



SUPPORTING
AN ENABLING ENVIRONMENT
FOR CIVIL SOCIETY

Enabling Environment Snapshot

Mauritius

June 2026

Context

Reporting period: December 2025-June 2026

Mauritius is widely regarded as one of Africa's most [stable](#) democracies and has consistently ranked among the continent's strongest performers in governance, rule of law and political freedoms. Unlike many post-colonial states, Mauritius achieved independence in 1968 through a largely peaceful process and has maintained a strong tradition of democratic governance, regular elections and constitutional rule. Civil society has played an important role in this democratic trajectory, contributing to social development, environmental protection, labour rights, gender equality and governance reform.

The development of civil society in Mauritius has followed fluctuating historical patterns. During the 1970s, social movements, trade unions and [women's organisations](#) became important actors in political mobilisation and public debate. Civic activism subsequently declined during the economic expansion of the 1980s and 1990s, when rising employment levels and economic growth reduced public mobilisation around social issues. In recent decades, however, civil society has increasingly re-emerged as a significant actor through thematic campaigns focused on environmental protection, transparency, social justice and democratic accountability. [Initiatives](#) such as No to Coal, Aret Kokin Nu Laplaz, Rezistans ek Alternativ and various governance-focused organisations have demonstrated the ability of Mauritian civil society to mobilise public opinion around issues of national importance.

The period between December 2025 and June 2026 was characterised by significant political developments that affected civic space. The [new administration](#) elected in November 2024 continued efforts to restore public confidence in democratic institutions following widespread criticism of governance practices under the previous government. Civil society organisations generally reported an improvement in relations with public authorities compared to previous years, although concerns regarding institutional reforms and accountability remain.

Mauritius continues to benefit from a relatively strong constitutional framework for the protection of civil liberties. [Freedom House](#) maintained Mauritius' classification as "Free" in 2026, assigning the country an overall score of 87 out of 100, representing one of the highest scores in Africa. Similarly, international governance indicators continue to rank Mauritius favourably with respect to political rights, civil liberties and rule of law.

Despite these positive indicators, several structural [challenges](#) affecting civic space remain unresolved. Mauritius continues to lack comprehensive access to information legislation, despite longstanding commitments by successive governments. Civil society organisations also continue to express concerns regarding the independence and effectiveness of oversight institutions, including bodies responsible for investigating complaints against public authorities. Human rights defenders working on sensitive issues, such as corruption, governance reform, police accountability, minority rights and LGBTIQ+ equality, report that engagement with state institutions remains [inconsistent and at times adversarial](#).

Mauritius remains a highly diverse and multicultural society comprising multiple ethnic, religious and linguistic communities. Interfaith dialogue and coexistence continue to be promoted through institutions such as the [Council of Religions](#), which plays an important role in maintaining social cohesion. Although ethnic tensions remain relatively limited, identity politics continues to influence electoral mobilisation and political discourse. Socio-economic [inequalities](#), particularly affecting vulnerable groups, remain an important concern for civil society organisations.

The digital environment continues to play an increasingly important role in civic engagement. Civil society organisations make extensive use of social media platforms and digital communication tools to mobilise public support, conduct advocacy campaigns and disseminate information. While no further [social media shutdowns](#) were reported during the assessment period, concerns remain regarding surveillance powers available under existing legislation and the absence of comprehensive safeguards protecting digital rights.

Overall, Mauritius continues to offer a comparatively favourable environment for civil society. However, the persistence of legal, institutional and financial constraints highlights the need for further reforms aimed at strengthening civic participation, enhancing accountability and protecting the work of human rights defenders.

1. Respect and protection of fundamental freedoms

Mauritius continues to maintain one of the most open civic environments in Africa and remains among the continent's strongest performers in relation to political rights and civil liberties. In its Freedom in the World 2026 [report](#), Freedom House maintained Mauritius' classification as "Free" and assigned the country a score of 87/100, reflecting strong electoral institutions, constitutional protections and an independent judiciary, while noting continuing concerns relating to transparency, access to information and media pluralism.

The rights to freedom of expression, peaceful assembly and association remain constitutionally protected under sections 12 and 13 of the [Constitution of Mauritius](#) and are further reinforced through Mauritius' obligations under international human rights instruments, including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR). During the reporting period, civil society organisations (CSOs) continued to operate across a wide range of sectors, including governance reform, environmental protection, anti-corruption advocacy, social inclusion, labour rights, gender equality and community development. Public campaigns and advocacy initiatives remained visible features of Mauritian civic life, reflecting a generally permissive environment for civic participation.

The legal environment governing freedom of expression remains generally supportive but continues to contain provisions that may potentially affect civic space. Defamation remains both a civil and criminal matter under Mauritian law, and concerns have periodically been raised regarding the possibility that criminal defamation provisions may be used to discourage investigative journalism or public criticism of state institutions. While no major prosecutions involving civil society actors were reported during the assessment period, international media freedom organisations continue to recommend the repeal or reform of criminal defamation provisions in accordance with [international standards](#). Media freedom remains comparatively robust by regional standards. Mauritius continues to benefit from a diverse private media landscape comprising newspapers, radio stations and digital news platforms that regularly scrutinise public institutions and government actions. However, concerns persist regarding the editorial independence of the Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation (MBC), which has repeatedly been [criticised](#) by media stakeholders and international observers for favouring government viewpoints in its reporting and programming.

Freedom of peaceful assembly remains generally respected. Public gatherings continue to be regulated under the Public Gathering Act 1991, which requires notification rather than prior authorisation. No major incidents involving the prohibition of peaceful demonstrations were reported during the assessment period. However, civil society actors continue to advocate for [reforms](#) aimed at clarifying the scope of police discretion and ensuring full compliance with international standards governing peaceful assembly.

Human rights defenders generally operate without facing the systematic intimidation, criminalisation or violence reported in some other jurisdictions. Nevertheless, organisations working on governance, accountability, minority rights and police oversight continue to identify challenges relating to access to information, responsiveness of public institutions and meaningful participation in decision-making processes.

Overall, fundamental freedoms remain broadly protected in Mauritius, and civil society organisations continue to operate in a comparatively favourable environment. Nevertheless, the absence of access-to-information legislation, concerns regarding oversight of institution effectiveness and ongoing debates surrounding the protection of Chagossian rights demonstrate that important challenges remain. Addressing these issues would strengthen democratic governance and further enhance the enabling environment for civil society and human rights defenders.

2. Supportive legal and regulatory framework

Mauritius continues to maintain a generally enabling legal framework for the establishment and operation of CSOs, primarily through the [Registration of Associations Act 1978](#) and the [Foundations Act 2012](#). The legal framework recognises freedom of association and provides relatively accessible registration procedures, while also imposing governance and reporting obligations on registered entities. During the December 2025–June 2026 reporting period, there were no reported cases of systematic refusal of registration or legal measures restricting the establishment of CSOs. However, the legal framework continues to rely heavily on regulatory oversight mechanisms, with limited explicit protections against undue state interference in civil society activities.

The [Registration of Associations Act](#) defines an association as an organisation composed of at least seven persons with a common non-profit purpose (Section 2). Registration is effectively required within three months of formation for local CSOs and before the start of activities for foreign CSOs, for associations seeking formal legal status (Section 5), and Section 9 grants registered associations legal recognition and corporate capacity. In practice, registration is therefore necessary for organisations wishing to enter contracts, hold assets, receive institutional funding or open bank accounts, as financial institutions generally require proof of legal registration.

The law provides an application process under Section 6 and specifies grounds on which registration may be refused under Section 7. Importantly, organisations whose applications are refused have access to an appeal mechanism under Section 33, allowing appeals against decisions of the Registrar. Registration is not subject to periodic renewal; once registered, associations remain registered unless their registration is cancelled or the organisation is dissolved. Instead, compliance is maintained through obligations contained in Sections 20–24, which require records and accounts, annual general meetings, and annual returns to the Registrar.

The legal framework does not require CSOs to obtain prior government approval for their programmes, objectives or advocacy agendas, nor does it require organisations to sign memoranda of understanding with specific ministries before operating in particular sectors. Associations are generally free to determine their own purposes through their constitutions and internal governance arrangements. However, the Registrar possesses significant oversight powers under Sections 31 and 32, including powers to request information and conduct inquiries into the affairs of associations. While intended to promote accountability and

compliance, civil society actors have [periodically expressed concern](#) that these provisions provide broad discretion without corresponding safeguards against arbitrary intervention.

Administrative compliance requirements continue to present [challenges](#) for smaller organisations. Registered associations are required to maintain financial records, submit annual returns and comply with governance obligations, including annual meetings and reporting requirements. Although these obligations contribute to transparency and accountability, smaller community-based organisations often lack the financial and technical capacity necessary to meet increasingly complex compliance requirements. Several local civil society actors continue to advocate for proportionate reporting obligations that distinguish between large, professionally managed organisations and small volunteer-led associations.

The Foundations Act contains similar provisions for foundations. Section 5 establishes the requirement for registration, while provisions under Part IV provide that a foundation acquires separate legal personality upon registration and issuance of a certificate of registration. The Act also allows foundations to pursue charitable, social, educational, environmental and human rights objectives through structures governed by their founding charter and council.

Overall, the trend remained stable during the reporting period. Mauritius continues to provide clear legal routes for establishing and operating CSOs, including appeal mechanisms and substantial autonomy over organisational objectives. However, broad regulatory powers vested in the Registrar and the absence of specific legal protections against unwarranted interference leave some uncertainty for organisations engaged in advocacy, governance monitoring and rights-based work. Strengthening safeguards against arbitrary intervention would further enhance the legal enabling environment for civil society.

3. Accessible and sustainable resources

Access to sustainable and independent resources remains a [significant challenge](#) for CSOs in Mauritius. Although the country has a comparatively well-developed philanthropic and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) framework, changes to the CSR funding system have increased concerns regarding the accessibility, sustainability, and independence of civil society financing. Since reforms introduced in 2019, a substantial portion of CSR contributions has been channelled through state-administered mechanisms rather than being allocated directly by companies to CSOs. This shift has reduced opportunities for direct corporate-CSO partnerships and increased reliance on centrally managed funding structures.

The [National Social Inclusion Foundation](#) (NSIF) is the principal institution responsible for administering and distributing a large share of CSR and public social development funds. The NSIF supports organisations working in areas such as poverty alleviation, education, disability rights, and community development. While the system has [enhanced](#) coordination and oversight of social programmes, many CSOs report that accessing funding involves complex application procedures, extensive documentation requirements, and demanding reporting obligations. These [administrative burdens](#) can disproportionately affect smaller organisations that rely on volunteers and have limited institutional capacity.

Transparency in funding allocation also [remains a concern](#). Although funding criteria and application procedures are publicly available, civil society actors continue to advocate for greater disclosure of project evaluations, funding decisions, and allocation outcomes. Increased transparency would strengthen confidence in the fairness and accountability of funding mechanisms and enhance trust between the government and the sector.

Dependence on state-administered funding has also generated [concerns](#) regarding organisational independence. Some CSOs fear that reliance on public resources could discourage advocacy on sensitive governance or policy issues. While there is little evidence of direct political interference in funding decisions, perceptions of vulnerability may undermine the willingness of some organisations to engage in robust policy advocacy or government criticism.

Foreign funding remains [legally permissible](#) and continues to play an important role in supporting civil society activities. Registered organisations may receive grants and assistance from international donors, including multilateral agencies, development partners, and foreign embassies. However, Mauritius [lacks a specific legal framework](#) explicitly safeguarding access to foreign funding. Registered NGOs generally [have access](#) to banking services, although unregistered groups may face challenges in meeting anti-money laundering and customer due diligence requirements.

Overall, Mauritius provides a moderately enabling environment for CSO financing, but challenges relating to funding concentration, administrative complexity, transparency, and long-term sustainability continue to constrain the sector's resilience and independence.

4. Open and responsive state

State openness and responsiveness remained a [comparatively weak](#) area of the enabling environment for civil society in Mauritius during the December 2025–June 2026 reporting period. Although the government continued to engage CSOs through consultations, partnerships and sectoral dialogue, these opportunities were not supported by strong legal guarantees for transparency or participation. Mauritius still [lacks a dedicated](#) Access to Information (ATI) or Freedom of Information law, meaning that CSOs, journalists and citizens do not enjoy a legally enforceable right to access government-held information. As a result, transparency remains dependent on administrative discretion rather than rights-based mechanisms, limiting the ability of civil society to conduct effective oversight, monitor public policies and hold authorities accountable.

The reporting period saw continuity rather than significant change in this area. No substantial progress was recorded towards the adoption of comprehensive access-to-information legislation, despite longstanding calls from civil society and international governance actors. Access to official information continued to be governed by a fragmented framework that includes the Official Secrets Act 1972 and institutional practices that grant public authorities broad powers to determine what information may be disclosed. Information requests remained subject to inconsistent procedures across government institutions, with no uniform response timelines or independent appeal mechanisms available when access is denied. These constraints continued to affect evidence-based advocacy and limited opportunities for independent monitoring of government performance.

Government engagement with civil society [remained visible](#) across several policy sectors, including social welfare, health, education, environmental protection, gender equality and community development. CSOs continued to participate in consultations organised by ministries and public agencies and remained important partners in programme implementation and service delivery. However, participation mechanisms were largely ad hoc and ministry-driven rather than institutionalised through [formal frameworks](#) guaranteeing stakeholder involvement. Civil society actors continued to [express concerns](#) that consultations often occur

after key policy directions have already been established and that feedback on the use of recommendations is rarely provided. The implementation of the [May 2025 UK–Mauritius Chagos agreement](#) continued to highlight these concerns, with some Chagossian organisations arguing that affected communities were not meaningfully involved in decisions affecting their future.

Overall, the trend remained stable but constrained. While the government continued to permit dialogue and engage CSOs on selected issues, limited access to information, weak participation guarantees and inadequate reporting on the incorporation of civil society input reduced the quality of state responsiveness. Without reforms to strengthen transparency and institutionalise meaningful participation, civic influence on policymaking is likely to remain limited.

5. Supportive public culture and discourses on civil society

Political culture and public discourse in Mauritius remain broadly supportive of civil society, with CSOs generally recognised as legitimate contributors to social development, democratic governance and public welfare. Civil society [actors continue](#) to enjoy [visibility](#) in national discussions, particularly on issues relating to poverty reduction, education, environmental protection, disability inclusion, youth development and gender equality. Government statements, mainstream media coverage and public communications typically portray CSOs positively when they are engaged in service delivery, humanitarian activities or community development initiatives. However, organisations involved in governance reform, accountability, anti-corruption advocacy, media freedom and rights-based work tend to receive less prominence and are often viewed as advocacy actors rather than development partners. This distinction continues to shape the enabling environment by influencing which civil society voices gain access to decision-makers and public platforms.

During the December 2025–June 2026 reporting period, civil society remained active in public debates concerning governance, human rights and national development. The most prominent example was continuing discussion surrounding the implementation of the UK–Mauritius Agreement on the Chagos Archipelago. Chagossian organisations, human rights groups and advocacy networks played a visible role in debates on reparations, resettlement and participation in decision-making. These discussions were amplified by findings of the UK House of Lords International Relations and Defence Committee and observations from United Nations human rights mechanisms, both of which highlighted concerns that Chagossian communities had not been adequately consulted on matters directly affecting their future. The prominence of these debates demonstrated that civil society retains the capacity to influence national discourse and bring rights-based issues into the public sphere, even where policy outcomes remain contested.

Public perceptions of civil society generally remain favourable, particularly regarding organisations that provide social services or address community needs. Nevertheless, civic participation outside electoral processes [remains relatively limited](#), and understanding of civil society’s watchdog and accountability functions is less developed. This can reduce public support for advocacy-oriented organisations and limit pressure on institutions to engage more meaningfully with civil society perspectives. While legal and policy frameworks promote equality and non-discrimination, there are no comprehensive requirements mandating the systematic inclusion of marginalised groups in all policymaking processes. Consequently,

representation often depends on the willingness of individual institutions rather than guaranteed participatory mechanisms.

Civic and citizenship education [continues](#) to form part of the national education system, contributing to awareness of democratic values and public participation. However, civil society stakeholders continue to argue that stronger emphasis should be placed on human rights, democratic accountability, active citizenship and the role of CSOs within democratic governance. Greater integration of these themes across educational levels could help foster a more participatory civic culture and strengthen public appreciation of civil society's contribution beyond service delivery.

Overall, the trend remained stable during the reporting period. Civil society continued to enjoy public legitimacy and visibility, and there was no evidence of systematic efforts to delegitimise CSOs in official discourse. However, advocacy and watchdog organisations remained less prominent than service-oriented actors, while limited civic participation and inconsistent inclusion of affected groups in decision-making continued to constrain the enabling environment. Strengthening civic education, promoting inclusive participation and recognising the accountability role of civil society would further enhance civic space and democratic governance in Mauritius.

6. Access to a secure digital environment

Mauritius continues to provide a relatively favourable digital environment for civil society compared to many countries in the region. Internet access is widespread, digital technologies are deeply integrated into public life, and CSOs increasingly rely on online platforms for advocacy, public engagement, service delivery and mobilisation. At the same time, concerns regarding digital rights, privacy and surveillance remain important features of the operating environment. While legal frameworks exist to regulate data protection, cybersecurity and electronic communications, civil society actors continue to question whether existing safeguards are sufficient to protect online freedoms and prevent disproportionate state interference. Consequently, the digital environment remains broadly enabling but is shaped by lingering concerns about government powers over online communications and information flows.

During the December 2025–June 2026 reporting period, [no internet shutdowns](#), social media suspensions or significant restrictions on access to online platforms were reported. This marked a continuation of normal internet operations following the highly controversial temporary suspension of major social media platforms during the November 2024 electoral period. Although the measure was subsequently reversed, it continues to influence public debate and perceptions of digital rights. Civil society organisations have remained attentive to the possibility of future restrictions and have continued to advocate for stronger protections for freedom of expression, access to information and independent oversight of surveillance measures. [Concerns have also persisted](#) regarding surveillance and interception powers available under existing laws, including provisions contained within the Information and Communication Technologies Act and cybersecurity legislation. However, there were no reported cases during the reporting period of these powers being used to impose broad restrictions on civil society activity online.

Mauritius maintains a relatively comprehensive [legal framework](#) governing the digital sphere, including the Data Protection Act 2017 and the Cybersecurity and Cybercrime Act 2021. These laws provide important protections relating to personal data, cybersecurity and digital

transactions and have generally supported confidence in online engagement. At the same time, some civil society actors continue to express concern that surveillance-related provisions could potentially affect privacy and digital freedoms if not accompanied by robust oversight and transparency mechanisms. Cybersecurity remained a [policy priority](#), although no major cyberattacks targeting civil society organisations were reported during the reporting period.

Digital access [remains high](#), with internet penetration exceeding three-quarters of the population and mobile broadband coverage reaching most areas of the country. Nevertheless, digital divides persist among lower-income households, some rural communities, older persons and other vulnerable groups due to affordability and digital literacy challenges. These disparities can limit participation in online civic activities and access to digital information.

Overall, the trend remained stable and moderately positive. Civil society continued to enjoy broad access to digital tools and online platforms, with no new restrictions imposed during the reporting period. However, unresolved concerns regarding surveillance powers, the legacy of the 2024 social media suspension and persistent inequalities in digital access continue to pose challenges. While Mauritius retains a generally enabling digital environment for civil society, strengthening digital rights protections and narrowing remaining digital divides would further enhance inclusive civic participation and democratic engagement.

Challenges and Opportunities

The next three months are likely to be shaped by both opportunities for deeper state–civil society engagement and persistent structural constraints that continue to limit civic participation. The continued absence of an Access to Information law remains the most significant challenge. As civil society organisations increasingly engage in policy advocacy, governance monitoring and public accountability initiatives, the lack of a legally enforceable right to access government-held information is likely to continue constraining evidence-based advocacy and independent oversight. Similarly, the absence of formal mechanisms requiring government institutions to explain how civil society recommendations are incorporated into policy decisions may sustain perceptions that consultations are largely procedural rather than genuinely participatory.

Another likely challenge relates to inclusiveness and representation in public decision-making. Debates surrounding the implementation of the Chagos Agreement demonstrated continuing concerns among affected communities regarding meaningful participation in decisions that directly affect their rights and interests. Unless more structured consultation and feedback mechanisms are introduced, similar concerns could continue to emerge in future policy processes, potentially affecting public confidence in participatory governance. In the digital sphere, although no internet shutdowns or significant online restrictions were reported during the review period, concerns regarding surveillance powers, online privacy and the legacy of the 2024 social media suspension are likely to remain influential in public discourse. Persistent digital inequalities affecting lower-income and vulnerable groups may also continue to limit the ability of some communities to participate fully in online civic activities.

At the same time, important opportunities exist. Evidence from the reporting period shows that civil society continues to enjoy broad public legitimacy and remains an active contributor to debates on governance, social development, environmental protection and human rights. Government ministries and public institutions continue to engage CSOs through consultations and programme implementation, providing a foundation upon which more institutionalised participation mechanisms could be built. The continued visibility of civil society in national

discussions, including on the Chagos issue, demonstrates that civic actors retain the capacity to influence public discourse and bring underrepresented perspectives into policy debates.

Overall, the short-term trend is expected to remain stable. Civic space is likely to remain open, with ongoing opportunities for dialogue and digital engagement. However, without progress on access to information, structured participation frameworks, inclusion of affected communities and stronger digital rights safeguards, improvements in state responsiveness and civic influence are likely to remain gradual rather than transformative.

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