



2019 CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATION SUSTAINABILITY INDEX

Asia Region: The Philippines Country Report
September 2020

Cover Photo: The Fourth Regional Disability Rights Dialogue, which was held in Yangon, Myanmar in January 2019, focused on opportunities to integrate disability rights into national policies to implement the Association of Southeast Asian Nations' (ASEAN's) Enabling Masterplan 2025: Mainstreaming the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The dialogue was co-hosted by the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES), the General Election Network for Disability Access (AGENDA), and the Union Election Commission of Myanmar (UEC) and was supported by USAID, the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), the United Kingdom's Department for International Development (DFID), and the U.S. State Department's Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor (DRL).

Photo Credit: International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES)

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For the Philippines

September 2020

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LOCAL PARTNER

CAUCUS OF DEVELOPMENT NGO NETWORKS (CODE-NGO)

Roselle S. Rasay
Ma. Aurora Francisco-Tolentino

PROJECT MANAGERS

FHI 360

Michael Kott
Eka Imerlishvili
Alex Nejadian

INTERNATIONAL CENTER FOR NOT-FOR-PROFIT LAW (ICNL)

Catherine Shea
Jennifer Stuart

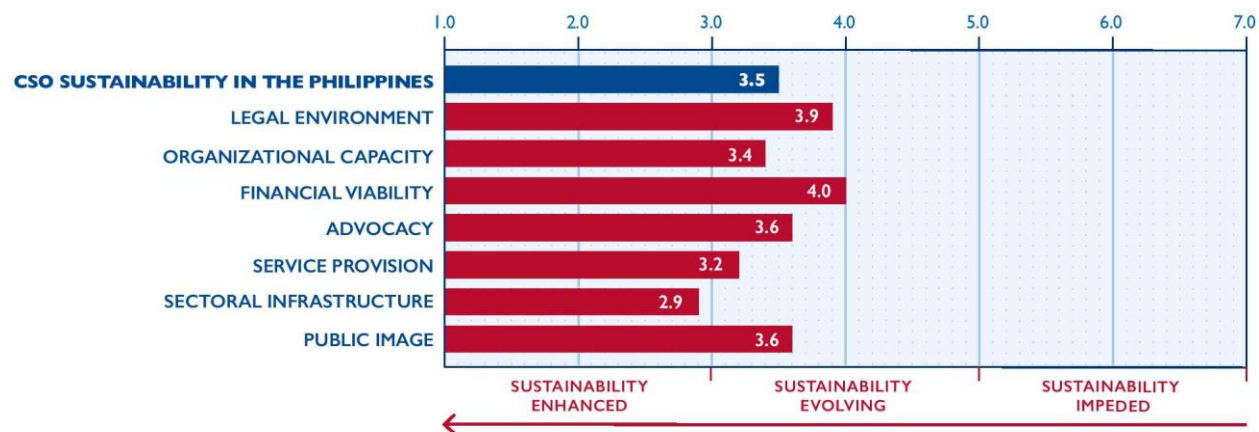
EDITORIAL COMMITTEE

Bishnu Sapkota, David Moore, Zach Lampell, Asta Zinbo, and Kourtney Pompei

THE PHILIPPINES

Capital: Manila
Population: 109,180,815
GDP per capita (PPP): \$8,400
Human Development Index: High (0/712)
Freedom in the World: Partly Free (59/100)

OVERALL CSO SUSTAINABILITY: 3.5



The Philippines held senatorial, congressional, and local elections on May 13, 2019, the midpoint of President Rodrigo Duterte’s six-year term. The Philippine Democratic Party (PDP)-Laban, the ruling party led by Duterte, won the biggest share of seats in the House of Representatives, followed by three parties allied with PDP: the Nacionalista Party, Nationalist People’s Coalition, and National Unity Party. Together, these parties comprised 62 percent of the seats in the lower chamber, giving them a supermajority. Half of the seats in the Senate were up for election. Duterte’s former aide and the former police chief who led the war on drugs were among those elected to the Senate. No opposition candidates were elected to the Senate, thus also creating a supermajority in the Senate, with only three members from the opposition and three members as independent candidates. Given the legislative composition, some advocacy CSOs struggled to find legislative champions to support their causes after the elections.

A climate of violence and harassment persisted in 2019 in both the political and social spheres. Extrajudicial killings related to the war on drugs continued, especially in the National Capital Region, although they received less media attention. At the end of 2019, the Philippine Drug Enforcement Administration (PDEA) reported that 5,552 people had been killed in drug operations during the year. However, Human Rights Watch put the death toll at 27,000, based on estimates from local human rights groups. In July 2019, twenty-one farmers and peasant leaders were killed during police operations in Negros Oriental, in the central part of the Philippines. *The State of Philippine Media Report* produced by the Freedom for Media, Freedom for All network reported heightened attacks on the media during the year. Sedition charges were filed against Vice President Leni Robredo, the Chair of the opposition Liberal Party, members of the opposition, and religious leaders.

The Philippine economy remained strong in 2019, although growth slowed to 5.8 percent, its lowest level in eight years, according to the World Bank. Inflation was only 1.7 percent, and the job market was solid. The poverty rate continued to decline steadily during the year.

The overall sustainability of the Philippine CSO sector was unchanged in 2019, although negative developments were noted in two dimensions. The legal environment deteriorated moderately mainly because of a rise in reports of state harassment and stricter scrutiny of CSOs. The government’s continued vilification of the sector, combined with a drop in public trust, also contributed to a deterioration in public image.

A total of 357,337 CSOs are registered in the Philippines, including an estimated 179,000 non-stock, nonprofit organizations as of 2019; 18,065 cooperatives (11,138 of which filed their reports as of 2018; 11,061 homeowners’ associations as of 2018; and 84,278 labor organizations and 64,933 workers associations as of 2018. Although these figures represent a considerable increase over numbers reported in last year’s *CSO Sustainability Index* report, this is likely caused by the fact that the various agencies that register CSOs are not consistent in their reporting. The actual number of CSOs is thought to have only increased slightly over the past year.

LEGAL ENVIRONMENT: 3.9



The legal environment for CSOs continued to deteriorate in 2019, for the fifth consecutive year, as reported incidents of state harassment increased and scrutiny of CSOs, particularly those involved in advocacy or that are critical of the government, intensified. Overall, CSOs felt that government agencies sought to control rather than support them.

CSOs register and annually update their registration with the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) in the case of non-stock, nonprofit organizations, which include non-governmental organizations (NGOs), foundations, and some people's organizations (POs, a form of membership organization). Cooperatives register with the Cooperatives Development Authority (CDA), while homeowners' associations register with the Housing and

Land Use Regulatory Board (HLURB). Labor organizations and workers associations register with the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE).

In early 2019, various CSO networks, foundations, and human rights groups sought clarification from the SEC about two memorandum circulars it issued in late 2018. SEC Memo 2018-15 stipulates that CSOs must disclose their funding sources, financial transactions, and program activities so that the SEC may undertake risk assessments for money laundering and terrorism financing. Based on concerns that these disclosures could be used to target legitimate organizations, CSOs lobbied SEC to suspend its implementation of the memo until the risk assessment process was clarified. In response, SEC revised the guidelines, extended the deadline for submitting mandatory disclosure forms to early 2020, and revised the risk assessment provision to clarify that the assessments are an internal SEC process, thereby assuring CSOs that the mandatory disclosure forms will not be made public.

SEC Memo 2018-17 requires CSOs to declare their beneficial owners. This created confusion about who CSOs' beneficial owners are, especially for corporate and family foundations. When Memo 2018-17 took effect in 2019, many CSOs sought to comply with the new guidelines by declaring their boards of trustees or persons exercising governance roles in their organizations as their beneficial owners despite the fact that by definition, non-stock, nonprofit corporations are governed by individuals in trust and are not owned by their incorporators. In case of dissolution, they must distribute their assets to similar nonprofit organizations or public entities.

CSOs were subject to additional administrative burdens in 2019. Some foundations reported that SEC began to require additional supporting documents with their General Information Sheets (GIS) in 2019. For example, CSOs that declared program operations in several municipalities in a single province had to submit accreditations from each municipality rather than a single accreditation from the province. SEC also started requiring CSOs to secure certificates of no derogatory record every time they secured certified true copies of their documents from SEC for any other legal or registration purposes. The Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR) and DOLE conducted more random checks of CSOs, especially corporate foundations, in 2019.

State harassment of CSOs, particularly human rights organizations and advocacy groups, increased in 2019. The Global Witness Report 2019 cited the Philippines as the most dangerous country in the world for environmental defenders, with thirty defenders killed in 2018 alone. The police conducted warrantless searches of the offices of several human rights groups and activists in Metro Manila and in the Mindanao region. Websites of human rights defenders and media outfits, including PhilRights, Bulatlat, AlterMedia, Karapatan, HR Online PH, and National Union of Journalists of the Philippines, were attacked and disabled. According to the *State of Philippine Media Report*, the number of killings, attacks, and threats targeting journalists increased from 99 in 2018 to 128 in 2019, while police visits to and other intimidation of media agencies increased from 6 to 16 cases. Human rights defenders were also subject to charges of sedition, terrorism, and criminal offenses. In an intelligence briefing for lawmakers in November, an officer of the Armed Forces identified eighteen CSOs as "communist terrorist groups." Most of those thus accused were humanitarian, human rights, and advocacy CSOs, including the National Council of Churches in the Philippines (NCCP), Citizens' Disaster Response Center (CDRC), and Farmers Development

Center (Fardec). In the same briefing, about thirty international CSOs, including Oxfam, Save the Children, Caritas Australia, Switzerland, and Belgium, and the Swedish Red Cross, were named as “providing funds wittingly or unwittingly” to these groups. The groups identified were outraged by the charges, and many CSOs viewed the action as malicious, careless, and endangering their partner communities. Finally, several lawyers were reported murdered in 2019, bringing the total number of lawyers killed between July 2016 and September 2019 to at least forty-one, according to the Integrated Bar of the Philippines and Human Rights Watch. The lawyers mostly represented human rights defenders, journalists, political opposition leaders, government critics, and persons accused of drug-related crimes.

Since 2017, schools for indigenous people of the Davao region in Mindanao operated by the nonprofit Salugpangan Ta’Tanu Igkanogon Community Learning Center have been subject to harassment by the military and police. For example, they have reported heavy military presence during school openings, military interrogation of volunteer teachers, and soldiers going house to house to warn parents that these schools are not recognized by the Department of Education (DepEd). In October 2019, DepEd issued a suspension order to fifty-five schools run by Salugpangan, stating that the schools were using unapproved curriculum and were teaching leftist ideology. The Commission on Human Rights urged DepEd to re-examine its decision, expressing concern that it may be a case of disenfranchisement and a violation of indigenous children’s rights to education. In addition, President Duterte threatened to bomb tribal schools, accusing them of teaching students to become communist rebels.

The Tax Reform for Acceleration and Inclusion Act, which took effect in 2018, was expected to increase donations to CSOs by reducing donors’ tax from 30 to 6 percent. However, no benefits had been felt yet in 2019. While CSOs’ income is generally tax exempt, revenue from income-generating activities is subject to tax, regardless of the disposition of income.

CSOs may earn income through the provision of goods and services, as long as such activity is stipulated in their bylaws. CSOs can compete for government contracts and projects provided they are accredited by the government agencies issuing contracts. CSOs must register their public fundraising initiatives with the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD). CSOs may accept funds from foreign donors, although new anti-money laundering and counter-terrorism financing regulations require banks to exercise scrutiny over all financial transactions between domestic and foreign CSOs.

CSOs’ need for legal support increased in 2019, particularly because of the harassment of human rights organizations and activists. CSOs also needed legal support to understand and comply with new regulatory requirements and data privacy laws. In particular, MVGS Law, a private law firm, provided free corporate legal assistance and helped draft position papers for CODE-NGO and other human rights groups engaged in discussions with the SEC about various SEC policies. However, legal services are generally accessible only in the capital, Manila, and key cities.

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY: 3.4

Organizational capacity in the CSO sector did not change significantly in 2019. Larger CSOs, organizations with complex programs, corporate foundations, and cooperatives generally have greater organizational capacities and more sophisticated organizational systems in place than smaller organizations, community-based groups, and POs.

Many NGOs continued to work with partner POs and community leaders to solidify community support for their program interventions in 2019. For example, the Partnership for Philippine Support Service Agencies (PHILSSA), a network of CSOs focused on sustainable urban development, continued to provide technical assistance and capacity development support for its partner PO network Aksyon Para sa Kahandaan sa Kalamidad at Klima (Action for Preparedness for Disaster and Climate Change, AKKMA), which is composed of

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY IN THE PHILIPPINES



associations of the urban poor in seven regions across the country. Because of this support, trained AKKMA leaders were able to articulate their advocacy objectives, as well as those of PHILSSA, in various local, national, and even international dialogues and events in 2019.

In 2019, some donor-dependent organizations folded or shifted their focus to areas in which more funding was available, such as disaster preparedness or humanitarian aid. Christian Aid, for example, announced that it would close its operations in the Philippines in March 2020 after nearly forty years of presence in the country.

As in previous years, larger CSOs, organizations with complex programs, corporate foundations, and cooperatives have greater capacity to engage in strategic planning. Such organizations usually craft strategic plans to guide their operations for periods of three, five, or ten years and review them periodically. They usually report on their progress in implementing their strategic plans in their annual membership meetings. On the other hand, smaller organizations and CSOs with a narrow programmatic focus usually only develop annual activity plans.

Similarly, larger CSOs, cooperatives, and corporate foundations typically have more sophisticated internal management systems, including detailed governance, human resource, financial management, and fundraising systems, policies, and processes. Smaller CSOs and community-based organizations have simpler systems, including board elections and terms of office, that still allow them to practice appropriate decision-making processes.

Larger CSOs generally have clear human resource policies and are able to maintain regular staff and employ, retain, or consult lawyers and accountants. In contrast, smaller NGOs and POs have lean staffing structures and are supported largely by volunteers with whom they have informal personnel arrangements. CSOs have difficulty maintaining staff because they are only able to offer limited salaries and training opportunities. CSO staff turnover seems to be higher among millennials and Generation Z, even at corporate foundations offering higher salaries, because younger people tend to have higher expectations for salaries and promotions after relatively short periods on the job, especially when comparing their benefits to those of their cohorts working in other sectors.

CSOs regularly use email and mobile phone devices to communicate with their members and use desktop or laptop computers at work. Organizations commonly provide their staff with computers but not mobile phones, therefore, CSO staff often use their personal mobile phones for official tasks. Although internet connectivity is still limited in some parts of the country, CSOs increasingly rely on the internet to communicate and promote their activities. They are also starting to become more adept at using social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram to promote their organizations' activities.

FINANCIAL VIABILITY: 4.0



CSOs' financial viability did not change in 2019. Corporate foundations and cooperatives, especially those offering savings and credit programs, continue to be financially sustainable, while grant-dependent CSOs struggle to sustain themselves. Many organizations remained committed to delivering services to their members and partners but did so in a more limited way in 2019, sometimes relying on volunteers or even operating at a deficit. POs, especially those that continue to operate as associations of volunteers, found it particularly difficult to sustain their operations unless they transform into cooperatives or social enterprises with livelihood and economic objectives for their members.

Shifts in both foreign and local donors' funding levels and priorities in recent years continued to make it difficult for local Philippine CSOs to raise funds in 2019. In addition, a number of international CSOs have registered branch offices locally to raise funds from local sources, thus competing directly with local CSOs.

Section 71 of the General Provisions of the government's General Appropriations Act (GAA) of 2019 allows for fund transfers to CSOs under strict conditions. For example, CSOs must be accredited by the agency from which such funding is sourced, jointly implement the specific project or program with the agency, and be in good standing with the government agencies with which they work. CSOs can bid for government contracts under the same terms that apply to corporations, including filing of performance bonds.

Local funding institutions, such as the Peace and Equity Foundation and Foundation for Sustainable Society, Inc., decreased their loans and grants to CSOs in 2019 because of poor market conditions and lower interest earnings from their endowment funds in the previous year. Businesses continued to provide regular funding to their own corporate foundations, and some companies encouraged employees to give to their corporate foundations or other CSOs as part of the companies' corporate social responsibility (CSR) programs. The League of Corporate Foundations organized its annual CSR Expo in 2019, featuring new startups, innovative programs, and volunteer opportunities, from which corporate foundations could select partner nonprofits to support. However, corporate foundations have yet to develop strategic partnerships with a broad swath of CSOs and community programs, as many CSOs are unable to meet corporate foundations' due diligence requirements or grant giving criteria.

Cooperatives have better financial prospects than other types of CSOs, as they are managed in a more professional manner. According to Pambansang Kilusan ng Samahang Magsasaka (the National Farmers' Union Movement, PAKISAMA), a confederation of small farmers, fishers, indigenous people, and rural women and youth organizations, international agricultural funding organizations and agencies, such as AgriCord Agriterra, and the International Fund for Agricultural Development, prefer to offer direct support to well-managed farmers' associations and producers' cooperatives. This preference suggests that there will be a diminishing role for intermediary CSOs in this sector.

A few organizations have explored alternative funding sources, such as fee-based training, consultancies, and platform-based social enterprises, but these have yet to produce reliable income streams. CSOs are generally hesitant to test fundraising alternatives such as crowdfunding. In 2019, Aboitiz Foundation, a corporate foundation, created an online crowdfunding platform called KINDer, which invites smaller organizations to submit stories about their work or fundraising campaigns for promotion on the platform with minimal administrative fees.

In general, CSOs have financial management practices that are adequate in accordance with their size and level of development. Larger CSOs and networks, cooperatives, and corporate foundations tend to have more sophisticated financial management systems. Many small organizations have simple systems, and instead of certified public accountants, rely on bookkeepers or administrative personnel to manage their finances.

ADVOCACY: 3.6

CSOs advocacy did not change in 2019. Despite the difficult climate for advocacy, CSOs were able to organize broad-based, cross-sectoral campaigns on a number of important issues.

CSOs' engagement with the government on policy issues varies from the national to local levels. At the national level, issue-specific coalitions engage directly with relevant agencies. For example, the Civil Society Network for Education Reforms works with DepEd on the implementation and review of the agency's Education for All commitments and Alternative Learning Systems, as well as the United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goal 4, which calls for inclusive and equitable education for all. The Philippine Open Government Partnership (OGP) organized broad consultations with CSOs during the development of the country's Fifth National Action Plan (NAP) 2019–2021. The Philippine OGP Fifth NAP commits ten national government agencies to OGP principles of transparency, accountability, use of technology, and civic participation in the implementation of their programs, with their CSO counterparts committing to either co-implement or monitor the government's implementation of these programs.



The House Committee on Participation invites CSOs as resource persons in technical working group meetings or committee hearings on bills that may impact the regulation of CSOs. Other national government processes, particularly the Marawi Rehabilitation program and the flagship “Build, Build, Build” infrastructure program, remained opaque.

Data from the Department of Interior and Local Government suggests that CSOs’ engagement with local governments remained strong in 2019, with 11,000 CSOs registered as members of local development councils (LDCs). LDCs formulate the annual and medium-term socio-economic plans and policies of local government units. Based on initial assessments, CSOs are particularly effective in disaster preparedness and response, social protection, and monitoring of government projects.

CSOs did not engage in visible national advocacy on issues such as democracy, human rights and peace in 2019. However, several cross-sectoral campaigns enjoyed notable success. For example, POs, faith-based groups, farmers, urban poor, and labor groups mobilized for the People’s Journey (Lakbay ng Taumbayan) in May, an eighteen-day caravan across the Philippines ending at the People Power Monument in Manila. The marchers called on lawmakers to stop trying to change the constitution to extend their term limits and undermining provisions mandating socialized housing, human rights, and asset reform. The march culminated in calls supportive of opposition candidates in the May elections.

CSOs found it more difficult to lobby for their legislative agendas in 2019 because the supermajorities created in both Houses of Congress meant there were not enough votes to pass more “democratizing” legislation. However, many CSOs’ lobbying efforts were still successful in 2019. For example, HealthJustice Philippines, a think tank and advocacy group with legal expertise on tobacco control and health promotion, worked with the World Health Organization to lobby for passage of the Universal Health Care Act, which was enacted in March. In response to an alarming increase in the number of cases of abuse of children in conflict situations, UNICEF, Child Rights Network, Council for the Welfare of Children, and Philippine Legislators’ Committee on Population and Development campaigned for enactment of the Special Protection of Children in Situations of Armed Conflict Act, which was adopted in early 2019. Philippine affiliates of IndustriALL, a global alliance of workers in the mining, energy, and manufacturing sectors, supported the Expanded Maternity Leave Law. The Philippine Commission on Women organized nationwide consultations on the development of guidelines to implement the 2018 Safe Space or Lewdness Prohibition (Bawal Bastos) Act, which criminalizes sexual and gender-based harassment. Several advocacy groups continued to lobby for passage of long-standing bills, including the Freedom of Information (FOI) Bill, Coconut Farmers Trust Fund Bill, and National Land Use Bill. Human rights groups continued to push for a human rights defenders law and against reinstatement of the death penalty and the reduction of the minimal age for criminal responsibility to twelve.

The Right to Know Right Now Coalition (R2KRN), a network of more than a hundred organizations and civil society leaders pushing for the passage of the FOI Bill, also reported on the status of information requests under President Duterte’s Executive Order on FOI. While finding new champions for the FOI Bill among newly elected legislators in 2019, R2KRN members focused on documenting the process of requesting data and the replies of specific agencies using the government’s FOI online portal. Some examples of information requested in 2019 were Statements of Assets and Liabilities of President Duterte and project documents for the proposed Kaliwa Dam and other projects reportedly funded by loans from China.

CSOs also advocated in 2019 to improve the regulatory policies that affect the sector, with a focus on revising the SEC’s Memorandum Circulars 2018-15 and 2018-17. With pro bono legal support from MVGS, a group of CSOs including CODE-NGO, Philippine Alliance of Human Rights Advocates (PAHRA), and Ateneo Human Rights Center, among others, sought a dialogue with representatives of the SEC enforcement and investor protection department. The CSOs raised concerns about the unclear risk assessment process in the mandatory disclosure guidelines, as well as their apprehensions that the mandated disclosures might lead to legitimate organizations being targeted. In addition, the Philippine Council of NGO Certification (PCNC) and Association of Foundations (AF) organized information sessions with SEC on the guidelines on the mandatory disclosures and declaration of beneficial owners for nonprofits. SEC eventually revised these guidelines.

SERVICE PROVISION: 3.2



CSO service provision did not change in 2019. CSOs continued to offer a diverse range of services in such areas as training and education, health and nutrition, livelihood development, cooperative development, social services, and lending and microfinancing.

CSOs are responsive to community needs, although few CSOs have evaluative measures to determine the adequacy of their planning and programming. CSOs continue to gain competencies in disaster preparedness and humanitarian programming. Development-oriented CSOs are becoming more equipped to deliver humanitarian response interventions adhering to the widely used Core Humanitarian Standards, facilitate disaster risk reduction and management planning for local government units and communities, and contribute to

relevant policies, programs, and actions.

Some human rights organizations and faith-based groups continue to provide social protection, legal, and psycho-social services, and case documentation to the families of those killed in the government's war on drugs. Lawyers and human rights organizations offering these services became overextended during the year, as there are not enough lawyers working in this area.

Cooperatives often partnered with other institutions to expand their services to members in 2019. For example, Lamac Multipurpose Cooperative, an award-winning cooperative in Cebu with over a billion pesos in assets, partnered with Jollibee Group Foundation to train more farmers on agro-entrepreneurship. The National Confederation of Cooperatives, Philippine Family Farmers' Agriculture Fisheries Forestry Cooperative Federation (AgriCOOPh), and Partnership for the Development of Human Resources in Rural Areas partnered with the Philippine Cooperative Center and national government agencies to develop the competencies of agricultural cooperatives and enhance the competitiveness of their products. Cooperatives also provided services to the larger communities in which they operated through the Community Development Fund (CDF), which receives 3 percent of cooperatives' net surpluses. A few large cooperatives, such as the Oro Integrated Cooperative in Cagayan de Oro City, have established their own foundations to provide community services beyond the cooperative's members.

Cost recovery continues to be a challenge for many CSOs, especially those that are dependent on donor funding. Many CSOs are reluctant to charge fees for their services or engage in consultancy services, as they have a mindset that their services should be free. Others are simply not aware of how to go about charging for some or all of their services. In other cases, CSOs' funding agencies will not allow them to charge for these services.

Some government agencies continue to recognize the value of CSOs as providers of capacity-building and research services, policy advocacy, and the monitoring and evaluation of government programs by consulting them or involving them in the implementation of their programs. These include the Department of Interior and Local Government, DSWD, Department of Budget and Management, Presidential Communications Operations Office–Freedom of Information Office, and Commission on Audit.

SECTORAL INFRASTRUCTURE: 2.9

The infrastructure supporting the CSO sector in the Philippines did not change in 2019.

Intermediary support organizations and CSO resource centers, such as Venture for Fundraising and Fundraising Philippines, continued to provide training on fundraising for CSOs. In 2019, the League of Corporate Foundations and League of Accountants for Development reactivated their training services on proposal writing and accounting for non-accountants, not only for their members but for other CSOs. Private consulting firms, such as Meraki Consulting and Technopoly Inc., also provide consultancy services to CSOs, including at negotiated rates reflecting organizations' capacity to pay.

Many CSOs and sectoral organizations¹ belong to formal or informal provincial, regional, or national networks and federations. CSO networks continued to provide training to members and other CSOs in 2019. The Association of Foundations' LEAD to Serve program provided training on CSO leadership; the League of Corporate Foundations offered workshops on resource mobilization and proposal development; Philippine Coalition on Volunteerism Inc. launched the Global Standard for Volunteering for Development; the Center for Humanitarian Learning and Innovation hosted training in business continuity planning for CSOs and cooperatives; and PAKISAMA and the Philippine Family Farmers' Agriculture Fisheries Forestry Cooperatives Federation (AgriCOOPh) offered technical extension training, as well as governance and management courses, to their member organic rice cooperatives. Social welfare and development agencies are required to attend at least 70 percent of DSWD's training and other DSWD activities in order to renew their registration.

In a year in which POs found it particularly challenging to sustain their operations, members of the PO network AKKMA network benefitted from technical assistance offered by the full-time staff of the Partnership of Philippine Support Service Agencies network. Among the PO networks that continue to thrive are those with full-time, professional staff, such as PAKISAMA (federation of farmers association), SENTRO (federation of labor associations), and Kilos Maralita (federation of urban poor groups).

New intersectoral partnerships emerged in 2019. For example, faith-based organizations, farmers' associations, indigenous people's associations, urban poor groups, human rights groups, and the media joined forces to stop the Kaliwa Dam project in Quezon Province, which is expected to displace indigenous farming and fishing communities and threaten lives and livelihoods in the area. Philippine Business for Social Progress launched an initiative to rehabilitate Marawi City called United for Marawi in partnership with CSOs, the government, business groups, and the United Nations Development Programme. Philippine Business for Education and Teach for the Philippines called on stakeholders to support DepEd after the country ranked last in the 2018 Program for International Student Assessment.

SECTORAL INFRASTRUCTURE IN THE PHILIPPINES



¹ Sectoral organizations include those working with basic sectors such as women, children, elderly, indigenous peoples, urban poor, formal and informal labor, children and youth, and persons with disability. The Philippines has a law defining these fourteen basic sectors, which are convened through the National Anti-Poverty Commission.

PUBLIC IMAGE: 3.6



CSOs' public image deteriorated slightly in 2019 as public trust in CSOs dropped and the government continued to vilify CSOs.

The Philippine Trust Index 2019 reports that Filipinos' overall trust in institutions has dropped since 2017, with the sharpest decline in trust in NGOs, which dropped 22 points from 59 percent to 37 percent in a two-year period. This is probably because the public has limited awareness of the NGO sector; 35 percent of respondents to the Trust Index reported that they do not know what NGOs are.

Government perceptions of CSOs vary. The president continues to view human rights activists and CSOs as critics of his pronouncements and policies. The military and police accused some peace advocates and

humanitarian organizations of being "communists" and therefore "terrorists." However, key national government agencies, such as the Department of Interior and Local Government and DepEd, and local government offices continued to regard CSOs as sources of credible information and rely on them as contractors for government projects. Businesses generally view CSOs as partners for their CSR programs. Some businesses, however, think that CSOs lack the management and financial capacities needed to implement projects that corporations can support.

While CSOs generally have weak relations with media, specific advocacy efforts in 2019, including the People's Journey march and the Stop Kaliwa Dam! campaign, received positive local and national media coverage that increased public knowledge about these issues. In addition, several members of the R2KRN advocacy coalition are independent media groups and investigative journalists that feature CSO stories in mainstream media. CSOs do not pay for media coverage as they are generally unable to afford to do so.

Organizations that rely on public donations or individual giving, such as Greenpeace Philippines and Philippine Animal Welfare Society, appear to do a better job at promoting their work to the public than grant-dependent organizations, which communicate mainly with donors and community partners. Cooperatives are also good at promoting their work to their members, and corporate foundations usually receive public relations and communications support from their head corporations. CSOs increasingly rely on digital technologies to promote their work and communicate with their audiences. While Facebook is the most widely used platform, corporate foundations also use Viber, Telegram, and LinkedIn, while younger staff use Instagram. Some CSOs use Messenger, Skype, or Zoom for meetings to minimize travel costs. Some also have started using YouTube to share recorded events or Facebook Live to stream live events. Human rights organizations and advocacy groups are concerned about digital security because of government harassment. Data privacy is especially important for corporate foundations.

Larger CSOs, CSO networks, and corporate foundations publish their annual reports in print or post them online on their websites. By the end of 2019, PCNC, a self-regulating body for the sector, had certified 460 CSOs. CSO networks and other membership-based organizations have developed their own codes of ethics. International humanitarian CSOs and UN agencies are beginning to introduce safeguarding practices, which call on CSOs to ensure that their programming does not result in abuse or neglect of any beneficiaries, especially children and at-risk adults. Local partner CSOs are sometimes mandated to develop such policies.

Disclaimer: The opinions expressed herein are those of the panelists and other project researchers and do not necessarily reflect the views of USAID or FHI 360.

U.S. Agency for International Development

1300 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW

Washington, DC 20523

Tel: (202) 712-0000

Fax: (202) 216-3524

www.usaid.gov