what is shrinking civic space?

a global pattern of repression against independent civil society & people's organisations
Why do states curtail civic space?

Independent civil society organisations act as agents of change that challenge unequal or unjust social structures, and this threatens the elitist political and economic interests of those in power. **Thus, the need to:**

- Restrict the people’s participation in areas of public concern
- Reward their allies who hold a stake in silencing critical voices
- Protect corporate interests
- Quash dissent
- Limit and depoliticise civil society’s advocacy work
- Delegitimise independent civil society
targets of... shrinking civic space

- rights defenders
- community-based organisations
- civil society organisations
- research institutions
- faith-based groups

that work for

- land rights
- environmental protection
- gender equality
- humanitarian response
- indigenous peoples’ rights
- alternative journalism
- transparency and accountability
- reforms in health, education, and housing services
forms of attacks

legal & judicial actions
restrict public participation and day-to-day operations

defamation & vilification
portray rightful resistance as unpatriotic, terroristic, or anti-development

subtle repression
like red tape, close monitoring, and administrative burdens hinder organizations from securing legal registration, joining networks and coalitions, obtaining funding from donors, and operating where they are needed the most

actual violations
of rights to life, liberty, expression, and association
The shrinking of civic spaces is a threat to human rights, and runs counter to the notion of a democratic society.

Civic spaces in a democracy are sites of engagement and struggle where civil society organisations and rights advocates and community members can organise to play their role of contributing to development by articulating their positions, demanding and promoting accountability, and voicing their dissent whenever necessary.
What are the rights & freedoms being put in peril?

Free expression
Association
Peaceful assembly
Participation in public affairs

Where these are under threat, people cannot effectively fight for their civil, cultural, economic, political, and social rights.
What is the relationship between development and shrinking civic space?

Real and transformative progress will not be possible without a fully engaged civil society and population.
CPDE rallies its membership, collaborates with other CSO networks, and calls on all development actors to heed the Belgrade Call to Action adopted in April 2019 at the Civil Society Summit held in partnership with the Balkan Civil Society Development Network, Action for Sustainable Development, and Civic Initiatives.

The document calls on UN Member States to stop the attacks against development workers and human rights defenders, and fulfil the sustainable development goals.

[View our call](bit.ly/CPDEBelgradeCall)
What actions have CPDE taken in relation to shrinking civic space

CPDE is also supporting National Campaigns against Shrinking Civic Spaces 2020 in the following countries:

- Armenia
- Malawi
- Gabon
- Mexico
- Jordan
- Nepal
- Kyrgyzstan
- Nigeria
- Lebanon
- Philippines

The campaign aims to:

- **monitor** the status of implementing the international commitments to provide a CSO enabling environment;
- **increase awareness** of different citizen groups on the need to reverse this trend; and
- **raise concerns** to relevant national agencies for addressing gaps in EDC implementation.
To take concrete steps to protect and enable space for civil society, including enabling laws and regulations, democratic accountability based on human rights norms and human rights standards, and the full protection of civil society under attack – such as social leaders, human rights defenders and gender equality activists.

To embed inclusion and meaningful accountability to people in development practices. To implement and respect democratic country ownership of national development plans and implement transparency and accountability for inclusive SDG delivery. To lead by example with concerted action to challenge major human rights violations, including deteriorating conditions facing peoples’ organizations, trade unions, women’s rights organizations, indigenous peoples, and community-based environmentalists, among many others. To recognise the importance of the interconnected themes in achieving Agenda 2030 – civil society voice, eradicating poverty, women’s empowerment, fighting inequality, decent work, climate action, and environmental justice.