

# 2020 Civil Society Organization Sustainability Index – Asia

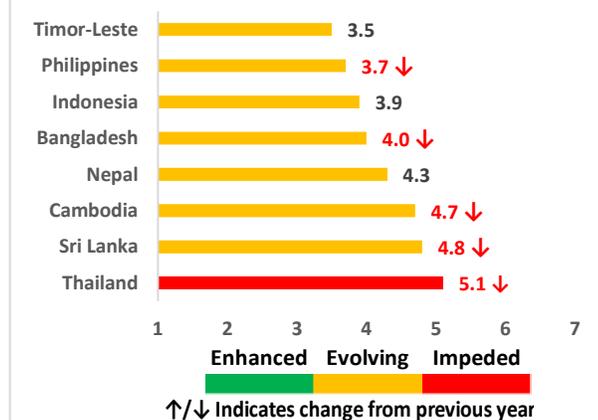
**Overview** The 2020 Civil Society Organization Sustainability Index (CSOSI) for Asia reports on the strength and overall viability of the CSO sectors in Bangladesh, Cambodia, Indonesia, Nepal, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Thailand, and Timor-Leste. It addresses both advances and setbacks in seven key components or “dimensions” of the sustainability of civil society sectors: legal environment, organizational capacity, financial viability, advocacy, service provision, sectoral infrastructure, and public image. The CSOSI is intended to be a useful source of information for local CSOs, governments, donors, academics, and others who want to better understand and monitor key aspects of sustainability in the CSO sector.

The CSOSI provides a comprehensive assessment of the capacity of civil society to serve as both a short-term partner in implementing development solutions and a long-term actor in ensuring that development outcomes are sustained. The CSOSI empowers local civil society actors to collectively assess not only the environments in which they operate, but also their own capacities to advocate, operate sustainably, and communicate with citizens. Allowing local civil society to self-identify their development challenges is the first step in promoting resiliency and long-term self-reliance.

The CSOSI is produced by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) in partnership with FHI 360, the International Center for Not-for-Profit Law (ICNL), and a local implementing partner in each participating country. A total of 73 countries across the globe were surveyed in various regional editions of the CSOSI in 2020.



## 2020 OVERALL CSO SUSTAINABILITY



**Results** Civil society in Asia was challenged in 2020 by the COVID-19 pandemic, with nearly half of all dimension-level scores in the region registering deteriorations in 2020. As the country reports for this year’s Index show, three primary trends affected CSO sectors across the region during 2020.

Government actions to curb the spread of the virus often were used as repressive tools to silence critics, adding to the already concerning trends described above. At the same time, the economic impact of COVID-19 took a heavy toll on the financial viability of the CSO sector, inevitably impacting organizational capacity as well. In the midst of these and myriad other obstacles — including restrictions on travel and social gatherings — CSOs struggled to meet the needs of their constituents but largely proved their resilience, adaptability, and vital role in society. Five countries — Bangladesh,

Cambodia, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, and Thailand — reported declines in their overall scores, while overall scores in Indonesia, Nepal, and Timor-Leste were unchanged. Thailand continues to be the most difficult environment for CSOs in the region. In 2020, its overall CSO sustainability score was downgraded to Sustainability Impeded, the lowest category, and four out of seven dimensions in that country not only remain “impeded,” but in fact saw further declines. Sri Lanka was the only country to record declines in every dimension in 2020. In Cambodia, deteriorations in all dimensions except service provision and sectoral infrastructure reflected the impact of financial declines and closing civic space. The case was similar in Bangladesh, which registered declines in every dimension but organizational capacity. Nepal and Timor-Leste stand out in 2020 for having no score changes in any dimension. The sole positive change registered in the region in 2020 outside of Indonesia was in the public image dimension in the Philippines, which improved moderately.

**Resources** The 2020 CSOSI regional reports can be found at FHI 360’s [resource page](https://www.csosi.org). Explore historical CSOSI data at <https://www.csosi.org>.

