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Contribution of civil society organizations in Mongolian democracy

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Abstract

This study investigates the impact of civil society organizations (CSOs) on democratic transition and consolidation processes in Mongolia. Employing comparative civil society theory and empirical analysis of institutional development, the research examines three constitutive dimensions: (1) historical trajectory of CSO-state relations, (2) institutional frameworks governing civic participation, and (3) CSOs' efficacy in enhancing democratic accountability mechanisms. Primary findings identify structural constraints including resource dependency syndromes, managerial capacity deficits, and susceptibility to political co-option that impede organizational sustainability. The analysis concludes that while CSOs demonstrate significant agency in democratic norm diffusion, their institutional resilience necessitates multipronged interventions: legal framework modernization, diversified funding streams, technical capacity enhancement, and tripartite partnerships bridging state, civic, and citizen spheres.

Keywords: Civil society, democracy, Mongolia, governance, citizenry participation

Introduction

Concepts and definitions

Politics constitutes a fundamental mechanism for collective decision-making across diverse social units ranging from familial structures to national polities transcending confined institutional domains to represent a universal conceptual framework applicable to all societal actors. As defined by Leftwich, it encompasses the comprehensive processes of conflict, negotiation, and cooperation inherent in determining the creation, allocation, and utilisation of resources. Political relations manifest through formal and informal channels, operating within public, private, or hybrid spheres, and function across two interconnected analytical tiers: the primary establishment of foundational procedural norms (the 'rules of the game'), and the subsequent formulation of substantive regulations under those predetermined parameters.

Political development necessitates the consensual establishment of these foundational norms eschewing unilateral dominance alongside consistent adherence to derivative institutional rules irrespective of formal codification. Key developmental criteria include: (1) institutionalization of legal frameworks constraining power exertion; (2) incorporation of broad societal consensus into governmental operations; (3) meaningful civic participation and oversight; and (4) establishment of competent, stable institutions delivering equitable public services. Within this paradigm, democracy emerges as the preeminent governance structure, characterized by rules explicitly derived from and constrained by democratic values, thereby ensuring universal normative compliance.

In the work of theorists such as Alexis de Tocqueville, Robert Putnam, and Larry Diamond, civil society is defined as the basic condition for the survival and strengthening of democracy. Even in the conditions of Mongolia, since the 1990s, this theory has been implemented in practice, and it is proven by the facts that civil society organisations have played a special role in spreading democratic values, increasing citizens' participation, and monitoring government activities.

The 19th-century French historian and political philosopher Alexis de Tocqueville emphasized the importance of a vibrant civil society for a healthy and robust democracy. He said that voluntary associations and associations free from the state and economic spheres

prevent any oppression and corruption by promoting a healthy democracy by expressing the interests of the community, improving the responsibility of citizens, and mediating between individuals and the state.

Overview of Tocqueville's concept of democracy and civil society:

Decentralized power structure and local self-government. Having an administration that has the right to independently solve local problems increases citizen participation and collective awareness.

Associations, societies and voluntary cooperation. Associations, communities and voluntary cooperation are important in ensuring the unity of individuals with diverse data and interests in society and solving problems in society. Protection of individual rights. In a democratic society, the tyranny of the majority tends to be established, and individual rights and freedoms are protected with the help of intermediary institutions that connect the rule of law and the state and citizens.

Social capital. While individual freedom is essential to the sustainable maintenance of democratic institutions, strong social links such as shared values and trust are just as important.

Religion. It was believed that religion has an important influence on the formation of moral values, social unity, collective consciousness, and citizens' participation.

What stands out from Tokwil's view is that associations and societies organized on a voluntary basis make citizens aware of democratic thinking, values, and norms in their daily lives and thus become an important immunity to democracy. Today, most political theorists and researchers agree with Neo Tocquevillian view that while civil society is recognized as a necessary condition for democracy, the strength and stability of liberal democracy depend on the active participation of citizens.

The main distinguishing feature of civil society from the state is that it is not based on coercion or vertical management, but on the contrary, it is based on horizontal and parallel ties with voluntary, equal and harmonious relations (Philosophy of MAS, 2014). There are many different concepts that define civil society, which makes the concept quite complicated. Some of them emphasize certain characteristics of civil society and neglect others, while others pay more attention to state power, politics, and civil human freedom, while the rest give more importance to social capital, unity, and economic functions. These attitudes complement each other and are more than theories and principles, they are just differences in policy implementation, emphasis, and interpretation (Philosophy of MAS, 2014).

Political philosopher Ernest Gellner considered civil society to be a social sphere that exists between the "state and the market, and a shield zone that prevents one of them from becoming strong or superior in terms of control over both the state and the market. When developing the civil society index, the Global Association for the Promotion of Citizen Participation (CIVICUS) defined civil society as a field where citizens unite and act for their common interests in a separate form from the "family, state, and market.

If we clarify that the definition includes the content of voluntary association and organisation of people from the point of view of their own and social interests and opinions, and activities based on the principle of self-management independent of the state:

1. R. Dahrendorf formulated independence from the state as the ability of citizens to control government actions and hold the state accountable.

2. Independence means that citizens can control the government and hold the government accountable. The other idea is not to dominate the state, but to refer to a citizen-dominated society.

3. Voluntary nature refers to the set of all associations that are established naturally or voluntarily.

4. Self-management means that "understands the relationship established with others based on their free will"

5. Joining by interests means a variety of associations of formal and informal groups, non-governmental organisations and individuals that participate at the local and national levels in solving political, economic, and social development issues by citizens based on their opinions and common interests.

Citizens define their common goals and work in a non-governmental way based on their solidarity and active efforts to achieve them, but civil society is a concept of political activity (Mayer & Wryer, 2012) ^[28].

Civil society activities are determined by the following three criteria.

- Citizens' initiative is voluntary
- The activity should be organized
- Operations should be targeted for the benefit of the masses (Mayer & Wryer, 2012) ^[28].

Civil society is capable of performing the following six social and political functions. In:

1. It is an important institution that represents the interests of society in the political system. In this sense, it is a condition for the implementation of democratic political management.
2. It plays the role of political self-regulation in society.
3. Events and dialogues for political exchange and public understanding are organized.
4. Social self-help activities are organized by uniting collective forces.
5. It supports the political socialization of citizens.
6. Solidarity and social capital are created and restored (Mayer & Wryer, 2012) ^[28].

Civil society is an important area of democracy that reflects and monitors society, as it provides an understanding of democratic practices to all citizens and creates conditions for the exchange of views on development options, experiences, and foundations. It also opens up wide opportunities for direct democracy and solidarity activities, as well as the expression of political culture in any society and its environment. Moreover, civil society organisations provide citizens with free public spaces to exchange opinions and consult, independent from the influence of mass media and major political associations (Mayer & Wryer, 2012) ^[28].

According to liberal democratic theory, in order to create a responsible state, in addition to free and fair elections, civil and political rights, unionization, and independence are needed.

A strong and diverse civil society is essential for preventing the excesses of state power, aligning governance with the rule of law, and legitimizing state authority.

Researcher Diamond believed that civil society plays a

different role in the stages of democracy. For example, during the democratic transition, civil society plays the main role of mobilizing pressure for political change. Organized social groups such as students, women's groups, farmers' organisations, NGOs, trade unions, religious groups, professional organisations, media and research centres, and human rights organisations are important sources of democratic change. In times of democratic consolidation, however, civil society was seen to play a key role in investigating abuse of state power, preventing authoritarian governments from regaining power, increasing citizen participation, and public oversight of government activities. In short, a dynamic civil society plays an important role in strengthening and maintaining democracy (Mercer, 2002). Although civil society played an important role in the collapse of communism and the beginning of the wave of democracy, it is believed that its development in post-communist countries declined after the transition (Kubik, 2005).

The principles and values of civil society are reflected in the documents and declarations of international organisations as follows. These are:

- **Encouraging diversity:** Since people's demands are diverse and constantly evolving, the government and civil society will support the creation and increase of new non-governmental organisations that represent and serve their interests.
- **Cooperation:** The state and civil society will play different and interdependent roles in the affairs of the country, understand that they are responsible and cooperate equally with each other and related parties.
- **Valuing the independence and independence of civil society organizations:** The fact that civil society organizations are free from any pressure or influence of the state is the main component for the effective implementation of their main functions of protecting common interests, human rights and freedoms, and monitoring government activities. The state respects the right of citizens and their organisations to define their own goals and objectives and conduct their activities within the framework of the constitution.
- **Making policy deals:** Government policies and decisions are directly related to the situation and interests of every citizen. It is a norm of democracy for citizens to express their rights and interests individually or through civil society organisations during the process of policy and decision-making.
- **Ensuring real participation:** The government and civil society organisations are equally responsible for providing all parties with the opportunity to participate effectively in the policy development and implementation process. In particular, it is important to involve low-income and vulnerable groups (language, bone, age, gender, income, geographical location, etc.) in planning and implementing policies, decisions, and activities.
- **Ensuring quality:** The government and civil society organisations are responsible to the citizens for the quality of their work and services. Civil society supervision plays an important role in ensuring the quality of government activities. If a civil society organization performs work or services on behalf of the state, the relevant laws and regulations shall be

followed.

- **Ensuring sustainable development:** The activities of civil society organisations (CSOs) are important for the development of individuals and communities, the development of their life skills, and the improvement of their work. Therefore, the democratic government is responsible for increasing the financial and other capabilities of CSOs and ensuring sustainable institutional development.
- **Transparency:** Government-CSO cooperation and public relations should be based on trust, which requires an open information environment. The application of the principle of transparency should not harm the internal democracy of CSO clients, volunteers and full-time employees, third parties and organisations.
- **Taking responsibility:** Since the source of funding for the state and CSOs is the funds of taxpayers or citizens, operational planning, financial spending, and results should be kept as open and transparent as possible, and should be held accountable. The capacity of such institutions should be the same for both the government and the CSO.
- **To be free from corruption:** State administrative and local government organisations should not perform work and services under contracts or projects, or receive government grants.

Civil society organisations are part of civil society, but through their activities they strengthen the civil society and thus support the democratic process. According to the rationale, in order to support and develop "democracy" and "civil society", it is considered necessary to support and develop CSOs in advance. Studies of modernization and political development by Alexis de Tocqueville, Samuel Huntington, Robert Putnam, and other researchers have also followed suit, arguing that the declining influence of political parties in Europe since the 1990s has further increased the role of civil society in democracy (Mayer & Wryer, 2012) ^[28].

The importance of civil society organizations in strengthening democracy and civil society is generally justified by the following main grounds. In:

1. Civil society organisations are independent participants, ensuring the diversity of governance institutions.
2. Civil society organisations often work with groups that are financially incapable and whose interests are not expressed, allowing them to increase participation (socially and geographically) and empowerment (individually and organizationally) (Silliman & Noble, 1998) ^[29]. At the end of this type of bottom-up democracy, top-down political change is possible.
3. Civil society organisations put pressure on the decentralization of state power, the granting of powers at the initial stage, and the proposal of policy options.

Civil society organizations (CSOs) refer to non-profit, non-governmental organizations. The forms of organisations operating independently of the government in any form are generally understood within the term "non-governmental organization". The common goal of organisations of this type is to unite and express people's interests (UNDP, UNDP and Civil Society Organisations, 2006). Bernard and

Helmich note that groups of civil society serving both themselves and society separately may exist in many institutional forms, including non-governmental organisations, non-profit associations, and problem-oriented informal organisations. Because the terms CSO and NGO are variable, their use depends on the context rather than a finalized formula.

According to the laws of Mongolia, citizens and government organisations (legislative, executive, and judicial authorities) are established on a voluntary basis from legal entities other than legal entities based on their own interests and opinions, independent of the government, and conduct their activities on the principle of self-management. A non-profit organization is defined as a non-governmental organization (Law on Non-Governmental Organisations).

When the United Nations defines a civil society organisation, “expresses the interests and values of its members and the public, actively participates in social life, and culture, science, and the environment

The “Civil Society Organisation sourcebook published by the Asian Development Bank: A Staff Guide to Cooperation with Civil Society Organisations” divided civil society organisations into the following categories. In:

- **Community-Based Organizations** - these government organisations are established to solve the social problems faced by their members. The main features are the ability to set requirements, organise and implement participation processes, participate in development activities, and mobilise the public. They have a wide range of functions, including economic, social, religious, and even recreational activities. Examples of community-based organisations include neighbourhood associations, tenant associations, local development organisations, consumer groups, and credit unions.
- **Faith-Based Organisations (Faith-Based Organisations):** Religious places of worship, congregations, specialised religious organisations, or religious-based groups belong. Foundations - Foundations are charities founded by individuals or organisations as legal entities (corporations or trusts) that meet the goals of the foundation. It is usually organized as a charity that receives donations to fund cultural and social activities.
- **International NGOs (International National Organisations):** Resolution 288 (X) of the United Nations Economic and Social Council (February 27, 1950) defines an international NGO as “any international organisation not established by international agreements”. means”. NCOs, mostly based in developed countries, include “ActionAid”, “The Cooperative for Assistance and Relief Everywhere”, “Mercy Corps”, “Plan International”, “Save the Children”, “Transparency International”, and “World Vision”.
- **Trade Unions (Labour Unions):** These organizations are federated unions of workers organised to express their collective views on wages, working hours, and working conditions. Trade unions are often defined by industry or occupation. Organisations include the

Congress of Indonesian Trade Unions, the Indian National Trade Union Congress, the Asian Labour Network of International Financial Institutions, the International Organisation for Community Services, the International Federation of Trade Unions, etc.

- **Non-governmental organizations (Non-Organisations):** ADB has been using the term “NGO” in the same sense as “NB” to include all non-profit organisations independent of the state. Today, the term “NGO” is used to refer more closely to professional, intermediary, and non-profit organisations that operate in the fields of economic and social development, human rights, welfare, and emergency care.
- **People's Organizations:** These organisations are voluntary organizations with the main goal of improving the economic and social well-being of their members. In some countries, the term is used interchangeably with “Community-Based Organisation”, but “Citizens Collective” often covers organisations that raise issues related to a particular industry, such as manual fishing, rather than geographic location. Examples of voluntary organisations created by farmers, local workers, or indigenous people also include.
- **Professional Associations:** These organisations often represent the interests of their members in certain professions. Professional associations may also enforce standards related to the professions held by their members. Examples include the Association of Architects, Chartered Accountants, and the Association of Economists.
- **Research Institutes (Research Institutes):** Research institutes often conduct research and analysis related to public policy issues and disseminate their findings and recommendations to influence decision makers and policy makers. Examples include members of the Cambodia Development Research Institute, the South Asian Network of Economic Research Institutes, and the World Resources Institute.
- **Social Movements:** Groups of people or organisations try to make social changes through sustainable, organized and collaborative activities. Social movements are not permanent institutions, but tend to merge instead, achieve their goals, and then dissolve. Examples include movements to end slavery, the death penalty, oppression, and economic liberalism. The largest civil society movement calling for an end to poverty and inequality is the “Global Call to Action Against Poverty”.

In addition to the types of CSOs mentioned above, there are CSO coalitions and networks united in common geography, membership, goals and activities. For example, the Development Group NGO network consists of six national networks and four regional networks representing more than 2,000 development NGOs and cooperatives in the Philippines (Asian Development Bank, 2009). Civil society organisations have the following common functions:

- Identifying problems/setting agenda/ - as a non-governmental organisation cooperates more closely with society and citizens, it plays an important role in revealing and influencing the problems that should be solved by the society and incorporating them into the policies of the state and the government.
- Development of solution/ - especially international and continental non-governmental organisations develop solutions to solve problems and implement these solutions in regions and countries.
- Influencing policies (lobby, effecting role) - influencing the decisions of public policymakers and decision-makers, and exerting lobbying pressure is one of the important functions of non-governmental organizations.
- Reforming role/ - non-governmental organisations have the main goal of creating positive reforms and changes in social life and the minds of citizens in the process of implementing social counselling work. In particular, the function of reforming the social life of non-governmental organisations will have an important impact today, when providing citizens with systematic knowledge and education about society, politics, and economy is a criterion for sustainable development.
- Implementation role/ - its important function is that the non-governmental organisation provides assistance and services in many fields of education, health, finance, agriculture and human rights that the country, nation, and population need.
- Cooperation function /cooperation role/ - non-governmental organisations cooperate widely with the country's government, private sector, donors, and donor organisations to achieve their goals and objectives.
- Creating results on the basis of negotiations (establishing resources based on dialogue) - non-governmental organisations work by concluding multilateral agreements, agreements, and cooperation agreements to solve problems and create specific work results.
- Complementary role - to protect and serve the interests of members of society who have not been able to participate in public policies and activities provided by the state and government.
- Opposing role when necessary - All non-governmental organisations carry out their activities to effectively meet the mission of comprehensive development of a civil democratic, fair and impartial society, so any illegal decisions, actions, and irresponsibility of the government, its organisations, and officials. This function is carried out in the form of non-tolerance, submitting demands and statements to the government, and organizing demonstrations and meetings if necessary (MFA, Swiss Development Agency,) 2017).

The following requirements have been set for civil society organisations to strengthen the democratic system and

improve governance. In these (KAS, 2020):

1. Conducting policy analysis, participating in policy and decision-making, and conducting advertising;
2. Monitoring the results of the work of government institutions, the activities and ethics of civil servants;
3. Creating social capital and helping citizens recognize and express their values, beliefs, norms of civil relations, and democratic practices;
4. Organise a certain group of local people, especially the vulnerable and marginalized part of the population, actively participate in political and social life, and provide them with the necessary services;
5. Contribute to the deepening of good governance by conducting development activities aimed at improving the lives of its members and other citizens;

In connection with the importance of the participation of citizens and civil society organisations in the strengthening of democratic governance, the development of transparency and accountability systems, the issue of activating and empowering civil society became important. Since a lot of studies focusing on this issue have been conducted, it is recommended to improve the participation of civil society, firstly, to ensure the right of citizens and interested parties whose interests are affected to participate in the policy process, and secondly, to create and strengthen effective mechanisms for policy dialogue and partnership.

Although the active participation of civil society and civil society organisations is important in strengthening democracy, studies of the post-democratic transition in Latin America and post-socialist countries have shown that it is closely related to governance and legal systems, human development indicators, and the value of justice. In countries with low post-transition economies, civil society organisations are highly dependent on donors and tend to serve their governments.

Although civil society organisations contribute to democracy by diversifying governance institutions, expanding and strengthening civil society, and bringing many democratic participants into the political sphere, they cannot achieve all of these outcomes alone. Fukuyama warned that, in some cases, civil society organisations are confused with civil society itself (and vice versa).

Research Methodology

In this study, a mixed method was used, combining international benchmarks such as CIVICUS civil spatial assessment, V-Dem index, expert research conducted in Mongolia, case analysis, and quality interview. In accordance with the objectives of the study, the results of the institutional development, types of participation and impact of CSOs were evaluated.

The studies conducted on the topic of civil society in Mongolia consist of academic works at the theoretical level of philosophy and political science on the one hand, and policy studies that raise some pressing issues in the creation of databases and the development of civil society on the other hand.

Civil society is located at the intersection of various social forces and participants, and its characteristics are highly dependent on state and social norms, traditions, and socio-economic environment.

In order to realistically assess and evaluate civil society as a whole, it is necessary to consider it from a variety of

perspectives, including domestic and foreign stakeholders and outside views at the regional, national and local levels. In the late 1990s, SIVICUS International initiated the Civil Society Index (CSI) and started evaluating and analysing the state of civil society in various countries of the world. In 2005, when developing the Mongolian civil society index, the organisation analysed the state of Mongolian civil society with 78 indicators with 4 main and 25 sub-metrics: structure, environment, values, and effectiveness (Developing the Civil Society Index, 2005).

We are based on the organisation's concepts and methods in evaluating and evaluating the development of Mongolian civil society organisations in the last 30 years and their contribution to democracy, and in seeking further progress, we collect and judge the available information as reflected in the recommendations of SIVICUS; 1) ^[1] Consult with stakeholders; 2) Consultation with stakeholders; 3) Public inquiry; 4) Media review; 5) Case-based analysis is used at an appropriate level.

Questionnaires to clarify the research objectives have been developed and the results have been collected from experts working in the field of civil society in the form of one-on-one interviews.

Survey questionnaire:

- Clarifying changes in the activity and awareness of citizens' participation in CSO activities in the past thirty years
- To find the factors affecting citizens' participation in CSO activities
- Identifying factors that harm the development of civil society
- Discovering political institutions that affect the capacity of civil society organisations
- To clarify how the institutional formation of the democratic system affects civil society organisations
- Determining the role and participation of civil society organisations in ensuring the accessibility and stability of institutions

Institutional and structural features of civil society organisations

Legal framework

The Law on Non-Governmental Organisations approved in Mongolia in 1997 is a basic legal document to ensure citizens' right to association and regulate the activities of civil society organisations. This law was amended in 1998, 2002, 2003, 2015, 2016, 2020, and 2024, with the aim of improving the legal framework of NGOs and making their activities transparent and efficient.

In Mongolia, the Law on Non-Governmental Organisations was approved in 1997, and it became the main legal document for ensuring the right to association and

regulating the activities of civil society organisations. The law was amended in 1998, 2002, 2003, 2015, 2016, 2020, and 2024, emphasizing the aim of improving the legal framework of NGOs and making their activities transparent and efficient.

Considering the number of amendments and activities approved in local and national policy documents and legal acts, 85 (Mongolian Civil Society Consortium, 2021) policy documents have been amended the most in the field of environment.

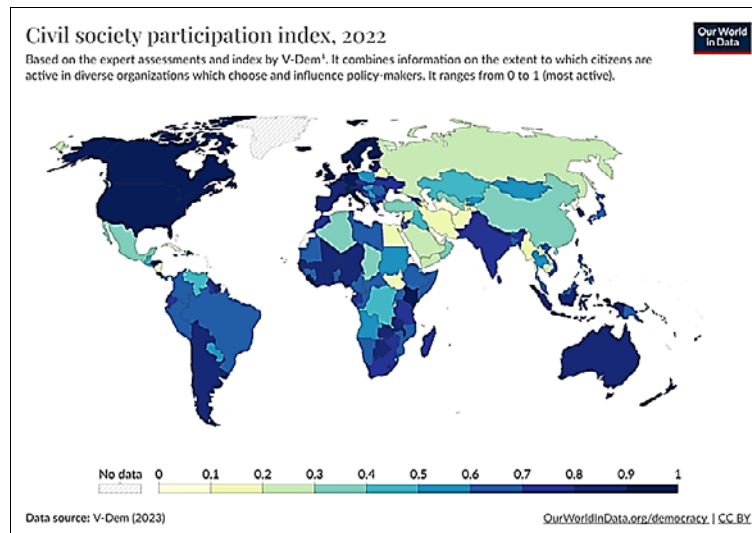
In the Law on NGOs adopted in 1997, "non-governmental organisation" is a legal entity other than citizens and government organisations (legislative, executive, and judicial authorities) that is established on a voluntary basis for social and self-interest and opinions. It is stated that it means a non-profit organization that is independent from the government and operates on the principle of self-management. This law applies to non-governmental organisations other than parties, trade unions, churches, and international and foreign non-governmental organisations operating on the territory of Mongolia. According to the law, NGOs are classified into the following two types. These include: "Non-governmental organisation serving society" means non-governmental organisations that operate for the benefit of society in the fields of culture, art, education, science, health, sports, nature and environment, human rights, protection of the interests of certain groups and strata of the population, and humanitarianism; "is a non-governmental organisation that serves its members and has the main purpose of protecting their legitimate interests, except for non-governmental organisations that serve society. Within the framework of the 1997 Law on NGOs, CSOs have the opportunity to receive and report official funding by registering as legal entities, and have the opportunity to employ full-time employees and conduct their activities on a wider scale (Figure 1). In addition, public groups and social movements can operate without being registered in the state register. For example, savings groups are not registered in the state, but they operate very actively and in a well-organised manner, which is recognised by local governments.

According to the 2018 report by the World Alliance for Citizen Participation (CIVICUS, 2018), Mongolian civil society is classified among countries with limited freedom. The report concluded that the capacity of Mongolian civil society organisations is weak, they do not significantly influence government policy decisions, and they have limited rights and obligations. According to the current Law on NGOs, these organisations are legally classified into two types: associations and foundations. In 2002, the reform of the Civil Code regulated the types of NGOs and non-profit legal entities to be associations, foundations, and cooperatives.

¹ CIVICUS is a global association of civil society organizations and activists dedicated to strengthening civil society and citizen activities around the world. The organization was founded in 1993 and is headquartered in Johannesburg, South Africa.

Table 1: Amendments to the Law on NGOs

Sr. No.	Date of approval	Amendments	Reasons for changes
1	15-01-1998	Articles 21 and 22 of the Law were considered invalid.	The General Tax Law was revised and approved.
2	04-07-1998	Amendments were made to Article 25, Part 1 of the Law.	The Civil Code has been revised.
3	23-05-2003	The third chapter of the law was considered invalid.	The Law on State Registration of Legal Entities was approved.
4	29-01-2015	The Law on State Registration of Legal Entities, which amended Article 2 and Articles 7 and 23 of the Law, was revised.	The issue of registration of NGOs was transferred from the Ministry of Justice to the General Directorate of Internal Affairs and Communications.
5	04-12-2015	The Criminal Code, was amended.	Article 24 of the Law, was revised.
6	01-12-2016	The Law on State Secrets, amended by Article 9, Section 4 of the Law determined.	This was revised and approved as the Law on State and Official Secrets.
7	24-04-2020	Article 23, Section 5 of the Law was amended.	Rederring to the Amendments to the Law on Archives and Records Management.
8	12-01-2024	Articles 7 and 14 were amended.	Forms of electronic information and documents were formalized.

**Fig 1:** Citizens who participate in Diverse Organisations 2022

Although the maturity and stability of NGOs in Mongolia depends on many factors, one of the main issues to be considered is undoubtedly the issue of financing. The Law on NGOs includes the following regulations on financial resources.

1. Membership dues, donations,
2. Donations from citizens, enterprises and organisations;
3. Income from business activities related to the implementation of the objectives of the charter;
4. Funds provided by the state budget for credit, heritage and project implementation.

With the reform of the Tax Package Law approved in 2019, NGOs and other non-profit legal entities were allowed to engage in business activities, and the income from those activities could be used for public purposes in line with their charters (Enkhjargal, 2019) ^[30].

The 1997 law, which is the main legal regulation of NGOs, does not define and regulate the government's support for NGOs, which is the basis of cooperation between the state and civil society. Therefore, in the 22 years since the adoption of the law, less than 2% of the funding of NGOs has been provided by the state. More than 80% of NGOs are financed by external sources, while the sources of funding for the remainder are unclear. As a result, they are often criticized for becoming profit-oriented organisations rather than representing social interests (Enkhjargal, 2019) ^[30].

Organizational features

With the adoption of the new Constitution by Mongolia in

1992, the early goals of Mongolian democracy were aimed at spreading the values of liberal democracy, creating, strengthening and properly operating institutions, and civil society organisations were also formed within the framework of this content.

A controversial topic among researchers on the development and periodization of Mongolian civil society is whether civil society existed in Mongolia before 1990. Some scholars trace the development of civil society in Mongolia back to the period of socialist reforms and changes in the country. For example, philosopher Dashpurev argues that the structures of modern Mongolian civil society were formed within the socialist totalitarian state system, and that during socialism, civil society existed only to the extent that Marxism, in the theoretical and moral framework of Leninism, understood it. In contrast, Chuluunjav contends that the concept was not included in the glossary of the theory of scientific communism in terms of terminology and was, in fact, opposed to civil society, aiming for its complete abolition by political society. Dashpurev later added that the structure of civil society in Mongolia its components and elements did not develop from the decline of aristocratic society as in 17th-18th century Western Europe but rather matured by dismantling the traditional nomadic socio-economic and cultural system. He notes that it appeared on the brink of the collapse of the socialist totalitarian social order. Before 1990, within the framework of the socialist regime, Mongolia referred to and operated Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) as public organisations, including well-known examples such as trade unions, the

Mongolian Youth Association, and the Mongolian Women's Association.

Since the 1990s, Chuluunjav has examined the policies of the Mongolian government on the development of civil society organisations. He identified three distinct stages:

- Mid-1990s to 2000 the formation of a Western-style civil society.
- 2000 to 2012 a period of post-communist approaches in which political parties were strengthened and consolidated by law.
- Since 2012 a period characterized by active civil society organisations, but also by the growing dominance of political organisations.

Some researchers criticize his classification as unclear on what criteria and measures it is based on.

Myagmarsuren sought to reconcile the two positions mentioned above. He argued that as a result of the brutal political repression and massacres of the 1930s and 1940s, the collectivization movement of the 1950s and 1960s, and the confusion among intellectuals during the same period, Mongolia's traditional civil society collapsed. He concluded that the "germs" of civil society under the new system existed only in a hidden form. Furthermore, since the 1980s, civil society formations have gradually recovered, beginning to express their values, opinions, and positions through literature, film, media, political discussions, debates, religious and cultural events, and at times through open resentment, opposition, and struggle. By 1990, these forces converged in strong support for the democratic movement and the revival of religion, culture, and traditions.

Myagmarsuren classified the development of Mongolian civil society into several stages, based on factors such as legal institutionalization, changes in political culture and systems, citizens' methods of political participation, and economic incentives:

- 1989-1992 the stage of political-civilian movement formation.
- 1992-1997 efforts to create a healthy civil society.
- 1998-2006 politicized activism of civil society.
- 2007-2012 growth of government involvement in civil society.
- 2013 to present a stage in which the boundaries between healthy and fragile civil society are periodically redefined.

Most of the civil society organisations in Mongolia were founded after the adoption of the "NGO Law, i.e. after 1997, and as a result, the number increased every year, reaching out to every organisation, activity, branch, capital, and province (Mongolian Civil Society Consortium, 2021). As of 2020, there are 24,276 registered NGOs in Mongolia, of which 10,806 are operating (NDS, 2020). Since 2013, the number of registered NGOs and non-operating NGOs has increased rapidly. The share of NGOs among all registered AANs has almost doubled from 5.7% in 1998 to 9.7% in 2020.

As of August 22, 2002, out of 3,200 organisations registered with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, there were 2,586 NGOs serving society and 614 NGOs serving their members (Narangerel. R). As of 2012, there were statistics that 12,600 non-governmental organisations were registered, but only one percent of them, or more than 170 non-

governmental organisations, were active (CRC Legal Research Center, 2013). As of June 2018, a total of 17,634 CSOs were officially registered with the General State Registration Office: 15,241 serving the community, and 2,393 serving its members. Despite the large number of registered CSOs, CSOs operating regularly and systematically remained relatively small.

Financial opportunities, human resource stability and management capabilities have a major impact on the survival and success of CSOs. More than 80% of CSOs are registered in the capital city and the rest in local areas. The number and capacity of local CSOs is increasing year by year. Community-based organisations (ONOTBs) will often be small in size, have no full-time staff, and often operate on a voluntary basis. Medium-sized CSOs have 2-5 full-time and volunteer staff. It is common for women to work at any level of membership or management, accounting for more than 80% of all employees.

The General State Registration Office updates the CSO registration statistics every month, but does not publish information to citizens such as CSO activities, contact addresses, and annual reports. Only a small number of CSOs disclose their activity information to the public on websites and social media channels. Also, there is no mechanism to measure whether CSOs are working effectively and to determine whether they are working according to their functions. The lack of information about the activities of CSOs limits the possibility of creating public participation in the development of civil society and supporting their initiatives.

One of the major problems faced by CSOs is the lack of experience in obtaining funding at the domestic and international levels. The main sources of funding for CSOs are membership fees, donations, and projects and programs funded by donor organisations. At the same time, CSOs can be financed by income from business activities related to the implementation of their charter goals (Government of Mongolia, 1997).

Table 2: Non-profit legal entities in Mongolia: News from the State Statistics Service (2023)

Sr. No.	Form of legal entity	Number of legal entities
1	NGO	17,599
2	Foundations	1,302
3	Religious organisations	549
4	Trade unions	1,264
5	Legal entity of public law	1
6	Media organisations	1,072
7	Educational and educational institutions	819

According to the Ministry of Justice and Home Affairs, CSOs received 59.5% funding from international donor organisations, 27.9% from individuals through donations, and 12.6% from their own operating income. Government of Mongolia, 2004). To this day, the financing of civil society organisations remains in the same situation as in 2004. Unlike international CSOs, national and local CSOs do not have basic funding and often operate based on the financing of competitive projects and programs announced by international organisations. Since the financing of the project is not constant, in order to continue its activities, in some cases, CSOs are engaged in activities completely

different from their main areas. It would be helpful if local NGOs were provided with resources aimed not only at project results, but also at strengthening NGO capacity and creating basic resources. Strengthening operational financing and ensuring stability has become one of the pressing issues for CSOs. Traditional CSOs established before the transition to the market have more capital, infrastructure and personnel resources than CSOs established after 1990. These CSOs have branches operating at the national and local levels, some of which have offices and buildings provided during the socialist era. Local governments in some provinces and districts provide office space to the Association of Elders and organisations of people with disabilities.

Currently, most experienced and large CSOs provide training and advice to other small organisations and groups, especially local CSOs and community-based organisations (ONOTBs). Some CSOs operate as policy research centres focusing on educating and strengthening the capacity of stakeholders, including the media and government agencies. CSOs with research centres conduct basic research on technical and economic basis, monitor and evaluate projects and programs funded by donor organisations.

In the past, CSOs have made significant progress in establishing a unified network and association for the purposes of information sharing, protection of common interests, interconnected work, joint implementation of projects and programs, and pooling resources. The Civil Society Council, established in 2008, is a central body covering all CSOs willing to join. Civil society networks were also created at the local level. The local CSO network is formed by branches of national CSOs and local CSOs representing the interests of local people and herders, who promote activities that promote social change and reform through community-based activities.

In 2008, Civil Society Branch Councils were established under the Ministries of Health, Education, Environment and Defense through the Unified Council of Civil Society, but not all of them were active. The most effective work was the Mongolian Environmental Citizens' Council. The organisation has merged more than 600 CSOs operating in the field of environment, reached an agreement to partner with the Ministry of Environment on the issues facing the sector, and signed a memorandum of understanding. Also, the Ministry of Environment allocated a budget to the organisation and provided it with offices in order to support productive cooperation in the sector.

CSOs operating in the health and education sectors formed their own councils as an example of the aforementioned Environmental CSOs. The network of these CSOs is active and has established a memorandum of understanding with the relevant ministries. At present, these CSOs work in the policy councils of their line ministries, and in doing so, they do not necessarily have to go through the CSO council.

In 2006, within the framework of the international initiative to support the active participation of civil society in the implementation of the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI), Mongolian CSOs established a national coalition called Publish What You Pay. This coalition serves society by protecting public interests and operates independently of government and politics. In addition, the Citizens Monitor the Budget coalition of CSOs carries out activities to monitor the expenditures of both local and state budgets.

CSOs often form coalitions, assemblies, and networks to influence the government on policy and legal reform issues. For example, the National Assembly of Human Rights CSOs and the network and coalitions of CSOs for the protection of gender equality and children's rights played an important role in the development and approval of the Domestic Violence Act (2016) and the Child Protection Act (2016) (Asian Development Bank, 2019).

Considering the major civil society organisations in Mongolia

Women's organisations.

Women's CSOs established in Mongolia in the early 1990s are at the forefront of democracy and reform, political, social and economic increased participation of women in government activities. The Liberal Women's Intellectual Foundation, one of the first women's NGOs, was founded with the goal of promoting equal participation of women in politics. As a social progress women's movement, it conducts activities aimed at voter education and strengthening the capacity of female leaders. The Liberal Women's Intellectual Foundation, the Social Progress Women's Movement and the Women Lawyers' Association jointly launched a campaign to combat gender-based violence and founded the Center Against Violence, which developed into an independent NGO called the National Center Against Violence. Women's NGOs and women leaders played an important role in the development and approval of the Mongolian National Women's Program (1996-2020). In order to increase the participation of women in decision-making, the first women's NGO coalition was formed before the 1996 elections, and the second coalition was established in 1997, resulting in an increase in the number of women members of Parliament. The national network MONFEMNET, working in the areas of human development and women's rights, was established in 2000. In 2007, the network underwent restructuring and expanded into the first regularly regulated organisation, open to all CSOs working for gender equality, human rights, freedom, and a democratic society. In early 1995, it provided information and research support to CSOs and women's groups on issues of women's and gender importance, Women's Information and a research centre was established. This organisation later changed its name to the Gender Center for Sustainable Development. However, due to the dissolution of the United Nations Women's Fund (UNIFEM) branch in Mongolia, there is speculation that the number of CSOs operating in the field of gender has decreased due to the decrease in funding from international organisations.

Research and “think tank” organisations.

Research institutions and think tanks in Mongolia are funded by social and economic policy and development, human rights, budget spending control and evaluation, and donor organisations

works mainly in areas such as results control. They support activities such as ensuring election control and justice, improving the transparency of income from natural resources to the state, and increasing citizens' control over government budgets and expenses. It also serves as a platform for public participation in policy-making, implementation, and monitoring activities, as well as influencing the transparent and fair management of the

country's rich mineral resources. These research institutions are registered with the state according to the NGO law. The Open Society Forum encourages quality policy research and analysis, and dissemination of information on budget policies, laws, and regulations to the public. It also makes a valuable contribution to strengthening the capacity of civil society in Mongolia by organizing various trainings and seminars, providing grants, and supporting the development of industry institutions.

Professional associations

Specialised professional associations contribute to the development of the sector and work towards drawing the government's attention to the pressing problems of the sector. Professional organisations are often highly specialised in their field of activity. These professional associations include teachers, doctors, construction workers, entrepreneurs, bank workers' associations, non-bank financial institutions, savings and credit cooperatives associations, and art councils, as well as other community associations. They are working on some regulatory functions of government agencies, such as evaluating member organisations, accrediting individual qualifications, and communicating with international organisations. Associations of mining and wool cashmere processing industries also work with NGO registration (Asian Development Bank, 2019).

When diagnosing their weaknesses, NGOs name organisational governance, management, technical and financial capabilities, as well as a lack of systematic operations and strategic investment to strengthen the organisation's capacity (MOE, UNDP., 2014). 40.5% of NGOs included in the 2016 census of AAN are connected to the Internet, while 67.9 percent of NGO employees use the Internet. 45.0% of the NGOs included in the census answered that they have computers. There are 20.6 thousand computers in these NGOs, of which 14.2 thousand or 69.0% are stationary and 6.4 thousand or 31.0 percent are laptops. By region, 76.1% of NGOs with computers were located in Ulaanbaatar (UNDP, Ministry of Education and Culture, Ministry of Education and Culture). 2014).

NGOs are cooperating with each other, but they are not developing enough cooperation with international communities. Most NGOs fail to achieve their strategic goals due to lack of funding. The approach to project-based activities alone limits their ability to achieve sustainable results.

NGO management, administrative management and skills are generally weak. It is necessary to strengthen the capacity of central civil society organisations and network organisations, and to improve the influence of the organisation and the skills to lead the society. For example, the fact that the members of NGOs serving people with disabilities are disabled or poor affects the capacity of the organisation and the individual. Some small NGOs have weak technical skills in project development and report preparation. These weaknesses have made CSO strategies unclear and cause their development to slow down.

Due to a lack of funding, most NGOs do not have permanent office space. According to the Mongolian NGO Forum, 62% of its member organisations and local NGOs reported that they lack stable premises to carry out their activities. Data from the National Statistics Office in 2017 indicated that, out of 17,685 officially registered NGOs,

only 48.5% (8,578 organisations) were active. In other words, the majority of registered NGOs were inactive: 5,437 had never operated, 3,340 had temporarily suspended their activities, 267 had completely ceased operations, and 63 had no available information due to an unknown address or other reasons.

Human resource sustainability and management capabilities have a major impact on the survival and success of NGOs. Community-based organisations are often small in size, without full-time employees, and often work on a voluntary basis. Medium-sized CSOs have 2-5 full-time and volunteer staff. It is common for women to work at any level of membership or management, accounting for more than 80% of all employees. 38.3 percent of non-governmental organisations participating in the 2016 census of enterprises and organisations have 1-2 employees, 31.8 percent have 3-5 employees, 13.8 percent have 6-9 employees, 10.8 percent have 10-20 employees, and 5.2 percent have 21 or more employees. NGOs account for. When 97 environmental NGOs were included in the survey, 50% said that only 1 person worked without regular employees.

The lack of information on the activities of NGOs has been considered a factor limiting the ability to ensure public participation in civil society development and to support citizens' initiatives. Although the General Authority for State Registration (GASR) updates statistical data on the registration of NGOs on a monthly basis, it does not publish information for citizens such as the organisations' activities, contact addresses, or annual reports. Only a small number of NGOs including Globe International, the Center for Human Rights and Development, the National Center Against Violence, and the Mongolian NGO Forum regularly make their activities transparent to the public through websites and social media platforms (Konrad Adenauer Stiftung & NUM, 2020).

Considering the characteristics of NGOs in Mongolia at the beginning and middle of development:

- As of September 1, 2005, 5,077 NGOs were registered with the Ministry of Justice and Internal Affairs, and considering the number of NGOs registered with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs from 1997 to 2004, an average of 560 NGOs per year, or 50 NGOs per month, and 12 NGOs per week. registered.
- More than 40% of the above NGOs were registered in 2002-2004, more than 80% of them are NGOs serving society, and about 20% serve their members.
- More than 50% or 1562 of those NGOs are registered as associations and associations. In other forms, it was classified as 627 centres, 514 funds, and 231 clubs. In addition, 74 councils, 45 academies, 41 committees, 39 movements, and 27 bureaus were registered.
- According to the estimates made based on the reports of the NGOs ordered to the Tax Office, less than 20 percent of all NGOs were active.
- 77% of all NGOs were operating in UB city and 23% in rural areas.
- A total of 307 NGOs were registered in Sukhbaatar District and 217 NGOs in Chingeltei District of the capital, making these districts the areas with the largest number of NGOs. In rural areas, 36 NGOs were registered with the tax authorities in Darkhan-Uul Province and 29 NGOs in Dundgovi Province.
- The number of NGOs that submitted their annual activity reports accounts for 5% of all registered NGOs.
- In terms of human resources, approximately 30% of all NGOs had 2 full-time employees, 23.5% had 5

employees, and 17.6% had 3 employees.

- Half of all associations and societies had no more than 50 members, 25% had 50-100 members, and about 2% had more than 100 members.
- About 50% of membership NGOs have membership fees, and the tax rate was 100-500,000 MNT.
- As of 2004, 59.5% of NGO funding consisted of foreign donor organisations, 27.9% of their operating income, and 12.6% of donations and support.
- NGOs paid a total of 2,851.5 million MNT in taxes to the state budget in 2002-2004, 19.1 million MNT in 2002, 34.5 million MNT in 2003, and 26.7 million MNT in 2004.
- From 2001 to 2005, 17 NGOs from the state fund performed work with a total of 156.6 million MNT grants and contracts. (Open Society Forum, 2005).

Communication and cooperation

Since the source of state power is the will of citizens, the partnership between the state and civil society is inevitable.

- The government should cooperate with civil society with equal rights and responsibilities
- To ensure the participation and control of civil society in order to make its activities for the welfare of society effective
- Attention should be paid to increasing the capacity of civil society by removing government-related obstacles, such as legal and organisational regulations, that hinder the implementation of its functions (Chuluunbaatar, 2013).

The concept of mutual partnership between the state and civil society is determined by degree. In order for civil society to exist, it is necessary to value these values related to the direction and nature of activities.

Since values are manifested primarily through actions, the maturity of civil society organisations can be measured by the extent to which each component of civil society reflects these values (Chuluunbaatar, 2013).

On March 9-10, 2012, during the National Civil Society Forum held in Mongolia, the leaders of the sector developed a draft of the government's policy on civil society and held a public discussion. Since 2009, Mongolia has been celebrating January 31 every year as Civil Society Day. On this day, CSOs raise their voices about the pressing problems of the industry and organize advocacy activities. With the initiative and active participation of civil society organisations, in 2012, "developed a draft of the Civil Society Development Concept" and submitted it to the

Parliament, and the main ideas are summarized below.

In article: 2.1. Civil society is defined as the voluntary joining of official or informal groups based on their opinions and common interests, or operating at the local, branch, or national level to contribute to political, economic, social, and cultural development alone. It is formulated as a field in which citizens voluntarily unite around the world, or operate alone for common interests, goals, and values, outside the family, government, and market. Civil society is internationally known as "not-for-profit", "voluntary", "social", "charity", "third-type", which applies equally to organisations of many types and forms of civil society.

2.2. Organisations with special legal regulations such as churches, political parties, trade unions, chambers of commerce and industry, and the Red Cross are components of civil society and contain the basic characteristics of civil society organizations as well.

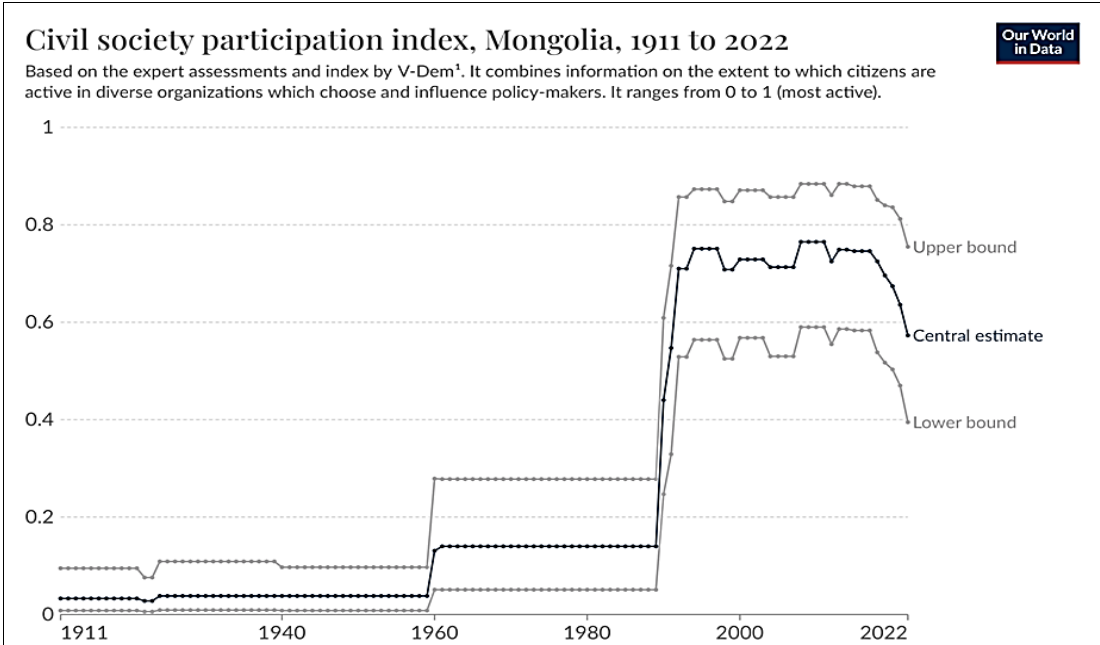
2.3. Civil society organisations differ in their level of development, independence, and ability to influence, but they have the following common characteristics.

2.3.1 In addition to having a purpose aimed at public benefit, not for profit or not distributing profit from any earned income, serving society or members, having a certain organisation, self-management structure, and independence from the government, it also incorporates voluntary participation and support in its activities to an appropriate extent.

2.3.2. It has the main functions of representing the interests and needs of citizens, protecting human rights, and providing services.

2.3.3. It will be free from any pressure, pressure, or influence of the state, and it will deepen democracy, protect common interests, human rights, and fundamental freedoms, demand social change, monitor government activities, and carry out its activities fairly and effectively. is the main condition for conducting.

2.4. Cultivating and strengthening civil society organisations, formal and informal groups is the main way to ensure the development of civil society. However, the reason why this document was withdrawn without discussion by the Parliament remains unclear. This agreed position was presented in a document based on international experience, which clarified the characteristics and legal status of non-profit activities aimed at the public benefit, the legal entities engaged in them, and the principles and directions to be followed in improving relevant regulations.



Graphic 1: Participation of Mongolian civil society index (1911-2022) ^[2]

Since 1990, these CSOs have been reformed and their activities have developed into independent Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs). Before 1992, CSOs such as the Mongolian Democratic Union Coalition and the Mongolian Social Democratic Movement were established for political purposes. Later, CSOs began to emerge to protect the common interests of various groups, including the Liberal Women’s Intellectual Foundation, the Social Progress Women’s Movement, the Center for Gender Sustainable Development, and the National Center Against Violence (Byambajav, 2006).

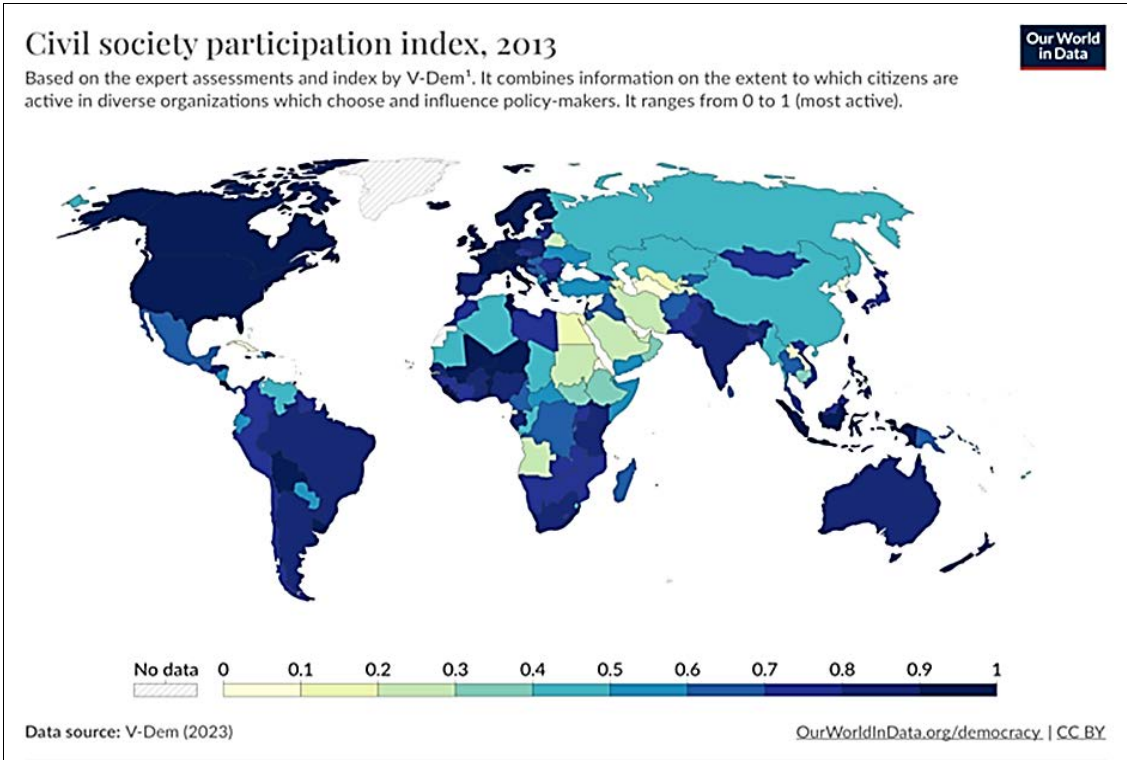


Fig 2: Mongolian civil society participation index/2023

² Civil society participation index, (2024). Data by V-Dem. Expert estimates of the extent to which citizens are active in diverse organizations which choose and influence policy-makers. The index ranges from 0 to 1 (most active).

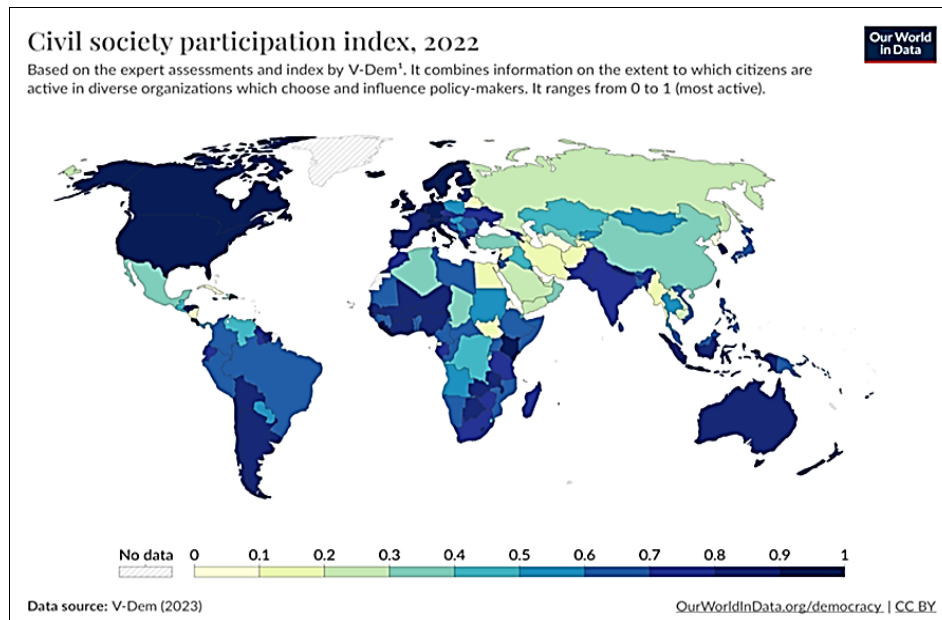


Fig 3: Mongolian civil society participation index/2022

Judging from the political policies carried out by the government regarding civil society, it can be seen that political policies have a direct and strong impact on the development of civil society in the conditions of our country. For example, between 2000 and 2012, many new non-governmental organisations expanded the sphere of civil society by opposing or seeking consensus on government policies that burdened citizens. During this period, the scope of civil society broadened to include patriotic and non-governmental organisations that respected national interests especially in the fields of geology and mining aimed at protecting the interests of the public and citizens.

In addition, according to the 2025 V-Dem report, Mongolia's civil society space has decreased to some extent in recent years. For example, according to the CCSI indicator, Mongolia scored about 0.6 points and is at a level close to the world average, but in recent years, the increase in the control of the electronic environment and the government's control over civil society organisations has had a negative impact on this indicator, the report noted. "Political development of Mongolia since 1990: processes, relations, attitudes According to the processing of the results of research conducted by high-level experts on the topic of ", the development of state institutions in the development of democracy was affected by 0.255* units, the development of political institutions by 0.175* units, and the participation of citizens by 0.021* units, the development of civil society by 0.149* units, and the formation of political culture by 0.166* units respectively. According to this, the development of democracy is positively dependent on the development of state institutions by 0.255 units and the participation of citizens by 0.021 units (NUS & Center for Democracy Studies, 2022). It is noteworthy that citizens' participation is the least relevant in the development of democracy. Considering the most repeated answers to the open question of experts: Name the factors that hinder the development of Mongolia's democracy:

1. The right view of democracy has not been developed, and there is no clear understanding and knowledge of ideals and values
2. Conflict of power, clientelist politicians and conspiracy

politics flourished

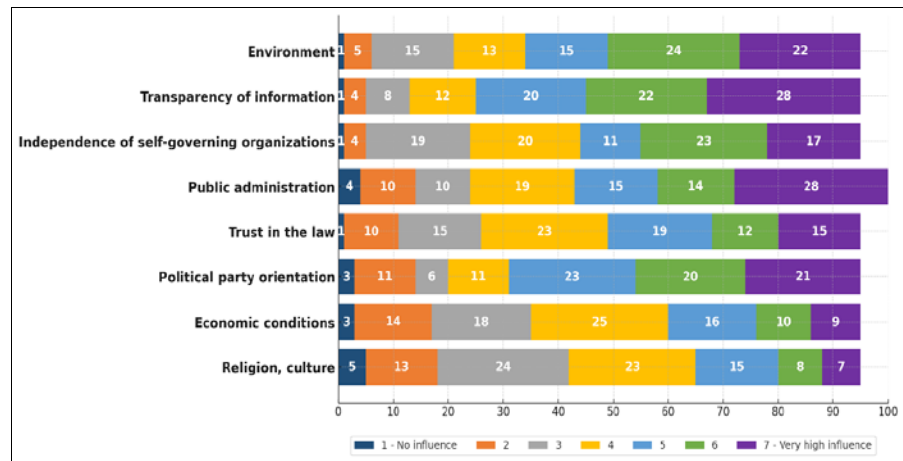
3. High levels of corruption, official crime and injustice have escalated
4. The immaturity of political parties and the division of parties
5. Economic weakness and deterioration of living standards
6. Background and attitude of the old social system
7. Answers such as poor political education of citizens are named the most frequently.

How can civil society organisations participate in creating an institutional environment for more accessible and sustainable development in Mongolia? considering the answers received from experts to this question:

- Civil society organizations should participate in more free, responsible and active leadership to ensure the interests of citizens.
- Improving and creating a legal framework to increase the role of civil society organisations.
- Providing society with multifaceted research and information and enlightenment.
- Strengthening civil political education, improving the system of civic education, empowering teachers.
- Answers to the development of social partnership have been repeated the most.

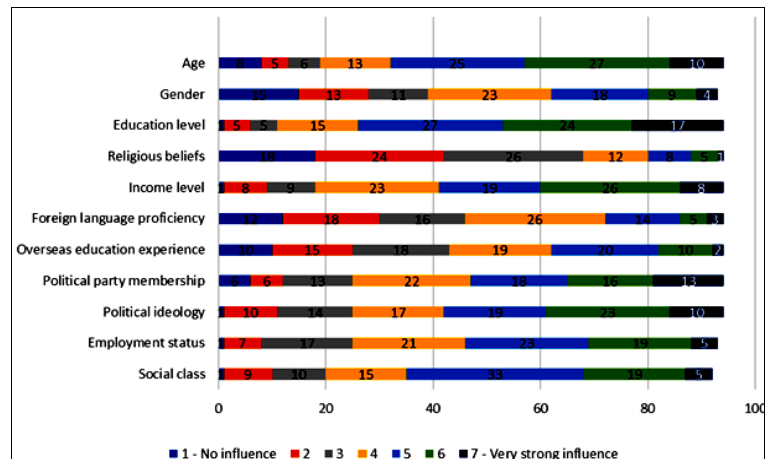
Non-governmental organisations for education in 0.176* units, women's rights protection organisations in 0.187* units, children's rights protection organisations in 0.175* units, organisations for the protection of the rights of people with disabilities in 0.182* units, organisations for the protection of herdsmen's rights in 0.174* units, other social movements by 0.156* units, electronic movements and social initiatives by 0.202* units, religious organisations and associations by 0.177* units respectively. According to this, online social movements, initiatives and measures are positively related by 0.202 units, and other social movements by 0.156 units (NUS & Center for Democracy Studies, 2022).

Experts believe that the transparency of the legal framework and governance has the most important effect on the partnership and cooperation between the state and civil society.



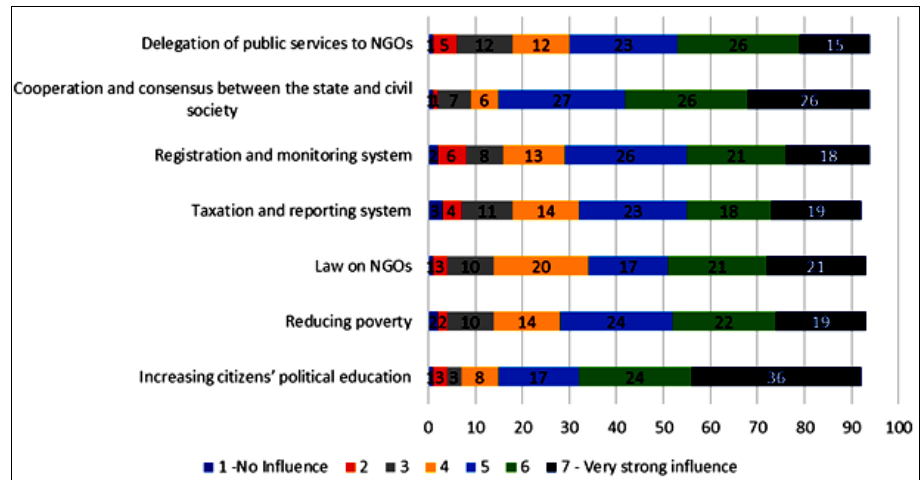
Graphic 2: Assessment of the Factors Influencing State-Civil Society Partnership and Cooperation

It was believed that social strata, education level, and age group have a greater influence on citizens' conscious and active participation in the political process through civil society organisations.



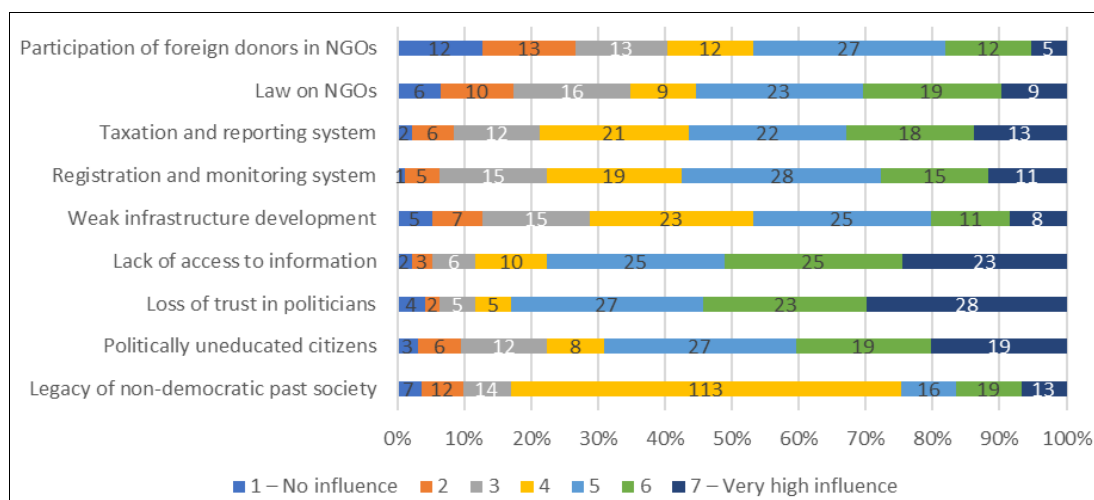
Graphic 3: Assessment of the Factors Influencing Civil Society Development

The factors that negatively affect the development of civil society include the loss of confidence in politicians, lack of access to information, and lack of political education of citizens.



Graphic 4: Images - Assessment of Factors Positively Influencing the Development of Civil Society

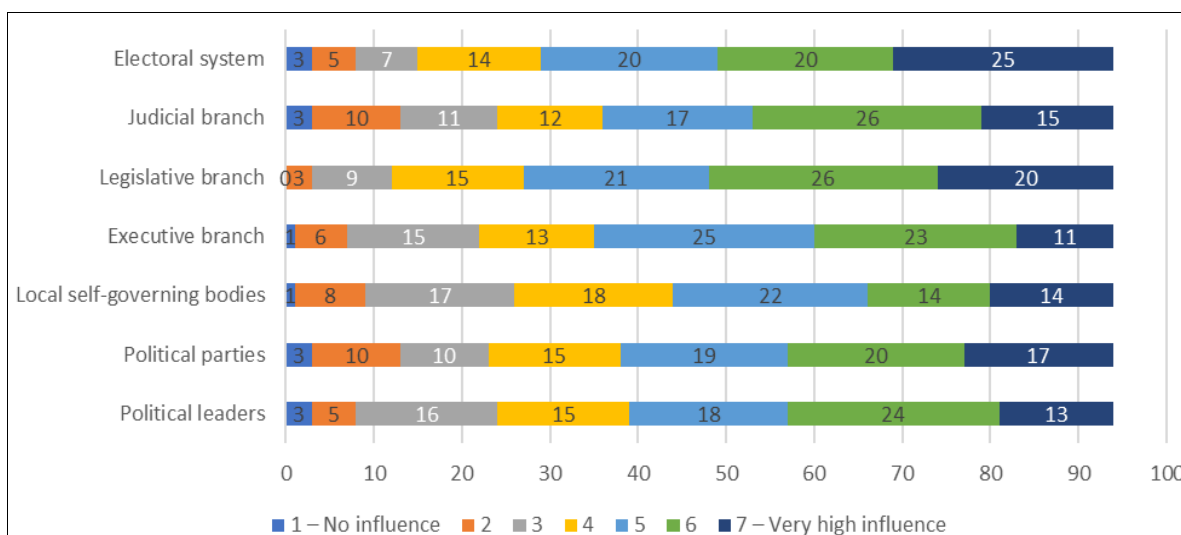
On the other hand, the factors that positively affect the development of civil society have been named as increasing the political education of citizens, cooperation and consensus between the government and civil society organisations with the highest percentage.



Graphic 5: Assessment of Factors Negatively Influencing the Development of Civil Society

This body of work relating to chapter five elucidated that the legislature, the electoral system, and political parties are

important for the empowerment of civil society organisations.



Graphic 6: Assessment of Factors Affecting the Capacity of Civil Society Organizations

Since 1990, the political participation of citizens has started to increase, and it is still going through a certain stage of development. Since the adoption of the Law on NGOs, many civil society organisations have been established, but as of today, they rarely operate stably. It should also be emphasized that the development of this sector is slowing down due to the increase in organisations working for narrow interests that distort the development of civil society. Especially recently, it can be seen from the fact that NGOs that cooperate with the one-time government are still being established. Over the past thirty years, the lack of a legal framework for CSOs to move forward in the right direction has also negatively affected the development of this sector. Although there were problems that could not be solved during this period, no consensus could be reached at any level. Therefore, there is a priority need to reach an agreement between the government and civil society. Civil society organisations believe that the government is trying to reduce the space of civil society after the adoption of the Law on the Union Fund. An important point in this is the idea that the government should not evaluate civil society organisations without only sending reports by evaluating the process. The government should remember

that citizens value civil society. It is also suggested that if you have membership, you should not be given the option of association or if you have a foundation.

In order to empower civil society and CSOs, essential criteria should be incorporated into the law. For example, provisions should be made to refuse registration or suspend organisations (such as schools, hospitals, and media organisations that hold NGO status) if their activities threaten national security or violate human rights. In other words, legislation must define the limits of non-violent tolerance and the boundaries of what cannot be addressed through peaceful means. It is also important to differentiate between organisations working for the welfare of society and so-called “GONGOS” (government-organised NGOs), specifying them according to their goals. This distinction is crucial because the reputation of genuine organisations fulfilling their primary mission is undermined by those serving only the narrow interests of particular groups.

A common problem for civil society organisations to operate stably is tax and social security contributions. This is because CSOs are self-financed and there is no financial support from the government. However, just because the government is receiving financial support does not mean

that government activities will be suspended. Every time an organisation needs manpower to carry out its activities, it is difficult to pay salaries. For example, when one person is paid 800,000 MNT per month, the organisation pays 30% of taxes and other taxes, etcetera.

Civil society's common demands from the government are policy, participation, and financial support.

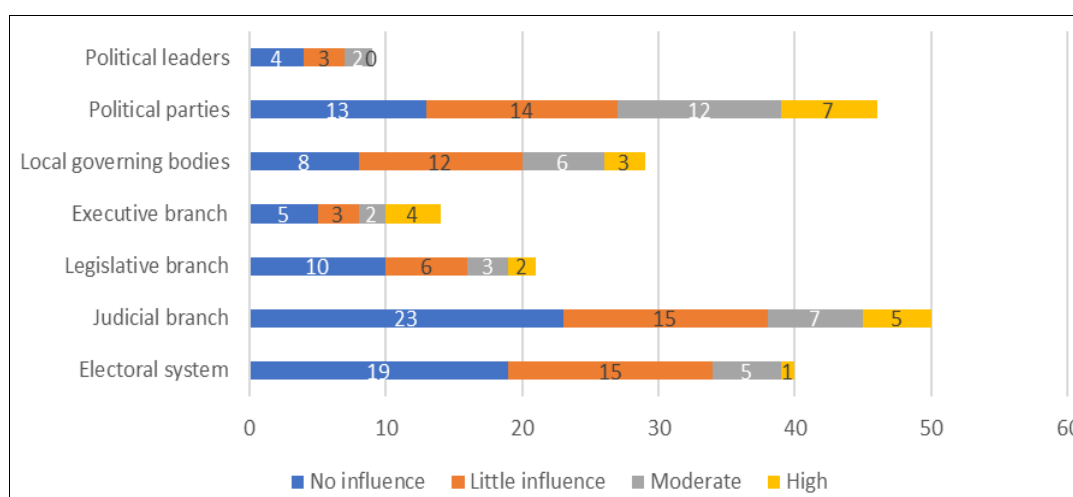
By improving the political education of citizens, the participation of civil society and citizens will improve. Also, if the CSO fulfils its duties and is independent of politics, it gives recommendations, advice, pressure, and demands on the decision, it will fully ensure the participation of citizens. Depending on the age, gender, and place of residence, there is a part of society that cannot always participate in social life. CSOs that can provide that space can be considered the most important.

How would you rate the changes that have occurred in the past thirty years in the conscious and active participation of citizens in political activities and the CSO process? If it is

considered that political party membership and political ideology have no effect on this question, age has the greatest influence. Experts also agree that income and education level affect the medium level.

How do you see the factors that you believe can positively affect the development of civil society in the future? In this questionnaire, it is of great importance to increase the political knowledge of citizens and to intensify the consensus to integrate government and CSO cooperation in the policy-making process. Experts also agree that increasing the political education of citizens will have a positive effect on the development of civil society organisations.

Which political institutions do you think play a major role in the empowerment of civil society organisations? Experts believe that political parties, local self-governing organisations, executive and legislative bodies have a high influence on this questionnaire.



Graphic 7: Which State Institutions Do You See as Playing a Key Role in Strengthening Civil Society Organizations?

Conclusion

Historical and real examples confirm that civil society organisations played an important role in the democratic transition and development process in Mongolia. These organisations not only brought the voice of citizens to the government, but also made a real contribution to promoting democratic values, participating in control mechanisms, and protecting vulnerable groups. CSOs filled this gap and supported the institutional strengthening of democracy in the context of the immaturity of basic democratic institutions and the instability of social trust and political participation.

However, during the responsible period of post-transition democratic strengthening, there was a lack of participation and effectiveness of citizens and civil society in strengthening democratic governance and improving the transparency and accountability system. In particular, difficulties such as financial dependence, instability of internal management, government control, uncertainty of the legal framework, and the phenomenon of using NGOs for political purposes were regularly observed in the development of civil society organisations. It is commendable that although the CSOs caused by these continue to have a decline in trust and a decline in their ability to influence policy, expectations and demands that civil society organisations make an important contribution

to the strengthening of democracy remain high.

In addition to the capacity of civil society organisations, civil society organisations are unable to take the lead in increasing citizens' participation and improving citizens' political education, as well as the lack of efforts and understanding of democratic governments and other governance institutions, including political parties, local self-governing organisations, executive, legislative, and organisations. affecting. In addition, the conflict for power has intensified in Mongolian politics, a clientelist structure has been created, high-level corruption, official crimes, and injustice have worsened, and the tendency to use and mobilise civil society organisations for their narrow interests is increasing, which is a major challenge faced by civil society organisations.

Suggestions and recommendations

Therefore, in order to ensure the sustainable development of civil society and deepen the quality of democracy, the following policy directions and recommendations are proposed:

1.Improving the legal framework

- Revise the Law on NGOs in accordance with international standards.
- Improving financial transparency and reporting systems.

- Legalise provisions to ensure political independence.

2. Institutionalization of public social relations

- Creating a legal system for mandatory participation of CSOs in the policy-making stage.
- Regular implementation of citizen participation mechanisms (public hearings, consultations, public monitoring).

3. Promoting the financial stability of CSOs

- Expand opportunities for cooperation with domestic resources, private sector and international donors.
- Create regulations for tax credits and incentives.

4. Increase the capacity of local civil society

- Creation of a centralized mechanism (programme of local CSOs) for training, qualification and methodological support.
- Prepare plans and directions for cooperation with local governments.

5. Promoting e-governance and community engagement:

- Ensuring the working environment of NGOs in the online environment within the legal framework.
- Support for electronic monitoring, polls and information dissemination channels.

In addition, the following recommendations are given to civil society organisations to contribute to the strengthening of democracy and increase their operational effectiveness.

- Civil society organisations should direct their activities to lead collective affairs based on trust, relationships and public interests between individuals in society
- To carry out influence activities aimed at the recognition of politicians and the public of the role played by civil society and its organisations in strengthening social and democratic governance;
- Strengthening the collective understanding of the state and civil society and reaching consensus in improving the legal framework of civil society organisations;
- Since any political change brings new opportunities as well as new threats to civil society, it must remain vigilant, demand accountability from politicians to fulfil their promises, and carefully observe the early signals of democratic retreat, including the rise of so-called GONGOs (government-organised NGOs).
- To direct the participation of civil society organisations to ensure the freedom and fairness of elections, to maintain the democratic nature of governance, to protect the right to vote and be elected before elections, to provide election education, to control the security of the vote counting system, to support public debate, to protect civil rights from candidates, to work in the direction of obtaining promises to protect freedom and ensure social justice;
- Developing a strategy that includes the goal of developing fact-checking and information education to help combat disinformation, and influencing citizens to have more precise regulatory standards without affecting their freedom of expression;
- To expose civil society organisations that are used for political purposes, and to take the lead in increasing the immunity of citizens and civil society organisations in

this regard.

By implementing these measures, civil society organisations can develop into more independent, responsible and policy-supporting subjects. Also, the government will restore the trust of citizens and provide a real impetus to ensure the sustainable development of democratic institutions.

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