



Defending the Democratic Space of Civil Society in the Philippines

Project initiated in <month> 2021

Summary:

The partnership of Center for Disaster Preparedness Foundation (CDP) and Nunca Mas are addressing the shrinking democratic space in the country brought about by the anti-terrorism law's passage and the planned replacement of the disaster risk reduction and management law amidst pandemics. In such situation, intentionally or unintentionally, civil society organizations (CSO) are under attack and the two laws are the latest examples of constricting the space and maneuverability of civil society to operate in supposedly a democratic society. In pursuing advocacy, lobby and campaign efforts both against the Anti-Terrorism Law and the impending replacement of the disaster risk reduction and management law, CDP together with the network the Disaster Risk Reduction Network Philippines (DRRNetPhils) composed of 60 organizations nationwide, will be at the helm. The project aims at shaping and influencing public opinion in favor of a policy on holistic resilience. Corollary to this is engaging legislative champions that can help pass a law beneficial to the people and not for the whims of the state. Along with pressing for positive response of the Supreme Court on the overstretched broad definition of terrorism depriving the rights and liberty of possible affected people.

Historical Context:

On June 3, 2020, the Philippine Congress has passed into law the Anti-Terrorism Act that replaced the Human Security Act, which among other things eliminates critical legal protection and permits government's overreach against groups and individuals labeled as terrorists. This law opens door to arbitrary arrests and long prison sentences for people or representatives of organizations that have displeased the President. Sadly, the democratic space won during the people power revolution after long years of martial from 1972 to 1986 is now shrinking with civic space becoming tight and narrowed due to the militarized approach and conduct by the government in all their campaigns and undertaking like the anti-drug campaign. Though the government claims democracy is still in place and at work, but in truth and reality, it is becoming fragile with law and order not serving the majority of the population. What is alarming for CSOs is the shrinking civic space considering the critical role to play of civil society organizations in complementing the role of the government for instance in humanitarian and development action.

Philippines with its rapidly growing population of 106.7M (2018) is also disaster-prone due to its location and geophysical characteristics being situated in the Pacific Ring of Fire and Western Pacific Basin, where tropical cyclones are formed. Repeatedly struck by hydrometeorological hazards such as typhoons and floods, and geological hazards like earthquakes including hazards such as fire, landslides, drought and volcanic eruptions. The country also experiences human-induced hazards and disasters caused by political and socio-economic origins such as armed conflict in the South threatening the security of civilian communities with displacement of thousands of civilians as a result.

Our Approach:

Our approach is to reach out to broad civil society networks, business sectors and lawyers in lobbying and advocacy. Through united efforts the project will help influence legislators and the Supreme Court to follow recommendations from civil society and other stakeholders. The all-encompassing goal is to contribute to a. improving the final legislative proposal on natural disaster response, which will not limit civil society involvement and active involvement in both natural and man-made disasters. Secondly, the goal is to have parts of the recently adopted anti-terrorism law declared unconstitutional and therefore modified or cancelled.

Our Partner:

