

Country Focus Report

México

July 2025

Introduction to the Enabling Environment

What we understand by an Enabling Environment is the combination of laws, rules and social attitudes that support and promote the work of civil society. Within such an environment, civil society can engage in political and public life without fear of reprisals, openly express its views, and actively participate in shaping its context. This includes a supportive legal and regulatory framework for civil society, ensuring access to information and resources that are sustainable and flexible to pursue their goals unhindered, in safe physical and digital spaces. In an enabling environment, the state demonstrates openness and responsiveness in governance, promoting transparency, accountability, and inclusive decision-making. Positive values, norms, attitudes, and practices towards civil society from state and non-state actors further underscore the supportive environment.

To capture the state of the Enabling Environment, we use the following six principles:

Six key enabling principles:

1. Respect and protection of fundamental freedoms
2. Supportive legal and regulatory framework
3. Accessible and sustainable resources
4. Open and responsive State
5. Supportive public culture and discourses on civil society
6. Access to a secure digital environment

In this Country Focus Report, each enabling principle is assessed with a quantitative score and complemented by an analysis and recommendations written by our Network Members. Rather than offering a singular index to rank countries, the report aims to measure the enabling environment for civil society across the six principles, discerning dimensions of strength and those requiring attention.

The findings presented in this report are grounded in the insights and diverse perspectives of civil society actors who came together in a dedicated panel with representatives from civil society to discuss and evaluate the state of the Enabling Environment. Their collective input enriches the report with a grounded, participatory assessment. This primary input is further supported by secondary sources of information, which provide additional context and strengthen the analysis.

A) Introduction

This document offers an analysis of the enabling environment for civil society in Mexico, built from four main sources: events reported through the Consortium's Early Warning Mechanism platform; the quarterly diagnostics prepared by Cemefi in the Snapshots; various publications by organisations and media outlets; and the time contributed by experts, through their reflections in the panel meeting held on 30 April 2025, as well as their subsequent feedback on this report. These sources are complemented by events monitored during the first half of July 2025. Taken together, this effort seeks to provide a collective perspective on the current state of the enabling environment in Mexico.

While all the principles analysed in this document show varying degrees of erosion—including the weakening of fundamental civic freedoms, barriers to accessing resources, increased surveillance and censorship in digital spaces, and the government's ongoing delegitimisation of civil society's role—Principle 4, “An open and responsive state”, stands out for the most

significant changes observed during the past semester. Within this component, patterns of institutional transformation, the concentration of functions, and the closing of participatory mechanisms within government have been identified, leading to the construction of a new institutional model that redefines the conditions of openness and collaboration between the state and civil society.

This analysis is situated within a national, regional, and international context that has triggered serious concerns. Bodies such as the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) have expressed alarm over the contraction of fundamental freedoms and institutional weakening in the country. These warnings underscore the importance of maintaining consistent and well-documented monitoring.

Far from being only a record of setbacks, this document seeks to establish a baseline to guide observation over the next six years. It represents an opportunity to collectively review the state of the enabling environment, identify critical areas, anticipate events that may strengthen or weaken it, and activate concrete responses to these developments.

B) Assessment of the Enabling Environment

Principle 1: Respect and Protection of Fundamental Civic Freedoms

Score: 2.6 ¹

Mexico's legal framework, together with the recommendations of the [OHCHR](#), recognises fundamental rights such as freedom of association, participation, freedom of expression, and peaceful assembly. Nevertheless, the state of these rights in the country is considered “repressive”, reflecting a hostile environment for their exercise. This is evidenced by the 2.6 score assigned by the [CIVICUS Monitor](#) for 2024, which highlights the challenges faced in the exercise of these freedoms. Given recent developments over the past six months and the discussion among experts, it is considered that this rating may be even lower for 2025.

Under these circumstances, several obstacles hinder the right to association, ranging from fiscal and administrative restrictions to the dismantling and closure of governmental institutions—primarily at the federal level—that previously provided spaces for dialogue between government and civil society. Furthermore, in a context marked by different forms of violence and the presence of organised crime, the exercise of peaceful assembly and protest has become increasingly difficult for those demanding justice and accountability.

One of the most critical factors affecting the enabling environment for civil society in Mexico is the presence and expansion of organised crime, particularly in regions where [state territorial control](#) has eroded. Organisations engaged in the search for disappeared persons, the defence of land and territory, independent journalism, or the promotion of human rights face constant threats. Moreover, there is growing evidence of democratic erosion through the capture of public power by organised crime, especially via its [interference in electoral processes](#). These risks are neither isolated nor recent; rather, they are part of a structural dynamic where violence, impunity, and institutional co-optation by these actors impose real and significant limits.

Freedom of expression is exercised under high-risk conditions, primarily due to the high levels of violence against journalists, which make the country one of the [most dangerous](#) in the world for practising this profession. The stigmatisation and censorship promoted through

¹ This is a recalculated score based on the CIVICUS Monitor rating published in December 2024. The country is classified as Repressive in the Monitor, with a score of 40/100, which has been converted to align with our 1-to-5 scale.

government discourse have led to attacks on the press ranging from [judicial harassment](#) to assassination. The existence of [coercive laws](#) in some states has also been used to discredit and persecute those who criticise, investigate or expose acts of corruption or failures in government performance.

An important element of journalism in Mexico highlighted during the panel was the [gender dimension](#). Attacks against women journalists are not only related to their professional work, but are also compounded by the fact that they carry it out as women, thereby increasing the risks they face.

[Environmental activists](#), [searching mothers](#), [Indigenous peoples](#), and [human rights defenders](#) also face frequent threats such as criminalisation, harassment, revictimisation, and enforced disappearance. Despite the documentation efforts of civil society organisations, the majority of these cases remain unresolved or in impunity. Many of these incidents occur even when precautionary measures, such as those provided through the Protection Mechanism for Human Rights Defenders and Journalists, are in place—[underscoring its ineffectiveness](#).

During the panel discussion, it was noted that in the country's capital, openly repressive actions during citizen demonstrations are less frequent, largely due to the presence of organisations that document and accompany these events in the face of potential human rights violations. However, this situation cannot be generalised to the rest of the country: in several states, practices such as [excessive use of force](#), arbitrary detentions, and criminalisation through ambiguous legal provisions—such as “offences against authority”—continue to persist.

In a country where organised crime holds significant influence across different regions, mobilising to demand justice can represent a life-threatening risk. Such was the case of searching mothers [Teresa González](#) and [María del Carmen Morales](#), who were murdered in 2025. Both activists were part of collectives that were awaiting rulings on incidents that once again exposed the ongoing crisis of disappearances in Mexico. It should be noted that this case remains in impunity, despite the [activation](#) of precautionary measures by the UN Committee on Enforced Disappearances.

Protests and demonstrations have also taken on other forms, aimed at keeping memory alive in the pursuit of truth and justice. One such expression is the creation and installation of “[antimonuments](#)” in emblematic avenues and public squares across various cities, designed to bring visibility to historical events. These installations, however, have also been subject to attacks seeking to erase the memory of struggle and activism. Civil society collectives have warned that the government intends to remove these antimonuments in the lead-up to the 2026 FIFA World Cup to be hosted in Mexico.

Another factor that undermines freedom of association is the harassment reported by civil society organisations. For example, EQUIS Justicia para las Mujeres [denounced](#) the break-in and theft at its offices, where computer equipment and electronic devices containing sensitive and strategic information about its work were stolen. Similarly, the home of members of the Fray Bartolomé de Las Casas Human Rights Center (Frayba) was [raided](#), marking the second such incident in less than ten months. This highlights the risks faced in exercising the right to associate and operate freely, as well as in defending their causes.

Finally, there has been a noticeable increase in the emergence of social movements across much of the country, rooted in the defence of different rights—ranging from the fight against the [privatisation of water and land](#), protests against [indiscriminate mining](#), the [forced displacement of Indigenous peoples](#), and the repression of [community radio stations](#), to name just a few. This phenomenon demonstrates the existence of resistance movements and community organising that demand fundamental rights despite the difficulties they face.

This principle and its dimensions form the basis for the development and strengthening of civil society, ensuring not only its protection but also its ability to play multiple roles within a

democracy. When these freedoms are undermined, the impact extends to the rest of the enabling environment: unequal conditions are created for participating in public affairs, and the possibility of demanding accountability is limited. If the government discredits the value of civil society and fails to recognise its importance, it is unlikely to promote legal and fiscal reforms that respond to its real needs. This, in turn, hinders the development of innovative financing mechanisms and weakens the support ecosystem that organisations require to sustain their work.

Principle 2: Legal and Regulatory Framework

Score: 2.7

Civil society organisations (CSOs) in Mexico face a restrictive and shifting regulatory environment that limits their operational and financial freedom. From the moment of their formal establishment, they encounter legal, administrative, and economic obstacles such as high incorporation costs, the need for a certain level of administrative and legal expertise, and the exhaustive compliance with obligations before the authorities.

An example of this situation is the difficulty CSOs face in meeting the legal requirement to prove their activities. For instance, if an organisation engages in both educational and environmental activities, it must seek authorisation from two different official bodies, each responsible for certifying a specific type of activity. This applies to every field of action a CSO wishes to pursue. Such a framework indirectly conditions the right to association since, rather than a broad recognition of this right, a filtering process determines which causes are considered valid for receiving incentives. As a result, some organisations see their objectives and causes constrained within official [catalogues](#).

This environment not only hinders the legal constitution and the right of association of organisations but also conditions their [operational capacity](#): the more rigid the regulations, the less autonomy CSOs have to define and carry out their work.

These restrictions are further exacerbated for organisations located in rural areas, grassroots groups, or those defending land and territory, as they also face barriers imposed by local authorities. Such barriers include, for example, the lack of knowledge among public officials or notaries regarding their right to associate and to participate in public affairs.

Difficulties have also been identified for organisations authorised to issue tax-deductible receipts (*donatarias autorizadas*), which must contend with complex [tax legislation](#) that is subject to multiple modifications within the same year. This requires a high level of professionalisation in fiscal matters—something few CSOs are able to achieve—forcing them to hire specialised personnel capable of constantly monitoring official communication channels and correctly interpreting current regulations.

As a result, *donatarias autorizadas* face the greatest administrative burdens, including monthly and annual tax declarations, as well as the submission of additional reports to other oversight bodies such as the Financial Intelligence Unit (UIF). This unit operates within the international framework that considers the receipt of donations a [vulnerable activity](#), potentially linked to money laundering and terrorism financing. Consequently, CSOs are required to collect and report sensitive information about their donors. In collective discussions, this policy was noted to equate organisations with companies or financial institutions, creating a disproportionate impact on their administrative and operational capacities.

In response, more than 50 CSOs signed a [call](#) urging the government to review the current fiscal framework, particularly the reforms to the [Federal Law for the Prevention and Identification of Operations with Resources of Illicit Origin](#) (LFPIORPI), given the risk of increased administrative burdens that could hinder their operations. However, their demands were not taken into account, and on 1 July Congress [approved the reform](#) without establishing substantive dialogue with CSOs. Although the changes do not impose [new substantial obligations](#)—since mechanisms such as risk assessments or the monitoring of Politically

Exposed Persons (PEPs) were already in practice—the record of intensive oversight by the Financial Intelligence Unit (UIF) keeps the sector on alert. Of particular concern is the impact on organisations without specialised technical teams, which face difficulties in complying with complex legislation.

All legally constituted CSOs also bear [labour obligations](#). While standards such as [NOM-035](#) and [NOM-025](#) are intended to guarantee decent working conditions, they apply generally to all formal workplaces. For many CSOs, this represents a complex implementation challenge due to the lack of internal capacity in accounting, legal, or administrative areas—an especially acute problem for those lacking financial sustainability. As a result, they are often forced to assume high operational risks, which may translate into fines for non-compliance or the inability to hire the necessary staff.

In this context, reflections from the panel questioned the relevance and “benefits” of continuing to operate under legal forms such as Civil Associations (A.C.) or as authorised donees, given the obstacles mentioned, difficulties in opening [bank accounts](#), and the need to seek more functional forms of association. However, it was emphasised that the underlying problem is not the legal form itself, but the restrictive normative and political environment, which limits the full exercise of the right to associate and operate autonomously.

Although there is no official policy of forced dissolution, and legal mechanisms exist to challenge decisions such as the loss of authorised donee status, in practice specialised legal advice is required—access to which is limited for most organisations. Cases have arisen involving unclear grounds for the [cancellation of authorised donee status](#), and oral testimonies indicate that administrative restrictions are sometimes used as a form of pressure or punishment. While these incidents are not publicly documented, they reflect an instrumental use of the legal framework as a means of institutional harassment. In response, [specialised organisations](#) have sought to minimise these risks through training and dissemination of obligations acquired when establishing themselves as CSOs.

Finally, this situation is exacerbated by the lack of governmental willingness to work collaboratively toward improving the legal and operational environment. Although there have been statements and actions that make the sector’s regulatory needs visible through [media and social networks](#), effective solutions that promote reforms or protective frameworks have yet to be consolidated.

This principle concerning the legal and normative framework is fundamental, as it establishes the basis for exercising the freedom of association, promoting the right to participate in public affairs, and shaping how governmental regulatory provisions influence the efficient and sustainable use of resources that enable organisations to fully develop their activities.

Principle 3: Accessible and Sustainable Resources

Score: 2.0

The availability of information regarding the resources with which the various forms of civil society operate is limited, with the exception of those that are [legally constituted](#) (so-called authorised donees or Cluni), which are required to submit periodic reports on their financing. Through this periodic information, it has been possible to document how certain government regulations affect the efficiency in the use of resources by imposing restrictions or administrative burdens that hinder their effective use. This scenario is not the same for other associative forms that do not have mechanisms regulating their income and, consequently, no public information exists about them. Nevertheless, it is known that challenges related to operational financing are a concern shared among movements, collectives, grassroots groups, and institutionalised organisations.

From the available information, it can be observed that the government-provided incentives that existed for most CSOs [disappeared in 2019](#). These included capacity-building, training,

research, and documentation activities, as well as a co-investment programme that provided financing for projects carried out by organisations.

It is also evident that the conditions imposed by the fiscal frameworks—for authorised donees—hinder the flexible use of resources from sources other than donations, such as self-generated income, which is subject to fiscal limits capped at 10%, with the warning that if this amount is exceeded, the excess will be subject to income tax. Furthermore, if more than 50% of income comes from sources other than the authorised social purpose, the donee will lose its authorisation to receive tax-deductible donations.

In addition to the above, there is a [5% cap on donations](#) that may be used for administrative expenses. This rigidity affects the ability to strengthen work teams, ensure dignified labour conditions, or invest in internal processes such as evaluation, learning, and innovation.

Regarding the efficiency in the use of resources, many CSOs are forced to develop specific projects to [comply](#) with the guidelines established by donors, which reduces the possibility of managing resources to fulfill their own objectives. These guidelines include requirements such as being an authorised donee, having a certain level of organisational strengthening, and adopting specific planning and results models; this represents a difficulty for small organisations, those operating in rural or peripheral territories, or those that have opted for [less traditional organisational forms](#).

Another important factor affecting resource efficiency is the administrative and operational capacity that an organisation must have to adapt to and apply for multiple calls for proposals, which are sometimes closed or by invitation only. Overall, this process requires additional effort to find specialised personnel in fundraising, whose costs are borne by the organisations.

In general, the financial sustainability of the sector remains precarious due to the [high dependence](#)² on donations and the near-total absence of [public resources](#) since 2019. This is compounded by an incipient culture of individual giving to organisations, characterised by its irregularity and high administrative costs. While national private donations have shown an apparent nominal increase of 25% between 2019 and 2023, when adjusted for inflation they actually reflect a decrease of 3% over the same period.

Related to this, it is also observed that funding cycles from donor foundations generally respond to specific projects with predetermined timelines, which prevents CSOs from engaging in long-term planning that would allow for stable labour conditions and contribute to the scaling of their objectives and overall growth.

The philanthropic ecosystem in Mexico tends to concentrate on causes that have historically received [more attention](#), such as education, social assistance, or health. This has left sensitive issues in the background, including freedom of expression, the right to protest, democracy, transparency, accountability, justice, sexual diversity movements, and migration. Panel discussions highlighted that this trend is not only due to traditional resource allocation dynamics but also reflects a degree of caution that some foundations exercise regarding politically sensitive topics. This reluctance to support critical agendas limits the transformative reach of the sector in an increasingly challenging environment for civil society organisations.

Consequently, given the limited availability of national resources, CSOs rely heavily on funding from international cooperation. For example, in [2024](#), CSOs in Mexico received approximately 42 million dollars from USAID and the Inter-American Foundation, many of which were affected in 2025 following the sudden suspension of these funds.

² Jacqueline Butcher García Colín (coord.), *Generosidad en México III: fuentes, causas y destinos* (presentación del libro en PowerPoint, versión PDF, Ciudad de México, 2023), p. 13.

Case Study: “Sumar para Transformar”

An important alliance in the field of collaborative philanthropy in Mexico is known as [Sumar para Transformar](#). Since 2021, six private foundations have joined forces to strengthen Casas Hogar and Social Assistance Centers (CAS), which provide care for children and adolescents without parental guardianship in Mexico City and Querétaro. In its 2024 edition, the alliance allocated more than 27.4 million pesos (1.44 million USD) to support 14 organisations, directly benefiting over 500 minors.

The support model is not limited to financial transfers but also includes specialised technical assistance to improve institutional practices, rights-based care models, and internal sustainability processes. This type of collaborative scheme among donors represents an emerging form of philanthropic transformation, aiming to coordinate more flexible resources with a long-term vision.

Despite these valuable efforts, the broader landscape remains marked by structural barriers. Many organisations do not have access to these types of schemes and continue to face adverse conditions in securing funding, creating an inhibiting scenario that prevents them from obtaining sufficient and sustainable resources.

The existence of more flexible funding models for diverse forms of association, which allow for strengthening operational autonomy and ensuring growth and continuity, would enable organisations to continue providing basic services and care to the most vulnerable populations. It would also allow them to participate in key agendas, such as demanding transparency, citizen participation, and accountability. Therefore, putting their sustainability at risk does not only mean the loss of organisations but also the weakening of essential functions for the democratic strengthening of the country.

Principle 4: Open and Responsive State

Score: 2.0

This principle emerges as one of the critical components that enable the civil society environment and its relationship with the government, allowing the activation of the right to participate in public life. The current context is marked by a series of [constitutional reforms](#) that have created new government institutions, centralised functions that now depend directly on the Federal Executive Branch, and eliminated institutions with autonomous, technical, and operational capacities. All of this occurs in an environment characterised by opacity and the concentration of power within the ruling party.

Adding to this situation is a concerning closure of dialogue between the Executive and Legislative branches and civil society, reducing the spaces for exercising this right. Gaps are also evident in the production and transparency of information, which previously allowed for accountability to be demanded.

First, the progressive restriction of the right to access public information, especially evident after the [dissolution of the National Institute for Transparency, Access to Information, and Personal Data Protection \(INAI\)](#), has generated growing uncertainty regarding the effectiveness of the technical and legal mechanisms available to demand transparency and accountability. This not only limits civil society’s capacity to obtain information but also weakens its ability to influence public affairs.

This situation is further exacerbated by the profound transformation of the judicial system, which was subjected to a public election for the first time. This process was marked by misinformation about the candidacies, widespread [confusion](#) regarding the electoral mechanism, and public dissatisfaction with a reform approved without prior public debate. As a result, citizen participation reached only [13% in the vote for the election of 881 judicial positions](#).

Some specialised civil society organisations have warned that the results of this election will have multiple repercussions. One such consequence concerns the difficulty of [resolving challenges](#) related to access to information, due to the fragmentation of obligations across multiple oversight authorities at different levels and instances, which will have to process the review of cases.

A particularly concerning change for the enabling environment of civil society organisations is the transfer of information responsibilities from more than 480 obligated entities—previously required to respond to citizen requests—to the new body “Transparencia para el Pueblo.” This represents the disappearance of an autonomous institution responsible for guaranteeing access to information. During the panel, this decision was questioned due to the lack of clarity in the process and the absence of a defined path for its continuity. Instances of public information disappearing in states such as Jalisco, Veracruz, and the State of Mexico were also mentioned, suggesting a possible trend toward opacity in government obligations.

This is compounded by the cancellation of INEGI’s Intercensal Survey and uncertainty regarding the continuation of key measurements conducted by Coneval. The loss of information limits civil society’s ability to produce diagnostics, demand accountability, and participate in public policy development. Altogether, these developments directly affect the principles of participation, transparency, and accountability, which are fundamental pillars of an enabling environment.

Case Study: “Consortio para la Medición y la Evidencia” in the Context of Coneval’s Dissolution

A group of specialised CSOs, in coordination with academia, recently announced the creation of the “[Consortium for Measurement and Evidence](#)”, an initiative that arises in response to the dissolution of the National Council for the Evaluation of Social Development Policy (Coneval). Its purpose is to monitor methodological changes in poverty measurement and independently analyse public policy in this area.

The panel emphasised that transparency cannot be separated from accountability, and that the mere publication of information does not constitute an effective policy if it is not accompanied by concrete actions. A clear example is the registries of missing persons: if the available data do not trigger actual search mechanisms or enable the demand for accountability, their dissemination is insufficient. In such cases, the government fails to fulfill its substantive obligations, and transparency becomes a simulation that obstructs the guarantee of justice.

As noted, civil society increasingly faces limited opportunities to influence, engage with the government, and participate in legislative processes. Between 23 June and 2 July 2025, more than [22 initiatives](#) with significant implications for the country’s democratic life were rapidly approved. The speed of this process, carried out without discussion or openness to citizen participation, [has been widely criticized](#) by organisations, universities, and journalists, who warn of the risks posed by this package of laws and reforms. Notable among these are changes related to security, telecommunications, population registries, and reform of the law on forced disappearances, creating a context with serious threats to privacy and the protection of fundamental rights.

This scenario highlights that, in the enactment of laws, procedures rarely include citizen participation. The situation is further exacerbated by the absence of a Federal General Law on Citizen Participation, leaving significant regulatory gaps to ensure this right. Despite this, some states, such as [Chihuahua and Jalisco](#), have developed mechanisms that allow interaction with local authorities.

Two contrasting cases: “Quintana Roo Participa” and “Ley de Ciberasedio en Puebla”

A recent example of local government openness is driven by the collective [Quintana Roo Participa](#), which proposed an initiative to reform the Citizen Participation Law with the aim of expanding and facilitating access to mechanisms such as consultations, participatory budgets, and public hearings. The proposal—developed in collaboration with organisations, experts, and citizens—stands out for establishing concrete obligations of shared responsibility between authorities and civil society.

In contrast, the recent approval of a criminal reform in Puebla, known as the “Cyberharassment Law,” criminalises citizens who criticise public officials on social media. This legislation, passed by a local congress with a ruling-party majority and without dialogue with civil society, not only restricts the right to free expression but also sets a precedent that could be replicated in other states, such as Campeche or Tamaulipas, where [cases of digital censorship and harassment of journalists](#) have already been reported. Both scenarios reflect the current tensions between openness and control, as well as the role that local institutional design plays in enabling or constraining the full exercise of freedom of expression and participation.

More broadly, the deterioration of access to information, meaningful participation, and accountability not only affects this principle; it has profound impacts on others as well. On one hand, the approval of laws favouring censorship and surveillance directly affects freedom of expression, privacy, and the right to peaceful assembly. On the other, it influences public culture and reinforces negative perceptions of civil society’s role in collective governance. This erosion extends to the digital sphere, where such risks threaten spaces that have enabled new forms of participation, expression, and accountability.

Principle 5: Public Culture and Positive Narratives toward Civil Society.

Score: 2.2

In this principle, a governmental political culture that is not open to jointly seeking solutions to public problems predominates, which manifests in a persistent discourse of discredit and increasing tensions that fail to recognise the value that civil society organisations (CSOs) contribute to the construction of a pluralistic democratic life. As a result, a widespread perception of distrust and illegitimacy toward CSOs and their work is reinforced.

Experts on the Panel noted that the public perception established in recent years stems from the idea of the government as the sole guarantor of public interest and affairs, a product of the high electoral preference in the last two presidential elections ([53.1%](#) and [59.7%](#), respectively), which allowed the current party to govern and secure an absolute majority in [both chambers](#).

These dynamics were also reproduced within the Federal Public Administration, leading to a change in [strategy](#) to engage in direct dialogue with society. However, this dialogue occurs in a highly media-driven space where the public agenda is monopolised through daily morning press conferences. In this space, colloquially known as “las mañaneras”, the media outlets allowed to participate are limited, while other civil society actors are excluded. Additionally, these dialogues discredit the questions posed by media outlets critical of the government, publicly labelling them as opponents or acting against national interest.

At the same time, the government continues a model of direct intermediation between the State and the people, through figures such as the “[Servidores de la Nación](#)”, who operate as channels for the delivery of social programmes. This strategy reinforces a welfare-based narrative that presents these supports as concessions from the current government rather than as public services.

This approach reproduces dynamics of political clientelism and undermines traditional community practices, as well as the work that some CSOs carry out in favour of the population, weakening autonomous social fabric and reducing the possibility of authentic citizen participation. A conclusion shared among panelists was the perception that CSOs are included when the issues they address [align with the government's agenda](#)—for example, women's rights—while other topics, such as violence against activists, defenders, and journalists, transparency, and so on, are not considered for joint work with the government.

Although negative references to the work of civil society have been less frequent than during the previous administration, hostile narratives persist, generating a climate of distrust and systematic exclusion in public life. This situation particularly affects organisations working on human rights issues, whose only way to participate in some [institutional dialogue spaces](#) is as companions of affected groups. This is the case of collectives of mothers searching for their disappeared children, who were able to gain access only after exerting media pressure. While this dynamic allows for some presence, it reinforces the idea that CSOs do not have an independent role in processes of accountability and deliberation, relegating them to a secondary position.

This governmental narrative is also supported by an official discourse emphasising progress and [widespread wellbeing](#), which [denies the deterioration](#) of key indicators in areas such as security and health services, and publicly targets media outlets, journalists, CSOs, or collectives that present scenarios contrary to the government's vision.

The country is facing a model in which discourse is used as a mechanism of control, and omission serves as a strategy to silence citizen demands. In this context, panel interventions highlighted that large sectors of the population do not always recognise these dynamics as risks or threats to civic space, which hinders both social solidarity and collective defence against its weakening.

In this context, there is an urgent need for CSOs to continue promoting civic education that strengthens democracy, raises awareness of potential risks, and builds citizens' capacities—an [effort](#) that had previously been promoted only partially by the National Electoral Institute. This approach faces threats in light of a potential [future structural reform](#) focused primarily on the electoral process and resources, while neglecting civic education.

In this scenario, the urgency of CSOs advancing civic pedagogy was emphasised, aimed at deepening citizens' understanding of democracy and conveying that democratic processes extend beyond the ballot box and political parties. This work, previously partially supported by the National Electoral Institute, faces risks from a possible reform centred on electoral and budgetary matters, which could sideline civic education and critical training needed to counter threats that may weaken rights.

Case Study: “Juventud Actúa Mx”

One example of collaboration between an autonomous public institution and a CSO to promote civic culture is [#JuventudActúaMX](#), an initiative active since 2019. Its aim has been to encourage youth participation in civic life by promoting the exercise of political rights to influence the resolution of public issues. The project includes a capacity-building process to strengthen public policy advocacy skills, as well as support in designing and implementing concrete action plans. In 2024, the initiative facilitated the creation of a “[Youth Agenda with Regional Perspectives](#)”, which convened 795 young people from various states and collected 419 issues and proposed solutions.

Although valuable efforts such as this demonstrate the potential of collaboration to strengthen citizen participation, they remain exceptions in an otherwise adverse context. Consequently, this weakens civil society inclusion and correlates with restrictions on expressing opinions that diverge from the official narrative. Important issues are rendered invisible, often only surfacing through unresolved protests, and the significance of organizing and actively participating in public problem-solving is minimised.

A persistent concern raised during the panel was the effect of the [negative discursive and political culture toward civil society](#), which can impact access to both national and international resources. Organisations addressing sensitive issues face higher risks of stigmatisation or retaliation, which affects their legitimacy, limits their funding due to perceived risk among donors, and compromises their security in a public sphere exposed to narratives that delegitimise their work.

Principle 6: Access to a Safe Digital Environment

Score: 2.7

The digital environment has become a space for the exercise of rights such as freedom of expression and civic participation. Its value for civil society is growing, as activities like calls for demonstrations or even fundraising increasingly rely on digital tools.

This environment is constantly contested, as governments, businesses, and civil society interact with differing interests and uses. Although 8 out of 10 people in Mexico have internet access, the challenges go [beyond connectivity](#); ensuring a safe digital environment also involves protecting privacy, preventing arbitrary surveillance, and guaranteeing digital inclusion.

As this space grows in relevance, it also requires clear safeguards to preserve its democratic, inclusive, and secure nature. In Mexico, [Article 16 of the Constitution](#) protects the right to privacy and establishes limits on government intervention. From this stems the “General Law on the Protection of Personal Data Held by Obligated Subjects”, which currently faces [significant challenges](#) related to the misuse of personal data by both government and private actors.

At the beginning of 2025, two new laws triggered [alarms among organisations specialising in digital rights](#), and their approval in July solidified critical concern over the establishment of a [hyper-surveillance](#) system without regulatory safeguards. These are the General Law of the National Public Security System, which creates the “National Information System”, allowing unrestricted access to public and private databases, and the “Law on the National Research and Intelligence System on Public Security.”

Together with reforms to the National Guard Law and the General Population Law, these measures create a legal framework that institutionalises real-time monitoring of civilians and represents a significant setback for privacy, digital security, and the protection of fundamental freedoms. Although this legislative process was already described in Principle 4—highlighting the absence of public debate and the fast-track approval—in this section it takes on particular relevance due to its direct impact on ensuring a safe digital environment and the [concerns expressed by civil society organisations](#) following its adoption.

This situation is further exacerbated by the already mentioned elimination of the [INAI](#), removing an institutional check for the protection of personal data and the possibility of challenging violations. Without such an institution, the digital environment becomes more vulnerable to abuse.

While internet shutdowns during critical events have not yet been documented in the country, reforms with serious implications for institutionalised censorship have been advanced. One example is the proposed “Telecommunications and Broadcasting Law”, which raised concerns for its potential to [enable forms of prior censorship](#), including internet restrictions. Following pressure from various sectors, including civil society, the law’s approval process was halted in April and submitted for review. As a result, Article 109, which would have empowered the government to block digital platforms, was removed.

However, the finally approved version still contains alarming elements, such as the [obligation to store metadata](#)—including call logs, origin, destination, duration, and geolocation—which can facilitate surveillance practices. This is particularly concerning given precedents such as

the use of [Pegasus spyware](#), documented since [2011](#) to intercept communications of journalists and human rights defenders.

These types of practices, promoted by the government alongside the [armed forces](#) or public security institutions, set a precedent in a governmental context that increasingly allows the military to assume [civil functions](#).

This raises concerns about a governance model with authoritarian tendencies, where the laws not only compromise the right to privacy but also enable the use of legislation to normalise social control and weaken fundamental democratic guarantees, such as the protection of personal data.

The digital space is also largely composed of social media platforms, whose operation is governed by private and changing policies that [affect fundamental rights](#). In particular, changes in Meta's content regulation policies and algorithms put the dissemination of sensitive topics at risk. Panel participants reported that activists and organisations experience practices such as "[shadowbanning](#)", where algorithms limit the reach of their messages, forcing them to develop strategies like modifying language to bypass these barriers.

Additionally, during the dialogue space, it was highlighted that digital platforms, far from being [neutral spaces](#), tend to reproduce dominant or conservative political discourses and frame public debate with biases that foster polarisation or harassment against those seeking to express opinions on sensitive issues, such as sexual and reproductive rights, or that silence local issues that fail to gain sufficient visibility.

Despite the country's [wide internet coverage](#), digital inclusion for CSOs faces significant challenges. In rural areas, access barriers persist due to lack of infrastructure or high costs. Moreover, digital literacy needs to be strengthened: having connectivity alone is not enough; technical capacities are required to use digital tools effectively.

Many small or community-based organisations [lack equipment](#), connectivity, or trained personnel to incorporate digital tools into their daily work, such as online calls, fundraising campaigns, training, or organisational strengthening. This situation is worsened by the increasing digitalisation of government procedures and processes, which imposes additional barriers to fulfilling obligations and compromises the sustainability of these organisations.

Access to a safe digital environment is closely linked to all other principles of the enabling environment. Freedom of expression, demands for transparency, citizen participation, accountability, and access to resources are increasingly mediated by digital spaces. At the same time, risks of surveillance, censorship, and violations of privacy increase in a context where strong institutional checks and balances are lacking.

C) Conclusion and Recommendations

The enabling environment in Mexico is undergoing a sustained process of weakening. Although legal guarantees formally persist, in practice the exercise of rights is limited by restrictive regulatory frameworks, institutional surveillance, fiscal restrictions, and stigmatising narratives. This is compounded by an institutional reconfiguration that centralises functions in the Executive and the ruling party, which tends to reduce opportunities for citizen participation and transparency in governance. What can be observed is the consolidation of a new political model that deactivates existing channels of dialogue—which, although limited and imperfect, at least allowed some governance practices—effectively eliminating them.

From the analysis of this context, certain avenues emerge that could contribute to strengthening the enabling environment in Mexico:

Internal and organisational management level

- It is recommended to reinforce systematisation and make visible the impacts of the current regulatory framework on the operations of CSOs, with the aim of identifying key areas that can enhance organisational sustainability.
- In the relationship between organisations and donors, it is crucial to propose collaborative philanthropy schemes that allow donors and CSOs to co-create more sustainable solutions.
- Promote spaces where different types of financing and timelines can be tested around thematic axes aligned with both organisational and donor objectives, to open opportunities that respond better to local contexts, reduce fragmentation of efforts, and improve organisational sustainability.
- Channel resources to strengthen digital capacities in organisations, especially in non-urban environments, which can foster progressive appropriation of tools and close digital gaps.

External and intersectoral collaboration level

- Transforming the enabling environment requires intersectoral efforts to identify priority and common themes that support the protection of fundamental rights and participation in public affairs. In this sense, the role of CSOs, journalists, universities, social movements, and citizens is crucial to form a counterbalance that, through their work and experience, balances public decisions and prevents them from serving only the interests of a single sector.
- In line with this, fostering practices that promote information exchange between think tanks, CSOs, and academia could enrich analyses, coordinate actions, and guide responses needed for case documentation in an environment that restricts civil society work.
- It is also proposed to promote a democratic political pedagogy that demonstrates the public value of the right to associate, participate, and collectively shape public affairs—particularly among historically marginalised populations and youth—and to highlight CSOs not only as service providers but also as producers of solutions, knowledge, and care.
- Finally, thinking of the enabling environment for CSOs as a system implies that improvements in one area can positively impact other principles, but setbacks in any of the six principles can cause the entire ecosystem to deteriorate. Therefore, a strategic approach should be a systemic reading that sustains small gains and identifies alternatives to mitigate regressions.

Research process (consorcio)

Each principle encompasses various dimensions which are assessed and aggregated to provide quantitative scores per principle. These scores reflect the degree to which the environment within the country enables or disables the work of civil society. Scores are on a five-category scale defined as: fully disabling, disabling, partially enabling, enabling, and fully enabling. To complement the scores, this report provides a narrative analysis of the enabling or disabling environment for civil society, identifying strengths and weaknesses as well as offering recommendations. The process of drafting the analysis is led by Network Members. The consortium provides quality control and editorial oversight before publication.

For Principle 1 - which evaluates respect for and protection of freedom of association and peaceful assembly - the score integrates data from the [CIVICUS Monitor](#). However, for Principles 2–6, the availability of yearly updated external quantitative indicators for the 86 countries part of the EUSEE programme are either limited or non-existent. To address this, Network Members convene a panel of representatives of civil society and experts once a year.

This panel uses a set of guiding questions to assess the status of each principle and its dimensions within the country. The discussions are supported by secondary sources, such as [V-Dem](#), the [Bertelsmann Stiftung Governance Index](#), the [RTI Rating from the Centre for Law and Democracy](#), and other trusted resources. These sources provide benchmarks for measuring similar dimensions and are complemented by primary data collection and other secondary sources of information available for the country. Guided by these deliberations, the panel assigns scores for each dimension, which the Network Members submit to the Consortium, accompanied by detailed justifications that reflect the country's specific context. To determine a single score per principle, the scores assigned to each dimension are aggregated using a weighted average, reflecting the relative importance of each dimension within the principle. This approach balances diverse perspectives while maintaining a structured and objective evaluation framework.

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