

Thailand

Country Focus Report

2026



Credit: Robin Noguier



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A) An 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 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 6 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.

Brief Overview of the Country Context

‘Once conversations about democracy and equality begin, they are very hard to silence’
– Akarachai Chaimaneekarakate, Assistant Director and Advocacy Lead, TLHR

Period covered by this report: May 2025 – May 2026

Civil society remains an important part of Thailand’s social and political landscape, with CSOs continuing to advocate on human rights, environmental protections, and social justice. However, the political environment in 2026 has been challenging. The 2026 general election followed several years of political intervention by state institutions, including the dissolution of major political parties and the removal of elected political leaders through judicial processes. The election also took place amid heightened tensions with Cambodia and nationalist sentiment surrounding the border conflict. These developments have contributed to a more uncertain environment for CSOs working on political and institutional reform.

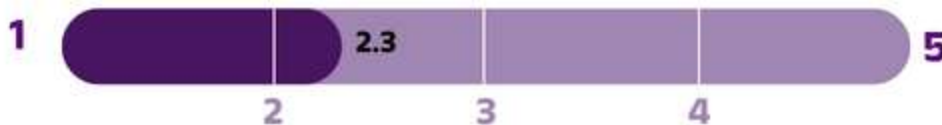
At the same time, Thailand is pursuing deeper international engagement, including through its membership of the UN Human Rights Council, ongoing OECD accession process, and continued negotiations for an EU–Thailand Free Trade Agreement. These developments present opportunities for greater international engagement with civil society, while also highlighting a tension between Thailand’s growing international integration and the constraints faced by CSOs domestically. Against this backdrop, the ability of civil society to operate freely and independently, access the legal, institutional, financial, and digital conditions necessary for its work, engage meaningfully with the state and wider public, and contribute to policy and social change remains an important measure of Thailand’s evolving civic space.

B) Assessment of the Enabling Environment

PRINCIPLE SCORE

1. Respect and Protection of Fundamental Freedoms

Score: ¹



Despite Thailand's formal return to civilian-led government in 2023 and the subsequent 2026 general election, the state of fundamental freedoms in the country remains bleak. Individuals exercising their rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly continue to face prosecution and arbitrary detention. Since the 2026 election, the use of defamation and other Strategic Lawsuits Against Public Participation (SLAPPs) has added to these concerns, increasingly targeting human rights defenders, journalists, and ordinary citizens for legitimate civic engagement and efforts to report on matters of public interest.

1.1 Freedom of Expression

For the seventh consecutive year, Thailand maintains its classification of [“repressed”](#) by the CIVICUS monitor, indicating serious and ongoing restrictions on fundamental civic freedoms. Between July 2020 and July 2026, no fewer than 1,998 individuals—including at least 280 children—have been charged in at least 1,347 politically motivated cases under a range of repressive laws. One such law is Section 112 (lèse-majesté) of the Criminal Code, which criminalises “defamation,” “insults,” or “threats” against the King, Queen, Heir-Apparent, or Regent with punishment of three to fifteen years’ imprisonment. Thai authorities have interpreted the law broadly to encompass forms of political expression and innocuous acts that would ordinarily be lawful in a democratic society. For instance, in May 2026, one individual was [sentenced](#) to three years in prison over a Facebook post of himself wearing a

¹This is a rebased score derived from the [CIVICUS Monitor rating](#) published in December 2025.

T-shirt bearing the message, “We have lost faith in the monarchy.” In February 2026, a European Parliament’s Sakharov Fellow was [sentenced](#) to two years and eight months in prison over a speech where she cited the [opinions of United Nations experts](#) regarding the lèse-majesté law.

Another way freedom of expression in Thailand is curtailed is the use of strategic litigation or SLAPP lawsuits by politicians and businesses to silence journalists and individuals from speaking about matters of public interest. This practice has become increasingly prevalent in the years leading up to and since the 2026 general election. In March 2026, a prominent cabinet minister, Suchart Chomklin, filed [criminal defamation complaints](#) against two journalists for reporting on a corruption and labour exploitation [investigation](#) involving Thai berry pickers in Finland, which reportedly implicated him. In April 2025, GULF Energy filed civil and criminal [defamation lawsuits](#) against at least five opposition Members of Parliament (MPs) from the opposition People’s Party over [parliamentary speeches](#) questioning the transparency of the government’s energy procurement process and whether certain energy conglomerates had received preferential treatment due to political connections. Following the 2026 general election, the [Election Commission](#) also filed criminal charges, including under Section 116 (sedition) of the Criminal Code, against multiple election observers who had monitored polling stations to identify potential irregularities and promote electoral transparency. The widespread use of SLAPP lawsuits is facilitated by gaps in the existing legal framework. Although the law provides for the early dismissal of bad-faith lawsuits, the mechanism remains [rarely applied](#) and is largely limited to privately initiated criminal cases. Other efforts, including [Anti-SLAPP legislation](#) being developed by the Ministry of Justice, remain ongoing, with questions over their effectiveness.

Compounding the use of SLAPPs is the emergence of [remote prosecution](#), whereby criminal complaints, including under criminal defamation and lèse-majesté laws, are filed in jurisdictions far from the accused’s domicile or any meaningful connection to the alleged conduct. This practice is enabled by Thailand’s Criminal Procedure Code, which views online offences as being committed wherever the allegedly criminal content is viewed, allowing complainants to “forum shop,” or choose where to file a complaint based on where the content can be accessed. As a result, defendants have had to bear significant financial, legal, and psychological burdens in travelling to distant jurisdictions to defend themselves. In January 2026, then-Deputy PM Thammanat Prompao [claimed](#) to have filed more than 600 defamation complaints in his native Phayao province against online critics, [many of whom](#) live in Bangkok, over a nine-hour drive away.

1.2. Freedom of Assembly

The right to freedom of assembly in Thailand remains significantly curtailed, more than six years after the youth-led pro-democracy movement emerged in July 2020, calling, *inter alia*, for democratic, constitutional, and monarchical reforms. Protesters continue to be subjected to arrests, harassment, and prosecution under various repressive laws, despite a change in administration following the 2026 general election. Under the Bhumjaithai Party, [new charges](#) continue to be brought against pro-democracy activists every month, including under the lèse-majesté law. The continued prosecution suggests that the government is unlikely to reverse the restrictive approach to freedom of assembly in the near term.

Another notable law that is being used to suppress the right to freedom of assembly in Thailand is the [Public Assembly Act](#), which grants authorities broad discretion to restrict the nature of assemblies that can be held under vague terms like the protection of “good morals,” and imposes burdensome prior-notification requirements for protest organisers. Additionally, the Act’s prohibition of assemblies being held within 150 meters from royal residences and other

sites significantly limits protesters' ability to exercise their rights effectively and prevents their message from reaching within ["sight and sound"](#) of their target.

With many prominent protest leaders, such as human rights lawyer [Arnon Nampa](#), either imprisoned or in [exile](#), the continued prosecution and imprisonment of activists has created a powerful chilling effect, making it increasingly risky for individuals to exercise their right to peaceful assembly. This can be observed in the significant decline in the number of public assemblies recorded in Thailand. One civil society database recorded approximately 120 public assemblies in 2025, a 90% decline compared to 1,516 public assemblies recorded at the peak of the movement in 2021.

1.3. Freedom of Association

The right to freedom of association, particularly for organisations working on politically sensitive or critical issues, such as freedom of expression, refugee rights, and environmental protection, continues to be curtailed. Many organisations working on these issues are targeted by authorities as "high-value targets" and subjected to online smear campaigns intended to discredit them. Civil society actors working on state accountability and transparency, democracy, and environmental protection also face personal harassment, intimidation, and prosecution. For example, Yingcheep Atchanont, director of Internet Reform Dialogue (iLaw), has faced [lawsuits](#) from several politicians in the current administration, including PM Anutin Charnvirakul, over his public statements and presentation of evidence concerning alleged collusion involving the Bhumjaithai Party in the 2024 Senate selection process, as part of iLaw's work to promote electoral transparency. Environmental defenders likewise continue to face judicial harassment and [death threats](#) for exposing environmental violations, including illegal industrial waste dumping.

The right to freedom of association is also restricted by legislation, particularly in relation to trade unions and workers' rights. For instance, [the Labour Relations Act](#) limits the formation of trade unions to workers employed by the same employer or in the same type of business, while requiring union founders and committee members to be Thai nationals. As a result, migrant workers may join existing unions but cannot establish or lead their own, while other workers may face difficulties organising across different employment arrangements or sectors.

The right to associate through political parties has also eroded since the Constitutional Court [dissolved](#) the opposition *Move Forward Party* in 2024 for proposing a bill to amend the lèse-majesté law to bring it in line with international human rights standards. In 2026, the National Anti-Corruption Commission (NACC) [found](#) the 44 former MPs from the party guilty of "serious ethical violations" for sponsoring the bill, and the MPs now [face proceedings](#) before the Supreme Court that could result in their lifetime bans from politics. Among them are 10 current MPs of the party's successor, the People's Party, including party leader Mr. Natthaphong Ruengpanyawut and deputy leader Ms. Sirikanya Tansakun. In this way, the right to freedom of association is undermined by measures that seek to strip political parties of their leadership and experienced members, weakening their ability to operate and participate effectively in Parliament. Such measures also undermine voters' confidence that the representatives they elect will be permitted to serve.

Case Study: Arnon Nampa

Arnon Nampa, a human rights lawyer and [recipient](#) of the 2025 Front Line Defenders Award for Human Rights Defenders at Risk, has been prosecuted in 14 separate lèse-majesté cases and convicted in 11, receiving a cumulative sentence of nearly 32 years in prison. All of his convictions stemmed from his legitimate exercise of free expression through peaceful public speeches at peaceful demonstrations and online posts, such as calling for democratic and

monarchy reforms, as well as reforms of the lèse-majesté law. In one speech, for example, he questioned why the King had requested changes to constitutional provisions on royal prerogatives after the draft constitution had already been approved by Thai voters in a referendum.

His prosecution also raises serious fair trial concerns, particularly regarding the presumption of innocence. Since his first lèse-majesté conviction in September 2023, he has submitted approximately 150 bail requests to Thai courts, all of which were denied on grounds that he was a flight risk or that he may flee. However, the courts have not provided evidence to substantiate these claims. Arnon therefore remains imprisoned, where he continues to act as a defence lawyer, representing clients who, like him, are prosecuted for exercising their right to freedom of expression.

Case Study: Murray Hunter

In September 2025, Australian journalist Murray Hunter, who resides in Thailand, was arrested at Suvarnabhumi Airport and [charged](#) under Section 328 (libel) of the Criminal Code for publishing four Substack articles allegedly defaming the Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission (MCMC). He was later [indicted](#) in November 2025. Before his arrest, the MCMC had initiated civil defamation proceedings against Mr. Hunter in Malaysia, where the Shah Alam High Court reportedly found him liable and ordered Malaysian internet service providers to block access to his Substack.

Although the case concluded with Mr. Hunter and the MCMC reaching a [settlement agreement](#), it highlights the ease with which defamation complaints can be initiated in Thailand, allowing even foreign entities to use the country's justice system as a tool of transnational repression. Had the case proceeded, Mr. Hunter could have faced up to two years in prison simply for reporting on matters of public interest.

Case Study: Amnesty

In July 2026, the Thai Parliament [passed a bill](#) granting amnesty to individuals prosecuted for exercising their rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly between January 2005 and July 2025. Although lawmakers presented the bill as a measure of national reconciliation, it explicitly excludes individuals charged under Section 112 (lèse-majesté) of the Criminal Code, including children under the age of 18. This exclusion leaves hundreds of people without access to amnesty and is particularly significant given that, as of July 2026, the majority of [political prisoners](#) detained for exercising their rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly are held under Section 112 charges. As a result, only a small proportion of those currently imprisoned for political expression are likely to benefit from the bill.

The selective exclusion of lèse-majesté cases discriminates between people prosecuted for exercising the same fundamental rights based on the political content of their expression. Moreover, the lawmakers' basis for excluding lèse-majesté cases does not appear to be reasonable or objective, particularly given that other offences, including Sections 113 (insurrection) and 135/1 (terrorism) of the Criminal Code, are covered by the amnesty despite carrying equally severe or more severe penalties and being similarly classified as national security offences.

Conclusion

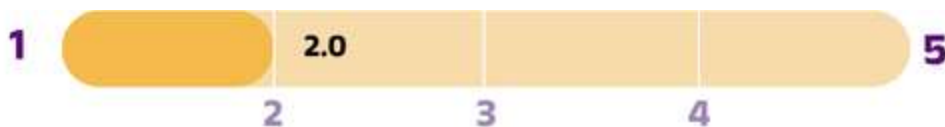
In conclusion, Thailand's formal return to civilian-led government has not translated into meaningful improvements in the protection of fundamental freedoms. The continued use of Section 112 to criminalise peaceful expression, the growing use of SLAPP lawsuits, and the

targeting of elected parliamentarians for proposing legislative reforms collectively demonstrate a persistent pattern of restrictions on civic and political participation. The prosecution of activists, journalists, academics, and opposition politicians has created a significant chilling effect on public discourse, particularly on issues relating to the monarchy and democratic reform. These developments raise serious concerns regarding Thailand's compliance with its international human rights obligations and the ability of individuals to exercise their fundamental freedoms without legal reprisals.

PRINCIPLE SCORE

2. Supportive Legal and Regulatory Framework

Score:



Thailand's legal framework continues to provide for the establishment of civil society organisations (CSOs) as legal entities, primarily in the form of associations and foundations under the Civil and Commercial Code, as well as cooperatives regulated under the Cooperatives Act B.E. 2542 (1999). International non-governmental organisations (INGOs) operate under the [Rule of the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare on the Operation of Foreign Private Organisations in Thailand B.E. 2541 \(1998\)](#). In practice, [most CSOs](#) are registered as associations or foundations, which constitute the primary legal forms through which civil society groups formally organise and operate in Thailand, with different rules and regulations applicable to each type of registered organisation. As noted in the 2025 Country Focus Report, concerns remain over the draft Act on Associations and Foundations, proposed in October 2024, which risks restricting CSO operations in ways [inconsistent with international law](#).

2.1. Registration

The challenges identified in the 2025 Country Focus Report persist, as no significant legal or policy changes have been introduced to address barriers to the registration and operation of civil society organisations (CSOs). In practice, prolonged and uncertain registration processes, administrative discretion, financial and reporting requirements, and government scrutiny continue to affect CSOs seeking to establish or formalise their operations.

Registration Requirements for International Organisations Operating in Thailand

The registration of INGOs in Thailand is governed by the [Rule of the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare on the Operation of Foreign Private Organisations in Thailand B.E. 2541 \(1998\)](#) and the [Rule of the Committee for the Consideration of the Operations of Foreign Private Organisations on the Criteria and Procedures for the Operation of Foreign Private Organisations in Thailand and the Establishment of Regional Offices in Thailand B.E. 2543](#)

[\(2000\)](#) (2000 Rule). As detailed in last year's report, INGOs remain subject to extensive requirements governing both their registration and subsequent operations, as well as oversight by relevant government authorities. The regulatory framework gives authorities considerable discretion in assessing applications, including through broadly framed criteria concerning an organisation's purpose and activities, such as whether these may affect national security, public order, or Thailand's relations with other countries (Clause 6 of the 2000 Rule). Applicants are also required to provide detailed information on their organisational structure, activities, staffing, and premises (Clause 13). Following registration, authorisation remains subject to periodic renewal and assessment of the organisation's activities and plans (Clause 7), while foreign staff must separately obtain and renew work permits and visas. Taken together, these requirements create significant administrative burdens and uncertainty for INGOs seeking to establish and sustain their operations in Thailand.

The persistence of these challenges has prompted some experts to highlight that the administrative requirements may be disproportionate to the scale of operations of INGOs implementing small-scale or project-based activities. They also raised concerns about screening and oversight by government agencies, including security authorities, which may discourage some organisations from seeking formal registration or create uncertainty about their ability to operate in Thailand.

Registration for Foundations and Associations

As detailed in last year's report, organisations may establish a foundation or association as an alternative to registering as a foreign private organisation, although these entities are subject to their own registration and operational requirements. The registration of foundations and associations is governed by ministerial regulations issued under the Civil and Commercial Code, including [the Ministerial Regulation on the Registration of Foundations, the Conduct of Foundation Activities, and the Foundation Registry B.E. 2545 \(2002\)](#) and [the Ministerial Regulation \(B.E. 2537 \(1994\)\) issued under the Civil and Commercial Code](#). In practice, applications often require review by multiple government agencies, including an assessment of whether the proposed organisation's objectives overlap with those of existing foundations or organisations. This can make the registration process lengthy and unpredictable, with applicants unable to anticipate when the authorities will issue a decision.

Furthermore, civil society members identified financial and administrative requirements as additional barriers, particularly for smaller and grassroots organisations. Registering a foundation requires an initial endowment of at least THB 500,000 (approximately EUR 13,000), in addition to requirements relating to a registered office, accounting, reporting, and maintaining legal status. These costs and compliance requirements can prevent some initiatives from formalising their operations.

Administrative discretion also continues to affect organisations working on sensitive issues, particularly refugee rights, as previously documented in the 2025 report. Panel participants reported that applications involving sensitive terms in an organisation's name or objectives may face additional scrutiny or prolonged delays. Terms such as "refugee" and "kathoei" ([people born with a male sexual physiology, but a feminine gender identity](#)) are reportedly questioned or considered unacceptable during the registration process, prompting some organisations to modify their terminology. This may restrict CSOs' ability to define their own identity and mission and may contribute to self-censorship.

Civil society organisations in the Southern Border Provinces (SBPs) continue to face heightened scrutiny. Although registration is legally possible, many organisations reportedly operate without formal registration, while registered organisations may be subject to document inspections and site visits. Unregistered groups may also receive visits from officials or

individuals associated with relevant authorities, contributing to an environment of heightened monitoring.

Lastly, civil society members on the panel reported that some foundation registration applications submitted in 2025 remain pending without formal approval. The primary concern is therefore not necessarily formal rejection, but prolonged delays, unclear responses, and the absence of a defined timeframe for decision-making from the regulating authorities. This lack of predictability hinders organisations' ability to plan and commence their activities and underscores the need for greater transparency and accountability in the registration process.

2.2. Operational environment

CSOs in Thailand are generally able to carry out their activities and pursue their objectives. However, the operational environment continues to be shaped by legal, administrative, and regulatory constraints. Many of these restrictions do not take the form of direct prohibitions but are instead achieved through authorisation procedures, oversight, monitoring, regulatory requirements, and legal interpretations, all of which have affected the operations of CSOs.

Under Section 110 of the Civil and Commercial Code, organisations are required to operate within the objectives stated in their registration documents. While intended to ensure that organisations act consistently with their stated missions, this requirement can constrain CSOs' ability to respond to emerging issues, as activities perceived as falling outside their registered objectives may trigger additional scrutiny or require organisations to seek approval for changes to their stated objectives. As a result, many organisations define their objectives broadly from the outset to preserve flexibility in their operations. Nevertheless, civil society members raised concerns that boards or regulatory authorities may interpret certain activities as exceeding an organisation's registered objectives, potentially limiting CSOs' ability to respond to emerging issues without first modifying their registered objectives.

CSOs also reported that administrative requirements and the discretion afforded to registrars can affect changes in organisational leadership. Under Sections 85 and 125 of the Civil and Commercial Code, changes to the directors of associations and foundations, respectively, must be registered, and the registrar may refuse to register a director whose "status or conduct" is considered unsuitable for implementing the organisation's objectives. Civil society members reported cases in which changes to board members, including the appointment of individuals perceived by authorities as associated with politically sensitive issues, resulted in delays in the registration process. Such delays can disrupt changes in organisational leadership and impose additional administrative burdens on CSOs.

CSOs operating in the Southern Border Provinces (SBPs) face additional security-related constraints. Panel participants reported regular visits from officials or individuals associated with relevant authorities and continued monitoring of their activities. Organisations may also be required to coordinate with security agencies or local authorities before holding events, while surveillance of activists, home visits, and observation of community activities continue to be reported. These practices have become a persistent feature of the operating environment and can undermine the sense of safety of activists and CSOs working on sensitive issues.

In addition, CSOs raised concerns about the [draft Act on Associations and Foundations \(the "draft Act"\)](#), which remains pending before entering the legislative process, an issue also raised in last year's report. Although the draft Act is not currently in force, its proposed requirements and powers would give authorities greater oversight of CSO activities, including through reporting requirements, inspections of organisational premises and documents, and broad grounds for intervention in organisational governance and dissolution. Consequently,

many experts expressed apprehension that the proposed additional controls could lead CSOs to limit or modify their activities, particularly those working on environmental protection, human rights, or politically sensitive issues.

2.3. Protection from interference

Interference with the work of CSOs has become increasingly complex and diverse, often taking the form of administrative measures, surveillance, restrictions on access to certain areas, immigration controls, and constraints on CSO workers and networks rather than outright dissolution. Although these measures may not result in the formal closure of organisations, they can significantly constrain the ability of CSOs to carry out their work.

Thailand's SBPs remain a particularly pronounced example of such interference. Security officials or individuals believed to be associated with state authorities reportedly attend and observe civil society activities, while event organisers and community leaders may be subject to ongoing [surveillance](#) and intimidation. International organisations operating in the region have also faced constraints linked to security concerns rather than formal legal restrictions. During the panel it was highlighted how some organisations promoting the application of international humanitarian law (IHL) reported that they were asked to cease their activities in the area and relocate their offices. As a result, some organisations have had to shift away from human rights or conflict-related work towards development-oriented activities. Visits by embassy officials and other foreign representatives may also require prior notification to or coordination with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, creating additional obstacles to international observation and engagement. These restrictions have reportedly limited the ability of CSOs in the SBPs to maintain international connections and access the support and visibility that such networks provide.

Immigration controls represent another means through which the work of CSOs and human rights networks may be constrained, particularly where foreign activists, practitioners, or experts are involved. There have been cases in which foreign activists or practitioners were denied entry to Thailand, subjected to travel restrictions, or faced increased scrutiny of their immigration status or work authorisation despite holding valid travel documents or visas.

A related concern has emerged following the enactment of the [Prime Minister's Office Regulation on Deportation](#) in August 2026. Issued pursuant to Section 5 of the [Deportation Act](#), the Regulation sets out categories of conduct that may constitute grounds for deportation where considered necessary for the maintenance of public order or good morals. For instance, Category 1 covers unlawful entry into or stay in Thailand, while Category 2 covers unauthorised employment in violation of the law governing the employment of foreigners. These provisions may have implications for CSOs that rely on foreign staff, researchers, human rights defenders, or other practitioners whose immigration status or authorisation to work may become subject to scrutiny. More significantly, Category 5 covers offences punishable by imprisonment of three years or more. This threshold encompasses a number of provisions that have been used to repress freedom of expression and peaceful assembly, including Section 112 (lèse-majesté) of the Criminal Code and Section 14 of the Computer Crime Act. Foreign civil society actors charged with such offences could therefore potentially face deportation in addition to criminal proceedings. Category 6 further extends the framework to persons acting as a principal, instigator, or supporter of the offences covered by the preceding categories. Although the Regulation is not specifically directed at CSOs, these provisions could provide an additional legal avenue through which immigration and deportation measures affect foreign civil society actors and their ability to remain in Thailand and carry out their work.

Lastly, existing mechanisms for protection from such interference remain inadequate. [The National Human Rights Commission of Thailand](#) (NHRCT) and parliamentary committees provide important avenues for CSOs to raise concerns, submit recommendations, and contribute to policy discussions, including on issues affecting children, refugees, and other vulnerable groups. However, their ability to protect CSOs and human rights defenders from harassment, surveillance, or reprisals remains constrained. CSOs noted instances in which individuals who brought complaints of surveillance by state authorities to the NHRCT subsequently experienced increased pressure or reprisals. While the NHRCT has a mandate to receive complaints, conduct investigations, and issue recommendations, it lacks powers to provide protective measures to complainants or prevent reprisals following the submission of complaints.

Conclusion

Thailand's legal framework permits the establishment and operation of CSOs, but significant practical constraints continue to affect their ability to operate independently and effectively. Barriers arise at each stage of the civil society lifecycle, from lengthy and unpredictable registration processes and financial and administrative requirements, to regulatory oversight, monitoring, and interference once organisations are established. Administrative discretion is particularly consequential for organisations working on sensitive or politically contested issues, including human rights, refugees, and activities in the Southern Border Provinces.

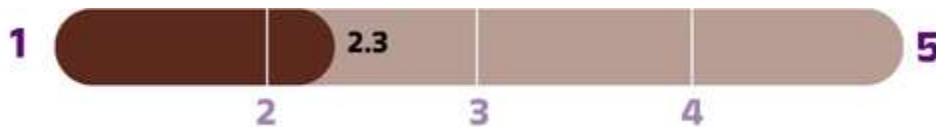
The operating environment is further affected by security-related monitoring, restrictions on organisational leadership and activities, and immigration measures affecting foreign civil society actors. The proposed Act on Associations and Foundations and the Draft Regulation on Deportation also raise concerns about the potential expansion of state powers affecting CSOs and their personnel, particularly those working on politically sensitive or rights-related issues. While these measures do not necessarily take the form of direct prohibitions, their cumulative effect can constrain the ability of CSOs to determine their activities, maintain their personnel and networks, and operate without undue interference.

Existing mechanisms provide only limited protection against such interference. Although the NHRCT and parliamentary committees offer avenues for CSOs to raise concerns and engage with authorities, their ability to protect individuals from harassment, surveillance, and reprisals remains limited. As a result, CSOs may formally exercise their rights to associate and operate, but continue to face significant practical obstacles to doing so independently and without undue interference.

PRINCIPLE SCORE

3. Accessible and Sustainable Resources

Score:



CSOs continue to be able to operate, but in an environment where access to and sustainability of resources are becoming increasingly constrained by geopolitical and domestic pressures, affecting their ability to maintain and expand their work in response to growing needs.

3.1. Accessibility

As reported in last year's report, Thai CSOs remain reliant on foreign funding but face growing constraints amid a shrinking and shifting international funding environment, following significant funding cuts by major donors, particularly in the [United States](#) and [United Kingdom](#). As international donors redirect support toward immediate priorities, including armed conflicts and humanitarian emergencies, Thai CSOs working on longer-term issues such as human rights and democracy reported facing greater competition for a smaller pool of resources. Organisations working on migration and gender equality reported being particularly vulnerable to these shifts, noting that funding for these areas has [declined](#) even as the needs they address persist and, in some cases, continue to grow. This has made access to international funding increasingly uncertain for CSOs working on issues that do not align with donors' immediate priorities.

Across both international and domestic funding mechanisms, smaller and newer CSOs face additional barriers to accessing resources. Funding mechanisms often favour organisations with formal legal status, established track records, strong institutional and financial capacity, and familiarity with donor networks and application requirements. Experts noted that these requirements can disadvantage grassroots and [youth-led organisations](#), whose work is often more informal, flexible, and responsive to emerging or short-term issues, while funding mechanisms tend to favour established organisations and longer-term projects. Smaller organisations may also have fewer staff and less administrative capacity to prepare proposals, meet reporting requirements, or maintain the institutional systems expected by funders. As a

result, access to resources remains concentrated among established organisations with the capacity and connections to navigate these systems, while organisations working more informally or at the grassroots level may struggle to secure funding even where their activities respond directly to emerging community needs.

Domestically, CSOs have access to several public funding mechanisms, including the [Thai Health Promotion Foundation \(ThaiHealth\)](#), but such funding reportedly remains concentrated among a limited number of institutions and specific policy priorities, such as health promotion, livelihoods, education, and social welfare. Civil society actors working on migration issues reported that public funding mechanisms also prioritise Thai nationals, making it particularly difficult for organisations working with migrant communities to secure support. Access to domestic funds through government programmes and private foundations is also reportedly concentrated among a small number of funders and gatekeepers, giving these actors significant influence over which organisations and issues receive support. Where fund assessors lack sufficient expertise or understanding of the communities concerned, funding decisions may prioritise projects that do not fully reflect local needs. This issue was raised by CSOs working on LGBTQ+ rights, who reported that limited understanding of these issues among funders can affect how applications are assessed and, consequently, how resources are allocated.

Beyond state-linked funding, CSOs can also raise resources from individual donors, but the existing tax framework limits which donations qualify for a personal income-tax deduction. Under Section 47(7) of the [Revenue Code](#), donations to foundations, associations, and other CSOs are tax-deductible only where the recipient has been formally designated as an eligible public charitable organisation or institution. Some civil society actors reported that the application process and eligibility criteria for obtaining tax-deductible status are unclear, while others reported that the system appears to favour more traditional charitable organisations, particularly those working in areas such as healthcare and education. This can make it more difficult for organisations working on issues such as environmental protection, human rights, and democracy to obtain the status needed for their donors to receive tax deductions. As a result, the tax framework can affect not only the ability of CSOs to attract individual donations, but also which types of civil society activities are more readily supported through private giving.

3.2. Effectiveness

The effectiveness of CSO resources depends not only on the amount of funding available, but also on how flexibly it can be used and whether funding conditions reflect the realities of CSO work. International donors are generally seen as providing greater flexibility than domestic funders, allowing organisations to adjust activities and budgets in response to changing circumstances. This can enable CSOs to respond more effectively to emerging community needs and unexpected situations. However, greater flexibility also places greater responsibility on CSOs to maintain robust financial and internal oversight systems, as organisations have more discretion over how funds are allocated and must be able to account for how resources are used. This can present a particular challenge for smaller and newer organisations with limited administrative capacity.

A major limitation on the effectiveness of CSO resources is the lack of core funding. Donor support is often provided through project-based grants tied to specific activities and objectives, while core funding covers basic operating costs such as staff, administration, and other essential expenses. When these costs are not adequately covered, organisations may have to combine funding from multiple projects to sustain basic operations, creating financial uncertainty and affecting staff welfare and the continuity of their work. This can also limit

organisations' ability to respond to emerging needs that fall outside the scope of existing projects, as resources are tied to activities and outcomes agreed upon with individual funders.

Another issue stems from restrictions on how funds can be spent, particularly where donors require expenditures to be tied to specific project activities and prohibit direct financial support to grassroots movements or community groups. Some civil society actors reported that funding received through public donations cannot be provided directly to such groups, requiring support to be channelled through specific expenses such as food, venue costs, or other activity-related expenses instead. While these arrangements may allow organisations to comply with donor or financial requirements, they can make movement-building more difficult by limiting the forms of support that can be provided to community actors. They also increase administrative burdens for both organisations and their partners, as CSOs must find ways to structure support around eligible expenditures rather than the needs identified by the communities themselves.

Funding politically sensitive work also carries distinct political and reputational risks for CSOs and their donors. CSOs receiving foreign funding have been frequently [portrayed](#) as serving foreign interests or acting as “foreign agents,” exposing them to harassment and scrutiny. This is particularly evident for CSOs working in politically sensitive areas such as refugee rights and legal aid for *lèse-majesté* defendants. At the same time, some international donors are cautious about attracting scrutiny from government authorities or conservative groups because of their support for CSOs working on these issues. Civil society members reported that some donors have therefore requested that their identities remain undisclosed, as disclosure could expose them and recipient organisations to political or reputational risks. These political considerations can also shape how CSOs seek and use funding. CSOs reported pressure to adapt how they frame their activities to fit donor priorities and funding requirements, particularly when politically sensitive work is harder to fund through regular grant mechanisms. Some organisations have consequently relied on emergency funding or adjusted how they present their work to secure support. This can affect the effectiveness of resources by requiring both donors and CSOs to account for the political risks associated with funding relationships.

3.3. Sustainability

The sustainability of Thai CSOs remains fragile, particularly their ability to secure predictable funding, retain staff, and plan beyond the short term. Heavy reliance on project-based grants means that many organisations have limited visibility over their finances beyond one or two years, making long-term planning and institutional development difficult. The absence of sufficient core or longer-term funding also leaves organisations dependent on continuous fundraising to maintain basic operations, rather than allowing them to build stable institutional capacity that supports their long-term goals.

This funding insecurity also affects the sustainability of the civil society workforce. CSO members working on politically and socially sensitive issues face particularly high risks of [burnout](#) due to sustained workloads, political pressure, and uncertainty over funding and employment. While some donors have begun supporting “collective care” and staff well-being, such support remains limited and is not yet a consistent component of CSO funding. High turnover can result in the loss of experienced staff and specialised expertise, making it harder for organisations to maintain continuity and build long-term capacity.

This fragility is further reinforced by dependence on international donors, exposing CSOs to shifts in global political and humanitarian priorities that can rapidly affect resource availability. As international donors reduce or redirect support toward other regions and emerging crises,

Thai CSOs have reported difficulty securing continued funding for long-term work even where the needs they address persist. Civil society actors therefore emphasised the importance of developing stronger domestic sources of support, particularly given Thailand's philanthropic capacity. However, building a domestic donor base is particularly difficult for smaller and community-based CSOs, which often lack the staff, donor databases, communications tools, and resources needed to sustain public fundraising and long-term engagement with supporters. Moreover, Thailand notably lacks intermediary mechanisms that connect individual donors with CSOs working on democracy and civil and political rights. Although platforms such as [Taejai](#) have expanded opportunities for public giving to some social organisations, they do not yet provide a dedicated channel for organisations working in these areas.

Conclusion

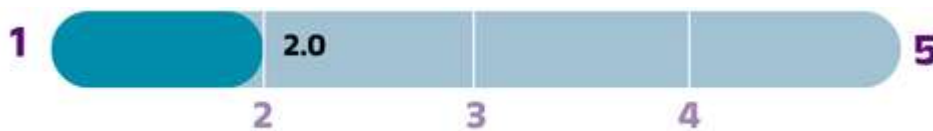
Overall, the civil society funding landscape in Thailand is characterised by structural constraints across accessibility, effectiveness, and sustainability. Funding remains unevenly accessible, with resources concentrated among established organisations and greater barriers faced by smaller, newer, and rights-focused CSOs. The overall decline in available funding further compounds these disparities, while restrictive, short-term, and project-based funding can limit CSOs' ability to respond to changing needs and cover essential operating costs. These challenges reinforce one another, as limited access to funding reduces organisations' ability to build capacity and diversify their resources, while the lack of flexible and sustained funding undermines their ability to plan and operate over the long term. As a result, although many CSOs remain operational, their financial and institutional security remains fragile, limiting their capacity to retain staff, plan beyond the short term, and sustain their work.



PRINCIPLE SCORE

4. Open and Responsive State

Score:



4.1. Transparency

Civil society actors reported ongoing difficulties in obtaining information from government agencies, despite recent government efforts to improve public access to government information and data sharing. These challenges persist despite the legal framework provided by the [Official Information Act](#), as documented in last year's report. CSOs emphasised that transparency remains limited not only by what information the government discloses, but also by what it withholds and whether information that is made available is sufficiently accessible and usable for public scrutiny.

A key issue that persists from last year is the practical implementation of the Official Information Act. While the Act provides a formal mechanism for requesting government information, civil society actors continue to report difficulties obtaining information from government agencies. Requests may be denied on grounds permitted under the [law](#), including national security, personal information, and private commercial interests. This has made it difficult for CSOs to obtain information needed to monitor government conduct, undertake research, and hold public authorities accountable. In the environmental sector, for example, CSOs reported difficulties obtaining information such as power purchase agreements and contract values, which authorities have at times withheld on confidentiality grounds. Such restrictions can limit the ability of communities and CSOs to assess environmental impacts and evaluate the cost-effectiveness of development projects.

Even when information is disclosed, it may not be sufficiently accessible or usable for public scrutiny. For example, during the panel discussions, environmental CSOs [observed](#) that Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) and [Environmental Health Impact Assessment](#) (EHIA) reports released by the government often contain highly technical information that affected communities may find difficult to understand or use when assessing projects and their potential impacts. Civil society actors also identified gaps in how public information is recorded, maintained, and consolidated in the first place. For example, a civil society actor

working on children's rights reported that when they sought to raise a complaint on behalf of a child through the Ministry of Education's hotline, they found no systematic mechanism for recording and tracking complaints. Similar gaps affect information on migrant workers and refugees, with different agencies maintaining separate and poorly connected databases. These weaknesses can leave the government itself without a complete or consistent picture of certain issues, while making it difficult for CSOs and the public to obtain reliable information, assess the scale of problems, or scrutinise the government's response.

Transparency issues also extend to the justice system, where Thai courts are [increasingly restricting](#) public access to proceedings involving political expression through secret-trial orders, requirements for observers to provide identification, and "gag orders" prohibiting the dissemination of courtroom information. Civil society members also reported witnessing defence lawyers and trial observers being threatened with contempt of court for questioning such restrictions. These restrictions are particularly prevalent in politically sensitive cases, including *lèse-majesté* cases. Between December 2021 and July 2026, TLHR documented at least 32 instances in which courts either restricted public access to *lèse-majesté* proceedings without formally ordering a closed hearing or ordered closed hearings without providing an adequate legal basis, as well as more than 37 instances of "gag orders" prohibiting observers and defence lawyers from discussing or reporting on courtroom proceedings. These practices undermine defendants' right to a fair and public hearing, as well as transparency in the justice system.

As a result, the overall level of government transparency remains limited. However, CSOs reported that they have occasionally been able to obtain information through persistent engagement, public pressure, or formal information requests. One example is access to election-related information from the Election Commission of Thailand (ECT) during the 2026 general election, which faced widespread public and civil society scrutiny amid allegations of electoral irregularities. The ECT's reporting of preliminary results was significantly [delayed and incomplete](#), while its official figures were reportedly inconsistent with figures recorded by independent election observers at polling stations. Vote62, an independent watchdog, recorded more than 5,000 [complaints](#) nationwide, including over 1,000 cases where official vote counts differed from tallies recorded by independent observers. Following calls from civil society and the public for greater transparency, the ECT subsequently released additional datasets, including a dashboard displaying polling-station-level election results.

4.2. Participation

While the government has established various channels for public consultation, including consultation meetings and opportunities to submit comments on draft policies and plans, civil society actors reported that meaningful participation remains constrained. The main concern is not the absence of consultation mechanisms, but whether civil society and affected communities are able to influence decisions before key policy directions have already been determined.

This was evident in consultations on large-scale development projects with significant environmental impacts. Civil society actors working on environmental issues reported that affected communities are often consulted only after key aspects of a project have been determined and without sufficient information to assess its potential impacts or influence available options. Consequently, they viewed these consultations as formalities intended to meet legal requirements, rather than genuine efforts to engage meaningfully with affected communities. For example, Greenpeace Thailand and other civil society groups [reported](#) that the draft ERIA for the Ranong–Chumphon Land Bridge in 2025 not only excluded some affected communities from its assessment, but also failed to address questions raised by the

community members that were present during earlier consultations. Similar concerns were raised by civil society members about a [lignite coal mine](#) project in Omkoi, Chiang Mai, where the environmental impact assessment process had proceeded without meaningful consultation, failing to adequately incorporate community voices or account for the project's full environmental and social impacts.

Participation is also uneven across policy areas and communities. This is particularly evident in policymaking processes where CSOs have reported being excluded or not meaningfully engaged. A civil society actor working on children's rights reported that CSOs have limited opportunities to participate in policymaking within the Ministry of Education, particularly in relation to child-rights policy and monitoring. Similar concerns were raised regarding participation in major national policy frameworks, including the National Human Rights Plan and the National Economic and Social Development Plan, which shape government priorities on human rights and national development. Several human rights organisations reported that they had not been invited to contribute to these processes, despite the responsible government agencies stating that multiple rounds of public consultations had been conducted.

However, CSOs working on children's rights reported that children and young people have been invited to participate in consultations on climate change, including [discussions](#) with the Department of Climate Change and Environment. Similarly, civil society actors working with migrant workers and refugees reported that some government agencies have invited CSOs to contribute to policy discussions, particularly where they can provide relevant expertise or information. These examples suggest that opportunities for meaningful participation remain inconsistent and dependent on the policy area and government agency involved.

4.3. Accountability

The primary challenge regarding state accountability is not the absence of channels for submitting complaints or providing public input, but what happens after concerns are raised. Civil society actors reported that government follow-up after complaints are submitted is often unclear or absent. Government agencies may acknowledge receipt of a complaint or indicate that a matter will be considered, without providing information on whether it was investigated, what response followed, or why a proposed measure was not pursued. In one case, a civil society member working on children's rights reported that a complaint submitted through the Ministry of Education's hotline could no longer be located when they later sought to follow up on it, making it impossible to determine whether the authorities had reviewed the matter or taken any action. This makes it difficult for CSOs and affected communities to determine whether their concerns have been addressed or to challenge decisions where they have not.

This lack of follow-up and response to complaints was reported across areas including environmental governance, human rights protection, and children's rights. In the environmental sector, for example, a civil society member described a case in which the Energy Regulatory Commission had committed to conducting a site visit to investigate community complaints about a power plant project. The project was subsequently approved before the inspection took place, and the planned investigation was cancelled, leaving the community without a clear response to the concerns it had raised.

Conclusion

Despite some initiatives to strengthen transparency and public participation, structural challenges continue to limit access to information, meaningful participation, and state accountability. Civil society actors reported persistent difficulties in obtaining government information, including information that is withheld, difficult to locate, or disclosed in forms that are difficult for the public to understand and use.

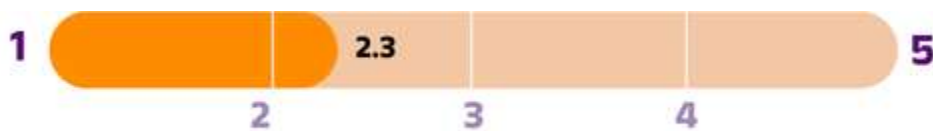
Participation also remains uneven. While government agencies provide opportunities for civil society engagement through consultations, affected communities are often consulted only after key decisions have been made, limiting their ability to influence policy and project outcomes. Opportunities for civil society engagement also vary across policy areas, with some agencies providing greater space for participation while others continue to offer limited opportunities for meaningful input.

Finally, complaint and consultation mechanisms do not consistently lead to government responsiveness. Civil society actors reported limited follow-up and insufficient information on how concerns were addressed, what action was taken, or why recommendations were not pursued. Together, these gaps limit the ability of civil society and the public to participate meaningfully in decision-making, monitor government action, and hold authorities accountable.

PRINCIPLE SCORE

5. Supportive Public Culture and Discourses on Civil Society

Score:



5.1. Public Discourse and Constructive Dialogue on Civil Society

Public Discourse

Public discourse around civil society in Thailand remains mixed, with both positive and negative perceptions of CSOs. However, several CSOs noted that the government has generally not taken a particularly supportive approach toward civil society, with relations between the government and CSOs often characterised by disagreement and scrutiny rather than cooperation. Several participants also reported negative public narratives that have contributed to online and offline attacks, including social media harassment, defamatory coverage, threats and other forms of harassment against organisations. During the 2026 general election, participants further observed an increase in disinformation campaigns targeting civil society, distorting public understanding of the role of CSOs and undermining the credibility of human rights defenders.

Throughout Thailand's 2026 general election, nationalist narratives and information operations (IO) increasingly affected civil society, including organisations and individuals working on civil and political rights, migrant and refugee rights, and issues concerning Thailand's SBPs. Many CSOs reported that they are frequently portrayed as undermining national unity or acting against the country's interests through negative online and hate campaigns that spread false or inflammatory information, including allegations that they receive foreign funding to pursue hidden political agendas. The intensity and toxicity of these campaigns increased particularly [during tensions along the Thai-Cambodian border](#), when many CSOs and their members became targets of online attacks. These attacks have made it more difficult for organisations to carry out their work, including publishing information and engaging in advocacy on sensitive issues. For instance, two [prominent civil society actors](#) were subjected to online harassment, disinformation, and threats following their public comments on alleged military activity near the Thai-Cambodian border. The harassment escalated to the point that they sought police

protection, with the attacks including smear campaigns, gendered and religiously charged insults, and death threats.

Positive public discourse persists to some extent. Some CSOs observed that recent social and political developments, particularly those related to anti-corruption efforts, have strengthened public recognition of civil society's role in scrutinising information, clarifying facts, and encouraging public participation in matters of public interest. For example, following the 2026 general election, iLaw published posts examining alleged irregularities in the voting process, with one post reportedly receiving around [one million shares on Facebook](#). Public support also extended to financial contributions, with donors contributing [THB 2 million](#) (approximately EUR 52,600) to iLaw Director Yingcheep Atchanon's Civil Rights Fund for Transparent Elections to support legal action challenging alleged irregularities in the 2024 Senate selection process. Similarly, the civil society campaign ["8 February: Vote to Approve"](#) received strong public support, with CSOs noting that the campaign reflected public demands to address structural problems arising from the military-drafted 2017 Constitution. The subsequent referendum recorded 36,870,266 voters, of whom 21,621,638, or [60.16%](#), voted in favor of the proposal.

The Portrayal of Civil Society in Media

Civil society members asserted that Thailand's media landscape has become increasingly complex, with commercial pressures affecting the ability of media outlets to report independently. Many mainstream media outlets have had to [rely on funding from government agencies and large business groups](#), contributing to self-censorship and reluctance to report critically on issues involving corporate sponsors, as well as [concerns regarding editorial independence and media ethics](#).

At the same time, CSOs observed that independent online media and emerging news outlets have created greater space for civil society voices, although their ability to reach wider audiences remains limited, particularly as many people increasingly consume short-form and highly sensationalised content on platforms such as [TikTok](#). They further noted that large mainstream media outlets tend to prioritise high-profile issues or those attracting significant public attention, leaving many human rights issues without sustained media coverage.

These broader dynamics also shape how human rights issues are covered in the media. Several CSOs noted that, despite growing social acceptance of gender diversity following the enactment of the [Marriage Equality Act](#), LGBTQ+ rights are still sometimes framed as matters of private or personal life rather than matters of public interest. They also observed continued gender bias in media coverage, including the use of hate speech against LGBTQ+ individuals and reporting that attributes violence against LGBTQ+ people to individual behaviour rather than its broader structural causes. This framing can shift attention away from the discrimination and structural inequalities underlying such violence.

Other CSO participants observed that while environmental issues continue to receive some media attention, reporting becomes considerably more limited when it involves major corporations, particularly energy companies. They pointed to the efforts of some large energy companies to [present themselves as "green energy companies"](#) by highlighting investments in renewable energy projects while continuing to invest substantially more in fossil fuels and carbon-intensive energy infrastructure. They also highlighted the increasing [framing of natural gas as "clean energy"](#) to justify the development of liquefied natural gas (LNG) infrastructure and Thailand's ambition to become a regional LNG hub. CSOs noted that the influence and economic power of major energy groups can constrain critical media coverage of their activities, particularly given the risk of legal action, including SLAPP lawsuits, against journalists and civil society actors who publicly criticise them.

5.2. Perception of Civil Society and Civic Engagement

As noted in last year's report, citizens' willingness to engage in civic and political participation is closely linked to their perceptions of whether such participation can produce meaningful change. This remains the case, although panellists observed that perceptions of civic engagement have evolved across different groups and issues.

Several CSOs viewed the political climate prior to Thailand's 2026 general election as more conducive to civic and political participation, with election campaigns and the referendum raising awareness of civic rights and expectations of political change. This momentum quickly faded as post-election developments fell short of public and civil society expectations, reinforcing perceptions that state institutions and oversight bodies remained dominated by established political interests, offered limited avenues for accountability, and provided few opportunities for meaningful political participation. Other experts added that [legal action](#) against activists, whistleblowers, and [others](#) exercising their rights, together with prolonged political uncertainty and broader political conservatism, had contributed to political fatigue and declining confidence in formal political participation.

Economic pressures, including rising living costs, economic uncertainty, and unstable incomes, have further constrained civic engagement, particularly among daily wage earners, economically vulnerable groups, and young people entering the labour market. Some panellists also identified limited access to knowledge, skills, and practical tools as barriers to effective civic participation, despite many citizens' belief that they can contribute to social change. They emphasised that legal literacy, civic education, and capacity-building programmes can help address these barriers by improving access to information and participation mechanisms and strengthening public confidence and willingness to engage.

Despite declining confidence in political institutions, trust in civil society organisations has, in some respects, increased. CSO members shared that many citizens view CSOs as credible and accessible actors for monitoring state power, protecting the public interest, and providing information and assistance, particularly on issues such as election transparency, public accountability, and community concerns. This is especially evident in Thailand's SBPs, where people often turn to CSOs rather than state agencies to seek advice, submit complaints, and address community problems. Although confidence that such engagement will lead to policy change remains limited, CSOs continue to serve as an important and trusted avenue for public participation.

Many experts indicated that civic participation has shifted across groups and issues, rather than simply declined. While youth political participation has [declined from its peak during the 2020–2021 pro-democracy movement](#) amid ongoing [prosecutions and other pressures](#), young people have increasingly engaged through community initiatives, creative expression, and issue-based advocacy on [environmental protection](#), [gender equality](#), [LGBTQ+ rights](#), and social justice. Environmental and climate issues have also attracted growing interest, although affected communities often rely on localised campaigns where they perceive limited institutional responsiveness. [LGBTQ+ communities remain active in advocacy despite barriers](#) related to discrimination, economic insecurity, and [family pressures](#), while migrant workers and refugees face greater constraints due to [insecure legal status, unequal power relations, and safety concerns](#), limiting their direct participation despite often relying on CSOs for support.

Some panel experts also reported that specific channels for civic participation have expanded modestly over the past year, particularly through parliamentary committee hearings, public consultations, and online consultation mechanisms. Collaboration among civil society

organisations, government agencies, and academic institutions has also contributed to policy discussions on issues such as refugee employment and statelessness. However, they noted that these opportunities for civic engagement and their impact on policymaking remain uneven. Although tangible advances have been achieved in areas such as marriage equality, other areas including environmental protection, democracy, and human rights continue to face substantial obstacles.

5.3. Civic Equality and Inclusion

Although Thailand has made notable progress in adopting laws and policies to protect vulnerable groups and reduce discrimination, such as the [Act on Protection and Promotion of the Way of Life of Ethnic Groups](#), many CSOs reported that significant barriers remain in practice. These include economic insecurity, legal status, discrimination, and unequal access to decision-making. Rising living costs were identified as constraints on civic and political participation, particularly among low-income and younger people. Administrative and logistical barriers also affect electoral participation, particularly advance voting. These include registration requirements, limited information about advance-voting procedures, and difficulties reaching designated polling locations. Recent [reporting](#) on the 2026 election documented cases of young ethnic minority voters who missed advance-voting registration or were unaware of the procedure and consequently had to return to their home constituencies to vote, incurring additional time and expense.

Legal status remains a significant barrier for migrant workers, refugees, and stateless persons. Although Thailand has introduced measures to expand protections, including a [2025 Cabinet Resolution](#) allowing approximately 77,000 registered refugees from temporary shelters to seek employment outside the camps, access remains subject to geographical, employment, and registration restrictions, while refugees excluded from the registration process remain without these protections. CSOs noted that such insecurity can discourage migrants and refugees from organising or participating in civic and political activities for fear of affecting their residence or employment. Stateless persons similarly continue to face discrimination affecting access to education, public services, and other opportunities.

Discrimination also continues to affect equal participation. CSOs reported that although LGBTQ+ people have benefited from important legal developments, including the Marriage Equality Act, discrimination against transgender people [persists](#). Women, particularly in the SBPs, continue to face barriers to political participation and access to economic resources, despite their active roles in community and civil society initiatives.

These challenges are particularly pronounced in the SBPs, where the prolonged application of [special security laws](#), including the Emergency Decree and Martial Law Act, continues to affect civic participation. CSOs reported that routine security measures, including checkpoints, identity checks, and vehicle searches, remain common. Legal restrictions have also affected participation in cultural and community activities. For example, nine activists involved in the 2022 Melayu Raya gathering in Pattani province, a peaceful event promoting Malay-Muslim cultural identity and youth expression, are [facing prosecution](#) under, *inter alia*, Section 116 (sedition) of the Criminal Code and the Emergency Decree. Civil society actors also noted that, even where cultural identity itself is not directly restricted, government-supported cultural initiatives tend to receive greater support than community-led activities, limiting communities' ability to shape how their identities and interests are represented.

Conclusion

Thailand's civic space remains characterised by a mixed public perception of civil society. While CSOs continue to face negative narratives, disinformation, political polarisation, and

pressure when working on sensitive issues, they remain important and, in some contexts, increasingly trusted sources of information, advocacy, and public accountability. Independent media, online platforms, and issue-based movements have also created new avenues for public discourse and participation, particularly among younger people.

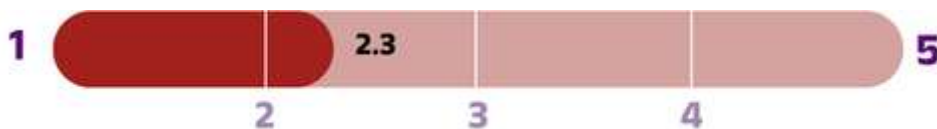
Civic engagement has therefore not simply declined but has shifted across groups, issues, and forms of participation. Confidence in formal political institutions remains limited, particularly where political and legal processes are perceived as unresponsive or inaccessible, while economic pressures and limited civic knowledge can further constrain participation. At the same time, citizens continue to engage through CSOs, community initiatives, online advocacy, environmental and social movements, and emerging institutional channels such as public consultations and parliamentary processes. These forms of engagement demonstrate continued demand for participation despite declining confidence in some formal institutions.

However, significant inequalities continue to shape who can participate, on what terms, and with what influence. Legal status, discrimination, economic insecurity, electoral and administrative barriers, and restrictions associated with the security environment in the SBPs continue to exclude or constrain particular groups. Thailand has made important progress in expanding formal legal protections, but these advances have not consistently translated into equal access to rights or meaningful participation in public life. Strengthening civic space will therefore require not only further legal and institutional reform, but also greater attention to the practical and structural barriers that prevent marginalised groups from exercising their rights on an equal basis.

PRINCIPLE SCORE

6. Access to a Secure Digital Environment

Score:



6.1. Digital rights and freedoms

Access to a safe digital environment for Thai CSOs is hindered by three key issues: the use of information operations to manipulate public discourse against civil society, weakening safeguards and accountability at major online platforms, and the growing use of SLAPP lawsuits against online expression.

First, civil society members have raised concerns about the growing use of information operations (IOs), coordinated efforts to manipulate public discourse and discredit human rights defenders, civil society, and political opposition. In March 2025, an opposition MP from the People's Party [disclosed](#) parliamentary evidence alleging that the Royal Thai Army had identified "High Value Targets" (HVTs), including many Thai CSOs, and subsequently sought to discredit them through IOs. Posts by organisations identified as HVTs have continued to [attract](#) coordinated hostile commentary. In [January 2025](#) and [June 2026](#), Thai courts confirmed the existence of state-linked IOs in separate cases. Experts also noted that the development of AI has further increased the capacity for IOs by enabling disinformation to be produced rapidly, at scale, and at low cost, without the same requirements for accuracy or evidence.

Second, experts raised concerns about weakening safeguards and accountability at major digital platforms, leaving civil society and vulnerable groups with fewer protections against online abuse and harmful content. Changes at platforms including [Facebook](#) and X have raised concerns about the platforms' commitment to human rights and user safety. In January 2025, Meta CEO Mark Zuckerberg [announced changes](#) to the platform's content moderation policies, including changes to restrictions on certain forms of harassment and a reduction in automated content moderation. X reportedly [removed](#) language protecting transgender people from online harassment in April 2023, after reportedly [firing](#) its human rights team in 2022. In Thailand, experts noted that concerns about platform safeguards are compounded by limited

public oversight. Although the government has pursued legislation to regulate major digital platforms, experts observed that several initiatives have not progressed due to economic and investment considerations. They further noted that the government's focus on attracting investment from major technology companies may limit political willingness to impose stricter oversight, while platforms themselves retain significant influence over public policy. These concerns are compounded by reports that content from civil society organisations addressing issues such as refugees, migrant workers, and politically sensitive topics can at times receive unusually low reach, making it more difficult for groups already facing limited protections online to reach and inform the public.

Lastly, civil society members raised concerns about the growing use of criminal defamation and SLAPP lawsuits by politicians and businesses to deter public participation. According to [data on cases involving online expression](#), more than 61 people were charged and/or prosecuted under Section 328 (libel) of the Criminal Code between July 2020 and August 2026, which carries a penalty of up to two years in prison. Civil society members noted that such cases have also affected journalists, academics, and ordinary users expressing opinions online. Experts observed that the threat of imprisonment, combined with the high financial burden placed on defendants, creates a chilling effect and encourages self-censorship. Despite ongoing efforts to reform the legal framework to better protect SLAPP victims and address the ease with which such cases can be filed, civil society members remain cautious about whether these reforms will meaningfully reduce the use of such lawsuits and strengthen protections for online expression.

6.2. Digital Security and Privacy

Methods of surveillance continue to pose risks to activists, civil society actors, and ordinary citizens. Following reports of state authorities using Pegasus spyware to target civil society organisations in 2020–2021, there has been no confirmed evidence of large-scale cyberattacks against civil society in the past year. However, a small number of incidents have been reported, including a [WhatsApp-blocked spyware campaign](#) in June 2026. Concerns nevertheless persist about the continued development of state surveillance capabilities. A parliamentary subcommittee disclosed that authorities had requested THB 35 million to procure [additional spyware](#) for use in Thailand's SBPs.

Digital security risks also arise from non-state actors. Civil society members reported that pro-monarchy groups continue to monitor online content and file criminal complaints against individuals, particularly under Section 112 (lèse-majesté) of the Criminal Code and the Computer Crime Act. According to statistics from [Thai Lawyers for Human Rights](#), between November 2020 and July 2026, private complaints accounted for 199 of 321 cases filed under Section 112, representing more than 60% of all cases filed.

Civil society members also reported that existing legal protections do not adequately safeguard personal data. Although the [Personal Data Protection Act \(PDPA\)](#) has increased awareness of data protection, experts reported limited evidence that it has provided meaningful protection for activists or civil society members. Experts also raised concerns about government agencies' use of the Act's Section 4(2) exemption for activities related to state security, public safety, money-laundering prevention, forensic science, and cybersecurity, including in relation to the processing or access of personal data. Similar concerns were raised about measures to combat online fraud and "mule accounts", which give authorities broader access to financial transaction data. Although there is no evidence that these powers have been used to target activists directly, participants warned that weak safeguards could allow such data to be used to monitor or track civil society actors.

Beyond surveillance and data protection, civil society continues to face online attacks including harassment and doxxing. In 2025, Citizen Lab released a [report](#) documenting a coordinated campaign in which private information obtained from state records was disseminated to harass activists and contribute to character assassination, with some targets subsequently facing real-world threats. These forms of attack also reportedly disproportionately affect [women human rights defenders](#) (WRDs), who face online harassment including rape threats, misogynistic remarks, and the sale or sharing of their photographs without their consent. Experts also raised concerns about emerging forms of gender-based violence involving AI-generated or sexualised content intended to shame, discredit, or intimidate women. Such attacks are increasingly reported, although many remain under-documented.

CSOs also reported that access to effective remedies remains limited. Although legal and [human rights institutions](#) provide channels for reporting online threats and privacy violations, participants reported cases in which complaints were not meaningfully investigated or pursued. The time, cost, and uncertain outcomes associated with seeking redress can also discourage victims from filing complaints, leaving significant gaps between digital harms and effective protection or accountability.

6.3. Digital Accessibility

Thai CSOs reported that access to digital technologies has generally improved, but remains uneven across organisations and communities. Smaller CSOs and those working with refugees, migrants, and border communities continue to face greater constraints due to limited funding, the cost of internet access and professional software, inadequate infrastructure and devices, and gaps in digital skills. Language barriers also remain relevant, as some newer digital and AI tools are available primarily in English.

Civil society members reported that AI is creating new opportunities, with CSOs using it for data analysis, translation, content production, and communication. Some organisations are exploring AI-generated characters and digital media to communicate the experiences of refugees and other vulnerable groups without revealing their identities. However, access to more advanced tools remains concentrated among better-resourced organisations, while smaller CSOs often lack the funding and technical expertise needed to use AI effectively and safely. Digital and AI literacy also varies across the sector, with many organisations relying on self-learning and peer exchange rather than systematic training. At the same time, experts noted that the limited availability of machine-readable government data constrains CSOs' ability to use AI for research and analysis, as relevant information may need to be manually collected and processed before it can be used with digital tools. This can limit the ability of CSOs to use AI for evidence-based research and policy advocacy.

Thai CSOs also remain highly dependent on major technology companies for essential digital infrastructure, including cloud services, communication tools, and social media platforms. Experts reported that organisations have limited bargaining power when companies change their policies, terms of service, or pricing, creating challenges for continuity of operations and control over organisational data. This dependence also raises concerns about relying on companies whose business practices and human rights policies may not always align with civil society priorities.

Conclusion

Thailand's digital environment presents interconnected challenges for civil society, affecting the ability of civil society organisations to communicate, organise, and participate safely online. Restrictions on online expression, information operations, weakening platform safeguards, and the use of SLAPP lawsuits can constrain civic space, while surveillance, privacy risks,

online harassment, and doxxing create additional risks for those engaging in public life. Limited access to effective remedies further compounds these challenges, leaving CSOs with few avenues to address digital harms.

At the same time, improved access to digital technologies and the emergence of AI are creating new opportunities for advocacy, research, communication, and service delivery. However, these opportunities remain unevenly distributed, with smaller CSOs and marginalised communities continuing to face greater barriers related to infrastructure, funding, digital skills, and access to secure and effective technologies. CSOs' reliance on major technology platforms and cloud providers also gives them limited influence over the policies, terms, and practices that affect their work and organisational data. Overall, while digital technologies have expanded the capacity of Thai civil society, persistent weaknesses in rights protections and digital security, combined with unequal access to technology, mean that the digital environment does not yet provide a consistently safe, accessible, and enabling space for civic participation.



C) Recommendations

In light of the findings set out in this report, the following recommendations are addressed to the Government of Thailand with the aim of ensuring that the legal and policy framework enables civil society to operate effectively and without undue restrictions:

Respect and Protection of Fundamental Freedoms

1. Immediately and unconditionally release all individuals detained for the peaceful exercise of their rights to freedom of expression and freedom of peaceful assembly, and withdraw all related charges, including those brought against children.
2. Amend or repeal the lèse-majesté law to bring it into conformity with international human rights law.
3. Decriminalise defamation by repealing Articles 326–328 of the Criminal Code and ensure that any protection of reputation is pursued only through proportionate civil remedies, with strong safeguards for truth, public interest reporting, opinion, and criticism of public officials and institutions.
4. Adopt effective safeguards to prevent the use of Strategic Lawsuits Against Public Participation (SLAPPs) and other forms of judicial harassment to punish, deter, or otherwise restrict the legitimate exercise of fundamental freedoms.
5. Take effective preventive measures to protect human rights defenders, activists, journalists, and other individuals from transnational repression, including threats, surveillance, harassment, and other forms of intimidation carried out across borders.

Supportive Legal and Regulatory Framework

6. Ensure that the registration of associations and foundations is governed by transparent, objective, non-discriminatory, and time-bound procedures by establishing clear registration criteria, preventing arbitrary delays or discrimination based on an organisation's name, objectives, or the communities it serves, and guaranteeing applicants the right to receive written reasons for any refusal or delay, together with access to an effective appeal mechanism.
7. Refrain from imposing unnecessary legal, administrative, and security-related barriers on the work of civil society organisations; end arbitrary inspections and other forms of interference with their peaceful activities; and ensure that organisations, including those assisting refugees and migrant workers, can operate without undue restrictions.
8. Review and amend the Labour Relations Act B.E. 2518 (1975) to remove restrictions that prevent migrant workers and other workers from fully exercising their right to freedom of association, including the right to establish and join trade unions on an equal basis.

Accessible and Sustainable Resources

9. Promote equitable access to funding for civil society organisations by reviewing and revising legal, administrative, and regulatory frameworks to ensure that administrative and reporting requirements are transparent, proportionate, and do not create unnecessary barriers, particularly for grassroots, youth-led, and human rights organisations.
10. Adopt clear and accessible procedures and criteria for civil society organisations to obtain eligibility for tax-deductible donations, and ensure that the framework does not discriminate against organisations working on human rights, environmental protection, democracy, or other issues that may be politically sensitive.

Open and Responsive State

11. Review the Official Information Act to address broad exemptions for withholding information, ensure timely responses and effective appeal mechanisms, and promote the proactive disclosure of information of significant public interest in accessible, searchable, and usable formats.
12. Ensure that government information relevant to public decision-making, including environmental assessments, public contracts, election data, and other public-interest information, is disclosed in a timely, accessible, searchable, machine-readable, and interoperable format that enables meaningful public scrutiny, including by affected communities and civil society organisations.
13. Institutionalise meaningful and inclusive participation of civil society and affected communities in policymaking and public decision-making from an early stage, before key policy directions or project decisions have been finalised, and ensure that consultation processes provide sufficient information and a genuine opportunity to influence outcomes.
14. Establish clear requirements for government agencies to respond to complaints and recommendations submitted by civil society and affected communities, including by providing information on actions taken, reasons for decisions, and mechanisms for follow-up and appeal.
15. Ensure that court proceedings are open to the public in accordance with the right to a fair and public hearing, and prohibit unnecessary restrictions on public observation and reporting, including unjustified secret hearings, gag orders, and other measures that limit public scrutiny of judicial proceedings.

Access to a Secure Digital Environment

16. Cease state-led information operations targeting civil society organisations, human rights defenders, journalists, and political actors, and establish effective safeguards against the use of state resources to manipulate public discourse, harass individuals, or discredit legitimate civic activity.
17. Establish effective regulatory oversight of major digital platforms to promote transparency and accountability in content moderation and platform governance, including regarding the removal, restriction, and visibility of civil society content.
18. Ensure that state surveillance and access to personal data are necessary, proportionate, and subject to effective judicial or independent oversight and remedies, including where exemptions under the Personal Data Protection Act are invoked.

19. Ensure that victims of online harassment, doxxing, and other forms of digital violence have access to effective, timely, and affordable mechanisms for reporting violations, obtaining protection, and seeking redress, with particular attention to gender-based digital violence against women human rights defenders.
20. Promote equitable access to secure digital technologies and AI tools for civil society organisations, particularly smaller and grassroots organisations, including through affordable internet access, digital and AI literacy programmes, and support for secure digital infrastructure and data protection.



D) Research Process

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 (1), disabling (2), partially enabling (3), enabling (4), and fully enabling (5). 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.

This publication was funded/co-funded by the European Union. Its contents are the sole responsibility of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the European Union.



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