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The Implications of Closing Civic Space for Sustainable Development in Pakistan
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The Implications of Closing Civic Space for Sustainable Development in Pakistan

Shandana Khan Mohmand

Summary

This paper presents findings from a case study exploring the prospects for measuring the impacts of restricted civic space on development in Pakistan. It is part of a larger inquiry into the phenomenon of restrictions on civil society activity around the world, including in, but not restricted to, developing countries, most notably in the past decade. Pakistan's divided and fragile civil society has had a troubled and uneven relationship with political and military power. Efforts to restrict NGOs and aid-funded organisations promoting women's or human rights have a long if intermittent history, and civic actors have struggled to engage in a military-dominated political settlement in which regular multiparty elections are a recent phenomenon. Yet civil society has played an important role in democratic struggles and across a range of development activities. Pakistan experienced several major natural disasters in the past decade, and humanitarian aid has been essential to ensuring basic (if inadequate) protections. NGOs provide a wide range of health, education and welfare services to millions of people in poverty in remote and hard-to-reach parts of the country who would otherwise go unserved. Yet, in the name of security and national sovereignty, and apparently influenced closely by the global normative tide turning against democracy and human rights as China becomes a more significant development partner, restrictions on civil society have abounded, particularly since 2013. These have included arbitrary orders, new laws, denunciations of civic actors, and an atmosphere of fear for human rights defenders and the liberal democratic sections of civil society.

This case study summarises findings from analysis of a specific recent episode, that of proposed cancellations of 30-odd NGOs, mostly international organisations (INGOs), in 2017. The case study explores the motivations and means of the restrictions, and the potential impacts in terms of beneficiary populations unserved, services not delivered, and wider effects on disaster management, women's rights, poverty and health and education services. It concludes that without significant efforts by INGOs to adapt to the new restrictions, and very likely even then, adverse impacts would be felt by millions of Pakistanis, chiefly from among the poorest and most marginalised sections of society, and in remote and conflict-affected settings where poverty and vulnerability are most acute. Given Pakistan's poor record on inclusive or pro-poor development, and its failure to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), these closures of NGO operating space are highly likely to impact adversely on its achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to which its politicians have so publicly committed. The paper includes discussion of the methodological limitations of the case study approach and proposes alternative measures or means of assessment of the impacts of closing civic space on development in Pakistan.

Keywords: closing civic space; NGOs; Pakistan; fragility; civil society; aid; sustainable development.

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This study is part of Action for Empowerment and Accountability (A4EA), an international research programme which explores how social and political action can contribute to empowerment and accountability in fragile, conflict, and violent settings.

Acronyms

APS	Army Public School
CESCR	United Nations Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
CPEC	China-Pakistan Economic Corridor
CRM	Child Rights Movement
CRS	Catholic Relief Services
CSO	civil society organisation
DFID	Department for International Development
DIC	District Investigation Committee
DRC	Danish Refugee Council
FATA	Federally Administered Tribal Areas
FATF	Financial Action Task Force
GBV	gender-based violence
GDP	gross domestic product
GPS	Global Positioning Systems
HRCP	Human Right Commission of Pakistan
INGO	international non-governmental organisation
IRI	International Republican Institute
LGBTQI	lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, questioning, intersex
LSBE	Life Skills Based Education
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
MRMV	My Rights, My Voice
MSF	Médecins Sans Frontières
NAP	National Action Plan
NDMA	National Disaster Management Authority
NGO	non-governmental organisation
NOC	No Objection Certificates
NPO	non-profit organisation (used for civil society and non-governmental organisations in Pakistan)
OSF	Open Society Foundation
PCSF	Pakistan Civil Society Forum
PECA	Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act
PFF	Pakistan Fisherfolk Forum
PHF	Pakistan Humanitarian Forum
PML-N	Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz
PPP	Pakistan People's Party
PTI	Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaaf
SAP-PK	South Asia Partnership Pakistan
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
TVET	technical and vocational training

1 Introduction: the implications of closing civic space for development in Pakistan

This paper presents findings from a case study designed to explore the prospects for measuring the impacts of restricted civic space on development in Pakistan. It is part of a larger inquiry into the phenomenon of restrictions on civil society activity around the world, including but not only in developing countries, most notably in the past decade. Civil society refers here to all forms of voluntary organisation that mediate between the state, market, and societal actors and interests, not only aid-funded non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and civil society organisations (CSOs) involved in service delivery or acting as a ‘watchdog’ on government, but also the media, human rights defenders, professional associations, academia and thinktanks, social movements, workers’ organisations, and environmental activists. Civic space has changed rather than shrunk, overall, as new actors and spaces for civic engagement (notably digital) have flourished in the past decade (Hossain *et al.* 2018). Yet space has clearly closed for groups with liberal democratic and human rights agendas and/or receiving international aid financing. Land and indigenous rights defenders and their supporters and movements have faced deadly opposition in several settings. Advocates of freedom of speech and association, minority rights or empowerment of marginalised groups, or environmental protection, also face new more restrictive laws and regulations, arrests and detention, and informal pressures to align, a ‘chilling’ atmosphere that restrains public debate, stigmatisation and impunity for attacks on civil society.

The present case study focused on the implications of closing civic space for development in Pakistan. Pakistan’s divided and fragile civil society has had a troubled and uneven relationship with political and military power. Efforts to restrict NGOs and aid-funded organisations promoting women’s or human rights have a long history, as civic actors have struggled to engage with power in a military-dominated political settlement with a short history of multiparty elections. Nevertheless, civil society has played important roles in democratic struggles and development activities more generally. Pakistan experienced several major natural disasters in the past decades, and humanitarian aid has been essential to ensuring basic protections of the population. NGOs provide a wide range of health and education and other services to millions of people in poverty in remote and hard-to-reach parts of the country who would otherwise go unserved. Yet in the name of security and national sovereignty, restrictions on civil society have abounded, taking the form of arbitrary orders, denouncing civic actors, and establishing an atmosphere of fear for human rights defenders and others from the liberal democratic side of civil society.

What are these restrictions likely to mean for Pakistan’s development, and specifically, its achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)? Pakistan failed to achieve most of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), and public service delivery capacity remains weak, apparently a low priority for contending elites. The crisis of public provision has continued to worsen and drawn attention to the need for multiple actors to play a role in poverty reduction and development, even as civic space has shrunk in recent years. Civil society had worked closely with the military dictatorship in dealing with the aftermath of the 2005 earthquake, and the transition to democracy in 2008 had strengthened a generally conducive working environment. The 2013 elections saw the return of the conservative Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), with its customary hostility towards Western-supported organisations and agendas. After the elections in 2018, the new Government of Pakistan has an opportunity to forge a new fit between civil society and the state, in order to harness its capacities to forge a pro-poor or inclusive development pathway.

1.1 About this paper

This paper is organised as follows. In this first section, a summary of key findings about the measurability of development outcomes in Pakistan is provided. The conceptual basis of the study is briefly outlined next, and the propositions it sought to test, and this is followed by a description of the methodology used. Section 2 sets out the main understandings of the political economy of inclusive development in relation to the specific development challenges facing Pakistan, situating these within a typology of political settlements. Section 3 describes the role of civil society in development in Pakistan, and discusses the changing nature of the 'fit' between civic actors and those in the state or political society. Section 4 sets out key dimensions of the challenge of inclusive development in Pakistan. Section 5 traces the origins and outcomes of regulations on NGO activities in specific policy domains, and assesses estimates of their numerical, spatial and other impacts on beneficiary populations or service delivery capacity. Section 6 concludes with discussion of the measurable impacts and lessons in Pakistan, and the wider implications for the analysis of the impacts of civic space on development.

1.2 Key findings of the Pakistan case study

The case study was a rapid exercise to test an approach to measuring the relationship between closures of civic space and 'frontline' development outcomes, by tracing the implications of restrictions on NGO activities in relation to disempowered, marginalised, poor and vulnerable populations. The paper concludes that there are good reasons to suppose that recent restrictions on NGO activities have played or have the potential to play a clear and adverse role in Pakistan's progress towards achieving the SDGs. For instance, calculations by civil society fora suggest that CSOs provide over a million children with access to quality education; about 23 million individuals with access to maternal and reproductive health care services; and that about \$124 million in committed funding for 2018 would be lost if just 11 international NGOs are shut down.

The case study offers robust insights into the magnitude and nature of selected likely development impacts, but concludes these comprise an incomplete and fragmented view of the whole. Services may also be lost in policy domains not surveyed here, and while NGOs adapt to the restrictions and 'chilling' climate, the human and organisational costs of such adaptation are generally ignored. The restraining role of civil society and free media on macroeconomic management and corruption, key mechanisms of political and economic crises in developing countries, are further factors likely to add to the developmental costs of closing civic space, even if not immediately apparent. The measurability of such civic restraint on development is somewhat beyond the scope of the present paper, but will be briefly discussed in the conclusions to the accompanying methodological paper (Hossain and Santos 2018).

However, data systems are too weak even to support aggregate analysis of the impacts on NGO beneficiary populations even within the selected policy domains or sectors. Within civil society itself there is limited transparency and coordination, and collective efforts to engage with new restrictions have been weak. Other impacts included qualitative changes in programme approaches, towards more welfarist service delivery models with less chance of transformative change, and greater chance of dependence. Hard-to-reach areas, including regions undergoing conflict, were among those likely to suffer the most, and about which verifiable empirical data was most scarce. The conclusions of the case study are that the 'frontline' development implications of restrictions on civil society can be measured in part, but the current evidence base is thin, patchy, and unintegrated.

The case study also offers insights into the wider international political economy within which civic space has closed, including the relative shift in the normative environment with the growing importance of Chinese development investment. Questions of sovereignty and

national values have been used to justify NGO regulations, and civil society has struggled to counter charges of allegiance to foreign values or finance. Global power shifts are shaping the closure of civic space, but translate differently in different national contexts.

1.3 Inclusive development and the civic space: key concepts and questions

The design of this case study drew on a conceptual framework which recognised that restrictions on civic space were part of wider national political struggles, and an effort by political elites to gain or consolidate resources or political power. How this shapes inclusive development outcomes depends on the elite commitment and state capacity to deliver broadly inclusive outcomes, in turn shaped by the balance of political power, or political settlement, and how that shapes development policy (Hossain *et al.* 2018 based on authors cited in the text). ‘Inclusive development’ is used here in a broad sense, to signal pro-poor and equalising patterns of economic growth alongside robust and inclusive progress on human development indicators. Among other aims, this paper aims to establish the extent to which inclusive outcomes have been measurably associated with freer civic space in Pakistan.

Elite commitment and state capacity to inclusive development will likely differ in nature and form in pluralist political settlements in which civic actors have a voice and a claim compared to more dominant systems, in which civil society is neutralised or silenced. A key question is whether inclusive development outcomes can be delivered in settings where political power has closed the space for public debate or participation, or if they depend on civil society actors, marginalised groups and the media participating in and scrutinising public policy debates and institutions. The evidence suggests a range of civil society roles in inclusive development processes, including in the historical process of building institutions and establishing values that underpin economic growth, and in the development of partnerships and alliances for aid and development financing; holding governments and market actors to account; empowering and combating the exclusion of marginalised groups, including through mobilisation and service delivery; in protective functions in relation to humanitarian assistance and human rights; and in information and communication, generating evidence and debate about development processes.

A safe conclusion seems to be that inclusive processes play some functions necessary to sustaining development over the medium- to long-term, by enabling the management of difference and the inclusion of the most vulnerable. However, inclusive processes are generally insufficient conditions for inclusive outcomes, if they coexist with – or exacerbate – a lack of elite commitment or state capacity to deliver. Much depends on histories of civil society and state-society relations, and on the ‘fit’ between civil society and the state. This means that it is not only free space to operate that matters, but the extent to which civil society can usefully engage with or exert influence on the state when it needs to. This ‘fit’ will change over time and circumstance, with civic actors at times in opposition to, and at others aligned with, state power. Freedom in civic space is important, but capacity to engage is equally so. The case study was designed to analyse this fit, through an analysis of key moments of contention around civic space between civil society and the state.

1.4 Case study methodology

The case study tested a methodological approach to direct measurement of the impacts of restricted civic space, tracing restrictions on civic space through to impacts on beneficiary populations. The methodology specified episodes when civic space had been in contention in policy domains where ‘frontline’ inclusive development outcomes (poverty and hunger reduction, gender equality, etc.) were at stake. It documented and analysed how NGOs and CSOs responded to new restrictions in 2017, the organisations or programmes that faced closure or adaptation, and assessed the overall impacts on specific policy domains or SDGs, with numerical estimates of impacts on beneficiaries or services. It then drew methodological

conclusions about the prospects for measuring development impact in Pakistan, and more widely.

The conceptual framework for the study (Hossain *et al* 2018) makes several propositions about the mechanisms through which that impact is likely to play out in immature competitive political systems such as the fledgling democracy of Pakistan. We would expect:

- restrictions on civic space to limit the representativeness and inclusiveness of democratic dialogue, so that groups with less power in the political settlement – often women, workers, small farmers, displaced persons, or minority groups – would lose ‘civil’ channels for voice and take to protest to be heard
- that where civic space is an established feature of most mature democracies, restrictions that cut services are unlikely, and direct adverse development impacts unlikely to be significant or large-scale. But in Pakistan, a long history of military rule has meant uneven and distant relations between state and civil society, influenced more by transnational and security factors than by domestic development imperatives
- freedom of speech and association are likely to be seen as direct threats to state power, particularly since the advent of cyberspace
- a critique of ‘foreign’ norms may justify efforts to curb civil society power on grounds of sovereignty
- periods of economic volatility are likely to result in wage, resource, and commodity price struggles.

The case study attempted to assess whether and how these – and other – mechanisms operated in the Pakistan case, in order to provide a comprehensive analysis of the relation between civic space and inclusive development outcomes.

The conceptual framework for this study indicated in-depth analysis of specific episodes of contention around civic space in which ‘frontline’ development outcomes are clearly implicated. In Pakistan, this work focused on restrictions placed on NGOs, and in particular on the currently evolving case of a group of international NGOs threatened with expulsion in late 2017. The focus was on observable processes through which restrictions on civic space was likely to lead to losses of or changes in service provision for particular groups and in selected sectors. The study involved extensive reviews of published and grey documents, and face-to-face interviews with 15 selected key informants in Islamabad and Lahore between January and April 2018. The informants comprised representatives of different types of civil society organisations, national and international, service-delivering NGOs and other types of civic actors. The interviews were semi-structured and aimed to collect the unique perspectives of people working in different types of civil society organisations on the set of issues and challenges that they now face in Pakistan, as well as their views on why civic space has shrunk over the last few years. They were also asked about the impact of this shrinkage on equitable and inclusive development in general, and on particular population groups and on Pakistan’s performance on SDGs.

Time and resources were key constraints. Within its limited scope, the case study optimised the resources by focusing on the evolving situation of shrinking space for NGOs in light of announcements of new regulations and potential expulsions in 2017. Interviews also discussed increasing curbs on media and academia, but these issues were not explored in the same detail. The study also faced limitations in the form of respondents’ fear of reprisals under the current security environment. Some respondents were unwilling to be a part of the study, while some others took long to respond to interview requests. Those that spoke to us did so under conditions of confidentiality, and so no names or identifiable interview details are provided.

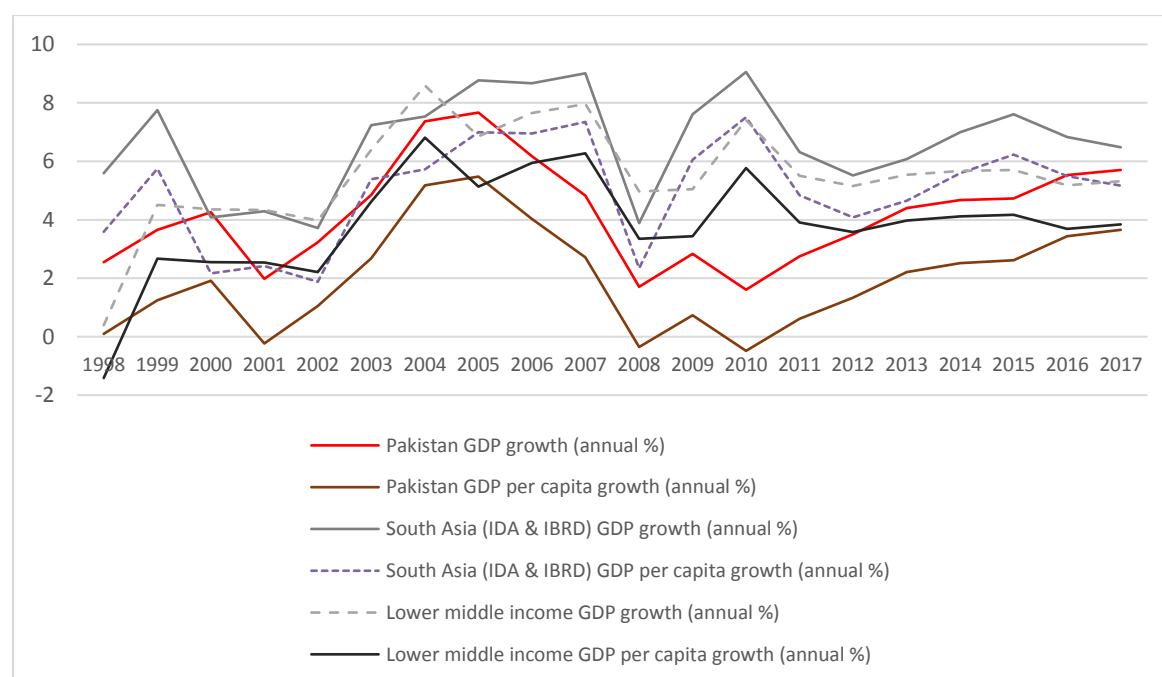
2 The political economy of inclusive development in Pakistan

2.1 The challenge of inclusive development in Pakistan

Conflict, disasters, weak governance, and democratic transition meant Pakistan's progress on human development indicators early in the new millennium slowed or even reversed in the decade to 2015. Having failed on most of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) (Ministry of Planning, Development, and Reform 2013), Pakistan now faces an uphill challenge to meet the SDGs (Rehman 2018).

Pakistan's uneven development progress has been underpinned by erratic growth. As is the case with its comparators, Pakistan's economic growth dipped at points in the past decade (see Figure 2.1). Yet, as Figure 2.1 suggests, Pakistan was hit harder by global economic shocks and natural disasters, and/or took longer to recover than other South Asian or Lower Middle Income countries. The proportion of the population living in poverty has declined, according to official statistics (see Table 2.1). Yet deeper and more multidimensional analysis indicates that these statistics may overstate progress, and mask high rates of 'churning' into and out of poverty, indicating many Pakistanis are exposed to the downsides of economic volatility (Amina Khan *et al.* 2015). The prevalence of undernourishment, a key poverty and wellbeing indicator, has been substantially higher in Pakistan than in comparator countries and aggregates (see Figure 2.2).

Figure 2.1 GDP and GDP per capita growth, 1998–2017



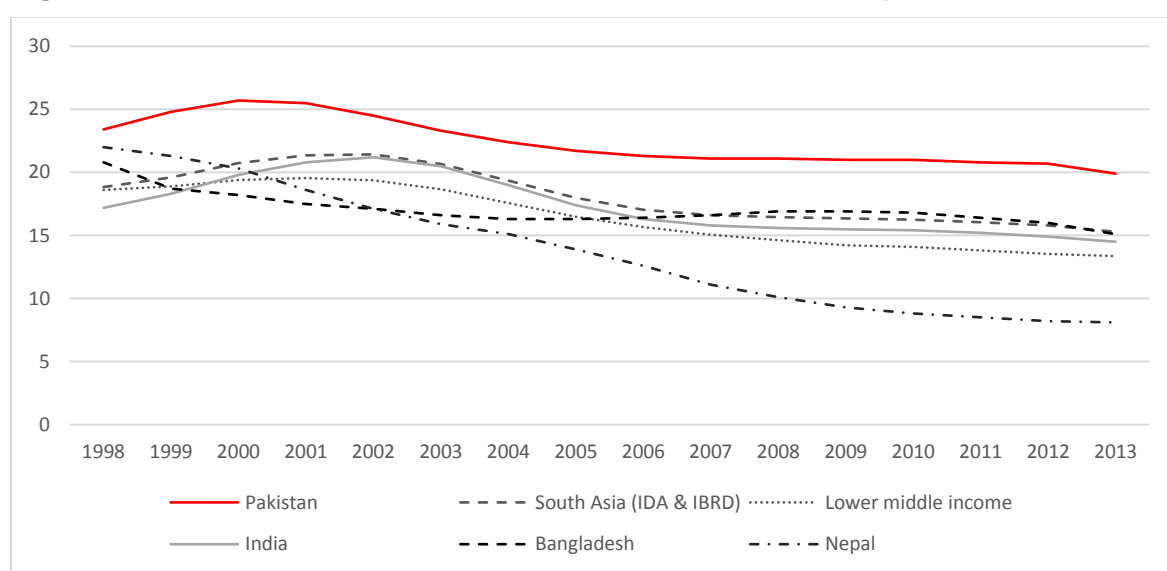
Source: [World Development Indicators](#) (accessed 13 August 2018).

Table 2.1 The proportion of the population living in poverty, 1998–2013

		1998	1999	2001	2002	2004	2005	2007	2008	2010	2011	2012	2013
Population living on less than \$1.90 (2011 PPP) a day (%)	Pakistan	23.4		28.6		18	16.5	13.2		8.3	7.9		6.1
	Lower middle income		37.5	35			30.2		26.5	22.6	19.6	17.9	
Population living below national poverty line (%)	Pakistan	57.9		64.5		51	50.4	44.1		36.8	36.3		29.5

Source: [World Development Indicators](#) (accessed 13 August 2018).

Figure 2.2 Prevalence of undernourishment, Pakistan and comparators



Source: [World Development Indicators](#) (accessed 15 August 2018).

The SDGs formally enjoy high-level cross-party political support. However, as the record of the MDGs has shown, public service delivery is generally weak, and institutional coordination within the government limited (Ministry of Planning, Development, and Reform 2013). Public spending on core education and health services is low (Illangovan and Francisco 2017). Tackling problems of child undernutrition requires coordination between health, education, food security, and water and sanitation agencies, as well as an ability to engage women. Gender inequalities can be seen as a structuring dimension of development progress in Pakistan. Ranked 130 out of 159 countries in 2015, women in Pakistan continue to face significant challenges in the realms of labour force and political participation, access to finance, as well as on key education and health services. Tackling development challenges such as maternal and infant mortality, undernutrition, and poverty is known to depend on women’s participation, yet progress overall on women’s rights and gender equality has been highly uneven.

2.2 Development and the political settlement in Pakistan

In terms of the typology developed as part of the conceptual framework for this study, Pakistan represents a formally democratic and competitive yet predatory state, where various elites have shared power between them since independence. 'Predatory' refers to the fact that Pakistan's development cannot be characterised as pro-poor, and that its benefits have been frequently captured by ruling elites and their allies rather than those in greatest need (see Easterly 2001 for an earlier analysis). Alliances between military, bureaucratic, and traditional landed elites have proven resilient, enabling a concentration of military, economic, and organisational power that has sustained across intermittent democratic regimes (Alavi 1972; Jalal 1995, 1999; Akhtar 2018). This has enabled a 'dominance by an elite who does not support human capital investment in the masses' (Easterly 2001: 3).

The official view of social protection underwent a 'paradigm shift' following the turmoil of the 2007 economic and political crisis that brought an end to direct military rule (Gazdar 2011). Civil society played a role in democracy and anti-corruption struggles, as well as raising awareness of the effects of the economic crisis on the population living with poverty or vulnerability. However, the period of multiparty rule since 2008 has done little to shift the assessment of the developmental qualities of the Pakistani elite. While it is widely recognised that civil society has an important potential role in progress towards the SDGs, NGOs and CSOs complain of a lack of information and engagement regarding the SDGs with local and national government, indicating a weak fit in relation to ongoing SDG policies and programmes at multiple levels (Rehman 2018).

2.2.1 Civil society and the securitisation of the state

Recent efforts to shrink NGO operating space across the country largely reflect the political economy of development in Pakistan, in which the securitisation of the Pakistan state has taken priority, and for which the normative environment internationally is changing, creating more space for right-wing politics and authoritarian rule.

The security situation in Pakistan deteriorated significantly across all provinces from 2008 onwards. Terrorist attacks by the Pakistani Taliban and Al-Qaeda-supported groups and sectarian violence between rival sects and against religious minorities affected major cities and smaller towns, making it difficult for CSOs to operate safely. The increased incidence of violence led to counter operations by Pakistan's security forces and an increasingly security-focused mind-set of state agencies. International and local organisations have found it increasingly difficult to carry on normal activities within this context. Smaller local organisations dealing with sensitive issues of minority and women's rights have been particularly affected in their work within communities. NGO workers, especially those administering polio vaccines, have been targeted and killed on multiple occasions, largely because of distrust of them as foreign agents. Funding has shrunk as a result of security threats as donors have pulled back from projects that are increasingly difficult to monitor.

Securitisation has mixed with growing nationalism, supported by assertions about external attacks on national sovereignty. A sense of insecurity was intensified by the killing of Osama bin Laden by the US, and a string of terrorist attacks on state installations, as well as the 2014 attack on the Army Public School (APS) in Peshawar that killed 140 children. This atmosphere of insecurity enables security agencies to justify growing scrutiny and regulation of international actors. A change in attitude towards INGOs around 2015 was apparently part of a broader National Action Plan (NAP) designed to intensify efforts against terrorism in the aftermath of the APS attack.

Many respondents recognised the magnitude of the genuine security risk faced by the Pakistani state, and saw regulating fund flows and the largely unregulated INGO sector as

legitimate requirements. The country spent 2017 under the threat of blacklisting by the global Financial Action Task Force (FATF), and was eventually placed on a 'grey list' in June 2018 because of international concerns about terror financing, with adverse implications for its financial standing and ability to attract foreign investment. To come off the watchlist, the country must be seen to take serious action against money laundering and terror financing. One respondent from an INGO explained,

There is no proven case till today of an international organisation laundering money for a terrorist outfit, but it is something that the government has to be really cautious about especially because civil society organisations are responsible for cross-border movement of huge sums of money. And unless there are strict rules and regulations, there is a strong chance in today's world that such money can come from or end up in wrong hands. Pakistan is under immense pressure from FATF to make its banking and foreign transactions fool-proof.

Greater transparency by national and international NGOs has not eased up restrictions on their work. Several respondents who work for national organisations noted that the recent moves against NGOs fall within a generally shrinking space for civil society organisations that also affects national NGOs, indigenous movements, academic institutions, and research. One respondent said,

I think it would not be right to say that the state or the government has at once started opposing NGOs. It gives an impression as if Pakistani government or state institutions were previously all for NGOs and had a very welcoming attitude. We all know that is not true.

Nevertheless, restrictions against different types of civil society organisations have certainly intensified over recent months, and have also affected the work of journalists, bloggers, human rights defenders, and academia. A ban on student unions and politics has been in place since 1984 (with a short respite between 1988 and 1993). Regulation of academic activities intensified in 2018, signalling a 'closure of intellectual space within the country' (The Academia 2018). Research activities are under greater scrutiny; GPS and mapping activities are prohibited, while research and surveys require No Objection Certificates (NOCs) from a recently constituted body, the District Investigation Committee (DIC), which comprises the district administration and security agencies and reviews applications every 3–4 months. Many requests are rejected or receive no response, leading to long delays in research project implementation.

The securitisation of the state also means an increasingly hostile environment for journalists, human rights defenders, and other activists. The United Nations Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR) raised serious concerns over 'repeated reports of abduction, killings and intimidation of human rights defenders, particularly those fighting for economic, social and cultural rights, allegedly committed in some cases by State agents' in its July 2017 review of Pakistan (CIVICUS 2018). In one recent example, activists from the Pakistan Fisherfolk Forum (PFF) were abducted in Sindh province by armed persons allegedly linked to a provincial minister in December 2017. The activists had played a significant role in mobilising the local fishing community to claim their rights and were abducted while surveying various lakes in the Sujawal district to assess the extent of the illegal occupation of the lakes (CIVICUS 2018). In January 2017, five bloggers who were critical of the military and security agencies were 'disappeared.' Others have been kidnapped over the year, and while some were eventually released, Pakistan's list of unresolved 'missing persons' cases currently stands at 313 (HRCP 2018; Amnesty International 2017; Freedom House 2017b). Three members of the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) have also disappeared between 2016 and 2017 (Sayeed 2017). Participation in peaceful assemblies and protests continues to pose risks to activists and journalists due to the use of excessive force to disperse protests, the criminalisation of

protests under the guise of anti-terrorism legislation, as well as the risk of interference and attack by terrorist groups (CIVICUS 2016, 2017).

Media groups – curbs on which have been the subject of much domestic and international attention through 2018 – have not so far backed other civil society groups in helping expand this space, and are not considered strong or reliable partners. A respondent who works with a coalition of civil society organisations reflected back on its history to say that civil society had become an easy target because its various arms do not work in solidarity around a common cause:

The media, labour organisations and NGOs are all divided. Civil society used to include a lot of activism, but this has been killed by the current structure of aid, and by donors' reporting mechanisms. Our civil society organisations are now all focussed on budgets and regulations, big decisions are now made by finance officers. There is no collective action now for structural change.

2.2.2 The global 'playbook' and the rise of right-wing politics

National drivers to control civic space have been strengthened by a shift in the normative environment away from democratic values, and towards decreasing tolerance of dissent and suppression of the rights of religious, racial or ethnic minorities, including in countries like Turkey, the Philippines, Australia, the USA, and others. The suggestion here is that actors such as Pakistan's security forces may have stepped up opposition to civil society actors secure in the belief that there will be fewer external sanctions to face. Respondents spoke of the 'China playbook', referencing China's growing influence in Pakistan as part of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (or CPEC, a part of the Belt and Road Initiative), Pakistan's growing ability to ignore other global actors, and China's own highly-controlled civic space. In April 2016, the Chinese government gave the police increased powers to supervise the work of NGOs operating in the country and required them to declare their sources of funding (Perlman 2017). Later, a law to govern INGOs went into effect in China in 2017 that 'grants broad powers to police to question NGO workers, monitor their finances, regulate their work and shut down offices' (Reuters 2016). The law speaks of harm to Chinese national interests, is vague in what constitutes such activities, includes a complex registration process for INGOs, has implications for restricting the work of different types of civil society groups, including academia, and is closely connected to its counterterrorism efforts. These are all features that the reader will recognise below in our case study of the increased regulation of international NGOs operating in Pakistan.

Another part of the global playbook, apparently Turkish in this case, is the idea that the state can meet SDG targets through the creation of public companies for service delivery, and does not require civil society support. Over the last couple of years, 56 such public companies have been created in the province of Punjab alone. The companies are currently being investigated for corruption, excessive expenditures, and for incurring losses, and their future is at present uncertain, but some of our respondents pointed out that they represent the Punjab government's new approach towards service delivery. 'They no longer need us to help them like they used to, when we were regularly included on the government's planning fora' said one respondent from a national organisation. This is not to suggest that services should not be provided through alternative structures, but that NGOs have seen a deterioration of their working relationship with government as a result, especially in Pakistan's demographically dominant province, Punjab.

National and global drivers of the balance of power in Pakistan have combined to increase restrictions on civic space. What those political influences on civic space mean for development depends on the nature of civil society and its relations with the state and the development process, discussed next.

3 The role of civil society

3.1 The evolution of civil society–state relations

Civil society in Pakistan is made up of NGOs, community-based organisations, thinktanks, trades unions, cultural groups, and informal citizen organisations. Its evolution can be divided into four phases since the country's independence in 1947. During the first, roughly from independence to the end of the left-leaning Bhutto regime in 1977, encompassing also the first military regime during the 1960s, civil society was focused around local collective organisations such as trade and student unions, welfare and charity organisations, women's groups, bar associations, peasant organisations, literary and media societies, and religious activity focused around madrasas and Christian missions. These were largely voluntary associations with strong ideological leanings and were based around struggles for democracy, labour rights, political representation, women's rights and so on.

The second phase lasted through the second military regime, under General Zia Ul Haq from 1977 to 1988, during which many of these groups were suppressed. However, the period led to the emergence of a pro-democracy movement that was intricately interwoven with an emergent women's movement. The strengthening of these associations, together with a growing middle class, led to the creation of local civil society organisations that were focused on human rights, in particular on the rights of women, minorities, and workers. This period produced some of the most well-known and enduring local civil society organisations in Pakistan.

The third phase that emerged in the early 1990s following a democratic transition came to be organised around NGOs and foreign funding. Greater space was now available to civil society, and then later in the 2000s to media groups as well, and the focus was on both advocacy and service delivery activities. Political mobilisation took a backseat to concerns of human development and poverty reduction, and NGOs functioned separately from other members of civil society, such as trade and student unions, labour groups, lawyers, students and so on. In the decade following the September 11 attacks in 2001, Pakistan became one of the top destinations for foreign aid, with a rapid inflow of resources into the country (Naviwala 2017). Development actors flourished with a large portfolio of projects in various sectors. However, efforts to restrict their space started early on, with the conservative PML-N government of 1997–99, which targeted women's groups in particular. A regular criticism of NGOs at this time was their lack of accountability to constituents and dependence on external funds and agendas, and the fragmented nature and limited real impact of their work, both in terms of improving access to services and fostering collective action (Bano 2012).

A distinguishable fourth phase started with Pakistan's most recent transition to democracy in 2008 after the end of its third military regime. A shift was visible around this time in the form of a large number of NGOs coming together within networks, alliances, and consortia to push for political and social change. The impetus for this new mode of working was provided by civil society's response to a series of disasters that devastated large parts of Pakistan over a period of five years – the earthquake of 2005 and the massive floods of 2010 and 2011. NGOs changed the way they operated in the aftermath of these catastrophes. Cooperation across different organisations increased, coordination across geographical and thematic areas became the norm, and networks were formed around a number of issues. While NGOs had stayed away from government agencies in the past, they now worked jointly and in coordination with state agencies. State agencies too were largely supportive of civil society organisations both during Musharraf's military regime, when the 2005 earthquake happened, and under the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) government from 2008 to 2013, when the country was twice hit by floods. International organisations such as ActionAid were publicly lauded by the Pakistani government for its humanitarian and

development assistance, having provided critical emergency relief during the 2005 earthquake (Toppa 2018). This was true of other international organisations as well, and that ‘the government and state agencies welcomed all humanitarian organisations with wide open arms at the time, especially the international ones that brought huge budgets with them’, said one of our respondents from an INGO.

As noted in the previous section, the present period appears to be marking a new, colder and more controlling relationship between state and civil society, as discussed in the previous section.

3.2 The roles of civil society in development

Civil society has played diverse roles in Pakistan’s development, reflecting the diversity or divisions within the category of voluntary or ‘non-profit organisations’ in Pakistan, and its contributions to development are not easily captured. The fit between civil society and the state has only rarely been close, and then only on specific matters, such as emergency aid, or women’s rights, and under very particular political economic conditions. Civil society operates substantially apart from the state, as a rule, with much activity focused on local service provision. In the early 2000s, Khan and Khan (2004) found most civil society groups were active in the provision of religious education, chiefly madrassah schools. A significant subset of civil society organisations was working in development-related areas such as poverty and livelihoods, women’s rights, or health and education services, mostly with foreign funding and transnational links. Deep divides between religious groups and secular human rights actors keep civil society fragmented and weak, as do efforts by the state to restrict or repress groups, usually those on the liberal NGOs and women’s rights side of the division (Sattar 2011; Khan and Khan 2004). It should be noted that both the religious right and the liberal democratic sides of civil society have strong transnational links, and that struggles over the civic space are also shaped by enduring external partnerships with polarising values.

This fragile and polarised civil society reflects and also explains its general failure to help manage social difference in just and sustainable ways, and to ensure accountability to the marginalised and powerless. As late as 2004, the contributions of civil society, or specifically, its liberal and progressive sections, to pro-poor development in Pakistan were seen to have been modest:

Civil society organisations and social movements espousing a transformative agenda have not registered significant success in challenging the fundamental power imbalances inherent to Pakistani society.
(Nadvi and Robinson 2004: 10)

If civil society appeared to have little power to convene a challenge to powerful landed and other economic interests to bring about a more pro-poor development, neither had it contributed to the core challenge of containing extremism in Pakistan (Sattar 2011). Nevertheless, Khan and Khan (2004) concluded that in the early Musharraf years, civil society organisations, ranging from service-delivery to more transformative development groups had played an important role in pro-poor development and social change in Pakistan, and that NGOs were well-linked into broader social movements around civic and political rights, women’s rights and environmental issues (Khan and Khan 2004). Yet it is not clear that civil society and social movements played any important role in the pluralistic and poverty-focused policy environment in which the Benazir Income Support Programme, a pioneering women-targeted cash transfer scheme, was established (Gazdar 2011).

More measurably, Pakistan’s estimated 45,000 CSOs in Pakistan have made direct contributions across different sectors. CSOs have been active in the areas of poverty

reduction, education, maternal and child healthcare, and disaster management, focused in particular on the needs of women and girls. Data on CSO service delivery is limited, but according to the Pakistan Civil Society Forum (PCSF), CSOs are providing quality education to well over 1 million children (half girls), and maternal and reproductive health care services to 23 million individuals. Programmes in the microfinance sector have more than 30 million users across the country (half women), and these micro-entrepreneurs have created about 1 million jobs.¹ A significant number of CSO programmes have been formally in collaboration with Government. Civil society groups have paid great attention to building public-non-governmental partnerships to address the challenge of delivering basic public health and education services (PCP 2007, 2009, 2011).

CSOs themselves have provided important formal sector employment opportunities – PCSF estimates suggest that 10,000 NGOs alone have more than 500,000 employees.² Analysis of the scale of employment in civil society from as early as 2002 showed civil society employment to comprise 10 per cent of public sector employment, and 1.4 per cent of private formal sector employment (Ali 2006). No more recent data appear to be available.

The country's development challenges have been further exacerbated by major natural disasters such as droughts, earthquakes, and floods. CSOs have been at the forefront of efforts for delivering essential services to affected populations during national disasters, and for the rehabilitation of affected communities. Yet they have no voice in policymaking, and the weakness of Pakistan's disaster preparedness relate also to the weakness of civil society advocacy and effective scrutiny of disaster management policy (Bussell and Fayaz 2017).

4 Episodes of closure and contention over civic space

4.1 Targets of efforts to close civic space

This section examines the case of NGOs in Pakistan, and in particular the case of international NGOs (INGOs), a group that has come in for very stringent scrutiny in recent years, as an example of the type of impact that shrinking civil society space can be expected to have in Pakistan. Most interviewees dated the most recent episode of contention relating to shrinking space for NGOs in Pakistan to five years previously, when the conservative right-wing party, Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), defeated the left-leaning Pakistan People's Party (PPP) in the May 2013 elections. The PML-N has a history of hostility towards civil society, and NGOs in particular. When the party was last in power between 1997 and 1999 (when it was dismissed by General Musharraf's military coup), Punjab province's Minister for Social Welfare and Women Development had led an attack against local NGOs, and restricted their operations. NGOs were criticised for receiving external funds and for being anti-state, and those working on women's rights in particular were targeted as immoral and anti-religion. This was despite the fact that many women's rights organisations had worked closely with different governments through the 1990s in preparing strategy papers for international conventions and conferences. In PML-N's last year in power in 1999:

Some 2,000 groups in Punjab province and more than 200 in Sindh province have been banned by the federal and provincial governments. The widely respected Human Right Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) has been refused permission to print its

¹ These figures are from data provided by PCSF in interviews.

² *ibid.*

newsletter and Shirkat Gah, a women's legal group, accused of embezzling 8 million dollars from World Bank funds, a charge the Bank has denied. (Rizvi 1999)

The alleged impetus behind the de-registration of NGOs at the time was the Government's desire to regulate the sector, and gain greater control over their activities and budgets. A source close to the PML-N provincial minister was quoted as follows, 'the NGOs are overstepping their mandate. They are raising political issues and not following their charters', while the minister publicly accused NGOs of misusing funds, and supported a media campaign that labelled many of the leading NGOs as 'enemies of the nation' (Rizvi 1999). Attempts at greater regulation of NGOs had also occurred under PPP governments in the 1990s, but without the public vilification of the sector.

A generally constructive working relationship between the state and NGOs existed under General Musharraf's military regime, especially with international organisations that brought large amounts of humanitarian aid to the country after the devastating 2005 earthquake in northern Pakistan, and the massive floods in 2010 and 2011. The military government that was in power at the time of the earthquake created the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) to coordinate the sector, and despite increased scrutiny, the atmosphere remained generally conducive for CSOs in general, and INGOs in particular, which operated under open-ended agreements with the Government. A positive and supportive working relationship continued under the PPP government until 2013.

The climate changed in 2013 when the PML-N came back to power. NGOs interviewed previously for another project in 2014³ had reported a definite shift in their working environment with the change of government, and said that they now faced greater regulations, suspicion, and mistrust. A November 2013 policy – the Policy for Regulation of Organisations Receiving Foreign Contribution – sought to provide a basis for greater scrutiny and regulation of all foreign funding to both domestic and international NGOs. Most of our respondents believed that this change of climate was a reaction to the 2011 hunt for Osama bin Laden (and his eventual killing in a residential compound in Abbottabad). The CIA operation had been fronted by a vaccination campaign led by a local doctor, who was allegedly linked to Save the Children, though the connection is denied by the INGO. This incident embarrassed Pakistan and resulted in increasing mistrust of international organisations, though it was not until the PML-N government took over that definitive moves were made against international organisations and development workers in general.

4.2 Strategies and approaches used to restrict civic actors

The Government's reaction in terms of increased restrictions, however, has been quite broad-based. Over the last five years, the Government has introduced a series of laws and regulations that impose legal restrictions on freedom of expression on issues such as the constitution, the armed forces, the judiciary, and religion, for reasons including national security and anti-terrorism (Freedom House 2017a). Loosely defined contempt laws have been used to prevent journalists from reporting on certain issues, while anti-terrorism laws have also been used to prosecute journalists (Freedom House 2017a). People have been prosecuted for alleged breaches of colonial-era blasphemy laws that are used to criminalise expression on religion (Amnesty International 2017). Security forces have been granted a range of powers under the Protection of Pakistan Act of 2014, allowing them to search, detain, and use force against suspects in violation of 'internet offenses and other offenses related to information technology' (Freedom House 2017a). Freedom on the internet is further threatened by the controversial Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act (PECA) of 2016,

³ As part of an MFS-II evaluation of support to civil society organisations in Pakistan by the Dutch government and Dutch development agencies.

which makes it legal for the government to force internet companies to remove any ‘speech, sound, data, writing, image, or video’ without court approval (ICNL 2017). PECA has also raised concerns for allowing imprisonment for ‘disseminating information with “dishonest” intent, or which is deemed to harm an individual’s reputation’ (Freedom House 2017a).

Through 2016, the state came down particularly hard on national NGOs, requiring them to re-register with added documentation if they received any funds from abroad. A number of organisations working in southern Punjab, in districts along the Indian border, in Baluchistan, and in the tribal areas bordering Afghanistan – areas that are considered particularly sensitive – and on women’s and human rights issues (about 350 by some counts), were asked to stop all activities because they were ‘pursuing an anti-state agenda’. Others began to be visited more regularly by intelligence agencies – according to one respondent, the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, one of Pakistan’s leading CSOs, receives a weekly visit from military intelligence, using the National Action Plan (NAP) as the reason. Letters received by local NGOs from various state bodies at the time suggested that activities considered part of an anti-state agenda included accusing the armed forces of harassment; presenting a bleak picture of the human rights situation in Pakistan to external actors such as the UN Commission on Human Rights; and receiving foreign funds without full disclosure of sources and activities (Saeed 2017). Our respondents suggested that a ‘foreign agenda’ was now synonymous with an ‘anti-national agenda’, and included issues like ‘gender discrimination, domestic violence, women and human rights, all of which are thought to be a part of foreign agenda and which have nothing to do with Pakistan or its society’.

These orders were challenged in courts in 2017 by an alliance of local organisations as being illegal, given that they were based on no existing laws.⁴ Two local organisations led this effort – South Asia Partnership Pakistan (SAP-PK) and Taangh Wasaib – with the renowned lawyer and activist, Asma Jahangir, as their council. The orders for registration were quickly withdrawn when they were challenged in court, and after the Chief Justice of the Lahore High Court asked the government to legislate a full policy if it wanted to control NGOs rather than simply level charges of ‘non-state activities’. ‘They withdrew the order to make sure that it wasn’t litigated, that no precedence would be set’ that might weaken future action, said a respondent who is a lawyer by profession and a human rights activist. Another respondent suggested that the government has chosen to act through orders, often vaguely worded, rather than through legislation because they would not actually manage to pass this through Parliament. Respondents were particularly biting on this front, suggesting that,

The whole chaos and confusion caused by a shady and unwritten process serves the state well. They can claim to act under legitimate pretext of registering foreign funded organisations and still keep organisations in check by not providing them clear rules of engagement.

Nevertheless, the close regulation of NGO activities by state agencies continued. One respondent said that sometimes the interference was as detailed as moving their activities from one selected union council⁵ to another one that the agencies were more comfortable with. Another respondent said that despite the fact that their national organisation is formally registered under the Companies Ordinance, all their local implementing partners require NOCs to undertake activities, which is

A constant nuisance, takes up a lot of time, and delays project implementation. This is a grave concern for development organisations as our interventions fail to achieve desired results and outcomes due to such delays. Donors take such delays to be a

⁴ Information from interviews.

⁵ The lowest tier and administrative unit of local government in Pakistan.

result of bad planning and therefore the reputation of our national organisations is at stake.

Some NOCs are easier to get than others, based on the specific funder and also the areas of operation:

It is easier to get an NOC for a project in which we working with donor organisations such as EU and DFID, but the ones that are funded by USAID are much tougher to get clearance for from the establishment now. One of our projects in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), funded by USAID, was denied an NOC recently and so it had to be dropped.

Another added:

The Government is much more interested now in knowing where our funds are coming from and where they are being spent than they were just a couple of years ago. We have to share information such as profiles of project staff, donor information, value of project, communities and people that we are looking to target through our intervention, kind of activities that would be carried out on ground and even the communication and training materials that would be used in different programs are sometimes demanded by the agencies.

The responsibility for monitoring and security clearance of INGOs, previously held by the Economic Affairs Division within the Finance Ministry, was shifted to the Interior Ministry under an October 2015 policy – the Policy for the Regulation of INGOs in Pakistan – that introduced financial and administrative restrictions on the work of INGOs. The policy required INGOs to reapply for registration through a new online form and obtain an MOU with the government. Once government approval is granted through NOCs, INGOs must register for ‘specific field(s) of work and specified location(s) or areas of operation, after consultation with the relevant federal and provincial authorities, and in line with the needs and national priorities of Pakistan’ (ICNL 2017). The Interior Ministry further requires that INGOs spend no more than 30 percent on administrative expenses, employ no more than 10 percent of foreign national staff, and that Pakistani nationals be given preference for key positions. Every year, organisations are required to submit performance audits and third-party evaluations of their work (Naviwala 2017). Further, INGOs are required to obtain security clearance from Pakistani missions abroad before foreign nationals intending to work for them can be issued with initial visas (Gishkori 2015).

Our interviews revealed that the new process for registration was vague and unclear, offered little systematised information to applicants, and was administered in an arbitrary manner, with short term MOUs provided that only covered a few months of operations at a time. The process was also time consuming, requiring about 15 different documents with financial, operational and programmatic details to be submitted to the ministry, including detailed staff particulars, tax return, and funding and registration details in home countries, amongst other information (Ali 2018 and interviews). The language used to explain this greater scrutiny raised concerns that INGO issues are viewed by the government not from a development but a security standpoint, and as proof of ‘the repositioning of Pakistan as a security state and perceiving all forms of dissent as a security challenge,’ (Sayeed 2017; Toppa 2018). The Interior Minister was quoted in 2015 as follows:

There were some intelligence reports suggesting some of the international NGOs funded by US, Israel and India were involved in working on an anti-Pakistan agenda. Let me clarify: offices of any international NGO found doing anti-Pakistan activities would be shut down.
(Perlman 2017)

This meant in practice that ‘NGOs working against Pakistan’s strategic, security, economic, or other interests will have their registration cancelled’ (Toppa 2018). A few months before the policy was issued, Save the Children’s Islamabad office was closed down in June 2015 by officials placing a lock on the organisation’s front gates under orders from the Interior Ministry.

In December 2017, about 29 INGOs (some reports suggested 27 or 31) were issued with notices from the Ministry of Interior ordering them to shut down operations within 90 days (Sayeed 2017). The grounds used for the expulsion of these INGOs was that their re-registration applications under the 2015 policy had not been approved because they had not fulfilled the criteria to re-register their organisations, with all the additional paperwork and documentation required. But according to our respondents even those organisations that believed that they had filed all the required paperwork received the order to leave. The letters of rejection of registration that were received by INGOs from the Interior Ministry provided no clear reasons for the rejection – with only general comments about working beyond their mandate and in unauthorised areas – and neither did the Ministry provide a list of organisations whose registration had been rejected, leaving civil society organisations to figure out the number of organisations that had received the letters. Comments by the Minister of State for Interior Affairs at this time pointed out that the organisations were doing work that was ‘beyond their mandate and for which they have no legal justification’, spent ‘all their money’ on administration, were not doing the work they said they were doing, and were working in areas where they were not authorised (Sayeed 2017).

To many of our respondents in international organisations, this came as sudden and drastic action. INGOs’ foreign registration and connections, and the fact that both these and national organisations receive large amounts of international funds leave them open to suspicions of ‘working for foreign agendas against Pakistan’s interests’, or even laundering foreign funds for actors working in the country. State officials have made statements to media that indicate such a mind-set, suggesting that international organisations have been targeted for operating in areas where the state has reason to believe that ‘Western intelligence agencies’ are active. Another added, ‘basically, the government is trying to follow and keep an eye on the money trail, which is quite understandable.’ This rationale was confirmed to a respondent from a national organisation by two government ministers. Interestingly, the high perceived salaries of INGO staff seemed to be one reason why some officials suspected that INGOs were fronting intelligence activities funded by foreign state agencies (Stacey and Bokhari 2017). One respondent explained, ‘the obscure thinking that foreign money comes with some covert agenda has made its way to the minds of policy makers’. To many respondents, this explanation answers the puzzle of why there are no discernible patterns in the actions taken against INGOs, or why clearer reasons have not been provided for the rejection of their registration applications – ‘the decisions have been taken merely based on security perspective’ suggested a respondent. ‘Whenever security mind-set takes over, there’s always a compromise on democratic values and voices,’ said another.

At the time of our interviews in March 2018, many organisations had appealed the decision, but there was still a lack of clarity on the final list of organisations whose appeals had been accepted or rejected. The work of most organisations had continued uninterrupted in the meantime on the basis of letters of interim permission until applications and appeals were decided one way or another. However, the uncertainty and the arduous appeals process, which include hearings of review requests at the Interior Ministry, has distracted from some activities. One respondent explained the review process as follows:

We were offered a chance to challenge the decision and contest the case, which we did. They did not ask a lot of questions and certainly did not issue any explanation of

why the decision was taken against us. After a brief hearing, the bench stated that we would be informed of the decision in due time. So in a nutshell, we do not know what it is that has earned us the ire of the government so much so that we've been denied the permission to work in Pakistan, we have no idea how long it would take to conclude the hearing process and meanwhile, our organisation has continued to suffer like all the other organisations that have not been offered MoUs.

4.3 Impacts on civil society actors and activities

Through 2016 and 2017 the state's attempts at regulation and restriction had been targeted at local organisations working on women's and human rights, but towards the end of 2017 this focus was widened to include a long list of international organisations headquartered in different countries around the world, including the US, Europe and Australia, and working across a number of areas including service delivery. This surprised people in both national and international organisations, both because service delivery sectors had until recently found support from the Pakistani state, and because it included organisations such as Open Society Foundation (OSF) and Plan International that had had positive working relationships with the government in the past.

Between October and November 2017, medical facilities run by Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) in the tribal areas were closed down when they were refused a NOC despite the fact that the organisation had been operating in the area for over a decade through about 120 local staff (given restrictions on the movement of international staff in tribal areas), spent more than \$27 million in Pakistan in 2016, and there were few alternate medical facilities in the areas that local residents could access (Toppa 2018). The organisation now has no presence in the severely under-provided tribal area. According to its country representative,

Healthcare services are very limited in the area and most of our patients cannot afford to pay for even basic medical care. As the only major hospital providing free, quality healthcare in the area, the closure of MSF's activities will leave a major gap and have serious negative implications for the health of people living in Bajaur⁶ and the surrounding areas, such as Mohmand Agency.⁷

The refusal of a NOC came after MSF had significantly increased its coverage under a real demand for its services. In a statement, the organisation pointed out that,

In the first nine months of 2017, MSF teams provided care to 41,029 patients in the hospital, compared to 38,865 in all of 2016. More than 14,400 patients were seen in the stabilisation room between January and September 2017, compared to around 8,200 in the whole of 2016. In addition, 1,152 deliveries were assisted by skilled MSF medical staff between January and September 2017, compared to 1,291 in all of 2016.⁸

Service delivery by other INGOs is similarly extensive, especially to marginalised populations. Annexe 1 provides these details for the INGOs that were asked to leave, but as examples:

- Plan International's website suggests that it has worked with over 1.6 million children across 4,945 communities in Pakistan since 1997 (Plan International n.d.)
- Trocaire has 150,000 direct beneficiaries and 1.3 million indirect beneficiaries annually
- World Vision has direct and indirect beneficiary group of 794,852 children and youth that receive 'access to education, protection, sustainable income generation, health

⁶ One of seven agencies (divisions) of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA).

⁷ www.msf.org/en/article/pakistan-closure-msf-project-northwest-will-leave-thousands-without-healthcare

⁸ *ibid.*

care, food and better care within their homes and communities' (World Vision Pakistan n.d.)

- Marie Stopes Society claims to have helped the state save about PKR 26 billion in direct healthcare costs, served 51.1m family planning clients, averted 4.5m unwanted pregnancies, and saved 5,655 mothers from mortality (Marie Stopes Pakistan 2016, 2013)

INGOs point out that they work extensively with local partners in remote parts of the country, generating employment and capacitating local organisations by providing them with facilities and building necessary skills. Members of these organisations have claimed, both in speaking with the media and in interviews with us, that their closure will result in the end of life-saving assistance to thousands of people affected by violence, disasters, and a general lack of good quality service provision, claims that are supported by the numbers provided on their websites and in their reports.

Eleven of the organisations that received the notification of closure from the Interior Ministry are part of the Pakistan Humanitarian Forum (PHF). PHF's calculations indicate that about \$124 million in committed funding for 2018 will be lost if these 11 organisations shut down. Simple extrapolations from this figure put the annual loss for all listed organisations at upwards of \$350 million.⁹ These are large-scale activities that reach, directly and indirectly, many millions of the most marginalised and impoverished Pakistanis. Some figures help make the point. Between them, the 11 organisations,

- Served about 8.7 million people throughout Pakistan
- Employed 800 Pakistani staff directly, and about 6000 through partners
- Delivered US\$11.5 million worth of successfully implemented humanitarian relief and development projects reaching over 450,000 people in Khyber-Pakhtunkwha, FATA and Punjab in the second quarter of 2017 alone.¹⁰

Other estimates given by the media, of the wider impacts of the closures, have suggested the overall figure of affected beneficiaries could stand at 29 million nationally, 14 per cent of the population (DAWN 2017). Foreign-aid groups were also noted to have contributed over \$285 million for development and emergency relief in 2016.

These figures provide indications of the magnitude and severity of the potential loss of services from the closure of INGOs. Hard figures for the expected impact of closure are difficult to access, especially within a general atmosphere of uncertainty and fear within which the organisations are currently operating. Organisational finances and expenditure have become sensitive issues because the government has targeted these as part of their criticism (specifically the allegation that INGOs may be spending more on staff salaries than on projects), and information on future planning is considered commercially sensitive by some, because INGOs are worried that knowledge of the extent of their troubles with the state may negatively impact projects in the pipeline on which decisions have not yet been finalised by their funders. A member of one organisation explained how the current situation of uncertainty meant that they risked losing about \$5 million in funding during the appeals process alone, because of the lack of clarity around their future registration status. Another reported that since their status became unclear in 2015 they had lost around \$180 million in funding, shrunk their programmes, losing 190 of their 230 staff between 2015 and 2018, and failing to reach 3 million children that were previously direct beneficiaries.

⁹ Author's calculations based on Annexe 1 (and counting the German foundations as three separate organisations).

¹⁰ Pakistan Humanitarian Forum Factsheet: PHF Project NOCs Q2 April – June 2017. The information is based on 19 organisations that submitted 50 Project NOCs during this period.

The commercial sensitivity of these restrictions relates to the need for donor partners to have formal registration status, even though they know why this remains elusive for most INGOs at the moment. Most donors are reluctant to work with organisations that have not been offered MoUs, and so INGOs are currently unable to compete for projects and calls, which has adversely affected their financial situation. In some cases, support has been withdrawn even for projects that had already been approved before INGOs applications for registration were refused by the government. One respondent pointed out that, 'even if we are offered a MoU as a result of our review application, we would have lost huge projects and would be left with no operational budgets to continue working in Pakistan'. Another noted that during the past two years, their projects amounted to only about \$8 million, and that this was a fraction of before 2016, and that they had lost \$9 million in new funding for a project on primary education for over 1 million girls in remote parts of the country because they were not formally registered with the government.

Annexe 1 provides more details for a concrete idea of the types of beneficiary groups be impacted by the expulsion of these INGOs. Given the current state of uncertainty and vagueness around both the expulsion orders and the process of appeals, the table is based on the most widely circulated categorisation of organisations as of March 2018. We were able to adjust the list based on information received from some of our respondents. The material covers organisations whose applications for re-registration were not approved after they applied under the 2015 policy, those whose re-registration is still being considered, and those whose status has been changed from an INGO to an IPO – a term that had not been clarified by the state, but which most respondents believe refers to 'International Political Organisations', since it grouped together organisations connected to political parties in the US and in Germany.¹¹

The affected organisations work across multiple sectors, including health and reproductive rights; education; water and sanitation; livelihoods; bonded labour; child and women's rights; and peace-building. A detailed scan of their activities in Columns E, F and G in Annexe 1 indicate that the greatest impact may be grouped around SDGs 3 (good health and well-being), 4 (quality education), 5 (gender equality), 6 (clean water and sanitation), 8 (decent work and economic growth), 11 (sustainable cities and communities), and 16 (peace, justice, strong institutions). Of these, by far the issue areas that feature most prominently are education and health (indicated for 17 and 19 organisations respectively, out of the 29 listed in Annexe 1). This is paradoxical, because both of these sectors represent major priorities of the national and provincial governments, are areas in which public-private partnerships have been pursued in the past, and are considered areas most acceptable for both national and international NGOs to work in.

Equally paradoxical is the fact that in the interviews conducted by the Interior Ministry with each individual organisation in the on-going process of appeals, organisations have been explicitly asked about their contribution to specific SDGs¹² and whether they are willing to change to other areas of work. 'The right answer,' said one respondent, 'is yes'. The state has not specified which areas it may want INGOs to shift to, but many of our respondents continued to believe that that the government's preferred areas of engagement for INGOs were health and education, and that it was work on thematic areas such as gender-based violence, minority rights, human rights, water distribution, and peace building that was being specifically discouraged. However, as one of our respondents was quick to point out,

¹¹ The fact that the International Rescue Committee (IRC) is included as an IPO is believed to be a mistake, possibly the result of officials having confused the IRC with the International Republican Institute (IRI), an organisation associated with the Republican Party in the US, and which is included in the list of INGOs whose cases were not approved.

¹² This was confirmed by all our respondents that had been through these interviews.

All these statements are based on hints received by different organisations and their perception of the situation. There is no documented proof for any of these trends. In fact, if we look at all the different organisations that have been denied the permission to work in the country, we cannot see a geographical, thematic, political or any other trend which we can use to see why and who has been issued letters of acceptance and who has not been accepted.

4.4 Wider impacts on civic space

The closure of INGOs in Pakistan has a number of implications, both developmental and political. In terms of developmental impact, the most immediate and obvious is that millions of direct and indirect beneficiaries of INGO projects are already not receiving essential services, and many more will be left without these if and when they exit the country. This effect may be particularly harmful given that there are no obvious indications that the government has a clear plan to fill the gap that will be left by these departing organisations, so that communities previously served by these INGOs and their local partners may be left without any support or services.

Another obvious impact is in terms of the funds that flow into the country and into the provision of essential services through these INGOs. Besides the communities that they serve, the withdrawal of these funds is also expected to have an impact on the many local CSOs that partner with the INGOs in implementing community projects. These local organisations may see a curtailing of their own financial sustainability, as well as their ability to employ local staff. The local employment market in the development sector may shrink significantly, as over 6000 local staff's work and salaries will be affected. Some respondents think this may actually have a positive impact by rationalising salaries in the sector, and allowing local organisations access to quality staff that are usually snapped up by INGOs, based on the very high salaries offered by this sector. However, there is a genuine concern that the local sector may not have enough immediate absorptive capacity, and thousands of livelihoods will be either directly affected, or indirectly through ripple effects within the development sector.

Interestingly, respondents suggested that civil society's absorptive capacity has been weakened over time, not just in Pakistan but in other countries too, by the fact that donors are regularly granting large contracts to the UN and private sector companies (what donors perceive as 'best placed actors') instead of to international and national NGOs, especially small, local ones. This reduces the capacity of local organisations and also makes development work conform to the ideas and values of for-profit private enterprises, rather than locally embedded organisations with decades of practical knowledge and experience of humanitarian work. Donors can help recreate a working environment in which national NGOs can hope to compete on the basis of equal opportunity, thus supporting the development of local expertise and capacity, and local solutions to development problems. 'This would deal with the major objection that donors pay big bucks to expats to fix local problems', said one respondent. Many CSOs work from project to project, meeting immediate targets set by others, rather than building their capacity through longer-term strategic planning and systems, databases and knowledge acquisition, and the ability to retain experienced staff.

In terms of political implications, Pakistan's international standing may be affected. The sudden closure of key development organisations may affect the government's ability to meet targets on various developmental commitments, such as the SDGs, Pakistan's own Vision 2025, the donor-led Grand Bargain, and the European Union's trade-led Generalised System of Preferences+, along with various United Nations treaties and conventions. Continued restrictions on humanitarian and civil society space could undermine Pakistan's

international reputation as a democratic and accountable government, as well as one that is able to provide vulnerable communities with access to lifesaving and life enhancing services.

There is now a new government in place after the July 2018 elections, led by the Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaaf (PTI). In the months leading up to the election our respondents had already started to hope that the government may eventually come to realise the real developmental impact of restricting civil space in this way, but ‘the question remains, is this a fight that a weak government is willing to pick against the army?’ wondered one respondent, referring to the undue influence of the military in the securitisation of Pakistan’s development policy.

I’m afraid this isn’t an important enough issue on which a beleaguered government will take on an increasingly insecure security establishment, especially since their interests converge broadly on this issue. I think the INGO situation will eventually work itself out, but not that for local NGOs that are far more affected but also far more powerless because no party is championing their cause.

5 Conclusions and implications

5.1 The implications of changing civic space for development in Pakistan

The propositions in the conceptual framework of this study suggested how changes in civic space were likely to impact on inclusive development under different political settlements and conditions of ‘fit’ between civil society and the state. These suggested that in a formally democratic, competitive but predatory state such as Pakistan, we can expect to see attempts to de-legitimise civil society on grounds that it is unrepresentative, elitist, or foreign, and to demonstrate the state’s power over NGOs and CSOs through heavy-handed restrictions that limit their resources or scope of work. Predatory states often rely substantially on foreign-funded NGOs or CSOs to deliver services, in particular the emergency and humanitarian services that are associated with many such developing countries, but without a significant watchdog role for civil society. The likely impact of such restrictions on civil society will primarily affect the most vulnerable and marginalised groups, who are likely to suffer most through a lack of voice and political pressure on political elites; there are likely to be no major protest movements or possibility of moving against elite interests; and instead of which people would be more likely to exit where possible, and/or engage in extremist politics and violent resistance.

This is visible in the case of increased restrictions on NGOs in Pakistan, and in particular the threatened closure of INGOs. Civil society actors have been forced to stop, curb, or change their activities in order to align not with the state’s developmental agenda, but rather with its security agenda, without a clear alternative plan in place to offset the effects of such action on the most marginalised groups. A political settlement that is configured around the military, a securitised state, and economic elites that make up its political parties means that civil society actors do not play a significant watchdog role in Pakistan and are not able to contribute to holding the state accountable. At the same time, it also means that even if the needs of marginalised populations are not being served, there are no major protest movements organised around these interests (barring an emergent ethnic movement of Pukhtoons that is still in its very early days), given an environment of exclusion, fear, and insecurity. This atmosphere also means that civil society groups of all varieties – including media and academia – can be expected to develop strategies for adapting to, or working around imposed restrictions, where possible, rather than resorting to resistance or protest.

The present case study explored the ways in which new and proposed restrictions on NGOs in Pakistan are likely to shape the nature, scale and form of services received by

marginalised groups, and in particular to assess the extent to which such impacts are likely to be measurable in any robust and quantitative sense. We used a single detailed case to make visible and extrapolate findings about the development impact of closing civic space more broadly in Pakistan. While some figures of the expected impacts were available in Pakistan, it was difficult to assess the likely impacts in a robust way, partly because of a general atmosphere of uncertainty and fear, but also because such figures are not regularly collected. As pointed out in the conceptual framework, 'the mechanisms through which civic space impacts development outcomes can be complex, contradictory, matter at different points in time, and work at different levels and parts of economic, social and political systems'. To help unravel these mechanisms for the purpose of investigation, more robust data is required. This includes:

- Organisational life histories that can highlight the particular paths that organisations take to adapt to closing space and the ways in which this affects their work. We suggested above that despite the heavy-handedness of the Pakistani state, the current episode of contention is possibly aimed more at the regulation of NGOs rather than their complete expulsion from the country, and that we expect these organisations to find ways to adapt to these pressures. Much more research is required to understand the exact ways in which organisations do this, and the impact of these strategies on their activities, project outputs, and developmental outcomes.
- Data and evidence on the contribution of civil society to development outcomes in Pakistan. Such evidence is very sparse at present, and many respondents acknowledged the need to have better indicators of contributions across the sector to challenge the global shrinkage of civic space. A major reason for this scarcity (in addition to the sensitive nature of the data) is that data collection is costly and usually not included in civil society organisations' list of deliverables. Donors can help the situation by encouraging CSOs to maintain regular and collective data on the magnitude of their work, and its actual impact on particular development outcomes, possibly even connected up to databases that publicly track CSOs' contributions to progress towards Pakistan's SDG targets. The impact of closing civic space then becomes the flipside of this database, showing how and when work is restricted and development outcomes affected.

A shrinking civic space in Pakistan in general, and the increasingly difficult environment for INGOs in particular, was explained by our respondents as being the result of a right-wing government with an anti-civil society history, a security mind-set nurtured by the army, and lessons from a neighbouring superpower (China) that is trying similar strategies at home. Yet most respondents believed there was a good chance that INGOs would not actually need to leave, and that the entire incident will settle down once the government has figured out how to regulate the sector. For some this might mean greater disclosure; for others, a reorientation of activities. For many it is good news that they will continue to operate in the country, especially around vital needs like education and health. For others, it means that work around thematic areas like women's and minorities' rights and with the most vulnerable communities may be severely curtailed. The situation needs to be monitored by civil society actors and by donors because it is likely that disempowered and marginalised groups will be excluded from vital services as the state restricts the work of those that amplify their voice and build their capacity to engage with the state. This would violate a key principle of the SDGs, which is to 'leave no one behind'.

5.2 Measuring the implications of civic space for development

This case study was designed to test propositions set out in the conceptual framework, as relevant to the countries' respective political settlements and state-civil society relations, and explore the methodological prospects, including data sources, for investigating the relationships between changes in civic space and development outcomes.

The case studies (this Pakistan case is part of a set) were rapid activities, involving experienced researchers in a short country visit, interviews with key informants, and secondary data collection and literature review. To optimise resources and sharpen analytical focus, the study focused on specific episodes when civic space had been in contention in areas likely to impact on development; it then analysed the development impacts in line with an understanding of the 'fit' between civil society and the state, derived from debates about the politics of pro-poor or inclusive development in Pakistan. The research was politically sensitive, and required great caution and trust.

In Pakistan, at the time of the fieldwork, the closures were threatened and not yet real. NGO activities had slowed or stalled during the period of the study in early 2018, but they had not been closed. As of December 2018, 18 of the NGOs had been forced to close.¹³ The analysis traced the potential impacts in terms of the likely losses of programmes, and the groups and issues likely to be affected should the closures go through. Although many other kinds of NGOs and organisations are also affected by regulations and arbitrary orders, the episodes examined here involved mostly international NGOs. INGOs tend to have comparatively strong data and monitoring systems, and most were able to provide information about the nature and scope of their activities at threat from the proposed closures, as well as quantitative assessments of the likely numbers of direct service beneficiaries at risk.

One limitation of such direct measures, even with comparatively robust data systems, is that NGO officials may themselves have a grasp of only some of the potential impacts of closures of their programmes. Individual services may have a number of unintended or multiplier development impacts not assumed by the theory of change with which a particular NGO is working. As is well known, the provision of education or microfinance may not only equip people with literacy or credit, but also empower them to engage with public officials or operate in the modern world. Nevertheless, the scale of the likely development impacts, and the marginalised groups on whom they were most likely to fall, emerged clearly: in one example, a US\$27 million health programme was to close, threatening access to health services in a remote area which lacked other facilities, and in which the NGO had served over 40,000 patients in 2017.

While some figures of expected impacts were available in Pakistan, it was difficult to assess these in a robust way, partly because of, as respondents described it, a 'general atmosphere of uncertainty and fear within which the organisations are currently operating' and because '[o]rganisational finances and expenditure have become sensitive issues both because the government has targeted these as part of their criticism (specifically the allegation that INGOs [international NGOs] may be spending more on staff salaries than on projects), and because INGOs are worried about how their current situation may be perceived by donors for ongoing or future projects.' It seems likely, in addition, that donors and INGOs would develop strategies for adapting to, or working around these restrictions, where possible, and that service cuts would not be as swingeing as the wholesale closure of the NGOs suggested.

Several important likely sources of impact were not measured. Civil society actors adapted their activities and/or mutated into different kinds of actors or organisations altogether; to analyse this resilience would require organisational life histories to track the trajectories of individual civic actors across key moments of change.¹⁴ Many NGOs and CSOs are adept at managing threats from governments and responding in ways that enable them to keep to their mandate without crossing official lines, so that the assessments generated by these

¹³ <http://newsweekpakistan.com/international-ngos-shutter-operations-amid-pakistan-crackdown/>.

¹⁴ See, for instance, Lewis (2008).

case studies may be overly negative about the measurable effects on development outcomes, or overstate the magnitude of the loss of services provided or received. Other unmeasured costs of coping with closing space included a high degree of stress and personal and organisational costs in coping with or adapting to restricted civic space. The actual risks of violence against civic actors, particularly in relation to land, resource, indigenous, women's and LGBTQI rights defenders, are documented by human rights monitors, but the costs of civic activism in such contexts are not.

Coping and adapting to narrower civic space is likely to impact adversely on the quality, efficiency, and possibly also the transparency and accountability of aid financing to civil society. In addition, the costs of shifting activities from mobilisation or empowerment and advocacy to service-delivery are likely to be significant in terms of the accountability of government policy and the inclusiveness of development. A more robust measure of the broader developmental impacts of closing civic space in Pakistan could be generated through comparative analysis of periods of relative civic space using mixed methods to assess the relationship to the inclusiveness of development in particular periods. Cross-country comparative analysis would similarly highlight the contributions – or not – of civil society to important development functions such as building trust in economic institutions; holding powerful actors to account; empowering disadvantaged and marginalised groups; protecting the vulnerable; and monitoring development progress.

Annexe 1

Types of services likely to be lost due to NGO closures (based on information available in online sources)

Gender equality and women's empowerment

Working towards gender equality and women's empowerment in Pakistan has been a key focus of at least 7 of the 31 CSOs targeted by the Interior Ministry. The closure of these NGOs will have a detrimental impact on awareness-raising and advocacy, and will affect women's access to services across a range of issues including their right to land and inheritance, gender-based violence (GBV), child marriage, economic empowerment, and food security and livelihoods.

Gender-based violence is a key focus of CSOs engaged in gender-related work in Pakistan. Trocaire, Rutgers WPF, ActionAid, and the International Catholic Migration Commission have been leaders in this area. Between June 2014 and May 2018, Trocaire's Country Strategic Plan on gender-based violence directly covers 17,233 people (7,953 men, 9,280 women), and further has 237,980 indirect participants. Rutgers WPF has involved nearly 5,500 men and boys in discussions, dialogues, and interventions to reduce GBV. The International Catholic Migration Commission has a GBV programme for refugees and other victims of GBV, and has reached 858 Afghan and other refugees. ActionAid's Country Strategy Plan (2013–17) also explicitly aims to promote responsive policies for GBV and child marriage.

ActionAid and Save the Children work to secure the economic empowerment of women in Pakistan. ActionAid's Country Strategy Plan (2013–17) aimed to achieve economic independence for 150,405 women and the right to land and inheritance for 111,576 women. Save the Children focuses its efforts on ensuring economic empowerment through its food security and livelihoods assistance work targeted towards women and youth in cotton-growing communities.

International Alert has been involved in awareness-raising regarding gender relations, and in 2014, helped to start more than 10,000 study circles that have resulted in shifts in people's attitudes, perceptions and behaviour around gender relations as well as their understanding of the legal, social and economic issues faced by women in particular. 'Champions' have then spread these messages in their local communities, resulting in people stopping and boycotting practices such as early and forced marriage. The Asia Foundation, in partnership with the Aurat Foundation, has implemented the Gender Equity programme to increase gender equity in Pakistan.

Health

At least 8 of the 30-odd CSOs targeted by the Interior Ministry have been working towards improving health outcomes in Pakistan. The closure of these NGOs will have an immediate impact on essential service delivery across a range of health facilities including reproductive health, maternal and early childhood health, nutrition, immunisation, mental health, and the prevention and treatment of several diseases.

Pathfinder, Marie Stopes, BRAC, Rutgers WPF, and Save the Children have been involved in the provision of services related to reproductive health and family planning. From 2010–16, Marie Stopes alone served 51.1m family planning clients and averted 4.5m unwanted pregnancies. Pathfinder has contributed to advocacy for contraception and has trained thousands of community health workers and religious leaders.

Marie Stopes, Interactive Research & Development, Mercy Corps, and Save the Children have been directly involved in service delivery related to maternal and newborn health. For example, Marie Stopes has saved 5,666 mothers from mortality (between 2010 and 2016) and Mercy Corps has trained health workers and midwives to improve maternal childbirth and newborn health.

Between January and September 2017, BRAC has referred 858 children for immunisation, and Interactive Research & Development is also involved in immunisation activities. Mercy Corps has worked to increase access to Tuberculosis treatment, and Interactive Research & Development has provided services related to Tuberculosis, Diabetes, smoking cessation and lung health, as well as mental health. Save the Children's programme on Malaria plans to reduce the burden of Malaria by 75 per cent in 38 highly endemic districts of Pakistan. Save the Children's HIV & AIDS initiative also aims to improve access to care and support for HIV-affected persons.

Education

At least 9 of the 30-odd CSOs targeted by the Interior Ministry have been working to improve education, literacy, and vocational training on a massive scale in Pakistan. The closure of these organisations will have a direct impact on education at various levels, including programming, infrastructure and facilities, teacher training, student learning, and the management and governance of schools and the education system.

ActionAid, through its Country Strategy Plan (2013–17) aims to provide free and quality public education for 379,362 children in Pakistan. In terms of infrastructure and facilities, Plan International has reached out to over 10,080 children with its school improvement and rehabilitation projects supporting the construction of classrooms and the provision of IT labs. Since 2005, Catholic Relief Services has built 114 school structures, trained and mentored 520 teachers, and conducted hygiene training for 6,688 students in rural communities. BRAC, between January and September 2017, has been operating 1,454 primary schools, enrolled 43,495 children (64 per cent girls), trained 1,347 teachers in Sindh, and graduated 5,493 learners.

The Asia Foundation's Books for Asia programme has provided Pakistani organisations with up to 90,000 books each year. Other CSOs have focussed on student learning – for example, Rutgers WPF's flagship curriculums on Life Skills Based Education (LSBE) have provided thousands of students with SRHR education and have trained 402 teachers from public and private schools. The International Rescue Committee has committed to ensuring age-appropriate reading, writing, and social skills for children as a cornerstone of its work between 2015 and 2020. Plan International's projects on technical and vocational training (TVET) have worked to foster youth empowerment, supported 15 public and private sector TVET institutions, and have provided 10,000 youth with skills training linkages to 40 local employers. Save the Children has been working with the government at district and provincial levels to improve management and governance of the education sector.

Children/youth

Four of the CSOs targeted are focussed on promoting child rights and the social and economic development of Pakistan's youth. World Vision has worked with the country's young population at a massive scale, with 794,852 children and youth targeted directly and indirectly to provide them with access to education, protection, sustainable income generation, health care, food and better care within their homes and communities. Right to Play has focused on positive child development in both the formal school setting and the community at large, and has reached 213,407 children with 49 per cent female participation as of 2014. Oxfam Novib Pakistan's My Rights, My Voice (MRMV) programme engages marginalised children and major media outlets to increase awareness of youth's right to SRH

and ensure meaningful youth participation. Meanwhile, Save the Children has been working on promoting child rights governance by providing technical and financial support to the revitalisation of the country's national Child Rights Movement (CRM) (comprising 108 child-focused NGOs across all four provinces of the country, including Azad Jammu and Kashmir).

Humanitarian response/resilience

CSOs in Pakistan have played a major role in providing humanitarian services to vulnerable and disaster-affected populations. At least 9 of the 31 CSOs ordered to leave the country have been working extensively in this area, and their activities range from relief, response, and recovery assistance to building community resilience systems in various parts of the country.

Save the Children has been at the forefront of the humanitarian response to every major emergency in Pakistan in recent decades. The CSO was involved in the response to the earthquake of 2005, conflicts in FATA and KP, and the floods of 2007, 2008, 2010, 2011, 2012 and 2013. In 2010, Save the Children reached nearly 4 million flood-affected people with humanitarian aid, of which 1.8 million were children. This was the largest humanitarian response from Save the Children globally. The organisation also raised US\$100,509,868 to meet the needs of the affected population in food aid, shelter, health, child protection, education, livelihood, water and sanitation. Since 2009, food security and livelihoods programs have been implemented in disaster-affected areas with a focus on relatively long-term activities including comprehensive agrarian packages that help families recover and promote their livelihoods for at least two years.

ACTED, Catholic Relief Services, and Open Society Foundations have also been active in providing humanitarian relief, response, and recovery in Pakistan. ACTED reports a massive 488,596 total direct beneficiaries (2016), and has provided 8,200,000 vulnerable, disaster-affected families with assistance to meet their WASH, shelter, food security, agriculture, education, and infrastructure needs between 2009 and 2012. Catholic Relief Services has supported more than 1 million people across the country and has built more than 50,000 transitional shelters, distributed more than 40,000 kits, assisted 38,000 households with restoring their agricultural livelihoods. Open Society Foundations has delivered \$3m in emergency relief funding after the 2005 earthquake and \$6m after the 2010 monsoon floods. Trocaire's Humanitarian Programme Plan (March 2017 – December 2019) covers 4,750 people (2,570 men, 2,000 women), and the International Rescue Committee's new 2020 strategy for Pakistan aims to reach out to more than 1.4 million people and provide emergency response within 72 hours through its Country Emergency Team.

ActionAid, Malteser International, and Mercy Corps, on the other hand, have been working extensively to build resilience and strengthen communities against disaster. As a part of its Country Strategy Plan (CSP), to be achieved between 2013 and 2017, ActionAid aims to adopt community resilience systems for 48,924 vulnerable people in 100 communities. Malteser International's work in this area (June 2016 onwards) aims to improve the resilience of around 60,000 people vulnerable coastal communities by strengthening local healthcare provision, improving water, sanitation, and hygiene structures, and training local people in disaster risk-reduction techniques. In collaborating with local authorities, Mercy Corps has been working with local authorities to develop long-term disaster prevention efforts like reducing soil erosion to mitigate future flooding.

Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs)

Among the CSOs ordered to leave by the Interior Ministry, The Danish Refugee Council (DRC), Catholic Relief Services (CRS), and the International Catholic Migration Commission have been key actors in providing assistance to refugees and internally displaced persons in

Pakistan. In one year of implementation, DRC has assisted approximately of 250,000 individuals with activities that included legal assistance, legal documentation, awareness on voluntary repatriation, vocational training, NFI distribution, hygiene promotion, rehabilitation of schools, health centres and sanitation drainages. CRS has been active near the western Afghanistan border, providing a basic literacy programme for both Afghan refugee children and children from the Pakistani host community. Most recently, the programme served 500 children (70 per cent girls and 30 per cent boys), preparing them to enter formal education. The International Catholic Migration Commission has also worked with Afghan refugees, with 500 school children participating in hazard mapping exercises (2014), 600 individuals receiving marketable life skills training in 2014, and 4,387 persons benefitting from livelihoods support projects in 2015. The CSO's GBV programme has reached 858 Afghan and other refugees, and its water and sanitation project aims to reach approximately 2,700 Afghan refugee households comprising of 22,250 individuals (5,400 men, 5,800 women and 11,050 children).

Democracy, governance, and human rights

Among the CSOs asked to leave the country, at least seven are working directly and indirectly on issues of human rights and democracy in Pakistan. These organisations work in a combination of research, advocacy, and service-delivery work in order to promote improved governance at various levels in the country. The International Republican Institute (IRI) has been working in Pakistan since 2002, conducting public opinion research, national and provincial level political party strengthening, democratic governance and civic participation programs. The National Democratic Institute has also been promoting democratic development in Pakistan, having worked for more than 20 years with political parties and civic groups to strengthen democratic institutions. The Institute supports programs that help political parties become modern and inclusive, and has worked extensively with women and young party activists to help them develop party-building skills and advocate for greater inclusion at the decision making level. In addition, the Institute has conducted election observation missions, trained party polling agents and worked with partner organisations on media, communications and advocacy issues. The German foundations (Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, Heinrich Böll Stiftung, Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung) also work on issues ranging from accountable and transparent local government to political awareness and the rule of law, while the Asia Foundation focuses on human rights, with activities including capacity-building to improve cooperation between Pakistani CSOs and provincial governments on human rights governance.

Agriculture and food security

Four of the NGOs expelled by the Interior Ministry have programmes related to agriculture and food security. For example, Mercy Corps has worked with dairy farmers to increase their incomes by keeping their animals healthy, while Catholic Relief Services has supported 7,500 drought-stricken households with concentrated feed and food and animal management trainings. As a part of its Country Strategy Plan (2013–17) ActionAid aims to achieve food security for 111,576 small-holding farmers, 51,914 of which are women, while Save the Children's food security and livelihood projects in cotton-growing communities focus on the empowerment of women and youth specifically.

Water and sanitation

Trocaire's programme on Water Rights (March 2017 - December 2021) has a coverage 4,720 people (2,832 men, 1888 women), with further 28,320 indirect participants, while Muslim Aid's Water for Life/Dig a Well programme has two ongoing projects with 100,000 beneficiaries across Pakistan. Solidar's WASH project covers 700 households with an estimated 4,900 total beneficiaries.

Economic empowerment/poverty reduction

BRAC, Mercy Corps, and Muslim Aid have worked to promote economic empowerment in Pakistan, through a range of programs including microloans and skills training. Between January-September 2017, BRAC provided 55,723 clients with US\$18.5 million in microloans. Since inception, BRAC microfinance programme has served more than 247,500 clients with US\$147 million. BRAC's Programme for Poverty Reduction in Baluchistan to promote holistic socioeconomic development for 3,671 households. Muslim Aid also has a microfinance programme with a 63,335,000 PKR budget, covering 8,793 beneficiaries in Rawalpindi and Chakwal. Mercy Corps works on improving economic opportunities available to Pakistanis by providing training in key skills and connecting trainees with local employment opportunities.

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