







The closing space for civil society and implications for environmental actors

# THE CLOSING SPACE: is it really a new phenomenon?



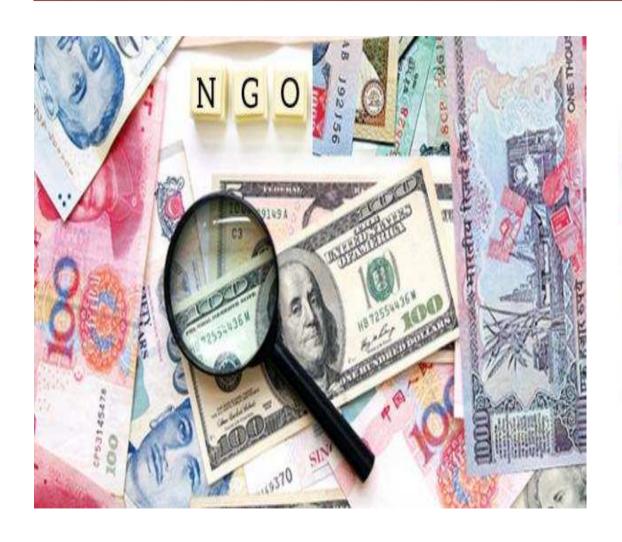
### **KEY CHARACTERISTICS**

 Proliferation of laws to curtail freedom of assembly, expression and association

Pace and spread

Global and viral

# **DEFAMATION**





#### **DRIVERS**

- Suspicion of western agendas on democracy and human rights
- Fear of people power + resisting accountability
- NGOs viewed as the political opposition
- Counter terrorism laws post 9/11
- Development agenda

#### **CASE STUDY 1: INDIA**

#### **The Foreign Contribution Regulation Act 2010:**

- Prohibits designated groups (farmers; students, workers, and Dalits) from receiving foreign funds
  - Defines groups who utilize common tools of protest and action such as rallies, road blocks, jail fills and surrounding police stations as political and illegible for FCRA status

## **INDIA**





# **CASE STUDY 2: CANADA**



- Excerpt from Canadian Counter Terrorism Strategy 2012:
- "Although not of the same scope and scale faced by other countries," the report said, "low-level violence by domestic issue-based groups remains a reality in Canada. Such extremism tends to be based on grievances real or perceived—revolving around the promotion of various causes such as animal rights, white supremacy, environmentalism and anticapitalism."

The document discussed environmentalists, who have never harmed anyone, alongside the Oklahoma City bombing and the 2011 Norway massacre as examples of "domestic issue-based extremism."

# **CASE STUDY 3: RUSSIA**



#### **RUSSIA**

#### The Russian media on Kutepova:

- On 1 June 2015, another film about Kutepova was aired on the Yekaterinburg TV channel Rezonans The film included an interview with Alexander Kalinin, then-mayor of Ozyorsk and a former head of the local Federal Security Bureau.
- "She [Kutepova] still wants to close the plant and open the [closed] town. Her goals strangely correspond to the wishes of western countries and competitors," he said in the interview. "Without a doubt, her actions are a threat," Kalinin added.

# Nadzeda Kutepova on the Russian media attacks:

 "We make a strange nest of spies," "Our staff of four is made up of single mothers and a pensioner, who became an invalid after working on the Chernobyl clean up. I can't think of a less likely fifth column."

# **QUESTIONS PART 1**

- Do you recognize your experience in this phenomenon?
- If so can you share how it's affecting you and your ability to do your work?
- What do you believe are the root causes behind the closing space you or other environmental actors are experiencing?
- What gaps are there in our understanding of how the space for environmental actors to operate is under attack?

#### STRATEGIES AHEAD

- Development agenda
- Unlikely allies: Relationships with corporations
- Challenging the unintended impact of counter terrorism laws
- Strengthening and diversifying counter-narratives
- Building and strengthening alliances against the closing space
- Strengthening resilience

# **QUESTIONS PART 2**

- What strategies, and tools are you using or what alliances could be developed to respond to physical, administrative or smear attacks?
- Does the impact of the closing space on environmental actors – and especially attacks on freedom of association - require a different kind response to how you normally engage in advocacy and alliance building?
- Are there concrete steps you could agree to take at this conference as a first step?