EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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EMPOWERING
CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS AT THE UPR

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Strengthening **Implementation** of **Recommendations** from the UN's Universal Periodic Review
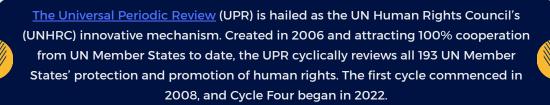
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This executive summary sets out the findings from the "Empowering Civil Society Organisations at the UPR" study. This novel research **aims to empower civil society organisations, in turn strengthening the domestic implementation of recommendations from the UN's Universal Periodic Review (UPR).**

Through an online survey and semi-structured interviews, a significant dataset was created detailing experiences of civil society organisations (CSOs) that engage with the UPR.

The Universal Periodic Review (UPR) is hailed as the UN Human Rights Council's (UNHRC) innovative mechanism. Created in 2006 and attracting 100% cooperation from UN Member States to date, the UPR cyclically reviews all 193 UN Member States' protection and promotion of human rights. The first cycle commenced in 2008, and Cycle Four began in 2022.

The findings identify actions to be taken through four themes:

1 Empowering Civil Society

2 Engaging with Domestic Governments

3 Collaborating with Other UN Member States

4 Supporting Role of the UN and OHCHR

This executive summary presents an overview of the four themes. Please see the full report for the detailed action points.

Key actors of the UPR are encouraged to take note of the findings and consider implementing the suggested action points in order to empower CSOs' engagement with the UPR and promote effective implementation of UPR recommendations. This will assist in ensuring the UPR meets its mandate to protect and promote human rights on the ground.

1 Empowering Civil Society

Empowering civil society draws upon the experiences of the participant CSOs when engaging with the UPR, identifying practical ways to further support CSOs.

1.1 Education and Training

In line with relevant scholarship, the data suggests that education on the mechanism is required, specifically for CSOs and domestic governments.

1.2 Capacity Building and Technical Assistance

Participants requested support with capacity building and technical assistance, for example, with compiling stakeholder reports, and navigating the later stages of the UPR.

1.3 Financial Support

A common issue is the requirement for financial support to allow CSOs to take part in the UPR process, in particular implementation activities.

1.4 Protection from Reprisals and Harassment

Many participants shared experiences of reprisals and harassment because of their engagement with the UPR. More robust support for CSOs is required from the UN and Member States.

1.5 Advocacy Strategies

Numerous participants shared their impactful advocacy strategies in relation to the UPR and implementation of recommendations. To empower CSOs, these strategies could be replicated by other organisations, where appropriate.

2   Engaging with Domestic Governments

Engaging with domestic governments explores how participants have worked, and would like to work, with national governments throughout the UPR cycle.

2.1 Cooperation between CSOs and Governments

The data demonstrates a need for greater cooperation between CSOs and domestic governments, so they can work together to realise UPR recommendations in practice.

2.2 Engagement with CSO Recommendations and Themes

The dataset showed that CSOs require support to engage with governments when UPR recommendations do not align with their expertise or the State has noted relevant recommendations.

2.3 Effective Follow-up Mechanisms

Participants identified the requirement for effective follow-up mechanisms and regular progress updates from government on implementation of UPR recommendations.

3   Collaborating with Other UN Member States

Collaborating with other UN Member States relates to how other State delegations can empower CSOs through meaningful and effective collaborations.

3.1 Meaningful Collaborations with CSOs

CSOs would be further empowered by having more opportunities to collaborate with other UN Member States. It is vital that these interactions are meaningful and mutually beneficial.

3.2 Making SMART Recommendations

The data confirmed the literature's findings that recommendations should be SMART to support implementation on the ground: Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Timebound.

3.3 Embassies Supporting Implementation

Multiple CSOs suggested that embassies are key to strengthening the role of CSOs in the implementation of UPR recommendations.

4 Supporting Role of the UN and OHCHR

Supporting role of the UN and OHCHR points to action that could be taken by the UN and OHCHR, in conjunction with CSOs, to improve the UPR mechanism and empower CSOs.

4.1 Strengthening UN Support for CSOs

Participants requested further support directly from the UN, including ensuring CSOs are consulted during key stages and creating more space for CSOs to take part in the UPR.

4.2 Improving the Implementation Process

As the process of implementing UPR recommendations currently takes place outside of the scrutiny of the UN, participants identified this as an area for the UN to improve.

4.3 OHCHR Transparency

The data reflected suggestions in the scholarship that the OHCHR's method for summarising the Stakeholder Summary Report could be more transparent to support the empowerment of CSOs.

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