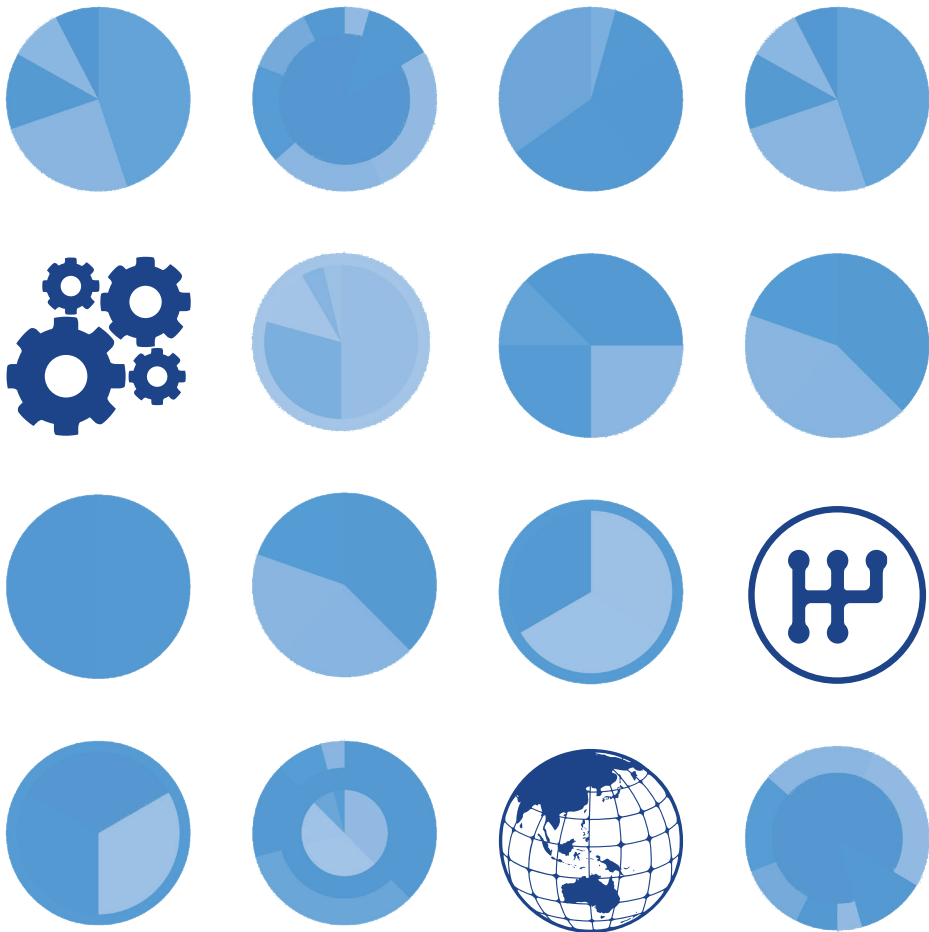


Civil Society Engagement in Policy Dialogue



List of Abbreviations

CBOs: Community-Based Organizations

CSOs: Civil Society Organizations

CP: Country Program

CSN: Civil Society Now

DICE: Digital Inclusion through CSO Empowerment

ERP: Enterprise resource planning

EU: European Union

FGDs: Focus Group Discussions

FEI: Freedom of Expression and Information

GIF: Global Investment Funding

GESI: Gender Equality and Social Inclusion

ICT: Information and Communications Technology

KIIs: Key Informant Interviews

KLD: Knowledge and Learning Department

LATUG: Law on Administrative and Territorial Units and their Governance

MDDC: Ministry of Digital Development and Communication

NPLE: Non-profit legal entities

PA: Public Authorities

PIN: People in Need

PwDs: Persons with Disabilities

RDD: Relief and Development Department

SNGs: Sub-national governments

USAID: United States Agency for International Development

WGs: Working Groups

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Executive Summary

Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) play vital roles through service delivery and advocacy, offering essential welfare services like emergency relief, environmental conservation, and sustainability. They operate at diverse levels, from local to international, with varied organizational structures and approaches. Advocacy-focused CSOs act as representatives for specific issues, aiming to influence policies and perspectives in the development arena, including government, media, and the public. This report focuses on CSO Engagement in policy development, monitoring, and dialogue in Mongolia, particularly their interactions with public authorities.

Despite increased diversity within CSOs in Mongolia over the past two decades, the legal framework hasn't adapted to evolving development needs. With 35,312 registered CSOs in 2022, only approximately 6,380 operate regularly. Challenges like limited funding, human resource retention, and management capacities hinder CSO-government cooperation, fostering mistrust and a lack of collaboration. Most CSOs in Mongolia have limited opportunities for direct involvement in policymaking/dialogue. However, the extent of this opportunity depends on how CSOs define their goals and services. In Mongolia, CSOs typically monitor policies and regulations rather than actively engage in policymaking/dialogue. Few organizations monitor policy development and participate in policy dialogues. The reasons identified during discussions with civil society actors and government stakeholders were the limited capacities/resources and lack of avenues to participate actively in policymaking/dialogue. Despite these challenges, CSOs actively pursue policy dialogue by monitoring policy development. They stay informed about specific areas, offer feedback to amend laws, and support the public in submitting petitions. Collaborating with committee members and local authorities, CSOs research policy contexts, backgrounds, and implications. They continuously try to follow up with government authorities on specific policies and regulations. Adding to these challenges, over 80% of CSOs are in the capital, placing CSOs outside the capital at a disadvantage compared to more established ones in the capital.

Furthermore, in 2023, Civicus labeled Mongolia as a 'narrowed civic space,' citing numerous violations of citizens' fundamental rights to freedom of expression and information (FEI) in the past year alone. The use of creative measures, such as enacting legislation that criminalizes disseminating false information, has hindered the work of civil society. Despite legal protection for the rights of CSOs and media organizations in Mongolian legislation, this trend stifles criticism against the government, private sector, and influential public figures, impacting collaboration between CSOs and the government. Mongolia is experiencing strong momentum in supporting CSOs, backed by long-term commitments and funding from major donors like the European Union, Global Affairs Canada, US government agencies (embassy, USAID), and UN agencies (UNDP, UNICEF, FAO). The EU CSO Roadmap for 2021-2025 exemplifies this dedication. PIN Mongolia is actively working to design a systematic approach that enhances CSO participation in local development through innovative tools and mechanisms for collaboration with the government and other stakeholders.

Building on findings from the Online CSO survey, Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) with government stakeholders and CSOs through semi-structured questions, Desk research on the decentralization process in Mongolia, and FGDs were conducted to understand the current mechanisms of participation and engagement of CSOs with local public authorities and the entry points used for improving engagement between CSOs and local and national public authorities. Additionally, a particular focus was given to the opportunities for e-participatory tools and mechanisms to transform collaboration between CSOs and governments into more open, innovative, and participatory.

The study's findings have been broadly categorized into three main sections:

- Current practices on CSOs-Government engagement
- Barriers to CSO engagement
- Recommendations to promote CSO engagement at different levels to influence policy dialogue

The key findings, along with the recommendations to CSOs, Government and Institutional donors to promote CSO-government engagement and participation at different levels, are described briefly below:

Key Findings

Current practices on CSOs-Government engagement

Policy dialogue and CSO engagement: CSOs and government stakeholders reported limited capacity/resources and a lack of opportunities for civil society to participate directly in policy dialogue. The capacity/resources to provide written feedback and engage at the policy level vary from organization to organization. On the contrary, the lack of avenues to participate in policy dialogues has diminished CSOs' ability to bring valuable expertise and research to policy discussions and has hindered their ability to conduct thorough research and analysis, limiting the quality of information available for decision-makers. Only a few CSOs have clear goals, established human resources, and the capacity to monitor policy development and participate in policy dialogues. Irrespective of these few organizations participating in policy dialogues and sending feedback on legislations and policies, the government often undermines CSOs' feedback. In an online CSO survey of 40 CSOs conducted by PIN Mongolia in January, 40% of CSOs responded the capacity of CSOs to influence government decisions was poor. Additionally, the discussion with CSO stakeholders pointed out that higher-level government agencies, such as the Ministry, are generally less willing to cooperate with CSOs. They rarely tend to involve CSOs at the policy level. Whereas there is little initiative at the medium level, these government agencies often lag in methodology on engaging CSOs and getting feedback from them. Only 35% of respondents (CSOs) reported the quality of collaboration/relationship with government agencies to be average (Online CSO Survey). When asked how they influence policymaking, 83% of CSOs mentioned that they participated in policymaking by commenting on policy documents, whereas only 10% participated in insider lobbying i.e., robust access to policymakers. The CSOs also flagged that this lack of opportunity to participate in policymaking/dialogue is one of the reasons why most Mongolian CSOs are voluntarily monitoring policies, observing local and national public budget expenditure instead of actively engaging in policy dialogue.

Monitoring and analyzing policies: Out of 9 CSOs interviewed, 7 CSOs are engaging in regulatory monitoring, interacting directly with the committee members of specific government authorities and analyzing specific regulations. They constantly engage with committee members to stay informed about the regulatory landscapes and analyze specific regulations. These CSOs meet government authorities on an ad-hoc basis to ensure good comprehension of specific regulations and send official documentation requesting why particular legislation on the raw coal ban is not being implemented and who is strictly responsible. Additionally, these CSOs have been working on policy dialogue via monitoring policy development, specifically focusing on laws related to youth participation in politics, designing and implementing small-scale pilot projects on climate green energy programs, youth education, and FEI, and monitoring the government policies and policy implementation in these areas. Furthermore, they also provide policy recommendations and feedback on law amendments, support public petitions, and educate people accordingly to encourage them to act to demand action. To facilitate CSO tasks, the government provides online platforms for CSOs and citizens to engage in policy advocacy and decision-making, promoting accessibility to information and budget transformation. The aim is to inform and involve citizens and CSOs in the budgetary process, encouraging their proposals and feedback for allocating the local development fund. For instance, the Ministry of Digital Development and Communication (MDDC), in collaboration with the CSO 'The Association of Information Communication Operators,' works to unite mobile communication representatives, fostering collaboration in technology and providing CSOs with a collective platform and voice for policy engagement.

Outsourcing or contracting out government tasks to CSOs: The interviews with CSOs and government stakeholders highlighted government authorities contracting out government services to CSOs. Besides policy making and policy monitoring, service-oriented CSOs provide state social welfare and employment promotion services. The CSOs that meet the specific requirements and that are registered at the General Authority on Social Welfare and Services can bid for contracts to provide community-based services for the elderly and people with disabilities, as well as technical and vocational skills training. However, contracting the work out is limited to this sector. The partnerships between government and CSOs are emerging and vary in scope and the depth of engagement among government agencies at the national and local levels. This depends on the views government officials hold on the role CSOs can play in policy development, the provision of services, or the promotion of citizens' participation in local development.

Some CSOs continuously map out citizens' needs and react promptly to the arising needs. At the same time, they have been attracting resources and building capacity in their work areas. Therefore, the PA decides to contract or delegate government tasks to CSOs; they realize that CSOs work closer to the grassroots, understand local needs better, and are more cost-efficient and flexible. This has led to occasional government outsourcing of CSOs with relevant expertise. However, the extent of this opportunity varies based on how CSOs define their goals and services. The government sometimes includes CSOs, academic organizations, and Working Groups (WGs) experts when they do policy development and amendment.

Decentralization efforts: The government stakeholders confirmed the vital role of Sub-national governments (SNGs) in local service delivery and local development. Engaging CSOs and citizens in policy dialogue and monitoring processes is essential for promoting transparency, accountability, and good governance. CSO stakeholders equally argued that decentralization empowers local communities by giving them more control over decision-making processes. It allows citizens to impact issues affecting their lives, fostering a sense of ownership and responsibility. It underscores the role of SNGs in local service and development. Despite recognizing the crucial role of decentralization, Mongolia has struggled to implement decentralization measures effectively. On the contrary, the government's focus on training civil servants neglected similar programs for CSOs, citizens, and SNGs, indicating a lack of commitment to decentralization in Mongolia. This oversight underscores a reluctance among government officials to actively support the necessary processes and engage salient stakeholders in policy dialogue and monitoring.

Information dissemination: CSOs and the government acknowledge the need to disseminate credible information locally to enhance citizen participation and align efforts with national-level initiatives. Citizens and institutions often lack access to trustworthy information, underscoring the need for CSOs to facilitate the exchange of information within their specific sectors or thematic areas. Thus, CSOs play a pivotal role in fostering informed public discourse by furnishing thoroughly researched and evidence-based information. Enhancing the effective dissemination of credible information is achievable through collaborative efforts between CSOs, government agencies, and other civil society groups.

E-Democracy Landscape: Mongolia's shift towards a 'Digital Nation' presents significant opportunities, with widespread internet connectivity (80% of data usage connectivity and 2.6 million users) and 96% usage of phone/accessibility. E-democracy initiatives aim to boost public engagement, transparency, and accountability, facilitating electronic submissions for petitions, grievances, and recommendations. E-democracy positively impacts accessibility, efficiency, and dialogue in public services in Mongolia. These initiatives have strived to ensure that digital platforms are accessible to all citizens, including those in remote or rural areas. It has bridged the digital divide and allowed a broader range of people to engage with government services and participate in democratic processes. The landscape of e-platforms in Mongolia is extensive, catering to various aspects of government services and public engagement. From e-parliament for citizen involvement in legislative processes to the 11-11 website for submitting complaints and petitions, the Smart Ulaanbaatar app provides diverse information about the city. Additionally, open data platforms like XACXOM disclose information on corruption-related matters. Government-specific websites cover public procurement, budget transparency, election information, and mining licenses. Despite the existing diversity, e-Mongolia aims to consolidate these services into a unified platform for improved efficiency, transparency, and effectiveness in government operations. Despite the legal emphasis on citizen participation through e-platforms in Mongolia's State Great Khural Law Article 39¹), CSOs are skeptical. They perceive a gap between e-participation processes and actual decision-making, with government institutions insincere acknowledging CSO voices. Criticism revolves around the underutilization of e-tools by the government, as decisions seem more influenced by social media, especially Facebook. This has resulted in negative opinions and a perception of minimal impact on the decision-making process.

Barriers to CSO Engagement

Technical Barriers: The relationship between CSOs and government entities in Mongolia is strained due to various factors. A significant issue is the lack of trust, with 40% of CSOs rating the trust between them and government agencies as very poor. Transparency issues, insufficient information distribution, and government reluctance to involve CSOs in decision-making contribute to suspicion and hinder cooperation. Mutual scepticism exists, as government agencies perceive CSOs as challenging their authority, while CSOs are wary of political influences and the government's tendency to work through specific CSOs. The duplication of CSO efforts, where the government adopts their ideas without credit, further strains relations. Additionally, the failure of CSOs to form alliances and communicate among themselves leads to overlapping work. A lack of policy analysis and advocacy expertise, financial constraints, limited human resources, and a shortage of permanent offices hinder CSOs' effective engagement in policy dialogue.

Structural Barriers: The challenges in CSO-government engagement stem from inadequate policies, insufficient funding, and a lack of clear success metrics, with only 55% of proposals submitted to donor organizations like UN agencies (48%), World Bank (28%), US government agencies (18%), Global Affairs of Canada (13%) and EU commissions and other EU-affiliated agencies (10%) of receiving funding (Online CSO survey results). In addition to these challenges, the high turnover of government officials, often triggered by elections, further hampers collaboration. Furthermore, redundancy in government engagement has led to inefficiencies and a lack of clarity in responsibilities. For instance, air quality is solely the Ministry of Environment and Tourism's responsibility, leading to a siloed approach. This lack of clarity regarding accountability and responsibility at the policy level contributes to a broader problem like lack of transparency and accountability and hindered progress, as stakeholders may not uniformly prioritize key issues.

Political Barriers: Significant political barriers are affecting CSO-government engagement. One primary concern is the shrinking space for collaboration, with government agencies increasingly handling tasks independently. If approved, proposed laws would categorize organizations as “federations” or “foundations,” potentially suppressing CSOs. Civicus has labeled Mongolia’s civic space as ‘narrowed,’ scoring 61 out of 100, citing violations of freedom of expression and information. Additionally, a lack of a meaningful feedback loop hinders effective communication, as the government often appears unresponsive despite claiming to receive feedback.

Digital Barriers: Mongolia faces several challenges in its digital transformation journey. While approximately 2.2 million people (two-thirds of the total population) actively use Facebook and are connected to mobile services, the cost of the internet poses a barrier for low-income households. This lack of reliable connectivity hampers the overall digital transformation process. Moreover, Mongolian citizens are not well-informed about e-participation tools, leading to a misuse of platforms like 11-11 for personal requests rather than constructive engagement. Issues such as insufficient ICT proficiency, low digital security skills among CSOs, and limited understanding of digital transformation hinder progress. Additionally, elderly individuals and those with disabilities face limited accessibility to existing digital applications. The proliferation of similar online platforms further complicates matters, making it challenging to find reliable information. Despite various e-platforms, many Mongolians heavily rely on social media like Facebook and Twitter, raising concerns about data breaches and spreading misinformation. During the COVID-19 pandemic, misinformation became a significant issue, with 93% of CSOs rating access to credible information as poor.

Recommendations to promote CSO engagement at different levels to influence policy dialogue

The study’s findings yield recommendations for Civil Society Actors, Government and Institutional Donors.

Civil Society Actors

To effectively engage with the government, CSOs need a well-defined strategy prioritizing active collaboration with stakeholders to shape policies. This collaboration should be evidence-based, relying on solid data to foster informed and rational discussions with policymakers. Building trust is essential for successful policy dialogue, as it promotes transparency and collaboration, allowing CSOs to impact decision-making processes significantly. Adopting a collaborative approach within the sector, CSOs should form networks and coalitions with relevant organizations to collectively influence policies and bring about positive change. Capacity building within CSOs is crucial, involving needs assessments to identify gaps and targeted training programs in research, advocacy, communication, and networking. To enhance e-participation, it’s vital to ensure that government institutions genuinely consider CSO voices from digital platforms. This requires awareness campaigns to educate CSOs and citizens on using e-participation tools. Mitigating digital barriers involves investing in internet connectivity infrastructure, especially in marginalized groups, and implementing programs to enhance digital security skills. Ongoing efforts should also focus on streamlining and improving user-friendliness in existing e-platforms.

Government/State Agencies

The recommendations stress the importance of government transparency, accessibility, and collaboration between the government and CSOs to improve governance and citizen engagement. Key points include making policy processes and data accessible, promoting inclusivity, and enhancing CSO involvement in monitoring projects through training initiatives. Encouraging regular interaction aims to build trust while advocating for CSOs’ participation in law enforcement policymaking, which fosters community representation. The emphasis on capacity building, particularly in provinces beyond the capital, underscores the need for broader engagement. Effective feedback mechanisms involving citizens and CSOs are proposed for transparency, and a decentralized approach to empower local CSOs through legislative updates and funding mechanisms. Ensuring smooth government transitions is highlighted, emphasizing collaboration, documentation, and merit-based hiring to maintain stability and diverse perspectives in government agencies.

Donors/Institutional Funders

Institutional donors are crucial in supporting CSOs in their advocacy through funding awareness campaigns and policy advocacy. To maximize impact, donors should implement monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to assess the effectiveness of decentralization initiatives. Prioritizing projects that enhance local government capacity, including training officials and CSO actors, is crucial in improving financial management and service delivery at the grassroots level.

Conclusion: In conclusion, the overview of the current practices in Mongolia reveals that both government authorities and CSOs are putting substantial efforts in actively taking measures to ‘institutionalize’ their collaboration, reinforcing the principles of open, collaborative, and transparent governance. By cooperating, they engage in discussions on issues that influence the development of society, and they complement efforts to ensure that citizens’ needs are equally considered and satisfied. Additionally, the collaboration between these actors enhances project efficiency by pooling resources and expertise, preventing duplication of efforts. Ultimately, effective collaboration, guided by engagement recommendations, contributes to the well-being and development of Mongolian society, reflecting the intertwined success of civil society and government.

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CHAPTER - I

Introduction

Mongolia boasts a thriving democratic society where its governments have made efforts to devise policies, laws, and regulations aligning with global standards and agreements, fostering collaborations with private sector entities, civil society organizations, and international development partners (EU Roadmap for Engagement with civil society in Mongolia for the period 2021 – 2025). Within the democratic system, civil society movements have become one of the most active parts of the Mongolian society. In the last two decades, CSOs have become more diverse and vibrant, playing a crucial role in advocating for the rights of marginalized groups, promoting social change, and providing essential services to communities. However, the legal and regulatory environment remains the same and does not meet the development needs of the CSOs. The Constitution of Mongolia (1992), the NGO Law (1997), the Civil Code (2002), and the Law on State Registration of Legal Entities (2015) constitute the primary legislation applying to CSOs. In 2019, Mongolia's fall legislative agenda included a new draft law on non-profit legal entities (NPLE). The Law has not been finalized yet. However, CSOs expressed extreme concern over efforts to restrict civil society organizations. The proposed legislation envisioned the creation of a "Civil Society Development Council," which would allow the government authority to oversee the activities of non-governmental organizations in the country. In addition, Article 9 of the NGO Law (1997) provides the CSO involvement in national policies. It describes relations between the state and CSOs and the fundamental principles underpinning the relations between CSOs and the State. It stipulates that (Civil Society Brief: Mongolia, 2019, Asian Development Bank):

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

Furthermore, a CSO working group was established in 2011, 2012, and 2017 to reform the CSO law, develop a state policy concept on civil society development to enhance government-CSO cooperation and social development and revise the CSO Law and rename it to the Law on the Non-Profit Legal Entity. Following the amendment to Mongolia's Public Procurement Law in June 2011, several CSOs gained representation in bid evaluation committees and actively monitored government-funded projects and programs. This participation allowed CSOs to effectively oversee the allocation of public funds and hold the government accountable. This policy has received international recognition as a positive example of enabling civil society involvement in monitoring public expenditures.

With the high number of registered CSOs, 35,312 CSOs in 2022, only 6,380 have regular and systematic operations (National Statistics Office). Limited funding opportunities, human resource retention issues, and management capacities significantly influence CSO survival and successful functioning. One of the biggest challenges facing CSOs is their limited experience mobilizing funding. The primary sources of CSO financing include membership fees, donations, and donor-funded projects and programs. Limited progress has been made in financial sustainability and institutional strength. On top of this, the CSO sector has weaker managerial and administrative skills. Their organizational advocacy and social mobilization skills are also limited. In some specialized CSOs, such as those serving disabled people, members are already disadvantaged and vulnerable to poverty; this translates into further limitations of institutional and personal capacity. Some smaller CSOs have minimal sector technical capacities and the ability to prepare proposals and reports. These weaknesses have resulted in slower growth and a lack of strategic clarity among smaller CSOs. In addition, over 80% of the CSOs (Civil Society Brief: Mongolia, 2019, Asian Development Bank, p. 3) are based in the capital, and the remaining are registered outside the capital. CSOs outside of the capital face more challenges than established capital-based ones. These obstacles have affected the CSOs' effective policy engagement with the government. Low access to information (Civil Society Brief: Mongolia, 2019, ADB, p. 3), attacks from opposition groups, and shrinking civic space have hindered CSOs' engagement in policy dialogue. Civicus, a leading body monitoring civic space globally in 2023, labeled Mongolia as a 'narrowed' civic space (Mongolia, Civicus). The government is increasingly using creative means, such as enacting legislation that criminalizes the dissemination of false information to undermine the work of civil society despite the rights of CSOs being protected under Mongolian legislation (Civil society raises concerns about press freedom and restrictions on peaceful assembly in Mongolia, Civicus). According to a survey circulated by the EU Delegation for the update of the Roadmap in March 2020, more than 70% of the CSOs consulted were involved in elaborating and/or monitoring public policies with the Mongolian authorities (EU Roadmap for Engagement with civil society in Mongolia for the period 2021 – 2025, p.2). Having most of the CSOs surveyed national coverage, involvement occurs mainly at the national level, followed by the provincial level. In most cases, dialogue is not institutionalized but rather ad-hoc. On average, CSOs consider that they can only moderately influence the Mongolian authorities, but their influence varies depending on the sector, as well as on the overall quality of the dialogue.

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

Internationally, governments support CSOs through various means, including favorable tax policies, office space provision, service contracts, and policy program dialogue. One example of such support is outsourcing government services to CSOs, particularly in social welfare and employment promotion. In this context, registered CSOs meeting specific criteria can compete for contracts to deliver community-based services to the elderly, individuals with disabilities, and technical and vocational skills training. However, it's important to highlight that this outsourcing practice is primarily limited to this sector.

The cooperation between the Mongolian government and CSOs is emerging and varies in scope and depth of engagement among government agencies at the national and local levels. In general, there are opportunities for CSOs to engage with government agencies and their activities, though this depends on each government agency. Furthermore, there is room to strengthen the mechanisms to structure engagement and consultation. Thus, this study will help us identify the activities of CSOs in terms of policy development or monitoring/oversight, understand barriers and opportunities to CSO policy engagement at the national level, and aid the PIN Mongolia CP in designing future actions for active and participatory civil society and contribute to enhancing and increasing the systematic participation of CSOs in decision-making. Along with conventional ways of CSOs and civil society engagement, the study will explore entry points for CSOs to engage in policymaking through digital technologies as part of the global agenda of supporting democratic processes through ICTs. The focus of the undertaken study is to understand:

- Current practices on CSOs-Government engagement
- Barriers to CSO engagement
- Recommendations to promote CSO engagement at different levels to influence policy dialogue

For this study, PIN Mongolia has interviewed CSOs working on sectors like climate change, youth advocacy, gender equality, and democracy, particularly Freedom of Expression and Information (FEI), as these sectors align with the PIN RDD/CP. Online CSO Survey, Desk research on decentralization in Mongolia, Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) with CSOs and government authorities, and FGDs were conducted to analyze the current participation and engagement mechanisms of CSOs with the government of Mongolia and local public authorities.

CHAPTER – II

Methodology

Research Duration

The study was conducted from (January - October) 2023.

Research Methods

A cross-sectional descriptive study was used to assess the current mechanisms of participation and engagement of cooperation between CSOs and PA in Mongolia and to understand the entry points for improving the influence of CSOs on public policy and engagement between CSOs and local public authorities. In addition, it was conducted to identify the opportunities for digital tools and mechanisms to transform collaboration between CSOs and governments. This study employed:

- Online CSO Survey carried out in January 2023;
- KIIs with government stakeholders and CSOs conducted from the end of July to early October 2023
- Desk research conducted on decentralization process in Mongolia in June 2023;
- FGDs with CSOs on 5 October 2023.

This study adopted a qualitative approach and was undertaken among CSOs (based in Ulaanbaatar) and key government stakeholders from Bayanzurkh and Songinokhairkhan districts (two districts of Ulaanbaatar) and Bayankhongor province and Gobi-Altai province. The study considered intersectionality, i.e., factors related to CSOs' knowledge, attitudes, and practices, and structural factors (cross-cutting elements such as youth/gender equality, climate change, and FEI). For the data collection, an online CSO survey was conducted in January 2023 among 40 CSOs based in Ulaanbaatar, the capital city of Mongolia. Furthermore, a key informant interview was conducted to gather in-depth information on the digitalization agenda and threats of digital technology on journalists and CSOs. In addition, some relevant information was extracted from the study carried out by PIN Mongolia in May 2023 to support CSOs representing marginalized groups and Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) objectives. Additionally, this study was accompanied by one-to-one, in-depth interviews to investigate and elaborate on the legal and policy frameworks surrounding cooperation between local government institutions and CSOs. A total of 9 CSOs and 9 government stakeholders participated and shared their experiences through in-depth one-on-one interviews. Each interview lasted for 1 hour to 1 hour 30 minutes with CSOs and (30-50 minutes) with the government stakeholders. These interviews were conducted both in-person/and virtually as per the participants' preference. In addition, FGDs were conducted to bring three different groups working on climate, youth/gender equality, and FEI to have mixed responses/perspectives to understand their familiarity/knowledge of current participation and engagement mechanisms of CSOs with the government of Mongolia and to investigate their mixed ideas on gaps/barriers to such engagement and participation. 11 CSOs participated in FGDs and shared their familiarity/knowledge, and each session lasted for 1 hour /1 hour 20 minutes.

Participants for the study were sampled purposively, keeping in mind the key questions:

- (1) What are the current mechanisms of participation and engagement of CSOs with local public authorities?
- (2) What entry points may be used for improving engagement between CSOs and local and national public authorities?
- (3) What is the existing e-participation tools and mechanisms to transform collaboration between CSOs and governments?

Data Analysis

Interview recordings, totaling 8 hours and 15 minutes or 85 pages of transcribed data, were transcribed verbatim and translated into English. Thematic analysis was conducted to interpret patterns of meaning, resulting in three main themes and respective sub-themes, identified through initial and axial coding. Manual data analysis was employed for this study.

Ethical Considerations

Participants gave informed consent for one-on-one interviews and FGDs, with assurance that interview results would be used solely for the intended purpose. CSOs and government stakeholders were briefed on data protection. Confidentiality and privacy were prioritized in compliance with Mongolian laws, utilizing audio recording for data entry with prior consent.

CHAPTER – III

Desk Research

Decentralization process in Mongolia

Mongolia is a unitary state. The subnational government (SNG) is established under Chapter IV of the Constitution and the Law on Administrative and Territorial Units and their Governance (2006), hereafter referred to as LATUG (Decentralization, Local Governance, and Local Economic Development in Mongolia, 2021, ADB). The government of Mongolia can be described as a semi-presidential republic with a centralized political system. The President of Mongolia is the head of state and is elected through a popular vote. The President has significant powers, including appointing the Prime Minister, dissolving the State Great Khural (parliament), and vetoing legislation. The State Great Khural, also known as the Parliament, is the highest legislative body in Mongolia. It is a unicameral structure with 126 members elected through a mixed electoral system. The Parliament can make laws, approve the state budget, ratify international agreements, and oversee the government's activities. At the provincial or aimag level, Mongolia is divided into 21 provinces or aimags, each with its local government. However, the power and authority of these local governments are limited compared to the central government. The central government exercises significant control over local affairs, including the appointment of aimag governors and the administration of provincial budgets.

These two levels of the institutional setup follow a dual structure seen in other post-socialist states:

- A legislative assembly (hural), supported by a full-time secretary and (at aimag level) other supporting staff under the secretary.
- An executive branch headed by a governor and a deputy governor. A list of candidates is nominated by the hural at that level, and from that list, a selection is made by the prime minister for aimag governors and by the aimag governor for soum governors. The governor and deputy governor oversee the two executive arms of the Sub-national Governments (SNGs) and (a) directly supervise the Governor's Office and its departments and staff and (b) provide administrative oversight of deconcentrated subnational sector ministry departments, their facilities (schools, clinics, etc.), and staff, but who are under the primary supervision of their central ministries or other central agencies.

This dual structure is usually justified by separating policymaking and oversight (the local legislature) from execution (the local executive) and aims to provide institutionalized checks and balances. Because of this dual structure, the SNG paradigm in Mongolia does not fit well with the notion of local government insofar as the local government carries connotations of a single, unified corporate entity with a clearly defined political and policy mandate (Decentralization, Local Governance, and Local Economic Development in Mongolia, 2021, ADB, p5).

Sub-national Governments (SNGs) in Mongolia

Sub-national Governments in Mongolia have an important role in local service delivery and local development, but several constraints undermine this potential. It is common to refer to “local capacity problems,” but that can be a misleading diagnosis, suggesting a need to focus on training. There are indeed problems in current human resource capacity-building arrangements. However, there are deeper problems:

- The policy, legal, and regulatory framework is sometimes unclear or inconsistent and usually is not translated into clear operational guidance for SNG personnel, such that even if more resources were devoted to training, the content is often missing.
- The local institutional setup duplicates some functions, blurs accountabilities, gives too small a role to elected hurals (elected assembly), and promotes a vicious cycle that undermines their potential representative and developmental role. It prevents either the hurals or the governors from supervising local deconcentrated staff.
- Despite the reforms of the new Budget Law, financing and budgeting arrangements, constitute a straitjacket, precluding local discretion that is the rationale for decentralization. This undercuts the scope for input, supervision, or coordination over local sector departments by local authorities and, in other cases, allows undue discretion and untransparent behavior (e.g., in aimag [province] budgetary allocations to soums [districts]).

These constraints compromise the ability of SNGs to fulfill their potential.

Legal and Regulatory Frameworks

Despite the impressive expansion of civil society in Mongolia, they need help regarding changes in the regulatory environment, government scrutiny, and improved transparency and accountability (Castagna 2022). They are at risk of more stringent CSO legislation being considered in parliament. Two new draft laws that regulate CSOs, a bill on associations and another on foundations, are pending in the parliament. These proposed bills were more restrictive than the current regulations and posed risks to the integrity of Mongolia's civic space, political pluralism, and long-standing permissive CSO operating environment.

CSOs in Mongolia operate within legal and regulatory frameworks such as the Constitution of Mongolia (1992), the NGO Law (1997), the Civil Code (2002), and the Law on State Registration of Legal Entities (2015).

Some key provisions governing CSOs are:

- Articles 481 and 482 of the Civil Code require registering community groups or CBOs as legal entities to raise and account for the funds.
- Article 8 provides the criteria for the dissolution of CSOs.
- Other laws and legislation that relate to CSOs and their activities include the Law on Government (1993), the Law on Regulating Public Demonstrations and Meetings (1994), the Law on Regulating Resolution of Citizens Applications and Grievances (1995), the Public Procurement Law of Mongolia (2005), the Law on Legal Status of Foreign Citizen (2010), the Law on Information Transparency and the Right to Obtain Information (2011), the Law on Value Added Taxation (2015), and the Law on Legislations (2015).
- In the CSO Law, Article 9 on relations between the state and CSOs says:
 - o The state shall protect the legitimate rights of CSOs.
 - o CSOs shall be independent of the state.
 - o The state bodies may support, financially and otherwise, the activities of CSOs.
 - o Information relating to state body activities, unless classified as a state secret, shall be open to CSOs.
 - o CSOs may be involved in drafting and implementing the decisions to be taken by legislative and executive authorities based on their opinion.
 - o CSOs may make public statements about their positions on decisions taken by state bodies.
- Article 23 of the NGO Law states that the CSOs must file an annual financial report with the Mongolian General Department of Taxation and an annual report of activities to the General Authority on State Registration.
- Article 19 of the NGO Law and Tax Law (1998) provides a favorable environment to CSOs by exempting their income and donations made to CSOs from taxation until the amendments were made in June 2006. The exemptions applied to CSOs operating for public benefit. The abolishment of the tax exemptions had, in general, a negative effect on CSO development by limiting their potential to raise funds domestically. The taxation and social insurance laws increase the transaction costs of CSOs and threaten their financial sustainability.

Despite several efforts to improve legal and regulatory frameworks in line with international best practices, the Mongolian CSO Law has remained the same since it was approved in 1997. Some working groups tried to revise it in 2003. A CSO working group was formed in 2011 at the Ministry of Justice and Home Affairs to reform the CSO Law. Subsequently, another working group comprising 60 CSOs was set up under the Cabinet Secretariat by the resolution of the Prime Minister's office to develop the state policy concept on civil society development (Civil Society Brief: Mongolia, 2019, Asian Development Bank, p7).

The State Policy Concept on Civil Society Development (2012), a key step in fostering government-CSO collaboration, aimed to advance social development through reforms like the CSO Law, state-funded programs, and increased space for CSO advocacy. Despite cabinet approval, a change in government paused parliamentary discussions, leaving the policy in draft form. In 2017, the Ministry of Justice and Home Affairs formed a working group to revise the CSO Law, intending to rename it the Law on the Non-Profit Legal Entity. After the amendment to Mongolia's Public Procurement Law in June 2011, numerous CSOs assumed roles as members of bid evaluation committees, overseeing government-funded projects and programs. This active participation enhances CSOs' ability to monitor public funds and advocate for increased government accountability. Globally, this policy is recognized as a commendable example of fostering civil society involvement in monitoring public expenditure.

Mongolia became a member of the Open Government Partnership in 2013 and undertook the implementation of two successive National Action Plans spanning 2014 to 2016 and 2016 to 2018. These plans aimed at enhancing government transparency, accountability, and responsiveness to the needs of the citizens. The Open Government Partnership's national council, chaired by the cabinet secretariat, includes representation from CSOs, actively engaging them in the formulation of plans and overseeing the government's adherence to its commitments. In the initial National Action Plan, Mongolia embraced 21 commitments, while the second plan featured 13 commitments, all focused on enhancing public services, promoting public integrity, efficiently managing public resources, and advancing corporate accountability.

CHAPTER – IV

KEY FINDINGS

The study's findings have been broadly categorized into three main sections – current practices on CSOs-Government engagement, barriers to CSO engagement and recommendations to promote CSO engagement at different levels to influence policy dialogue. These themes include following sub-themes:

Current practices on CSOs-Government engagement

- Policy Dialogue and CSO Engagement
- Decentralization plans that effectively engage CSOs/citizens in policy dialogue/monitoring processes
- E-Democracy/Digital Democracy - Opportunities and Barriers

Barriers to CSO engagement

- Technical Barriers
- Structural Barriers
- Political Barriers
- Digital Barriers

These sub-themes are explained below:

Current practices on CSOs-Government engagement

Policy Dialogue and CSO Engagement

Disparities in perspectives emerged among interviewees representing government stakeholders and CSOs, attributable to various factors such as divergent viewpoints, roles, interests, and organizational objectives. Government stakeholders asserted that CSOs and citizens are encouraged to contribute their viewpoints in policy formulation, facilitated through online platforms or geographically based meetings. An illustrative instance was provided by the social policy department, which regularly solicits opinions from CSOs and citizens, particularly at the outset of the year and during the development of the annual plan, focusing on areas such as education, welfare, and health. A government interviewee emphasized that the valuable inputs received from CSOs and citizens significantly impact decisions related to providing accommodation and sustenance for alcohol-dependent individuals, health education initiatives, and the amendment of legislation and regulations. Moreover, the interviewee noted that CSOs express a keen interest in engaging with the government through formal requests and feedback, citing that their department received seven feedback submissions and 60 requests related to health and education. Furthermore, 15 organizations collaborated to address issues associated with alcoholism and support the social integration of individuals struggling with alcohol dependency. Another interviewee from the social policy department highlighted the opportunity for citizens to acquaint themselves with the objectives of the local development fund and present well-researched proposals for its allocation. Ministry personnel emphasized the potential for collaboration with CSOs and professional associations, particularly those well-versed in pertinent rules and regulations.

Contrary to this, Mongolian citizens and CSOs anticipate comprehensive preparedness and exhibit a high dependence on the government. While they are apprised of governmental funds and initiatives, certain individuals desire seamless access to information, expecting it to be readily available as automated data. They do not consider the challenges and constraints associated with automating the dissemination of all government information and data, which may encompass concerns related to security, privacy, and resource limitations.

Moreover, the Ministry of Digital Development and Communication representative highlighted the existence of a CSO known as 'The Association of Information Communication Operators' within their ministry. This CSO is a collaborative platform comprising five mobile communication entities (television, internet, post, cargo). Functioning at the nexus of communication and information technology, it facilitates the engagement of CSOs, providing them with a forum and a collective voice to collaboratively address policy matters. Additionally, an interviewee from a CSO acknowledged that government entities typically involve CSOs, academic institutions, and subject matter experts in their WGs during the formulation and modification of policies. Despite this inclusion, CSOs often play a limited role in contributing to policy discussions and monitoring processes. The results of the Online CSO Survey indicate that 83% of CSOs engaged in policy formulation by providing feedback on policy documents, while only 10% were involved in insider lobbying, denoting substantial access to policymakers. Respondents expressed challenges in obtaining frequent or direct access to policymakers. A CSO representative focused on enhancing youth involvement in policymaking highlighted instances where government agencies subcontracted research and analysis tasks to CSOs. Despite constrained opportunities in policymaking, Mongolian CSOs strive to engage in policy dialogue by vigilantly observing policy evolution. These organizations remain well-informed about policies and pertinent issues, regularly immersing themselves in news updates, relevant reports, and government resources.

Representatives from two distinct CSOs elaborated on their initiatives in policy dialogue through active monitoring of policy development. One of the interviewees highlighted that their organization has been actively studying laws and regulations about youth participation in politics and democracy. The organization offers constructive feedback to refine existing laws and facilitates public participation by submitting petitions. Utilizing social media platforms has proven to be a highly effective strategy for disseminating information about these initiatives, thereby fostering awareness and contributing to substantive policy discussions. However, it is crucial to note that decision-makers exhibit a heightened sensitivity to online content, given its potential impact on their professional reputation. Meanwhile, the second interviewee, representing a CSO dedicated to combating air pollution in Mongolia, shared insights into their direct collaboration with committee members and municipal offices. Their proactive approach involves staying abreast of specific regulations and thoroughly researching these policies' backgrounds, contexts, and implications. Subsequently, the CSO provides a well-informed perspective on relevant policies and maintains continuous communication with government authorities to ensure ongoing updates and adherence to policies or regulations. Additionally, the CSO actively contributes policy recommendations and furnishes feedback on proposed law amendments, actively supporting public petitions and undertaking educational initiatives to empower individuals to advocate for action. To streamline the activities of CSOs, the government has established online platforms that facilitate engagement in policy advocacy and decision-making. This initiative underscores a commitment to promoting accessibility to information and fostering a transformative approach to budgetary considerations.

Decentralization plans that envisage the effective engagement CSOs/citizens in policy dialogue/monitoring

Engaging CSOs and citizens in policy dialogue and monitoring processes is imperative for fostering transparency, accountability, and good governance within the public sector. In pursuit of this objective, decentralization plans have proven to be efficacious. During consultations with government stakeholders, the pivotal role of SNGs in local service delivery and development was underscored and acknowledged. The stakeholders emphasized the importance of disseminating accurate information regarding national-level initiatives to the local and provincial levels. They recognized the necessity of augmenting citizen participation and steering efforts in a direction conducive to communal progress. Emphasis was placed on the critical nature of providing reliable and trustworthy information. Consequently, formulating a comprehensive communication and education strategy is deemed indispensable in any decentralization initiative. Several salient elements were identified concerning government decentralization efforts, including:

- Clear and Transparent communication: Ensuring unambiguous and transparent communication is imperative in the context of government-led decentralization efforts. It is paramount that citizens are adequately apprised of the decentralization plans and the corresponding implementation strategies. According to a respondent affiliated with the Cabinet Secretariat of the Government of Mongolia, the government has instituted numerous measures to bolster the decentralization agenda. Specifically addressing the urban-rural disparity and striving for a more equitable distribution of economic development, the government has implemented a series of measures to reinforce the decentralization agenda, with a particular focus on mitigating urban-rural disparities and promoting a more equitable distribution of economic development. Particularly, the government has augmented salaries by varying percentages, ranging from 20% to 100%, contingent upon engagement in local activities within the countryside or provincial administration. Additionally, there has been a reduction in loans offered to citizens relocating to rural areas, exemplified by a 3% interest rate. This strategic initiative aims to incentivize Mongolian citizens to engage in activities within rural locales, thereby stimulating local economies. However, the government has encountered challenges in disseminating information about these enhanced facilities and services, resulting in suboptimal implementation efficiency and impeding the overall efficacy of decentralized services. Addressing this informational deficit is pivotal for optimizing the impact and outcomes of the decentralization initiative. Furthermore, it is emphasized that the impetus for relocating to the countryside should emanate from the citizens themselves.
- Capacity-building programs: The governmental initiatives encompassing training and capacity-building programs have been instituted to enhance the proficiency of civil servants, equipping them with the requisite skills and knowledge essential for effectively discharging their duties. A notable revelation from a senior specialist within the monitoring and evaluation department of the Songinokhairkhan district office highlights the ongoing specialized training for civil servants conducted in collaboration with CSOs. In addition, during interviews, an informant expounded upon the expansive integrated program and policy embedded within the overarching framework of state organizations. Emphasizing the reach of this initiative, he elucidated that its implementation extends to provincial and local authorities. Nonetheless, an observation emerged from these discussions, indicating a conspicuous absence of projects or strategic initiatives directed explicitly toward CSOs and citizens. Critically, feedback underscored the predominant focus of governmental plans on enhancing the capacities of governmental authorities, thereby neglecting concerted efforts toward fostering collaboration and empowerment within the broader civil society realm and citizens. Their feedback pointed out that government plans only focused on capacitating the government authorities.

- Implementation of decentralization policies: The former head of the social policy department within the Bayankhongor district asserted that the government had no plans to build the skills of sub-national government officials to effectively engage with CSOs/citizens in policy dialogue/monitoring processes. Moreover, he expounded upon the suboptimal execution of the government's decentralization policy, citing instances such as the comparatively meager remuneration of local civil servants and underscoring a dearth of employment opportunities in the provinces. These identified inadequacies were underscored as pivotal factors compelling individuals to relocate to urban centers to pursue an enhanced quality of life.
- Participation and inclusivity: Ensuring the interests of all citizens and CSOs in decision-making processes is imperative for the success of decentralization initiatives. However, Mongolia has encountered challenges in effectively implementing decentralization. An interviewee highlighted a notable deficiency in considering people's petitions and votes, indicating a limited integration of public input into the political agenda. This signifies a reluctance among government officials to support decentralization processes in Mongolia actively. To address this disparity, a crucial step involves earnestly listening to citizens' voices and implementing their suggestions in the decision-making framework.

E-Democracy/Digital Democracy - Opportunities and Barriers

The advent of electronic democracy presents opportunities to enhance civic engagement and participation within democratic frameworks, thereby empowering civil society and refining policy-making procedures. E-democracy's efficacy lies in its ability to facilitate both bottom-up and top-down initiatives, contributing to a redefinition of political priorities and a transformation in the governance of local and global communities. Despite its recent foray into technology, Mongolia has emerged as a prominent "e" country, surpassing even developed nations in digitalization. An E-government readiness assessment report prepared by the Asia Foundation incorporates the results of Mongolia's government e-government readiness survey. The report indicates a 63% readiness level for the Mongolian government, calculated as the average of various indices across the 34 Capital City's Public Administrative Entities, one-stop service centers, 9 districts, its khoroo, and business and citizens' digital readiness (E-government readiness assessment report, 2022, The Asia Foundation). This readiness, at 64% for government and citizens combined, signifies a transition toward a 'Digital Nation,' offering significant opportunities for citizen engagement in public services and e-participation in democratic processes. Data reveals that approximately 80% of Mongolian citizens have data usage connectivity, with 2.6 million internet users reported in 2023 (Digital Mongolia, 2023, DataReportal). Additionally, 96% of the population has phone access (Montsame, 2022). E-democracy initiatives are underway across all levels of governance in Mongolia, aiming to enhance transparency, accountability, access, and dialogue. The country has pioneered ICT to submit petitions, grievances, and recommendations, thereby improving the accessibility, transparency, and efficiency of public services. This research on electronic democracy in Mongolia is based on a comprehensive study of existing e-democracy tools. It is a political and practical instrument for CSOs and citizens involved in introducing, implementing, and evaluating e-democracy initiatives. However, this ambitious digital transition carries inherent risks and may exacerbate social and economic disparities, limiting marginalized communities' access to digital services and their capacity to engage in democratic processes due to restricted technology access and low digital literacy levels.

Article 39¹ of the Law on State Great Khural of Mongolia, delineates mechanisms for citizen participation in exercising the State Great Khural powers. This provision empowers Mongolian citizens to directly engage in state affairs by posing questions and presenting proposals on specific issues slated for resolution. These participatory actions are facilitated through the official website for voting and dedicated software for mobile phones and devices. The article stipulates a 30-day voting period and establishes a threshold for the number of votes required to deliberate the proposed issues. The resolution of questions (Paragraph 39¹.1) and proposals (Paragraph 39¹.2) (these articles was added by the law as of July 5, 2022) outlined in this law is subject to the procedures specified in the associated legislation. Despite legal provisions addressing the incorporation of citizen and CSO voices, feedback from CSO representatives indicates a perceived disconnect between e-participation processes and tangible formal decision-making. Many CSO interviewees expressed negative sentiments toward the government, contending that government institutions merely feign acknowledgment of CSO opinions to include them in reports, with minimal utilization of e-tools. Criticism revolves around the perception that decision-making primarily occurs through informal channels such as Facebook, as opposed to structured e-participation mechanisms. To enhance the efficacy of CSO input, it is imperative that suggestions reach government institutions in an organized and transparent manner, and that these institutions actively utilize and incorporate CSO recommendations into their decision-making processes. Some respondents advocate for a cautious approach to introducing e-participation at decision-making levels, emphasizing the importance of assessing public technological literacy and advocating for the introduction of user-friendly technological solutions. A critical deficiency exists in the legal and policy framework designed to safeguard civic rights within the digital society, leading to an escalating digital divide, proliferation of dis/misinformation, cyberbullying, and cyberattacks. These challenges pose threats to societal cohesion and contribute to societal fragmentation. Therefore, to have comprehensive understanding of Mongolia's digital transformation, Online CSO survey, KIIs and FGDs were conducted with key stakeholders from both government and CSOs.

The findings provided the following information on existing mechanisms and opportunities which are as follows:

Some of the existing mechanisms used in Mongolia for transparency purposes, such as Open Budgeting, procurement information, and allowing citizens to voice their opinions e-petitions, are listed below:

- Uih.mn or the "United Info hub, a website administered by the National Center for Comprehensive Development NGO. It is an autonomous, not-for-profit platform dedicated to fostering accountability and citizen oversight. It functions as an autonomous, not-for-profit platform dedicated to fostering accountability and citizen oversight. During an interview, a participant shared insights into their involvement with the National Center for Comprehensive Development during the 2023 Ulaanbaatar flash floods, shedding light on the operational dynamics of the Uih.mn website. This case study highlighted Mongolia's utilization of e-petitions and underscored the critical role of digital literacy in the country. Despite accumulating over 36 thousand signatures and garnering 19,000 votes advocating for the removal of the capital governor, the legal system did not heed the collective voices of the people. It is important to note that the existing law stipulates a threshold of 100,000 citizens' votes as the requisite number to make decisions on any given issue, as outlined in Article 39¹.2.3 of the Law on the State Great Khural of Mongolia.
- The D-Parliament is a structured medium dedicated to cultivating active civic engagement and public involvement in the legislative proceedings. As an official electronic platform, it streamlines the process of submitting petitions, grievances, and recommendations to members of the State Great Khural (Parliament). With a paramount focus on inclusivity and transparency, the e-parliament facilitates citizen participation, enabling individuals, scholars, and interested parties to vote on proposed legislation before its formal consideration by the parliament. The platform has a public poll feature to systematically collect input and data from citizens on various issues and topics. Its multifaceted functionality includes soliciting input on draft bills, providing an online space for deliberations, serving as a conduit for citizen petitions and grievances, and functioning as a comprehensive online resource detailing the activities of the State Great Khural. All legislative proposals slated for presentation to the State of Great Khural are accessible through this digital interface. Beyond suggesting amendments to bills, citizens can actively engage in online dialogues addressing contemporary societal concerns via this digital platform. Proposals gaining substantial support are channeled to the Parliamentary Standing Committee and discussed in the plenary session. Legislative mandates stipulate a 30-day response time for government organizations to address citizen inputs. The Government of Mongolia's Citizen Feedback 11-11 center operates as an e-system within the framework of the Smart Government Project, a venture implemented by the Government of Mongolia and funded by the World Bank. The project's overarching goal is to leverage ICT to enhance the accessibility, transparency, and efficiency of public services in Mongolia. A consensus among participants, comprising CSOs and government stakeholders, underscores the widespread utilization of www.1111.mn in Mongolia. Citizens and CSOs can submit complaints through the official district website, 1111. An interviewee from the MDDC underscored the comprehensive nature of government websites featuring menus for comments, petitions, and complaints. A designated complaint specialist collates submissions from affiliated organizations, presenting them at Council of Ministers meetings. The collected feedback, suggestions, and requests are then systematically addressed and responded to within the stipulated legal timeframe. The interviewee further highlighted the utilization of ERP systems by government organizations and a citizen-centric platform, unelgee.gov.mn, for filing complaints. In the first half of 2017, the Citizens and Public Relations Center received 7,827 feedback, complaints, and criticisms, successfully resolving and responding to 6,993 within the legally mandated period. In the context of provincial governance, there is a notable observation pertaining to the online presence of district governors, particularly evident through the heightened traffic on their official websites. Consequently, citizens appear to be favoring alternative avenues, such as the utilization of a designated hotline bearing the numerical identifier 1111, to articulate their opinions rather than resorting to the submission of online petitions. Furthermore, the provincial authorities have proactively furnished additional communication channels for public engagement, manifesting in the provision of telephone contact points (18001200) and (70440001) for the purpose of soliciting feedback and suggestions from constituents. It is imperative to note that these telephonic interactions are not devoid of associated costs, thereby necessitating citizens to exercise discretion in their choice of communication medium. Considering the cost consideration, citizens have exhibited a proclivity towards providing feedback either through the established hotlines or resorting to the traditional approach of submitting written complaints. This duality in the modes of expression underscores the pragmatic response of the populace to the financial implications associated with telephonic engagements in the civic discourse.

- The Smart Ulaanbaatar application constitutes an electronic platform designed to disseminate comprehensive information pertaining to the affairs of the principal municipality, Ulaanbaatar. This multifaceted application encompasses diverse features, including but not limited to, the promulgations issued by the Governor of Ulaanbaatar City, particulars concerning public procurement processes, details regarding the entirety of public transportation routes within the metropolitan area, and the capacity to access data pertaining to road traffic conditions. Furthermore, the application affords users the capability to peruse information pertaining to roads currently undergoing maintenance activities, as well as those earmarked for prospective repair initiatives.
- The UB Info platform serves as an extensible repository consolidating a comprehensive array of news items within a singular interface. This platform facilitates efficient access for individuals seeking information concerning specific organizations and service centers, thereby streamlining the process of acquiring pertinent details. Additionally, users possess the capability to submit evaluations and complaints through this platform, operating under the premise that such reports trigger responsive actions. Nevertheless, there exists a notable lack of transparency regarding the quantification of issues resolved, contributing to a limited understanding among users regarding the efficacy of reported concerns and subsequent interventions.
- During the interview, comprehensive insights into open data pertaining to State Registration information concerning legal entities and property rights were elucidated. Notably, the Independent Authority Against Corruption of Mongolia's website, denoted as XACXOM, emerged as a pivotal resource encompassing diverse categories of information. The repository includes data on earnings, apartments, buildings (categorized by numerical identifiers), vehicles, livestock, agriculture, land, jewelry, art and historical artifacts, savings, cash holdings, personal current and payment accounts, card balances, receivables, and loans. Interview respondents emphasized a noteworthy trend wherein media organizations stood out as the predominant entities effectively leveraging this open information. Concurrently, it was highlighted that journalists are actively acquiring proficiency in navigating and utilizing the resources provided by <http://xacxom.iaac.mn> and other open information platforms. This underscores the evolving landscape where media professionals are becoming adept at harnessing the potential of open data sources for comprehensive coverage and investigative purposes.
- In addition to these platforms, various websites dedicated to electronic systems within the public domain offer distinct datasets and functionalities. Notable among them is the official portal for public procurement, accessible at <https://www.tender.gov.mn/>. This platform is a pivotal resource for information related to procurement processes and transactions. Furthermore, the website <https://www.shilendans.gov.mn/> plays a crucial role in enhancing transparency in budgetary matters. It serves as a repository for comprehensive data pertaining to budget allocations and expenditures, facilitating public scrutiny and understanding of fiscal processes. For electoral information, particularly concerning candidates and results, the website <https://www.gec.gov.mn> stands as a prominent source. It is instrumental in disseminating crucial data related to electoral processes, ensuring accessibility and transparency in the dissemination of electoral outcomes. Moreover, the electronic platform <http://geonet.mris.mn> provides information pertinent to mining licenses. This platform serves as a valuable resource for stakeholders seeking insights into the holders of mining licenses, contributing to transparency and accountability within the mining sector. The integration of these electronic systems underscores a multifaceted approach to open data dissemination, encompassing diverse domains such as procurement, budgetary transparency, electoral processes, and mining licensing.

Considering the foregoing, it is evident that the comprehensive consolidation of all portfolios and services onto a singular platform constitutes a strategic approach to proficiently administer the entirety of governmental services and facilities. The integration of these diverse services within a unified platform is designed to optimize internal workflows, mitigate redundancy, and augment operational efficacy. In addition to extant online platforms, an interviewee underscored the prevalent utilization of the widely embraced American online platform, change.org, among Mongolian users. This platform facilitates the creation and endorsement of petitions addressing a spectrum of issues by individuals and organizations. Notably, the efficacy of this endeavor is reflected in the accrual of numerous signatures, particularly from international sources, thereby amplifying its impact. The interviewee further expounded that such initiatives have served as a catalyst, inspiring numerous CSOs in Mongolia to incorporate e-petition functionalities into their respective online platforms. She elucidated her organization's proactive adoption of e-petitions on its website, concurrently soliciting commitments and pledges in support of various social causes.

Barriers to CSO engagement

Technical Barriers

A pronounced technical impediment to the efficacious engagement between CSOs and government entities has been the absence of collaboration. In Mongolia, mutual mistrust and conflicts of interest have substantially impeded the cooperative endeavors between CSOs and government entities. According to an online CSO survey, 40% of CSOs rated the trust between themselves and government agencies as very poor. The survey also revealed that 48% of respondents regarded access to information on local agendas, government agencies' policies in the draft, and discussions about local development as deplorable. The lack of transparency regarding government actions, inadequate dissemination of information, and the government's reluctance to share information or involve CSOs in decision-making have instigated suspicion and hindered collaboration. In-depth one-to-one interviews further illuminated how divergent objectives and priorities between government organizations and CSOs contributed to this climate of mistrust. CSOs highlighted how government agencies perceive them as challenging their authority, while CSOs, in turn, expressed skepticism regarding government intentions due to prevailing political influences. During KIIs, experts underscored the necessity for a mediator or international organization to facilitate communication between CSOs and PA. Moreover, in one-to-one interviews, most CSOs contended that government agencies were unwilling to cooperate with them. An online CSO survey conducted earlier in the year revealed that 35% of CSOs found the quality of collaboration with government authorities to be average, and 50% believed that the space for expressing their opinions at the policy and advocacy level was also average. CSOs cited the formulation of policies as an illustrative example during one-to-one interviews, emphasizing that institutions often feign receptiveness to the voices of citizens and CSOs while formulating policies. They asserted that CSOs actively seek to participate in policy dialogues and monitor government policy decisions. However, they noted that the level of participation is insufficient, with authorities intentionally withholding information. CSOs voluntarily engage in these tasks, viewing them as a duty, yet remain skeptical and unclear about the government institutions' efficient utilization of their contributions and the subsequent implementation.

During the discussion, a recurring theme highlighted by CSOs was a substantial impediment to collaborative efforts pertaining to conflicts of interest. CSO participants in FGDs consistently underscored the prevalence of government agencies operating through designated or ostensibly independent CSOs, colloquially referred to as "pocket" CSOs. This phenomenon was disclosed by an interviewee in the context of research conducted by PIN Mongolia, specifically addressing support for CSOs representing marginalized groups and their pursuit of Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) objectives. The research findings further illuminated concerns surrounding the overarching influence political figures and entities exert over government procurement processes. Participants raised apprehensions about transparency, equity, and the judicious allocation of public resources. Instances were cited wherein the outcomes of tender processes were preordained, resulting in a lack of transparency regarding the selection of organizations or individuals. This opacity, encompassing critical details such as contract specifics, evaluation criteria, and decision-making procedures, eroded the transparency of the tendering process and impeded the ability to enforce accountability. Additionally, CSOs conveyed instances where governmental entities appropriated ideas from CSOs, presenting them as their initiatives. Such occurrences fostered a climate of mistrust, prompting CSOs to distance themselves from non-governmental organizations and professionals associated with government entities. Consequently, this mistrust hindered effective collaboration between the government and CSOs in Mongolia. Furthermore, interviewees drew attention to suboptimal cooperation among CSOs themselves. They underscored the failure to forge alliances and coalitions, resulting in redundant efforts and overlapping initiatives. Deficiencies in communication and information sharing among CSOs exacerbated this issue, contributing to a fragmented landscape wherein the collective impact of CSO was compromised.

Moreover, the deficiency in expertise in policy analysis and advocacy presents a notable impediment to the effective engagement of CSOs in policy dialogues. A respondent representing a CSO underscored the organizational inadequacies, emphasizing the lack of proficiency in comprehending legislation and the insufficiency of skills required to draft coherent official correspondences addressed to governmental entities. Emphasizing the necessity for legal or expert assistance in policy-level advocacy, the interviewee highlighted the pivotal role of qualified professionals in facilitating such engagements. Concomitantly, a government sector interviewee highlighted the dearth of internal resources within CSOs, hindering their efficacy in influencing policy dialogues at decision-making levels. This observation aligns with findings from the CSO survey, revealing that 40% of CSOs perceive their influence on decision-making as deficient. Financial constraints emerged as a recurrent and critical challenge, with interviewees citing financial issues as the foremost obstacle faced by CSOs in Mongolia. This is particularly pronounced given that CSOs predominantly rely on external funding sources to execute their missions and initiatives. Numerous financial challenges have consequently curtailed the operational effectiveness of CSOs, making fundraising a substantial obstacle. Moreover, interviewees noted that CSOs encounter difficulties expressing their opinions, with varying levels of proficiency in communication skills among their members.

The lack of articulation skills was a noteworthy hindrance during policy dialogues. CSO representatives also drew attention to the institutional lag exhibited by government stakeholders. An interviewee recounted instances where the government sought the services of CSOs without compensation, thereby underscoring a perceived exploitation of CSO efforts. The issue was exemplified by the government taking credit for initiatives such as the 'community platform on air pollution,' designed by CSOs from the ground up. Additionally, a case was highlighted where the government lacked the requisite skills and approached a CSO to translate the National Report on Air Quality and Health, distributing the translated report without compensation for the services rendered. Furthermore, numerous CSO interviewees expressed concerns regarding the perceived incompetence of government organizations and officials. A unanimous sentiment among CSOs was that government officials lack professional capacity, often outsourcing tasks to civil societies without acknowledgment or remuneration. These findings collectively underscore the multifaceted challenges CSOs face in Mongolia, encompassing internal capacity constraints and issues of financial sustainability, communication proficiency, and perceived exploitation by government entities.

Structural Barriers

Policy inconsistencies pose a substantial structural impediment to effective engagement between CSOs and government entities, impeding collaboration and interaction. This deficiency has deleterious consequences on governance effectiveness and public participation. CSOs have raised concerns about the suboptimal quality and lack of alignment among policies and regulations. A participant focused on combatting air pollution revealed the inadequacy of air quality and sustainability legislation, asserting that only a minority meets high-quality standards, often lacking adequate funding and success metrics. The CSO survey disclosed a mere 55% success rate for proposals, with COVID-19 exacerbating the issue by causing a significant funding reduction for 38% of CSOs. CSOs assertively engage with government authorities, yet transformative changes may only occur upon enacting laws pertinent to CSOs and law enforcement, emphasizing citizen initiative and collaboration.

Moreover, the turnover of government officials emerges as another structural impediment impacting CSO-government engagement, primarily driven by electoral processes. In jurisdictions like Mongolia, government institutional effectiveness is limited to four years, leading to the annulment of implemented actions post-election. High turnover, especially among heads of Ministries during elections, disrupts government stability, continuity, and impedes CSOs' effective communication. CSOs underscore the challenge posed by the absence of professional capacity and consistent leadership, hindering the establishment of a sustainable human resource ecosystem.

Additionally, redundancy in government operations is identified as a pivotal structural barrier. Operational redundancy within government sectors results in inefficiencies and a lack of clarity in responsibilities. CSO representatives highlight the tendency of various government sectors to view air quality as the sole responsibility of the Ministry of Energy, fostering a siloed approach. This narrow focus disregards the multi-sectoral nature of air quality issues, impacting collaboration across energy, transportation, environmental protection, and public health sectors. The lack of clarity in accountability and responsibility at the policy level undermines transparency and accountability, fundamental principles of good governance. Without a clear understanding of responsibility for addressing air quality, effective policy implementation becomes challenging.

Political Barriers

In Mongolia, the imposition of spatial limitations has emerged as a salient political impediment, significantly impeding the effectiveness of interactions between CSOs and public authorities. CSO interviewees emphasized that government agencies frequently curtail the activities of CSOs, manifesting a discernible inclination to undertake specific tasks autonomously. Concurrently, skepticism prevails regarding the adequacy of CSOs' knowledge and experience to execute tasks proficiently. Furthermore, apprehensions arise regarding the impending approval of two legislative acts: the Law on the Legal Status of the Federation and the Law on the Legal Status of the Foundation. CSOs assert that these laws if enacted, will constrict and suppress their operational space. Participants in FGDs highlighted the prospective categorization of organizations as "federations" or "foundations" based on membership status, anticipating detrimental consequences for Mongolia's civic space. Notably, the proposed laws mandate comprehensive reporting of financial and operational details to the government, a contentious provision criticized by CSOs for the past 2-3 years. In the CSO survey, respondents rated the current state of open dialogue between CSOs and stakeholders as average (45%). Additionally, 65% expressed dissatisfaction with the government's support for CSOs, and 45% perceived the legal environment for CSOs as unfavorable.

Another prominent political barrier identified by interviewees was the absence of a constructive feedback loop. Despite legal provisions facilitating feedback reception and integration of CSO opinions, government authorities predominantly make autonomous decisions. Five out of seven of the interviewed CSOs reported that stakeholders simulate engagement with CSOs while inadequately incorporating their inputs. Particularly, the feedback mechanism outlined in the law remains largely dormant, leading to a prevailing perception that the government merely seeks to project an image of receiving feedback. Participants in FGDs underscored the government's lack of a systematic approach to collaboratively solicit and process feedback. Local officials at the soum/bagh levels were noted to possess insufficient capacity to address received feedback effectively. Written feedback is the predominant mode of communication, with varying capacities among CSOs to provide such feedback. Verbal suggestions from CSOs are often dismissed as overly general and disregarded by government stakeholders.

Digital Barriers

Mongolia, boasting a population of 3.3 million, features a noteworthy digital landscape where approximately 2.2 million individuals actively engage with Facebook, as revealed in KII. The populace predominantly accesses online platforms through mobile services provided by MOBICOM and UNITEL. Despite widespread mobile connectivity, a notable challenge arises in internet accessibility, particularly for low-income Households (HHs) grappling with the prohibitive costs associated with internet subscriptions. During KII sessions, a CSO highlighted findings from a survey conducted in the second-largest urban area of Ulaanbaatar. Respondents in this area reported spending less than a dollar per month on internet expenditures, emphasizing the financial constraints hindering their ability to access the internet. This economic limitation has emerged as a significant impediment to the overarching digital transformation process within the country. Beyond connectivity issues, CSOs directly engaged with marginalized communities in Mongolia face a dual challenge characterized by insufficient digital skills and resource constraints. A survey conducted among CSOs revealed that 45% of respondents perceive their inadequate ICT proficiency as a primary barrier hindering the successful implementation of digital transformation initiatives. Furthermore, 73% of CSOs possess low digital security skills, compromising organizational security and resilience. Paradoxically, while 63% of CSOs acknowledge the centrality of digital transformation in their organizational strategy, a paucity of qualified staff exists to execute these transformative endeavors. In tandem with these challenges, the research underscores a consensus among CSO interviews and FGD participants regarding the unmet demand among citizens for opportunities to enhance their digital and media literacy. Additionally, there is a recognized need for enhanced coordination to facilitate joint advocacy efforts, reinforcing the imperative for a cohesive approach to address economic, social, and political inequalities associated with access to, use of, or impact of information and communication technologies in Mongolia.

Despite the diverse array of e-participation tools, encompassing online platforms, mobile applications, and social media platforms designed for citizen engagement, respondents uniformly acknowledged a prevailing deficiency in the awareness of Mongolian citizens regarding these e-participation instruments. A government representative conveyed that citizens often lack a precise understanding of the purposes behind e-democracy opportunities, leading them to submit personal requests rather than constructive complaints or suggestions through platforms such as 11-11. Similarly, another interviewee underscored the insufficient grasp of the populace on tool utilization, specifically noting deficiencies in comprehension related to the voting process. Notably, during an electoral event on the d.parliament.mn website, out of 12,000 logins, only 6,000 successfully accessed the platform, with a mere 1,700 managing to cast votes. A third government participant emphasized the scarcity of feedback from citizens and CSOs, elucidating the resultant dearth of valuable input. Although there is an inclination to consider suggestions from citizens and CSOs, the observed paucity of participation indicates inherent shortcomings in the existing mechanisms. Conversely, CSOs contended that the authorities inadequately address the feedback received through e-platforms. An interviewee from a CSO reported submitting a complaint via the 11-11 platform but received no governmental response. Furthermore, the interviewee noted that government agencies tend to collaborate preferentially with specific CSOs rather than those possessing digital expertise. This selective collaboration, often based on personal affiliations, is perceived as a barrier to engaging with professional CSOs with digital proficiency. Additionally, interviewees highlighted a lack of information channels as a substantial impediment to e-participation. Participants expressed a lack of awareness in utilizing these e-tools judiciously, impeding their capacity for meaningful engagement. For instance, access to and comprehension of budgetary information within the Smart UB platform was cited as confined to individuals with financial acumen. Moreover, interviewees elucidated a deficiency in information regarding the government's advocacy efforts, contending that comprehensive outreach on such endeavors via e-participation tools is notably absent. This informational void impedes collaboration between CSOs and the government, potentially hindering their ability to align objectives and cooperate synergistically toward common goals.

Moreover, a consistent theme in the research pertains to the constrained accessibility of existing digital applications for elderly individuals and those with disabilities, constituting a noteworthy digital impediment. Respondents affiliated with CSOs emphasized that these platforms inadequately address the unique needs of these demographic groups, resulting in a dearth of access to essential services. The deficiency of proficient sign language specialists was a compounding factor exacerbating this issue. Additionally, interviewees emphasized that the pervasive inaccessibility of public infrastructures such as buildings, transportation systems, educational institutions, and communal spaces has curtailed the mobility and active participation of elderly and disabled populations. Furthermore, the proliferation of online websites and platforms has engendered challenges in discerning reliable information. CSO representatives advocated for establishing a centralized digital platform overseen by governmental entities. Despite various electronic platforms, a predominant reliance on social media platforms, notably Facebook and Twitter, was observed among the populace in Mongolia. This inclination is attributed to a deficiency in electronic literacy skills, hindering engagement with official government e-platforms. Particularly, using Facebook for official communications by government stakeholders has raised apprehensions regarding potential data breaches, leading to identity theft, financial losses, and reputational harm. The prevalence of Facebook in Mongolia has also given rise to concerns regarding the disseminating of misinformation. Interviewees contended that misinformation, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic, proliferated through social media. An online survey conducted by PIN and FARO Foundation involving CSOs in Mongolia revealed that 93% of respondents rated access to credible information as poor. Unworthy information has spawned speculation, disinformation, and public manipulation. Online platforms, especially Facebook and Twitter, serve as primary conduits for information consumption in Mongolia, where individuals encounter irrelevant content. The use of fake accounts and bots further compounds the challenge of swiftly identifying and removing misinformation on platforms like Facebook, thereby impinging upon citizens' access to credible and pertinent information.

Furthermore, the interview participants engaged in a comprehensive discourse encompassing diverse manifestations of hate-related incidents, including instances of physical violence, verbal abuse, harassment, property damage, and online threats. They underscored the imperative of comprehending and redressing these hate crimes to foster inclusivity, social cohesion, and justice. Notably, some interviewees disclosed instances of receiving threats and defamatory messages on various online platforms. An Online CSO survey conducted in Mongolia has unveiled a disconcerting scenario for civil society entities. A substantial 73% of respondents rated the legal environment as poor, while 93% identified a deficiency in access to credible information. Additionally, more than 50% expressed apprehensions regarding digital safety. Civicus, in its assessment, categorized Mongolia as a 'narrowed' civic space, highlighting numerous infringements on citizens' rights in FEI. A subsequent survey conducted in August 2023 involving 17 CSOs and independent media entities indicated a pervasive sense of stagnation in the FEI situation, with 66% of respondents perceiving no improvement. Participants reported instances of pressure from state officials to remove content and desist from advocacy efforts (75%), while 33% disclosed experiencing physical assaults and social media harassment, detrimentally impacting both their personal and professional standing.

CHAPTER – V

Recommendations and Conclusion

Recommendations to enhance CSO engagement at different levels to influence policy dialogue

Based on the findings that emerged from the study, here are some recommendations for civil society actors, government/state agencies and Institutional donors. These recommendations may benefit CSOs, government and Institutional donors to promote CSO-government engagement and participation at different levels.

Civil Societies Actors

- Clear Definition of Mission and Objectives with a Well-Defined Approach and Strategy: A thriving organization is successful from a well-articulated mission, precise objectives, and a strategic orientation. The mission is a guiding beacon, encapsulating the fundamental purpose and values propelling the organization forward, elucidating its raison d'être and long-term aspirations. In contrast, objectives are concrete, measurable targets harmonizing with the mission, furnishing a navigational framework toward success. Consequently, CSOs are urged to initiate delineating pertinent government authorities comprehending the priorities and interests of governmental stakeholders. This undertaking explores the viability of forging partnerships with government stakeholders and decision-makers. CSOs are pivotal in elucidating the value they can contribute to the government, thereby assuming an equal role in cultivating mutual understanding. Simultaneously, a meticulously formulated approach and strategy constitute the tactical execution of the mission and objectives, delineating the sequential steps and methodologies requisite for their attainment. CSOs must formulate and adhere to a well-defined approach and strategy when engaging with the government to ensure their voices resonate and address potential instances where the government may display preferences for other CSOs. Proactive collaboration with government officials, agencies, and pertinent stakeholders is essential. Establishing such partnerships fosters a more constructive and collaborative discourse for addressing concerns. CSOs can develop a coherent advocacy roadmap or policy engagement strategy to fortify their influence, incorporating explicit goals and objectives designed to influence governmental decisions and policies. Emphasis should be placed on evidence-based advocacy, enabling CSOs to partake in well-informed and rational discussions with policymakers and stakeholders. This approach facilitates effective communication of the underlying rationale supporting CSOs' arguments, rendering their proposals comprehensible and amenable to evaluation by others.
- Building trust with government entities: The cultivation of trust with governmental entities is imperative for effective engagement with CSOs. The establishment of trust serves as a fundamental prerequisite for the success of such dialogues and facilitates the promotion of transparency, collaboration, and the active involvement of CSOs in decision-making processes. This engenders an environment conducive to heightened participation of CSOs in policy development, ensuring alignment with constitutional principles and societal interests. Furthermore, the fostering of trust between government entities and CSOs facilitates the creation of systematic and transparent communication channels. These channels, once established, contribute to the perpetuation of an open dialogue framework. Through regular and constructive communication, a foundation for enduring relationships is laid, enabling the timely identification and resolution of concerns. In essence, the cultivation of trust between governmental bodies and CSOs not only fortifies the efficacy of policy dialogues but also engenders a framework for sustained collaboration and responsiveness to evolving societal needs.
- Collaboration among CSOs: Collaborative endeavors among CSOs aimed at establishing a network or coalition dedicated to engaging in policy dialogue represent a prevalent and pragmatic strategy for effecting policy influence and fostering positive societal change. The initial step in this process entails CSOs identifying pertinent counterparts and extending invitations for collaboration within the coalition framework. To navigate the intricacies of policy issues effectively, CSOs are advised to delineate a core group or Working Group (WG) within the coalition, concentrating efforts on specific facets of policy dialogue. Coordinated advocacy initiatives within this coalition present a mechanism for influencing policies that facilitate inter-CSO collaboration. Through joint endeavors, CSOs can amalgamate their voices, augmenting their impact at the policymaking and decision-making levels. Integral to these advocacy efforts is the active involvement of the public, as their support can significantly sway policy outcomes. Consequently, the inclusivity of the public in advocacy enhances the credibility and efficacy of the coalition's initiatives. Furthermore, recognizing the dynamic nature of policy landscapes and political climates, CSO coalitions should maintain flexibility and readiness to adapt. Such adaptability proves pivotal amid fluctuations in political parties, dissolution events, or other unforeseen circumstances. The coalition can navigate changes effectively by remaining agile, ensuring continued relevance and effectiveness in pursuing policy dialogue and positive societal transformations.

- Capacity building for CSOs to engage in policy dialogue effectively: CSOs are pivotal in societal development, and a comprehensive needs assessment is essential for identifying specific capacity gaps within these organizations. Utilizing methodologies such as surveys, interviews, and consultations with CSO members facilitates a thorough understanding of existing shortcomings. Upon delineating these gaps, CSOs can formulate a strategic plan delineating precise areas necessitating capacity building, encompassing domains such as research, advocacy, communication, and networking. To address identified gaps, CSOs can initiate targeted training programs and workshops covering diverse skill sets. These may include, but are not limited to, policy analysis, identification of pertinent statutes, advocacy strategies, communication skills, the drafting of official letters and petitions, project management, fundraising, and government budget monitoring. Furthermore, CSOs can extend their expertise to capacitate other CSOs in marketing and advocacy skills, thereby enhancing the efficacy of campaigns within specific sectors. The resultant influence on citizens' and policymakers' attitudes and behavior is a foreseeable outcome. In the pursuit of heightened effectiveness, CSOs can enlist the services of legal and policy experts. These professionals can guide CSOs through intricate regulatory landscapes, draft policy proposals, and provide counsel on potential legal avenues when necessary. Simultaneously, CSOs can receive training in advocacy and lobbying techniques, enabling more effective communication with policymakers and fostering public engagement. Encouraging the active involvement of the public in advocacy campaigns further amplifies the impact of CSO initiatives. Moreover, CSOs should prioritize inclusivity within their structures, fostering the participation of individuals from diverse backgrounds and perspectives. Recognizing that a diverse team is better equipped to address complex policy issues, CSOs can implement training and capacity-building programs. These initiatives aim to enhance the advocacy, policy analysis, and public engagement skills of CSOs, fostering a more robust and inclusive approach to societal development. Additionally, offering training for local government officials on effective collaboration with CSOs strengthens the overall ecosystem of civic participation and governance.
- Research, Policy Analysis, and Development: The nexus of Research, Policy Analysis, and Development constitutes integral and interdependent activities essential for formulating efficacious policies, cultivating innovation, and mitigating societal challenges. As a systematic inquiry and examination, research plays a pivotal role in the revelation of novel knowledge, validation of extant theories, and resolution of specific issues. Consequently, CSOs are poised to amass pertinent data about policies and issues, enabling both CSOs and policymakers to remain apprised of the evolving policy landscape. This acquired information equips CSOs to actively monitor relevant reports and governmental resources actively, fostering an environment of informed discourse. The utilization of such data fortifies CSO arguments, imbuing their advocacy initiatives with a foundation of evidence. Active participation and collaboration with government departments facilitate policy discussions, leading to the establishment of working groups. Furthermore, the analysis of accumulated data enables the identification of trends, gaps, and areas necessitating policy reform, thereby providing the groundwork for CSO recommendations and advocacy. Moreover, CSOs are positioned to distill comprehensive documents delineating key policies and accompanying them with specific recommendations. This developmental step translates research insights and policy analyses into actionable directives. The implementation of such directives encompasses drafting legislation, designing programs, initiating initiatives, engaging stakeholders, conducting public outreach, and monitoring and evaluating policy outcomes. Through this comprehensive approach, CSOs contribute substantively to the policy-making process, ensuring that their efforts are evidence-based and instrumental in effecting tangible societal change.
- Monitoring and Mutual Oversight by CSOs: CSOs assume a pivotal function in the monitoring and oversight of legislative frameworks and governmental directives. Employing vigilant scrutiny, CSOs proficiently monitor the progression of policy formulation, discern inadequacies therein, and ascertain the proper execution of said policies. Serving as a regulatory mechanism, CSOs function as a scrutinous entity over governmental bodies and institutions, guaranteeing the accurate implementation of statutes and safeguarding the inherent rights of the populace. This interactive process institutes a framework of reciprocal oversight, where both the government and CSOs are responsible for scrutinizing, evaluating, and ensuring accountability across diverse societal realms. This collaborative endeavor fosters transparency, accountability, and optimal governance by substantiating that governmental undertakings align with constitutional provisions and other pertinent regulations.
- Empowering citizens through voter education, awareness, and civic engagement: Empowering citizens through voter education, awareness, and civic engagement is imperative for the effective functioning of a democratic society. A well-informed and engaged electorate constitutes a cornerstone for the success of democratic processes. This study delineates crucial dimensions of citizen empowerment within this context:

- **Voter education:** Effective dissemination of information regarding electoral processes, encompassing voter registration, polling locations, and voting procedures, is paramount. Despite challenges in reaching citizens and institutions with credible information, CSOs can facilitate information exchange within their respective sectors. CSOs, through collaborative efforts with government agencies and other civil society groups, can enhance the dissemination of reliable information. Moreover, CSOs can contribute to informed public discourse by providing well-researched, evidence-based information. Educational programs conducted by CSOs play a pivotal role in augmenting citizen participation in the democratic process, as underscored by insights derived from KIIs. Emphasis is placed on keeping citizens informed, engaged, and capable of making informed decisions.
- **Increasing Public Awareness:** Elevating public awareness about the role and significance of CSOs in policy development is crucial for fostering their engagement. CSOs can orchestrate events and forums to disseminate their work and foster public discourse on policy matters. This strategic approach facilitates bridging gaps between CSOs and the communities they serve. Additionally, collaborative initiatives between CSOs and government authorities, such as the education ministry, can be instrumental in introducing civics education in schools and universities. This educational framework should encompass information on the roles of CSOs and guide citizens on effective engagement with these organizations. Furthermore, CSOs can advocate for collaborations between universities and CSOs in research and policy analysis.
- **Community Workshops and Youth Involvement:** Community-based organizations CSOs are pivotal in cultivating civic engagement by organizing workshops that serve a dual purpose. These workshops aim to educate citizens about their rights and responsibilities, underscoring the significance of active participation in civic activities. Emphasis is placed on youth involvement through educational programs implemented in schools and colleges. By instilling a sense of civic duty and responsibility from an early age, these initiatives contribute to developing an informed and engaged citizenry. Consequently, this proactive approach ensures a sustainable foundation for democratic processes through cultivating civic awareness and participation.

Government and State Agencies

- **Transparency and Accessibility:** The government is urged to institute policies that facilitate the accessibility of policy processes, decision-making procedures, and pertinent data to both citizens and CSOs. This entails fostering transparency on the part of the government in relation to budgetary matters, tender announcements, and comprehensive reports. CSOs and citizens assume a pivotal role in scrutinizing the allocation and utilization of financial resources, ensuring their alignment with the intended objectives. Local development funds serve as a mechanism to empower CSOs in engaging with community development and governance initiatives. It is imperative that these services and facilities be made available to a wider demographic, encompassing youth, PwDs, the elderly, as well as citizens and CSOs situated in rural areas. This approach fosters inclusivity, enhancing accessibility to services, and affording a broader spectrum of individuals the opportunity to actively participate in the democratic process.
- **Encourage regular interaction between CSOs and the government:** It is imperative to strengthen the relationships between CSOs and public authorities to cultivate trust, enhance transparency, and optimize the efficacy and accountability of law enforcement. Establishing mechanisms for meaningful engagement between CSOs and the government is crucial. Initiating an Open Dialogue framework facilitates the development of a structured engagement strategy, promoting transparent communication through avenues such as online platforms, public forums, advisory councils, or working groups. These platforms enable CSOs and stakeholders to exchange information, deliberate on concerns, and propose solutions, fostering continuous and open communication. Furthermore, the government should encourage collaborative initiatives, such as community programs, workshops, training sessions, and joint research projects, that involve both CSOs and government agencies. This collaborative approach not only enhances mutual understanding but also promotes shared objectives and cooperative efforts in addressing societal challenges.
- **Fostering a Holistic CSO Engagement:** The integration of CSOs into the policymaking process is paramount for the expansion of their roles in monitoring and evaluating activities, thereby establishing a more resilient and accountable governance framework. Consequently, the government should consistently involve CSOs in the oversight of projects financed by the government, the execution of action plans, and the formulation of policies and regulations. Collaborative efforts with relevant CSOs for the implementation and evaluation of policies are indispensable, and the government can bolster its capabilities by providing training and allocating resources. Active participation of CSOs in the policymaking process, particularly pertaining to law enforcement, is imperative. Seeking input and recommendations from CSOs during the drafting or revision of policing policies enhances inclusivity. This approach contributes to the refinement of policies that effectively address the community's needs and concerns. Moreover, the government can actively encourage and support CSOs in monitoring and holding law enforcement agencies accountable. CSOs can play a vital role in oversight by scrutinizing police actions, reporting instances of misconduct, and advocating for necessary reforms or the repeal of existing policies. This collaborative engagement ensures a comprehensive and participatory approach to governance and law enforcement.

Capacity building: Government entities need to bolster the competency of their human resources alongside CSOs and their personnel to augment their comprehension of policy matters, human rights, climate change, digitalization, and other pertinent concerns. Implementing comprehensive training and capacity-building initiatives for CSOs is imperative to enhance their adeptness in negotiation and communication, facilitating more efficacious engagement with diverse stakeholders. Substantial investments should be directed toward continuous training and development programs, encompassing leadership training, technical skills refinement, and avenues for professional progression to enable officials to enhance their capabilities and advance in their careers. This strategic approach is instrumental in fostering CSOs' enhanced participation in policy discourse and advocacy at local and national echelons. Moreover, in their assessment of CSOs' capacities, government agencies should transcend the current focus on Ulaanbaatar-based entities and extend their empowerment initiatives to include CSOs across all 21 provinces. An equitable distribution of prioritization will strengthen the capabilities of CSOs nationwide. Additionally, the government must reinforce its institutional capacities to obviate the necessity of outsourcing tasks to CSOs, such as translating national reports. This will ensure that government agencies are self-reliant in crucial functions. Furthermore, the government must proactively enhance citizens' digital proficiency by scrutinizing and refining the curricula and methodologies of universities and colleges. Strategic investments in advanced digitalization skills should be integrated into primary and higher education, aligning with the contemporary demands of the digital era. This multifaceted approach will contribute to a more robust and digitally adept citizenry, aligning with the evolving landscape of technology and information.

Feedback Mechanisms: The optimization of the feedback loop is imperative for fostering transparency, accountability, and effective governance within the governmental framework. The government should sustain digital platforms such as uih.mn, www.1111.mn, and <https://d.parliament.mn/> to facilitate citizen feedback and suggestions. Additionally, continuous monitoring and enhancement of voting lines and websites are essential, as prolonged voting queues can deter citizen participation in the electoral process. Through diligent oversight of these elements, the government can elevate the overall voter experience, promoting convenience and encouraging heightened civic engagement. Furthermore, the government should institute mechanisms for receiving feedback from CSOs regarding policies and regulations. This involves establishing a structured feedback loop that allows for adjustments to policies or regulations, as deemed necessary, to optimize their effectiveness. This can be achieved through regular meetings or dialogues between the government, CSOs, and law enforcement agencies. Such forums facilitate open and constructive discussions, enabling both parties to articulate concerns, share ideas, and provide feedback, ultimately contributing to informed policy adjustments and regulatory enhancements.

Advocacy: Facilitate the active involvement of CSOs in advocacy initiatives aimed at influencing government policies and decisions. CSOs possess the capability to submit petitions, articulate their perspectives, and exercise voting influence on parliamentary and governmental determinations, including legislative amendments. Citizens and CSOs, as exemplified, can initiate and endorse petitions strategically designed to draw attention to specific legislative or governmental issues. The government is encouraged to promote an environment where CSOs and citizens actively express their viewpoints, furnish feedback on diverse policy matters, and suggest modifications to prevailing laws or the introduction of new legislation. To operationalize this engagement, the government should leverage existing electronic platforms and digital technologies to foster widespread participation from across Mongolia, utilizing these channels to disseminate information, raise awareness, and mobilize support. Petitions and social media activism serve as viable entry points for engagement, allowing for the effective utilization of digital mediums to harness public sentiment and shape discourse on pertinent policy issues. Embracing these methods will contribute to a more inclusive and participatory decision-making process, strengthening the democratic fabric of governance.

Developing a decentralization strategy to enhance the participation of CSOs in policy dialogue: This necessitates a paradigm shift in authority and decision-making dynamics, transferring these functions from central governing bodies to localized entities. This transition aims to augment the influence and assertiveness of CSOs within the policymaking continuum. To achieve this, the government must comprehensively evaluate the current level of CSO involvement and the prevailing decentralization framework. Concurrently, a critical examination and revision of legislation and policies pertinent to decentralization are imperative, with a focus on fortifying support for CSO engagement at the grassroots level. Legal provisions safeguarding the rights and responsibilities of CSOs in policy discussions should be enacted. Augmenting the skill set and refining the disposition of government officials is essential, necessitating targeted capacity-building initiatives. Bridging the existing human resource capacity gap and addressing organizational challenges through training programs for CSOs and government stakeholders is paramount. Establishing financial mechanisms at the local level to underpin CSO activities, encompassing research, advocacy, and community outreach, is integral. Ensuring a transparent and accountable allocation of funds is imperative to prevent corruption and favoritism. The government should articulate the decentralization objective collaboratively with citizens when allocating public funds and making decisions. A concerted effort should be directed at fostering sustainable health, education, and employment services for youth and essential infrastructure development in both provincial areas and Ulaanbaatar city. In tandem with these endeavors, continuous monitoring and assimilation of insights from successful decentralization initiatives in diverse regions or nations are vital.

Integrating and applying best practices from such initiatives should be a recurring aspect of the decentralized governance plan. Ongoing evaluation of the effectiveness of the decentralization strategy and solicitation of feedback from CSOs and local stakeholders is crucial for adaptive governance. Regular refinement and optimization of the plan based on insights gained from monitoring and feedback mechanisms contribute to the resilience and efficacy of the decentralization initiative.

- **Ensuring Smooth Transitions in Government:** Facilitating collaboration and implementing a merit-based hiring approach for incoming officials becomes imperative, particularly during transitional phases following a change in administration. In such instances, a significant turnover of government officials may occur, either through replacement or voluntary departure. Mitigating this challenge requires proactive measures, starting with encouraging outgoing officials to engage in collaborative efforts with their incoming counterparts. This collaborative effort aims to ensure a seamless transition of responsibilities, knowledge transfer, and continuity of ongoing projects. Documentation of crucial information, procedural guidelines, and the status of ongoing initiatives is essential to provide the incoming team with a comprehensive understanding of their roles and the organizational landscape. Additionally, the government should fortify civil service protections to shield career civil servants from arbitrary displacement solely for political considerations. This safeguard contributes to maintaining stability within government agencies by preserving the institutional knowledge and expertise of experienced professionals. Prioritizing merit-based hiring practices for incoming officials is paramount. Selection criteria should be based on qualifications, skills, and expertise, mitigating any undue influence from political or party affiliations. A commitment to meritocracy ensures that candidates are chosen based on their competence and suitability for the respective roles. Furthermore, the government should advocate for a bi-partisan approach in appointments, wherein individuals from diverse political backgrounds are considered for key positions. This approach fosters a balance of experience and perspectives within the government, promoting a more inclusive and effective decision-making process.

Institutional Donors

- **Promoting Inclusive Development through Increased Funding and Research Initiatives:** To advance inclusive development, donors are advised to prioritize a substantial augmentation of financial allocations through both multilateral channels and bilateral agreements. This augmented financial support should be specifically channeled towards grants and financial assistance characterized by terms more favorable than prevailing market conditions. The primary objective is to ensure the efficient dissemination of funds to all identified target groups and stakeholders in need, with particular attention to vulnerable populations and specific initiatives, while avoiding imposing onerous repayment conditions. Concurrently with the escalation in funding, a deliberate emphasis should be placed on financing research projects and initiatives for data collection. Donors play a pivotal role in supporting evidence-based information that serves as a foundation for guiding policy development. By investing in research, donors contribute to a more profound comprehension of the societal needs and challenges encountered by the broader community and individual citizens. This can be actualized through financial backing for initiatives that facilitate collaboration between CSOs and government agencies, fostering a more comprehensive approach to research. This collaborative effort enhances the efficacy of research outcomes, ensuring that an in-depth understanding of societal dynamics informs the formulation of policies. In summary, the confluence of increased financial resources and the strategic leveraging of research initiatives underscores the critical importance of providing a more informed and inclusive approach to development.
- **Tech-Driven Strategies for Improved CSO-Government Engagement and Funding Dialogues Platform:** Integrating technology and innovation with effective governance presents a transformative opportunity for the engagement between CSOs and government entities. Online platforms and digital tools augment transparency, accountability, and public participation within governmental operations. Using technology creates dynamic spaces for public input, facilitates data-driven advocacy, and supports evidence-based decision-making processes undertaken by CSOs. Digital tools further contribute to transparency, cultivating trust between governmental bodies and CSOs. Donors are pivotal in nurturing constructive dialogue by financing platforms facilitating regular engagement between CSOs and public officials. These platforms function as essential arenas for inclusive decision-making, ensuring that CSOs play a meaningful role in policy discussions. Donor-funded dialogue platforms actively foster open conversations, integrate diverse perspectives into policy formulation, and promote collaboration to address societal challenges effectively. Technology, innovation, and donor-supported dialogue platforms can reshape CSO-government engagement, fostering inclusivity and dynamism in decision-making processes. This interaction enhances the overall effectiveness of governance by promoting transparency, accountability, and collaborative problem-solving, thereby addressing the complexities of contemporary societal challenges.
- **Foster Inclusive Digital Governance:** Donors can strategically advocate for the formulation and implementation of comprehensive policies that advance digitalization, gender equality, and social inclusion. This advocacy entails encouraging national and local governments to enact specific programs tailored towards the empowerment of women, marginalized communities, the elderly, and individuals with disabilities. Concurrently, donors can champion initiatives aimed at promoting transparency and facilitating access to information. This involves ensuring that CSOs possess the necessary resources to stay well-informed about government policies, decisions, and activities. By adopting this integrated approach, donors contribute to both technological empowerment and informed civic participation, thereby fostering a more inclusive and transparent governance landscape. The multifaceted advocacy efforts encompassing digitalization, social inclusion, and transparency collectively work towards advancing the overall goals of empowerment and participatory governance.

- Supporting Civil Society Organizations in their advocacy efforts: Facilitating the advancement of CSOs in their advocacy is imperative for effecting positive societal transformations. The integral role played by institutional donors in this transformative process is manifested through the provision of financial backing, characterized by targeted resource allocation for advocacy initiatives and the issuance of capacity-building grants tailored for training programs. This multifaceted support serves to fortify CSOs across various dimensions. Financial support entails the allocation of funds by donors to underwrite advocacy efforts, encompassing expenses related to awareness campaigns, policy advocacy, and public engagement. Simultaneously, capacity-building grants empower CSOs to augment their advocacy strategies, strengthen policy analysis capabilities, and refine project management skills. Within awareness campaigns, donors are instrumental in supporting media outreach, which may include creating informative materials, advertisements, and social media campaigns to amplify their reach across a broader audience. Financial assistance is also extended for organizing events and workshops to educate the public on specific advocacy issues. In policy advocacy, donors facilitate CSOs in conducting research and policy analysis, enabling the presentation of evidence-based arguments and proposals while concurrently fostering engagement with policymakers. Public engagement initiatives encompass community mobilization programs and technology integration to enhance outreach efforts. Training programs covering advocacy skills and project management serve to elevate the overall efficiency of CSOs. Donors additionally contribute to monitoring and evaluation activities, encompassing impact assessments and feedback mechanisms, ensuring a continuous cycle of improvement and accountability within CSO advocacy work. The substantial contribution of institutional donors is pivotal in cultivating a more just and accountable society. Through comprehensive support to CSOs, they strengthen organizational capacities, facilitating positive social change by bolstering public awareness and fostering effective engagement with policymakers.

- Integrating Decentralization Initiatives with Citizen Engagement: To effectively propel decentralization initiatives, donors are advised to prioritize projects geared towards augmenting the capabilities of local governments. Key emphasis should be placed on investments targeting the enhancement of financial management systems and bolstering the proficiency of local officials and CSO actors through strategic training initiatives. This approach is pivotal in elevating the overall service delivery capabilities of local governance structures. Concurrently, fostering citizen engagement and participation assumes a critical role in cultivating inclusive governance. Donors are encouraged to allocate resources towards initiatives that encourage community involvement, such as public consultations. A central facet of this strategy involves leveraging technology to facilitate citizen feedback mechanisms, thereby integrating local perspectives seamlessly into decision-making processes. The amalgamation of these dual approaches forms a comprehensive strategy, striving to empower both local governments and citizens alike. The aim is to contribute to a more effective and participatory local governance framework, underscoring the importance of collaborative efforts between donors and local entities in achieving sustainable decentralization objectives.

- Increase support for CSOs and public officials: Donors play a pivotal role in advancing sustainable development through strategic investments to enhance the enduring capabilities of CSOs and public officials. A critical imperative is to augment these entities' organizational and technical proficiencies, empowering them for impactful contributions to societal advancement. As such, donors should commit to sustained investments in the capacity development of CSOs and public officials, reinforcing their skills and providing requisite resources and systems for effective engagement. This commitment encompasses financial support for projects, provision of cutting-edge technology and other essential tools, collectively invigorating civil society and government structures, and fostering positive social impact and sustainable development. Furthermore, donors can significantly magnify their influence by increasing subgrants to promote the active participation of civil society actors and government bodies in policy dialogue, monitoring, and development. Subgrants are catalysts for collaboration, facilitating joint initiatives and encouraging dialogue and cooperation. This collaborative approach, supported by subgrants, not only strengthens policy development and implementation but also empowers these actors to engage in policy discourse and developmental initiatives actively. The infusion of additional funds enables organizations to conduct crucial research, advocate for change, and mobilize communities, fostering a more inclusive decision-making process. Moreover, donors can contribute to a more robust civil society landscape by investing in initiatives that promote collaboration and networking among CSOs. Facilitating collective impact and sharing best practices strengthen the overall effectiveness of CSO initiatives. Additionally, donors can be pivotal in fostering partnerships between CSOs and diverse stakeholders such as businesses, academia, and media. These strategic alliances enhance the influence and effectiveness of CSOs, creating a synergistic environment that propels societal development forward.

Conclusion

Civil Society Organizations play a pivotal role in influencing the formulation of policies and legislation, advocating for citizens' needs, and facilitating democratic processes. A robust and empowered CSO is an indispensable element of any democratic system, championing transparency, accountability, and the rule of law. The surveillance of governmental actions and policies by CSOs ensures their alignment with the principles of good governance. Including CSOs in policy dialogues enriches the democratic process by incorporating diverse perspectives, thus enhancing decision legitimacy as these organizations often represent a spectrum of interest groups and marginalized communities. The engagement of CSOs in policy dialogues ensures the consideration of a broad range of perspectives and concerns, resulting in the development of more inclusive and equitable policies. Furthermore, CSOs actively monitor policy implementation, offering valuable feedback on effectiveness and recommending adjustments when necessary. This continuous evaluation contributes to adaptive governance and policy refinement, fostering community capacity building and empowering citizens to comprehend and engage in policy processes. This approach cultivates a culture of active citizenship and civic responsibility. Additionally, CSOs serve as intermediaries between the government and the public, acting as a constructive bridge to articulate citizens' opinions effectively. They disseminate information about policies, implications, and potential alternatives, nurturing an informed and engaged citizenry. Effective collaboration between civil society actors and the government is imperative for informed and inclusive policy decisions. By partnering with CSOs, public authorities tap into the added value, expertise, and resources these organizations bring. Supporting CSOs enhances their capacity to fulfill policymaking and service provision roles efficiently, ultimately leading to more efficient and effective program implementation. Collaboration facilitates the exchange of skills and knowledge between government and civil society, reinforcing institutions, increasing civic education, and cultivating an informed and capable citizenry. Tailored recommendations within the engagement report serve as a foundation for transparency and accountability, offering a clear guideline for interaction between civil society and government. These fosters trust between the two sectors and the public, a critical factor for the successful implementation of policies and initiatives. Moreover, collaboration between civil society and government stakeholders enhances project and program efficiency. Through resource pooling, expertise sharing, and avoiding duplicative efforts, impactful and sustainable outcomes can be achieved for the benefit of Mongolian society. The success of any society is intricately linked to the effective collaboration between civil society and government. Recommendations on engagement provide a roadmap for building strong partnerships that contribute to the well-being and development of Mongolia.

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ANNEXES

I. Online CSO Survey

Introduction: Hello, this survey is being conducted by People in Need NGO Mongolia. Recognizing the unique value civil society organizations bring into local development, this survey aims to identify the challenges and capacity gaps CSOs in Mongolia face. Findings from the study may inform future planning for supporting capacity development for CSOs in Mongolia. The survey takes an average of 25 minutes to complete.

Confidentiality: The information you provide will be kept confidential in accordance with the "Law on statistics" and "Law on the protection of personal information" of Mongolia. The results of the study will not be used for purposes other than the purpose of this study.

If you have any questions related to the survey or questionnaire, you can contact our organization by phone at 70111501 (line #2).

PART 1. GENERAL INFORMATION		
#	Question	Answer
1	Where is your organization's main office based?	1. Ulaanbaatar city 2. Province (specify)
2	Where does your organization primarily implement its activities?	1. Ulaanbaatar city 2. Province (specify)
3	Areas of organization's activities (select all that apply)	1. Community development 2. Health 3. Education 4. Youth development 5. Environment and sustainable development 6. Agriculture and rural development 7. Food and nutrition 8. Governance and rule of law 9. Human rights 10. Gender equality, Gender-based violence, and Women's rights 11. Humanitarian assistance 12. Journalism, Media 13. Art/Culture 14. Other (specify)
4	Who/which groups does your organization target in the majority of your projects/activities? (select all that apply)	1. Children 2. Youth/ young adults (aged 15-29) 3. Child rights/family welfare 4. Girls and women 5. People with disabilities 6. LGBTQ+ 7. Ethnic minorities 8. People from rural areas 9. Migrants 10. Mental health 11. Culture and development 12. Communities at large 13. Other (specify)
5	Number of years in operation	
6	Number of employees (only enter the number of employees with full-time employment contracts)	
7	Number of female full-time employees	
8	Average annual turnover (approximate between 2020-2022)	1. Up to 20 million MNT 2. 21-40 million MNT 3. 41-60 million MNT 4. 61-100 million MNT 5. More than 100 million MNT

PART 2. NGO/CSOS CAPACITY AND CAPACITY BUILDING NEEDS		
#	Question	Answer
1	My organization has the ability to ensure appropriate financial reporting.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Strongly disagree 2. Disagree 3. Neutral 4. Agree 5. Strongly agree
2	My organization has policy documents that include the operational direction, goals, strategies, and plans in place, and these documents are followed by staff.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Strongly disagree 2. Disagree 3. Neutral 4. Agree 5. Strongly agree
3	Monitoring & evaluation principles are integrated into my organization's operations	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Strongly disagree 2. Disagree 3. Neutral 4. Agree 5. Strongly agree
4	Climate change is integrated in my organization's internal strategy and/or my organization made commitments towards supporting national or international climate change strategies.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Yes, national (government frameworks such as Vision 2050, etc.) 2. Yes, international (UNFCCC, Paris agreement, etc.) 3. Yes, climate change is integrated into my organisation's internal strategy (climate change watchdog to support climate change mitigation, etc.) 4. No, climate change is not yet part of my organisation's operations
5	How useful would you find the following external support? (1 to 5)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Online resources for organizational development in Mongolian language 2. One on one consultancy on chosen topics 3. Tailored group training on requested topics 4. Networking events for the NGO community 5. Others (please specify)
6	On average, how much time would your staff be able to dedicate to a capacity development program over a period of 1 year?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Approximately 1-5 hours a week 2. Approximately 10-15 hours a month 3. Less 4. Other (specify)
7	How would you rate your organisation's ability to provide capacity building to staff?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Excellent, staff receive all capacity building trainings required for successful operations 2. Good, staff receive most capacity building trainings required for successful operations 3. Average, staff receive some capacity building trainings required for successful operations 4. Poor, staff receive very little capacity building 5. Very poor, staff don't receive any capacity building
8	Did your organization have to reduce or increase the number of full-time employees as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Reduce significantly (50% and more) 2. Reduce slightly (10-50%) 3. Remain more or less the same 4. Increase slightly (10-50%) 5. Increase greatly (50% and more)
9	Have you observed changes to the amount of available funding/number of funding opportunities as a result of COVID-19?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Reduce significantly 2. Reduce slightly 3. Remain more or less the same 4. Increase slightly 5. Increase greatly

PART 3. COOPERATION AND RESOURCE MOBILIZATION

#	Question	Answer
1	What type of organizations usually fund your organization's activities? (select all that apply)	1. Mongolian government agencies 2. International organizations (ADB, JICA, UN, World Bank, etc.) 3. Foreign governmental organizations (US government, Canada fund, Swiss development agency, Embassies etc.) 4. Private sector 5. Individual donors 6. Other (specify)
2	Select up to 3 international donors that you mostly receive funding from. (if selected 2 and 3 in the previous question)	1. UN agencies (UNDP, UNICEF, FAO, etc.) 2. World Bank 3. European Commission or other EU-affiliated agencies 4. Canada Fund or other agencies affiliated with the Canadian government 5. US government agencies (embassy, USAID, etc.) 6. Australian government agencies 7. Korean government agencies (KOICA, etc.) 8. Japanese government agencies (JICA, etc.) 9. Swiss government agencies (SDC, etc.) 10. German government agencies (GIZ, etc.) 11. Other international donors (specify)
3	What amount of funding have you received from your top funder in the last 2 years?	1. Above 1.5 billion MNT 2. 350 million to 1.5 billion MNT 3. 150-350 million MNT 4. 30-150 million MNT 5. Below than 30 million MNT
4	Does your organization regularly collaborate with donors, other NGOs, the private sector, academia, and other stakeholders relevant to your activities?	1. Yes 2. Sometimes (specify the reason) 3. No (specify the reason)
5	Is your organization able to raise funds/strengthen its influence in local development from these partnerships?	1. Yes 2. Sometimes (specify the reason) 3. No (specify the reason)
6	How many project proposals did your organization submit to donor organizations in the last year?	
7	How many of your submitted project proposals successfully secured financing (or received a grant) last year?	
8	What difficulties does your organization face when raising funds from international donor organizations? (rank top 3-5)	1. Insufficient information about available funding opportunities in Mongolia 2. Language barrier preventing a successful project proposal development 3. Insufficient human resources to develop a successful project proposal 4. Lack of knowledge and technical expertise to develop a project proposal 5. Lack of experience, human and financial resources for project monitoring and evaluation (develop indicators, monitor progress against indicators, etc.) 6. No issues 7. Other (specify)
9	Have you observed changes to the amount of available funding/number of funding opportunities as a result of COVID-19?	1. Financial requirements (reporting, auditing, etc.) 2. Proving the existence of internal policies (Code of Conduct, safeguarding, etc.) 3. Proving the existence of monitoring and evaluation systems in the organization 4. Project design and writing of proposals 5. Understanding donor requirements and steps how to meet them 6. Visibility, communication & PR (website development, social media content, feedback channel, etc.) 7. Employee's technical expertise/ hard skills (e.g., knowledge of renewable energy, media literacy, etc.)

10	What are some of the biggest challenges in working with international donors, INGOs (as a 'donor'/partner), etc?	1. Meeting deadlines set by donors 2. Language barrier (English/Mongolian) 3. Lack of trust between donors and CSOs 4. Communication challenges related to implementation to donors/INGOs 5. Other (specify) 6. No challenges
11	Can you rank these donor organizations operating in Mongolia by how easy/difficult they are to access in terms of funding, from your organization's perspective? (1-most accessible, 5-least accessible)	
12	Please share the most common difficulties in obtaining funding.	

PART 4. PERCEPTION OF CSO/NGOs ON CURRENT SITUATION OF CIVIC SPACE IN MONGOLIA

1	On a scale of 1 to 5, can you rate how strongly these values are upheld in Mongolian civic space? (1 – very poorly upheld; 5 – strongly upheld)	<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <thead> <tr> <th style="text-align: center;">Values</th> <th style="text-align: center;">Rating</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Independence of civil society actors on political pressures</td> <td style="text-align: center;">1 2 3 4 5</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Freedom of speech</td> <td style="text-align: center;">1 2 3 4 5</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Democratic approach</td> <td style="text-align: center;">1 2 3 4 5</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Inclusion of youth</td> <td style="text-align: center;">1 2 3 4 5</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Inclusion of marginalized communities</td> <td style="text-align: center;">1 2 3 4 5</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Open dialogue between CSOs and other stakeholders</td> <td style="text-align: center;">1 2 3 4 5</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Others (specify)</td> <td style="text-align: center;">1 2 3 4 5</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Values	Rating	Independence of civil society actors on political pressures	1 2 3 4 5	Freedom of speech	1 2 3 4 5	Democratic approach	1 2 3 4 5	Inclusion of youth	1 2 3 4 5	Inclusion of marginalized communities	1 2 3 4 5	Open dialogue between CSOs and other stakeholders	1 2 3 4 5	Others (specify)	1 2 3 4 5
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Others (specify)	1 2 3 4 5																	
2	What do you think is CSOs' duty towards local civil society partners and youth in Mongolia?																	
3	With your current resources, rate your current ability to fulfill your organisation's stated goals to support civil society in Mongolia on a scale of 1 to 5. (1 - "My organization has low capacities to meet the stated commitments" 5 - "My organization is fully capable to meet the stated commitments")	<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <thead> <tr> <th style="text-align: center;">Resources</th> <th style="text-align: center;">Rating</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Human resources</td> <td style="text-align: center;">1 2 3 4 5</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Financial resource</td> <td style="text-align: center;">1 2 3 4 5</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Knowledge resource</td> <td style="text-align: center;">1 2 3 4 5</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Resources	Rating	Human resources	1 2 3 4 5	Financial resource	1 2 3 4 5	Knowledge resource	1 2 3 4 5								
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4	How would you rate the following qualities of civic space in Mongolia on a scale of 1 to 5? (1 – very poor; 5 – excellent)	<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <thead> <tr> <th style="text-align: center;">Qualities</th> <th style="text-align: center;">Rating</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Governmental support to CSOs</td> <td style="text-align: center;">1 2 3 4 5</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Legal environment for CSOs</td> <td style="text-align: center;">1 2 3 4 5</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Dialogue with CSOs and space for CSOs to voice their opinions on the policy and advocacy level</td> <td style="text-align: center;">1 2 3 4 5</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Abilities of CSOs to compete for international funding</td> <td style="text-align: center;">1 2 3 4 5</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Access to credible information</td> <td style="text-align: center;">1 2 3 4 5</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Access to credible information</td> <td style="text-align: center;">1 2 3 4 5</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Qualities	Rating	Governmental support to CSOs	1 2 3 4 5	Legal environment for CSOs	1 2 3 4 5	Dialogue with CSOs and space for CSOs to voice their opinions on the policy and advocacy level	1 2 3 4 5	Abilities of CSOs to compete for international funding	1 2 3 4 5	Access to credible information	1 2 3 4 5	Access to credible information	1 2 3 4 5		
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5	In one sentence, how would you describe a successful CSO?																	
6	What do you think CSOs in Mongolia need in order to strengthen their role in the local development?																	

PART 5. DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION

1	<p>How would you rate your organization's ability on the following qualities on a scale of 1 to 5?</p> <p>(1 – very poor; 5 – excellent)</p>	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th align="center" colspan="2">Qualities</th> <th align="center" colspan="5">Rating</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Digital security</td> <td align="center">1</td> <td align="center">2</td> <td align="center">3</td> <td align="center">4</td> <td align="center">5</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Data protection</td> <td align="center">1</td> <td align="center">2</td> <td align="center">3</td> <td align="center">4</td> <td align="center">5</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Disinformation/misinformation</td> <td align="center">1</td> <td align="center">2</td> <td align="center">3</td> <td align="center">4</td> <td align="center">5</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Communication security (preventing unauthorized access to internal or external communication, such as emails, shared online spaces, etc.)</td> <td align="center">1</td> <td align="center">2</td> <td align="center">3</td> <td align="center">4</td> <td align="center">5</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Qualities		Rating					Digital security	1	2	3	4	5	Data protection	1	2	3	4	5	Disinformation/misinformation	1	2	3	4	5	Communication security (preventing unauthorized access to internal or external communication, such as emails, shared online spaces, etc.)	1	2	3	4	5
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Communication security (preventing unauthorized access to internal or external communication, such as emails, shared online spaces, etc.)	1	2	3	4	5																												
2	<p>Is digital transformation part of your organisations's strategy?</p>	<p>1. Yes, it is in the strategy, and there is staff responsible for implementation of digital transformation of my organization</p> <p>2. Yes, it is in the strategy, but there is no staff responsible for implementing digital transformation</p> <p>3. No, my organization does not foresee any significant changes in the future in terms of digital transformation</p>																															
3	<p>Are there any digital transformation initiatives in your organization going on at the moment?</p>	<p>1. Yes, ongoing or in the past</p> <p>2. Yes, planned for the future</p> <p>3. No</p>																															
4	<p>At the moment, does your organization provide any capacity building to the staff or implement any initiatives to support learning in digitalization of processes in your organisation?</p>	<p>1. Yes, more than once a month</p> <p>2. Once a month</p> <p>3. Less than one a month</p> <p>4. No trainings, and no ongoing initiatives</p>																															
5	<p>How would you rate your organisation's digital and media competencies in the following areas? (Excellent to very poor)</p>	<p>1. Information and data literacy</p> <p>2. Communication through digital technologies (sharing, engaging with citizens through digital technologies)</p> <p>3. Digital content (developing content, copyright and licenses)</p> <p>4. Safety (protecting devices, personal data and privacy, etc.)</p>																															
6	<p>What are the main barriers to your organization implementing digital transformation?</p> <p>(Select all that apply)</p>	<p>1. Lack of knowledge about ICT</p> <p>2. Regulatory barriers</p> <p>3. Insufficient budget & resources</p> <p>4. Hesitance of staff to accept new technologies</p> <p>5. Inadequate training</p> <p>6. Lack of digital strategy and vision</p> <p>7. Lack of senior support to lead the digital transformation</p> <p>8. Other (specify)</p>																															
7	<p>Does your organisation use websites or other online resources to access information about new policies, bills, or other updates on decision making processes going on locally or nationally?</p>	<p>1. Yes, both locally and nationally</p> <p>2. Yes, locally, not nationally</p> <p>3. Yes, nationally, not locally</p> <p>4. None</p>																															
8	<p>Are you aware of any government website(s) or platforms through which your CSO would be able to participate in decision making locally or nationally?</p>	<p>1. Yes, both locally and nationally</p> <p>2. Yes, locally, not nationally</p> <p>3. Yes, nationally, not locally</p> <p>4. None</p>																															

PART 6. Cooperation with local governmental agencies

1	Has your organisation received funding or have you been in a partnership with any Mongolian government agency?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Yes, received funding (please specify) 2. Yes, in partnership, but not received funding (please specify) 3. No 																														
2	If yes, how would you rate the quality of your collaboration/relationship with government agencies?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Very poor 2. Poor 3. Average 4. Good 5. Excellent 																														
3	Ideally, what channels would your organization like to use to interact with Mongolian government agencies? (rank top 3-5)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Contact through official website or e-platform 2. Networking through other NGOs 3. Informal contacts with government agencies 4. Official ad hoc meetings with government agencies 5. Attend existing meetings with government agencies 6. I don't know 7. Other, please specify 																														
4	How would you rate the ability of NGOs to influence decisions related to the communities or target populations they serve for?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Very poor 2. Poor 3. Average 4. Good 5. Excellent 																														
5	Does your organization participate in any of the following ways to influence policy making related to your community? (Select all that apply)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Network with other organizations 2. Participation in meetings with policymakers 3. Comment on draft policy documents 4. Publication of policy documents 5. Publish articles in online media (website, social media) 6. Insider lobbying 7. Work on projects with policymakers 8. Others – specify 9. None 																														
6	Do you agree that projects and services provided by your local governmental agency in the geographical area of your NGO's operations are aligned with what the community in your target area needs the most?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Strongly agree 2. Agree 3. Neutral 4. Disagree 5. Strongly disagree 																														
7	How would you rate the following areas in terms of the ease of engaging with Mongolian government agencies on a scale of 1 to 5? (1 – very poor; 5 – excellent)	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th align="center">Areas</th> <th align="center">Rating</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Transparency of govt public funds and govt funding opportunities</td> <td align="center"> <table border="1"> <tr> <td>1</td><td>2</td><td>3</td><td>4</td><td>5</td> </tr> </table> </td> </tr> <tr> <td>Ease of administration/ administrative bureaucracy related to obtaining funding</td> <td align="center"> <table border="1"> <tr> <td>1</td><td>2</td><td>3</td><td>4</td><td>5</td> </tr> </table> </td> </tr> <tr> <td>Trust between NGOs and govt agencies</td> <td align="center"> <table border="1"> <tr> <td>1</td><td>2</td><td>3</td><td>4</td><td>5</td> </tr> </table> </td> </tr> <tr> <td>Access to information about local agenda, policies in draft by the govt agencies, and discussions about local development</td> <td align="center"> <table border="1"> <tr> <td>1</td><td>2</td><td>3</td><td>4</td><td>5</td> </tr> </table> </td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Areas	Rating	Transparency of govt public funds and govt funding opportunities	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>1</td><td>2</td><td>3</td><td>4</td><td>5</td> </tr> </table>	1	2	3	4	5	Ease of administration/ administrative bureaucracy related to obtaining funding	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>1</td><td>2</td><td>3</td><td>4</td><td>5</td> </tr> </table>	1	2	3	4	5	Trust between NGOs and govt agencies	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>1</td><td>2</td><td>3</td><td>4</td><td>5</td> </tr> </table>	1	2	3	4	5	Access to information about local agenda, policies in draft by the govt agencies, and discussions about local development	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>1</td><td>2</td><td>3</td><td>4</td><td>5</td> </tr> </table>	1	2	3	4	5
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8	Please suggest ways how local government agencies could engage more effectively with CSOs and civil society																															

II. KII for CSOs:

Introduction: Hello, this survey is being conducted by People in Need NGO Mongolia. Recognizing the unique value civil society organizations bring into local development, this survey aims to identify the challenges and capacity gaps CSOs in Mongolia face. Findings from the study may inform future planning for supporting capacity development for CSOs in Mongolia. The survey takes an average of 25 minutes to complete.

Confidentiality: The information you provide will be kept confidential in accordance with the "Law on statistics" and "Law on the protection of personal information" of Mongolia. The results of the study will not be used for purposes other than the purpose of this study.

If you have any questions related to the survey or questionnaire, you can contact our organization by phone at 70111501 (line #2).

Target locations: UB, Umnugobi and Bayan-Ulgii (TBC)

CSOs to interview: Faro, LGBT Centre, Nest Center + ?

General information:

1	Where is your organization's main office based?	1. Ulaanbaatar city 2. Province (specify)
2	Where does your organization primarily implement its activities?	1. Ulaanbaatar city 2. Province (specify)
3	Areas of organization's activities (select all that apply)	1. Community development 2. Health 3. Education 4. Youth development 5. Environment and sustainable development 6. Agriculture and rural development 7. Food and nutrition 8. Governance and rule of law 9. Human rights 10. Gender equality, Gender-based violence, and Women's rights 11. Humanitarian assistance 12. Journalism, Media 13. Art/Culture 14. Other (specify)
4	Who/which groups does your organization target in the majority of your projects/activities? (select all that apply)	1. Children 2. Youth/ young adults (aged 15-29) 3. Child rights/family welfare 4. Girls and women 5. People with disabilities 6. LGBTQ+ 7. Ethnic minorities 8. People from rural areas 9. Migrants 10. Mental health 11. Culture and development 12. Communities at large 13. Other (specify)

*Definition of 'digital threats': data protection, digital security, disinformation/misinformation, communication security (preventing unauthorized access to internal or external communication, such as emails, shared online spaces, etc.)

PART 1. Media & literacy skills		
1	How do you think the community your NGO represent benefits from digital technologies (access to social media, artificial intelligence, etc.)?	
1.1	What are the negatives?	
1.2	What resources/skills does your NGO need to address these negatives? What are the barriers to addressing these negatives?	
2	Does the community your NGO represent have the ability and tools to effectively participate in digital transformation?	
2.1	If not, what are the barriers?	
3	Are you aware of any digital threats* your organisation/community you represent may be facing now or in the future? If yes, what kind/types of digital threats?	
3.1	If yes, how does it affect your organization?	
3.2	What would improve your organisation's ability to protect from digital threats?	
4	Are you aware of any NGO- or government-led initiative, activity, networks, or project supporting digital and media literacy, or digital threats?	
4.1	If yes, what projects? Did you or someone you know participate?	
4.2	If yes, was it useful?	
4.3	If you know such projects, but didn't participate, why did you not participate?	
4.4	Are any of such projects/networks focused on marginalized groups (elderly, women, disabled people, people living in remote areas, etc.) and digitalization?	
5	Are you aware of any NGO- or government-led initiative, activity, network or project supporting awareness of digital threats?	
5.1	If yes, what projects? Did you or someone you know participate?	
5.2	If yes, was it useful?	
5.3	If you know such projects, but didn't participate, why did you not participate?	
5.4	Are any of such projects focused on marginalized groups (elderly, women, disabled people, people living in remote areas, etc.)?	
6	Would your NGO be interested in trainings for improving digital skills and ability to protect your organization from digital threats?	
6.1	If not, why?	
6.2	If yes, what topics related to digital threats/digital & media literacy would you be interested in?	
7	What is the ability of marginalized communities (rural, elderly, people with disabilities, refugees, LGBT etc.) to participate in digital transformation?	
7.1	What are the barriers and how can they be removed?	

PART 2. Participation of CSOs in decision-making		
1	What communication channels (online and offline) does your NGO or community you represent use to influence policy making for stronger policies and legislation in digitalization (cyberbullying, fake news, cybersecurity)/communicate any issues?	
1.1	In general, are these issues being followed up by the government?	
2	What can be done to improve communication/exchange between CSOs, citizens, and the government authorities?	
3	Is your NGO/community you represent aware of Mongolian e-participatory platforms, such as e-Mongolia, e-tanhim, or https://11-11.mn/ ? If yes, do you actively use it?	
3.1	What are the barriers for NGOs and citizens to use these platforms for participation in decision-making?	
3.2	What can be done to improve access to and usage of these platforms?	
4	Right now, would staff in your organization feel confident and equipped with advocacy skills and networks to advocate for stronger and more inclusive policies in digitalization?	
4.1	If not, why and what are the barriers?	
4.2	If not, what would help you in order to do so?	
4.3	Network, working group for digitalization laws? Would they be interested to work with us?	

III. Key Questions for Government Official Interviews

Policy Dialogue and CSO Engagement

- 01) What opportunities do CSOs and citizens have to engage in policy dialogue (both providing insight into the development of policy/legislation/budgeting and oversight/feedback)?
- 02) Do many CSOs/citizens take advantage of the opportunity to participate? If not, what do you think the barriers are?
- 03) What do you think can be done to overcome these barriers to CSO/citizen engagement?
- 04) In addition to policy dialogue, what other opportunities/mechanisms are there for CSOs/citizens to engage with government officials?
- 05) Are you aware of any programs planned that will support greater engagement of CSOs/citizens in policy development/monitoring/decision making?
- 06) What type of support is needed to ensure CSOs and citizens are able to most effectively exercise their right to participate in Mongolia's democratic processes?

Decentralization

- 07) With government decentralization plans, how is it envisaged that CSOs and citizens can have a role in policy development at the sub-national level?
- 08) As part of the decentralization process, are there plans to build skills of sub-national government officials to more effectively engage with CSOs/citizens in policy dialogue/monitoring processes?
- 09) If yes, what type of programs? What will be included?
- 10) If not, what types of programs do you think should be developed?
- 11) How far will the upcoming election impact the decentralization process of Mongolia? To what extent do they think it will provide new opportunities for subnational governments, civil society, and the media to deepen the partnership for more inclusive development?

E-Democracy/Digital Democracy

- 12) What digital opportunities are there for citizens to use 'e-democracy/digital democracy' tools?
- 13) Are there tools for citizens to access public data?
- 14) Are there tools for citizens to provide feedback on government processes/services/decisions?
- 15) Are the tools available used widely?
- 16) If not, what are the barriers? Why do you think citizens don't use the tools?
- 17) What are some of the e-democracy opportunities used the most in Mongolia?
- 18) Have there been widespread communication/awareness raising/education campaigns to introduce the tools to CSOs/citizens? If yes, do you think they have worked? If not, why not?
- 19) What are the main barriers for CSOs/citizens to use various e-democracy tools?

IV. Key Research Questions for CSOs

CSOs in National-level Policy Dialogue/Monitoring/Oversight

- Are the activities of CSOs at the national level primarily policy development or monitoring/oversight? Or both? Why is this the case?
- What projects/support has been given to support CSO engagement in policy dialogue to date? What have been key lessons learned and recommendations from these efforts?
- What are the main entry points for CSO policy engagement at the national level?
- What are the barriers to CSO policy engagement at the national level? Skills? Financial Resources? Lack of capable/willing government counterpart? Lack of trust in the process?

CSOs in Local-level (SNG) Policy Dialogue/Monitoring/Oversight

- What are the opportunities for CSOs to engage at this level? What are the barriers? Are there actors working to overcome these barriers?
- Is there a difference for CSOs in UB and outside of UB? Meaning, are the barriers/opportunities to influence on this level different or the same for UB vs outside UB CSOs?
- What projects/support has been given to support CSO engagement in policy dialogue at the local level to date? What have been key lessons learned and recommendations from these efforts?
- What are the main entry points for CSO policy engagement at the local level?
- What are the barriers to CSO policy engagement at the local level? Skills? Financial Resources? Lack of capable/willing government counterpart? Lack of trust in the process?

Use of E-Participation and E-Democracy Tools – Barriers and Opportunities

- What are the main tools available? Are they tools for transparency purposes like Open Budgeting, procurement information, etc? Or are there e-participation tools? Allowing citizens to voice their opinions e-petitions, etc?
- For the tools available, are they accessible? Are they geared towards tech-savvy individuals/target groups?
- What are the barriers to access?
- Is there a close and clear link of e-participation processes to a concrete formal decision-making process? If not, why and how can this be improved?
- Are existing e-participation tools accompanied by an effective mobilization and engagement strategy, involving communication instruments tailored for different target groups?
- What projects/support has been given to support e-democracy/e-participation aimed at citizens and CSOs to date? What have been key lessons learned and recommendations from these efforts?

What role can CSOs play in supporting e-democracy in Mongolia? What types of projects are needed to have more widespread use of e-democracy tools by CSOs and their constituents?

V. Focus-Group Discussion on Cooperation between CSOs and Public Authorities

#	Question	Answer
1	Within your sector (thematic focus), where are specific areas different CSOs cooperate?	
2	Do you see other concrete areas where CSOs can cooperate but don't currently now?	
3	Are there mechanisms in your sector now to cooperate such as networks, and policy/advocacy platforms in order to engage more effectively in policy dialogue?	
4	If the mechanisms to engage with the government exist, what further support is needed to support CSOs in these efforts?	
5	What role do you see different digital tools having in the policy dialogue process and more open democratic governance? Tools such as e-participation, online petitions, etc.	
6	What is needed to make these tools accessible and ensure they are being used effectively to hold the government to account?	
7	We will present the findings of our research to key donors/international stakeholders and relevant government bodies. Do you have any key messages that you would like to have us convey via our research findings in relation to improving access/opportunities for CSOs to engage in local and national policy dialogue and monitoring?	

