

# ADVOCACY GRANTS



Lifeline advocacy grants give **civil society organizations (CSOs)** around the world the resources to push back against **civic space restrictions** related to the **freedom of association and assembly**. These short-term grants respond to new threats or openings in the civic space landscape; they are highly flexible and can support a wide variety of activities.

*“Because of Lifeline’s support, we were able to find new allies in the church and in academia—using first-hand testimony and videos, we are bringing to their attention the massive campaign against human rights defenders and CSOs. This is helping us to erode support for Duterte’s violence policies targeting indigenous and vulnerable rural communities.”*

*-Lifeline grantee in the Philippines*



## What can advocacy projects look like?

- Mobilizing the public to **push for amendment to restrictive legislation** such as foreign funding restrictions, NGO laws, states of emergency, or tax and audit laws meant to discourage civil society activity
- Using **strategic litigation** to create legal precedence for the protection of freedom of association and assembly
- Advocating for passage of **enabling legislation**, such as a Human Rights Defenders (HRD) protection bill or a digital rights bills
- **Monitoring the impact of restrictive legislation** on civil society and defenders
- **Using technology** to highlight and ameliorate the particular challenges WHRDs and feminist organizations face in the course of their human rights work
- Advocacy **meetings with decision-makers** to provide recommendations or policy analysis on how to ensure freedom of association and assembly within the given context
- Engaging with the UPR process, Human Rights Council, the African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights, The Inter-American Commission, or other **international bodies** to push for an international response to freedom of association and assembly violations

The **Lifeline Embattled CSO Assistance Fund** is a consortium of seven international NGOs — CIVICUS, Freedom House, International Center for Non-Profit Law, Front Line Defenders, FORUM-ASIA, Swedish International Liberal Centre, and People in Need — supported by 19 governments that seek to address threats to civic space. The Lifeline Fund provides short-term grants to civil society organizations (CSOs) under threat for their human rights work.



## Highlighted Advocacy Projects

A CSO in **Pakistan** launched a consultative process to push the government to develop a national policy for the protection of HRDs. After convening four provincial consultations and one national consultation that highlighted the issues HRDs face, policy guidelines were developed and shared with the National Commission on Human Rights. The Policy Guidelines on Protection of Human Rights Defenders was accepted by the National Commission and launched in December of 2018; the implementation process is now on-going.

In **Colombia**, a CSO worked to defend the legal right to protest across the country. They decided to focus at the municipal, rather than the national level, so the CSO coordinated working meetings with officials in four cities to discuss, develop, or implement a municipal protocol that would protect the ability for citizens to protest. In Cali, CSOs were successful in ensuring that the municipality's "Policy on Human Rights" included specific guidelines on protecting freedom of assembly and social protest.

A CSO in **Kazakhstan** pushed for changes to restrictive provisions of a new Tax Code that would have negative implications on CSO activity. The CSO created an expert working group to produce an analysis of the law that included recommendations for amendment. This report was shared with government stakeholders to push for reform and with CSOs to make them aware of risks to their organizational sustainability. This CSO succeeded in promulgating amendments favorable to CSOs that restored the tax exemptions for CSOs.

To push for an improved enabling environment for civil society, a CSO in the **Democratic Republic of Congo** organized workshops between CSO leaders and government and security sector officials. This effort resulted in the launch of a Memorandum of Understanding between civil society and provincial authorities in the judiciary and security sector that offers protection for the right to freely assemble.

## Global Impact

*"Through the issuance of the policy paper and the public discussion of the registration issues, the project broke the impediment of fear in civil society and enabled it to confront the local authority by criticizing the laws it issues."*

-Lifeline grantee in Syria

*"Our activists based in rural areas had an opportunity to meet with land rights activists working across the world who have faced the same challenges, but who have more exposure to regional and international human rights networks."*

-Lifeline grantee in South Africa

*"Civil society organizations have generated a clear and complete picture of violations caused by this law and the repressive practices that may endanger their work."*

-Lifeline grantee in Iraq

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