs. Through such membership and involvement, CSOs are better positioned to provide oversight of public funds and demand greater government accountability. Internationally, this policy is cited as one of the good practice examples in enabling civil society participation in public expenditure monitoring.



▲ **Employment training.** The government can contract out services, like social welfare and employment promotion, to CSOs.

International practice shows that the state can support CSOs in several ways: through a favorable tax environment and exemptions, the provision of office space, the awarding of contracts to deliver works and services, and the creation of opportunities and space for dialogue on policies and programs. Examples of contracting out government services to CSOs include CSO participation in providing state social welfare and employment promotion services. The CSOs that meet the specific requirements and that are registered at the General Authority on Social Welfare and Services can bid for contracts to provide community-based services for the elderly and people with disabilities, as well as technical and vocational skills training. However, the practice of contracting the work out is limited to this sector.

Mongolia joined the Open Government Partnership in 2013 and implemented two National Action Plans (2014–2016, 2016–2018) to improve government transparency, accountability, and responsiveness to citizens.⁹ CSOs are represented in the Open Government Partnership's national council, chaired by the cabinet secretariat, and actively participate in the development of plans and monitoring of government commitments. Mongolia adopted 21 commitments for the first national action plan and 13 commitments for the second national action plan in the areas of improving public services, increasing public integrity, more effectively managing public resources, and improving corporate accountability.



▲ **Health partnerships.** The partnerships between government and CSOs are emerging and vary in scope and depth of engagement among government agencies at the national and local level.

The partnerships between government and CSOs are emerging and vary in scope and the depth of engagement among government agencies, and at the national and local levels. This depends on the views government officials hold on the role CSOs can play in policy development, the provision of services, or the promotion of citizens' participation in local development. In general, there are opportunities for CSOs to engage with government agencies and their activities, though this depends on each government agency. Furthermore, there is room to strengthen the mechanisms to structure engagement and consultation.

Legal and Regulatory Frameworks

The Constitution of Mongolia (1992), the NGO Law (1997), the Civil Code (2002), and the Law on State Registration of Legal Entities (2015) apply to CSOs. All legal entities are classified either as profit or not-for-profit. CSOs are not-for-profit organizations. Articles 481 and 482 of the Civil Code state that several persons may form an association and carry out their activities without state registration. While community groups and CBOs can still operate successfully and partner with government and other organizations, they need to register as a legal entity to raise and account for the funds.

The court (Article 8) may dissolve CSOs if they conduct activities inconsistent with their mission and violate laws severely or repeatedly.

Other laws and legislation that relate to CSOs and their activities include: the Law on Government (1993), the Law on Regulating Public Demonstrations and Meetings (1994), the Law on Regulating Resolution of Citizens Applications and Grievances (1995), the Public Procurement Law of Mongolia (2005), the Law on Legal Status of Foreign Citizen (2010), the Law on Information Transparency and the Right to Obtain Information (2011), the Law on Value Added Taxation (2015), and the Law on Legislations (2015).

CSOs are required to file an annual financial report with the Mongolian General Department of Taxation and annual report of activities to the General Authority on State Registration (Article 23 of the NGO Law). According to the General Department of Taxation, less than 50% of registered CSOs submitted their report to the General Department of Taxation. At the same time, more than 60% of CSOs sent their annual report of activities to the General Authority on State Registration.¹⁰ The compliance with the above reporting requirements is not adequately reinforced and the regulatory mechanism to monitor implementation of the law is lacking.

Article 19 of the NGO Law states that CSOs may generate income from membership fees and contributions by citizens, business entities and organizations; mission-related economic activities; borrowed or inherited funds; and funds allocated from the state budget for project



▲ **Improved transparency.** Recent approval of several important roles and regulations is expected to improve the government's transparency, accountability, and responsiveness, and broaden the role of CSOs in this sphere.

implementation. The NGO Law (1997) and Tax Law (1998) provided a favorable environment to CSOs by exempting their income and donations made to CSOs from taxation until the amendments were made in June 2006. The exemptions applied to CSOs operating for public benefit.

The abolishment of the tax exemptions had, in general, a negative effect on CSO development by limiting their potential to raise funds domestically. Also, while CSO incomes are tax exempt, they are not exempt from real estate taxes, which impose additional burden on CSOs that own buildings, such as shelters.¹¹ The taxation and social insurance laws increase the transaction costs of CSO and pose threats to their financial sustainability.

The NGO Law has not changed since it was approved in 1997, despite several efforts to improve legal and regulatory frameworks in line with international best practice. Since 2003, three working groups attempted to revise the NGO Law. The latest working group was established in 2013 to work on drafting related civil society laws for: (i) public benefit, (ii) NGO or not-for-profit organizations, and (iii) government works and services to be performed by NGOs. The frequent government changes meant these drafts have not been finalized. In 2017, efforts to amend the law were renewed and a working group was established under the coordination of the Ministry of Justice.

The recent approval of several important laws and regulations is expected to improve the government's transparency, accountability, and responsiveness, and broaden the role of CSOs in this sphere. These changes have taken effect recently and hence, there is a need for concerted efforts for their effective implementation. The following laws and regulations provide the framework for improved government transparency, accountability, and civil society participation in improving government services (endnote 10):

- Law on Information Transparency and the Right to Information (June 2011),
- Law on Budget (Article 6.5) amended to enable citizens' participation for greater transparency (December 2011),
- Law on Managing and Preventing Conflict of Public and Private Interest in Public Service (January 2012),
- Law on Glass Account (2014),
- Law on Public Polling (2015),
- Law on Development Policy and Planning (2015),
- General Law on Administration (2015),
- Law on Public Hearing (2015),
- Law on Legislation (2015),

- Criteria on Transparency (2009),
- Regulation on Ensuring Budget and Financial Transparency (January 2012),
- Regulation on Contracting Out Government Goods and Services to NGOs (March 2016), and
- Regulation on Accreditation of NGO to Provide Services to Victims (2017).

Capacity of Civil Society Organizations

The government increasingly seeks feedback from CSOs prior to key decision-making and respects the CSOs' right to express their interests freely. Generally, CSOs lead in identifying critical issues in a wide range of sectors and introduce innovative strategies and initiatives to the government. Increasingly, local CSOs have been more effective in influencing decision-making at the national level.



▲ **CSO-government discussions.** CSOs lead discussions identifying critical issues in a wide range of sectors and introduce government to innovative strategies and initiatives.



▲ **Addressing air quality.** CSOs have become one of the loudest voices against environmental pollution, including air pollution from stoves burning charcoal.

The CSOs are forming consortia and alliances to articulate their issues and concerns more effectively with the government, international CSOs, and other stakeholders. For example, CSOs have become one of the loudest voices against environmental pollution. Environmental CSOs established an alliance for research and environmental assessments to promote evidence-based decision-making within government and the private sector. In mining towns, citizens are establishing local CBOs to protect their rights and to pressure mining companies to comply with national and international environmental standards. These organizations have been effective in pushing for mining projects with smaller environmental footprints. Mongolian civil society, especially those organizations working on human rights issues, has accumulated significant programmatic experience, strengthened its national and international networks, improved their internal cohesion, consolidated their ties with grassroots, and developed productive relations with state institutions.

However, limited progress has been made in their financial sustainability and, consequently, in their institutional strength.¹² Generally, the CSO sector is weaker in managerial and administrative skills. Umbrella organizations and networks also require capacity building. Organizational advocacy and social mobilization skills are also limited. In some specialized CSOs, such as those serving disabled people, members are already disadvantaged and vulnerable to poverty; this translates into further limitations of institutional and personal capacity. Some smaller CSOs have minimal sector technical capacities and abilities to prepare proposals and reports. These weaknesses have resulted in a slower growth and a lack of strategic clarity among smaller CSOs.

Several development agencies recently conducted capacity assessments of CSOs operating in the fields of human rights, citizens' engagement, and good governance.¹³ CSOs reported major weaknesses related to governance, organizational management, and technical and financial capacities, including limited investment in systematic and strategic CSO capacity. Although there are collaborative initiatives among CSOs, partnerships between the international community and CSOs do not exist. The poor quality of CSO reports is a major issue. Due to funding constraints, many CSOs cannot advance their strategic goals. It is common for CSOs to have a project-driven approach, which limits their opportunities for sustainable results.

Priority areas for building CSO capacity are organizational capacity, including development of clear missions and visions; strategic plans; the establishment of internal administrative systems, personnel policies, financial and accounting systems; and, most importantly, resource mobilization strategies. The Open Society Forum (OSF) Mongolia is one of the main CSOs supporting capacity building for other CSOs. OSF provides monitoring and policy research grants to CSOs and training so that CSOs can effectively utilize those grants for specified purposes. To support the longer term sustainable operation of CSOs, OSF implemented an institutional capacity development program. OSF is currently providing funds for office rooms for six CSOs, addressing one of the most critical issues for their long-term operations, such as high cost of office renting. OSF also supports public interest litigation CSOs. The Mongolian Women's Fund raises money to support initiatives for the advancement of Mongolian women and protection of their human rights.

There are almost no CSOs housed by government institutions. There are many CSOs that do not have a fixed office due to lack of funding. These public benefit CSOs typically have the staff of one or two people. This is very common among CSOs operating at the grassroots level.

Cooperation with Other Development Organizations

International CSOs played an important role in progressing economic development, political democracy, and poverty reduction in Mongolia after 1990. Organizations such as the Adventist Development Relief Agency, Amnesty International, Asia Foundation, Good Neighbor Society, Hans Seidel Stiftung, Help International, Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, Marie Stopes International,

Mercy Corps, the Open Society Institute, Save the Children, World Vision International, and the World Wide Fund for Nature have made important contributions to the country's social and economic development during its transition period. Their functions and activities were diverse and based on their areas of expertise. For example, Amnesty International began promoting and protecting human rights; and Adventist Development Relief Agency promoted food security and microfinance. The Asia Foundation facilitated a civil society partnership network consisting of several CSOs, which works against corruption. Their support has evolved to address the changing needs of the country. The role of international NGOs and international development organizations is also changing from direct implementation to capacity strengthening of local CSOs to improve their development effectiveness and outreach.

Mongolian CSOs, particularly those focusing on human rights and advocacy, are well connected to regional and international organizations, having particularly strong ties with Asia and the Pacific, North America, and western Europe. They are also connected, through the support of the Open Society Institute network, to East and Central Europe and Central Asia. Mongolian activists contribute at leadership levels to regional and international networks.

CSOs actively cooperate with development partners and donors such as the Asian Development Bank, Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, United Nations agencies, and the World Bank. For example, the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation funded the Sustainable Artisanal Mining project to support a national federation to step up their advocacy efforts



▲ **Improving educational outcomes.** CSOs have accumulated experience and expertise, including in the education sector, that make them an essential and valuable partner for advancing the country's development progress.

in the sector. The Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation and the World Bank support the project Mainstreaming Social Accountability in Mongolia that is building the capacity of civil society and citizens in improving government transparency and accountability. In the last 2 decades, CSOs in Mongolia have grown into a strong “third” sector, representing the interests and perspectives of groups and people with diverse backgrounds and beliefs. CSOs have accumulated experience and expertise that make them an essential and valuable partner for advancing the country's development progress.

Endnotes

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PSN: BRF190150-2

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.22617/BRF190150-2>

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On the cover: Stupas are one of the most recognizable forms of Buddhist architecture in Mongolia.