

The Interplay Between Civil Society and State in Southeast Asia: Pathways to Human Development and Flourishing

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This article examines the critical role of civil society organizations (CSOs) in advancing human development and human flourishing in Southeast Asia, highlighting the suitability of the Interdependence Model in explaining the dynamic interactions between CSOs and the state. CSOs in Southeast Asia significantly contribute to education, health, and social welfare by working collaboratively with government entities. Through initiatives like the Tanoto Foundation's educational programs in Indonesia and the Community-Based Health Care (CBHC) program in Vietnam, CSOs fill crucial service delivery gaps, improve health outcomes, and enhance educational accessibility. Moreover, organizations like Friends-International in Cambodia demonstrate the comprehensive support CSOs provide to vulnerable populations, addressing immediate needs and promoting long-term social welfare. The Interdependence Model, emphasizing cooperation and partnership, effectively captures these collaborative efforts, contrasting with the Pluralist, Corporatist, and Conflict models, which do not fully encompass the cooperative nature of current CSO-state relationships in Southeast Asia. This framework underscores the potential for CSOs and the state to work together to address complex development challenges, thereby fostering sustainable development and enhancing the quality of life across the region.

Keywords: Civil society organizations, Interdependence Model, human development, Southeast Asia, state-CSO collaboration

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1. Introduction

Civil society and the state in Southeast Asia have a complex and multifaceted relationship shaped by historical, political, and social contexts. Civil society, broadly defined as the aggregate of non-governmental organizations and institutions that manifest interests and will of citizens, plays a critical role in promoting political participation, social development, and human rights in the region (Lee, 2005). The state, on the other hand, encompasses the political institutions that govern a country, exercising authority and implementing policies that affect all aspects of societal life (Whitfield, 2003).

In Southeast Asia, the nature of civil society's interaction with the state varies significantly from one country to another, influenced by factors such as colonial legacies, the level of democratization, economic development, and cultural dynamics. For instance, in countries like Indonesia and the Philippines, civil society organizations (CSOs) have been instrumental in democratization processes and have actively engaged in political discourse and reform movements (Gerard, 2014). Understanding the relationship between civil society and the state in Southeast Asia is crucial for several reasons. Firstly, civil society organizations often fill gaps left by the state, particularly in areas of social services, education, and healthcare, contributing to overall human development (Weiss, 2017). These organizations can mobilize resources, advocate for policy changes, and implement programs that directly impact the well-being of communities, thereby fostering human flourishing.

Secondly, the dynamic between civil society and the state is a significant indicator of the health of a democracy. Strong, independent civil society institutions are often associated with greater political accountability, transparency, and citizen participation, which are essential components of human development (Hefner, 2001). By scrutinizing state actions, advocating for marginalized groups, and promoting civic engagement, civil society can drive social progress and protect human rights. Lastly, examining this relationship provides insights into the potential future trajectories of human development in the region. As Southeast Asia continues to undergo rapid economic and social changes, the role of civil society in shaping these developments becomes increasingly important. Understanding how civil society can effectively collaborate with or challenge the state can help predict and guide future policies and initiatives aimed at enhancing human development and flourishing (Carroll, 2010).

2. Conceptual Framework

Historically, the relationship between civil society and the state has been shaped by different theoretical perspectives. Classical theorists like Hegel and Marx offered early distinctions between civil society and the state, viewing civil society as the sphere of economic relations and private interests, while the state represented the universal interest and political authority (Cohen & Arato, 1992). Modern interpretations emphasize the role of civil society in promoting democracy, social capital, and public accountability (Putnam, 1993). The interactions between civil society and the state can be understood through several theoretical models, each providing unique insights into the dynamics of power, influence, and cooperation. These models include the Pluralist, Corporatist, Conflict, and Interdependence models, each offering a distinct perspective on how civil society engages with state institutions.

The Pluralist Model, rooted in classical liberal democratic theory, emphasizes the dispersion of power among various groups within society. Pioneers such as Robert Dahl and Seymour Martin Lipset argue that in a pluralist society, no single entity monopolizes political influence. Instead,

a multitude of interest groups – including non-governmental organizations (NGOs), advocacy groups, and community associations – compete to influence public policy. This competition acts as a counterbalance to state power, ensuring that diverse perspectives are represented in the democratic process. Dahl's seminal work, *Who Governs? Democracy and Power in an American City* (1961), underscores the importance of this dispersion of power for the health of democracy. By mobilizing public opinion and holding the state accountable, a vibrant civil society is essential for maintaining democratic integrity and preventing the centralization of power.

Contrasting with the pluralist perspective, the Corporatist Model views the state as an entity that incorporates civil society organizations into the policymaking process. This model is closely associated with the works of Philippe Schmitter and Gerhard Lehmbruch. In corporatist systems, key interest groups, such as labour unions and business associations, are formally integrated into the decision-making framework. Schmitter's influential article, *Still the Century of Corporatism?* (1974), explores how this incorporation facilitates negotiated compromises that reflect a broader spectrum of societal interests. By providing structured and institutionalized channels for these groups to engage with the state, corporatism aims to produce more stable and predictable policy outcomes. This model often results in a more harmonious relationship between the state and civil society, although it can marginalize groups not included in the formal negotiations.

The Conflict Model offers a starkly different perspective, viewing the relationship between civil society and the state as inherently adversarial. Inspired by Marxist and critical theories, this model posits that civil society organizations frequently emerge in response to state failures or oppressive regimes. Thinkers like Antonio Gramsci and Charles Tilly have highlighted how civil society becomes a battleground for challenging state hegemony. Tilly's work, *From Mobilization to Revolution* (1978), details the dynamics of social movements and their contentious interactions with state authorities. According to the Conflict Model, civil society groups engage in protests, advocacy, and other forms of resistance to advocate for change and reform. This adversarial relationship underscores the role of civil society as a force for social justice and transformation, often in opposition to the state.

Lastly, the Interdependence Model highlights a collaborative relationship between civil society and the state. This model is often associated with theories of governance and public administration that emphasize partnerships and cooperative governance. According to this model, effective public service delivery and social development require the active participation of civil society organizations alongside the state. Lester Salamon's *Partners in Public Service: Government-Nonprofit Relations in the Modern Welfare State* (1995) provides a detailed analysis of how government and civil society can collaborate to address social issues. The Interdependence Model emphasizes that both entities can work together to implement development projects, deliver public services, and address societal needs. This cooperative approach contrasts with the adversarial nature of the Conflict Model and the formalized negotiation of the Corporatist Model, promoting a more inclusive and flexible partnership.

3. Historical Context

Historically, civil society in Southeast Asia has deep roots extending back to pre-colonial times, where communal and kinship-based organizations were integral to societal governance. These traditional forms of civil society were often deeply intertwined with local governance structures, facilitating community cohesion and local dispute resolution. In pre-colonial

Southeast Asia, power was exercised through personal relationships rather than bureaucratic structures, with communities being largely self-sufficient and governed by a mix of communal and state influences. The communal organization of these societies was evident in various forms of social structures, such as the *banjar* system in Bali and the *barangay* system in the Philippines (see Mathews, 1992). These local governance units were responsible for managing resources, resolving conflicts, and maintaining social order within their communities. However, the advent of colonialism brought about significant changes to these indigenous forms of civil organization. Colonial powers, including the British, Dutch, French, and Spanish, imposed new administrative structures that often disrupted and replaced traditional governance systems. The introduction of Western legal and political systems marginalized traditional authorities, altering the landscape of civil society in profound ways (Rodan, 1997). For instance, the British colonial administration in Malaya implemented a centralized bureaucratic system that diminished the role of traditional village heads and local councils, thereby weakening the communal bonds that had previously governed these societies (Hutchinson, 2015).

The colonial period in Southeast Asia catalysed the emergence of new forms of civil society organizations, especially through social and political movements aimed at addressing the grievances of the colonized populations. Thus, in Indonesia, the Sarekat Islam, founded in 1912, was one of the earliest and most influential anti-colonial organizations. Initially established as a cooperative for Javanese merchants to counter Chinese commercial dominance, it quickly evolved into a broad-based political movement advocating for Indonesian independence from Dutch colonial rule. The Sarekat Islam was instrumental in raising political consciousness among Indonesians and mobilizing support across various social strata (Rodan, 2022; Marr, 1971). By the 1920s, it had garnered significant support and set the stage for subsequent nationalist movements, such as the Indonesian National Party (Partai Nasional Indonesia) led by Sukarno. In the Philippines, the Katipunan, founded in 1892 by Andres Bonifacio, exemplified the rise of anti-colonial sentiment against Spanish rule. The Katipunan's efforts culminated in the Philippine Revolution of 1896, which was pivotal in ending over three centuries of Spanish colonization. The organization employed a combination of grassroots mobilization, secret societies, and armed struggle to challenge colonial authorities. The movement's success not only resulted in Philippine independence but also demonstrated the power of organized civil resistance in achieving political objectives (Ileto, 1979; Sturtevant, 1976). Vietnam's anti-colonial movements were significantly shaped by the influence of Marxist-Leninist ideologies. The Vietnamese Nationalist Party (VNQDD) and later the Indochinese Communist Party (ICP), led by Ho Chi Minh, were central to the struggle against French colonialism. The ICP, established in 1930, played a crucial role in organizing peasant uprisings and labour strikes, which were critical in building a unified front against the French. The culmination of these efforts was the August Revolution in 1945, which led to the establishment of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam. Ho Chi Minh's leadership and the ICP's strategies significantly influenced anti-colonial movements across Southeast Asia (Ho Tai, 1996; Marr, 1971). The complexity of these movements extends beyond their immediate political objectives. They were not merely localized manifestations of peasant upheavals but were deeply connected to broader geopolitical and social dynamics. For instance, the involvement of Western-educated intellectuals and the influence of global ideologies such as socialism and nationalism were critical in shaping the direction and strategies of these movements (Amirell, 2023).

Post-colonial governance in Southeast Asia profoundly shaped the trajectory of civil society, often through efforts to consolidate state power and tightly control civil society activities. The

immediate post-independence period was marked by a focus on nation-building, with new governments prioritizing political stability and national unity. In Indonesia, the post-colonial period under Sukarno and Suharto illustrates the complexities of state-civil society relations. After gaining independence in 1945, Indonesia initially embraced a parliamentary democracy. However, President Sukarno, facing political fragmentation and economic challenges, moved towards a system known as “Guided Democracy” in 1959. This system centralized power in the executive branch and suppressed political opposition, including civil society organizations. Sukarno’s regime sought to control civil society by incorporating organizations into the state apparatus, particularly those aligned with nationalist and leftist ideologies (Feith, 1962). The situation intensified under Suharto’s New Order regime (1966-1998). Suharto’s government was characterized by an authoritarian approach that emphasized economic development and political stability. Civil society organizations were subject to stringent regulations and surveillance. Many were co-opted into state-controlled entities, while those perceived as threats were suppressed. For instance, labour unions were brought under the control of the state-sponsored labour federation, FBSI (*Federasi Buruh Seluruh Indonesia*), effectively neutralizing independent labour activism (Hadiz & Robinson, 2004). Suharto’s regime also manipulated traditional social organizations like the *karang taruna* (youth associations) to serve state interests, thereby limiting their potential as platforms for dissent (Aspinall, 2005). Similar patterns emerged in Malaysia, where the government under the United Malays National Organization (UMNO) pursued policies that tightly regulated civil society. The Internal Security Act (ISA), enacted in 1960, allowed for detention without trial and was used to suppress political opposition and control civil society organizations. The government’s approach was aimed at maintaining ethnic harmony and political stability, but it often resulted in the suppression of dissenting voices and restricted the space for civil society to operate independently (Crouch, 1996).

In the Philippines, the Marcos regime (1965-1986) similarly exerted tight control over civil society. Marcos declared martial law in 1972, citing the need to combat communist insurgency and restore order. This period saw widespread human rights abuses, the suppression of political opposition, and the co-optation of civil society organizations. Labour unions, student groups, and NGOs were either dissolved or brought under state control. The Catholic Church emerged as one of the few independent voices, playing a critical role in the eventual overthrow of Marcos through the People Power Revolution in 1986 (Thompson, 1995). Post-colonial Vietnam provides another example, where the state, under the Communist Party, maintained strict control over civil society. After reunification in 1975, the government imposed a socialist model that tightly regulated all aspects of society. Civil society organizations were either integrated into state structures or severely restricted. The Vietnam Fatherland Front was established as the umbrella organization for all mass organizations, ensuring that civil society activities aligned with state policies (Kerkvliet, 2005). Despite these repressive measures, in many cases, civil society organizations found ways to operate within the constraints imposed by the state. For example, in Thailand, despite periods of authoritarian rule, civil society managed to thrive, particularly in the form of community-based organizations and NGOs focusing on development and human rights. The 1990s saw a significant expansion of civil society activities in Thailand, facilitated by political liberalization and economic changes (Connors, 2011).

Nevertheless, the late 20th and early 21st centuries have seen a notable resurgence of civil society in Southeast Asia, driven primarily by democratization processes and increasing political liberalization. One of the most prominent examples of this resurgence is the People Power movement in the Philippines during the 1980s. This movement demonstrated the potential of

civil society to mobilize mass support against authoritarian regimes, ultimately leading to the overthrow of President Ferdinand Marcos in 1986. The movement, characterized by large-scale, peaceful demonstrations, was a coalition of various civil society groups, including the Catholic Church, student organizations, and political opposition groups. This collective action underscored the power of civil society in effecting political change and set a precedent for future democratic movements in the region (Bünthe & Weiss, 2023). Similarly, Indonesia experienced a significant transformation in the late 1990s. The fall of Suharto in 1998, after 31 years of authoritarian rule, paved the way for a democratic transition that opened up space for a vibrant civil society. During the Reformasi period, numerous NGOs and advocacy groups emerged to address a wide range of social and political issues, from human rights and environmental protection to labour rights and anti-corruption efforts. The democratization process in Indonesia has since allowed civil society to play a crucial role in shaping public policy and holding the government accountable (Carroll, 2010).

However, the resurgence of civil society in Southeast Asia has not been without challenges. In Thailand, for example, the military coup in 2014 and subsequent political developments have led to increased state surveillance and restrictions on digital activism. The use of *lèse-majesté* laws to silence critics and the imposition of strict cybercrime laws have created a hostile environment for online dissent. Despite these challenges, Thai civil society has continued to adapt and find innovative ways to resist and advocate for democratic reforms (Manorom, 2019). The complexity of civil society's role in Southeast Asia is further illustrated by the varying degrees of state-civil society relations across the region. For example, in Malaysia, the political landscape has seen fluctuations in the level of openness and repression. The 2018 general election, which resulted in the historic defeat of the ruling Barisan Nasional coalition, was significantly influenced by civil society movements advocating for electoral reform and anti-corruption measures. However, the subsequent political instability and the return of authoritarian tendencies have posed ongoing challenges for civil society (Beh et al., 2020).

4. Civil Society's Role in Human Development: Case Studies

CSOs have played a crucial role in promoting human development in Southeast Asia, significantly contributing to education, health, and social welfare. These organizations, through their grassroots connections and community-based approaches, have addressed gaps in public services, advocated for policy changes, and enhanced the quality of life for many communities. In the field of education, CSOs have been instrumental in providing access to quality education, especially in underserved and marginalized communities. For instance, in the Philippines, the Philippine Business for Social Progress (PBSP) has played a vital role in improving educational outcomes, particularly in rural areas. PBSP's initiatives include building schools, providing scholarships, and training teachers. These efforts have significantly enhanced educational accessibility and quality for children in underserved regions. PBSP's programs are designed to create sustainable educational environments by involving community stakeholders, thereby ensuring that the improvements in educational infrastructure and quality have a lasting impact (Asia Foundation, 2020). Similarly, in Indonesia, the Tanoto Foundation focuses on enhancing educational infrastructure and teacher training, particularly in rural areas. The foundation has implemented various initiatives, such as the provision of learning materials, the construction of libraries, and extensive teacher training programs. These efforts aim to improve the quality of

education and ensure that students in remote regions receive the same educational opportunities as those in urban areas. The foundation's PINTAR program, for instance, focuses on improving the capacity of schools and educators to deliver high-quality education, which has benefitted thousands of students and teachers across Indonesia (Tanoto Foundation, 2020).

In Vietnam, CSOs have played a crucial role in improving health outcomes through various community-based health care (CBHC) programs, particularly in rural and isolated communities. These programs are instrumental in addressing healthcare disparities and enhancing the overall health of the population. This program leverages the efforts of community health workers (CHWs) who are trained and supported by CSOs to deliver healthcare services directly within the communities. These CHWs play a vital role in educating the population about health practices, conducting health screenings, and providing basic medical care, which is especially crucial in areas where access to formal healthcare facilities is limited (WHO, 2021). One notable initiative is the Intergenerational Self-Help Clubs (ISHCs), which operate under the broader framework of CBHC. These clubs, supported by NGOs and local funds, engage community members in health-related activities, focusing on the holistic concept of "Positive Health" that includes physical, mental, and social well-being. The ISHCs implement various activities such as health screenings, health education sessions, and preventive care measures, significantly contributing to the health of older adults and other vulnerable populations (Pardoel et al., 2023). During the COVID-19 pandemic, CSOs in Vietnam adapted their strategies to continue providing essential health services. They played a critical role in disseminating information about the virus, distributing personal protective equipment (PPE), and supporting the healthcare system in managing the surge of patients. The flexibility and grassroots reach of CSOs enabled them to fill gaps left by the formal healthcare system, ensuring that even the most marginalized communities received necessary care (Asia Foundation, 2020).

Likewise, CSOs have made significant strides in improving social welfare across Southeast Asia by addressing pressing issues such as poverty, inequality, and social justice. Two notable examples of these efforts can be found in Thailand and Cambodia, where organizations like the Foundation for Slum Child Care and Friends-International have been pivotal. In Thailand, the Foundation for Slum Child Care (FSCC) provides comprehensive support to children living in urban slums. This organization operates in some of Bangkok's most impoverished areas, offering essential services that include education, nutrition, and healthcare. The foundation's programs aim to improve the immediate living conditions of children while also addressing broader systemic issues that perpetuate poverty and inequality. FSCC's approach is holistic, focusing not only on direct service provision but also on advocacy to improve living conditions in slum areas. By working closely with local communities, FSCC ensures that their interventions are culturally appropriate and sustainable. They offer early childhood education programs that prepare children for school, thus increasing their chances of academic success and long-term economic stability. Nutrition programs ensure that children receive the necessary dietary intake to support their physical and cognitive development, while healthcare services address both acute and chronic health issues common in slum environments (Asia Foundation, 2020). In Cambodia, Friends-International works to protect vulnerable children and youth through a comprehensive set of programs aimed at preventing child labour and exploitation. Established in 1994, Friends-International has grown to become one of the leading social enterprises in Southeast Asia. The organization's holistic approach addresses both the immediate needs of children and youth and provides long-term solutions through education and vocational training. Friends-International operates various initiatives under the Mith Samlanh program, which offers

outreach, drop-in centres, and transitional homes for street children. These programs provide essential services such as hygiene facilities, medical treatment, daily meals, and counselling. The organization's vocational training programs cover a range of skills, including automotive mechanics, hospitality, and beauty services, enabling youth to gain employment and achieve financial independence (Jung & Bhabha, 2019). The ChildSafe Movement, another significant initiative by Friends-International, mobilizes community members to protect children from abuse and exploitation. This program trains local citizens to recognize and respond to situations where children are at risk, creating a network of individuals committed to child protection. Additionally, Friends-International's social businesses, such as vocational training restaurants and fair-trade shops, not only provide practical training for youth but also generate income to fund the organization's programs.

5. Contributions of CSOs to Sustainable Development and Environmentalism in Southeast Asia

CSOs in Southeast Asia have become vital actors in environmental governance, addressing issues such as deforestation, pollution, and biodiversity conservation. One notable example is the Indonesian Forum for Environment (WALHI), which is the largest environmental organization in Indonesia. WALHI engages in a wide range of activities, from advocating for forest conservation to opposing environmentally destructive mining operations (Nautilus Institute for Security and Sustainability, 2023). In Thailand, the work of organizations such as the Foundation for Environmental Education for Sustainable Development (FEED) highlights the significant impact of CSOs on environmental education and policy advocacy. FEED focuses on raising awareness about environmental issues through educational programs and community workshops. These initiatives aim to empower local communities with the knowledge and tools necessary to engage in sustainable practices and advocate for environmental protection (Chansaengsee et al., 2022). Moreover, Thai CSOs have been instrumental in influencing policy changes related to environmental conservation. For example, the Green World Foundation (GWF) has been active in promoting urban green spaces and biodiversity conservation in Bangkok. GWF's projects include community gardens and educational programs that teach urban residents about the importance of biodiversity and sustainable living practices (Nautilus Institute for Security and Sustainability, 2023).

In the Philippines, organizations like the Haribon Foundation have made significant contributions to marine conservation and sustainable fisheries management. Haribon's initiatives include community-based coastal resource management programs that involve local fishers in conservation activities. These programs not only protect marine biodiversity but also improve the livelihoods of fishing communities by promoting sustainable fishing practices (Buot, 2022). In Vietnam, CSOs have been active in addressing environmental issues such as pollution and deforestation. Organizations like the Centre for Marine Life Conservation and Community Development (MCD) focus on promoting sustainable coastal development and marine conservation. MCD's programs include capacity-building workshops for local communities, promoting eco-friendly tourism, and advocating for stronger environmental policies (Hien, 2020). Vietnamese CSOs also play a crucial role in raising awareness about the impacts of climate change and advocating for mitigation strategies. For instance, the Vietnam Sustainable Energy Alliance (VSEA) campaigns for the adoption of renewable energy sources and energy efficiency measures. Their advocacy efforts have contributed to the development of

national policies aimed at reducing greenhouse gas emissions and transitioning towards a more sustainable energy system (Hoang, 2017).

6. Discussion

In the context of human development and the relationship between CSOs and the state in Southeast Asia, the most suitable model to explain the current dynamics is the Interdependence Model. This model highlights the collaborative relationship between civil society and the state, emphasizing partnerships and cooperation in achieving common goals such as public service delivery, social development, and environmental sustainability. Thus, in Indonesia, organizations like WALHI collaborate with the government to address environmental issues such as deforestation and pollution. This partnership is crucial for implementing sustainable development practices and protecting biodiversity. WALHI's advocacy and grassroots mobilization efforts demonstrate the importance of a cooperative approach between CSOs and the state in achieving environmental sustainability (Nautilus Institute for Security and Sustainability, 2023). Similarly, Friends-International in Cambodia works to protect vulnerable children and youth by providing vocational training, education, and support services aimed at preventing child labour and exploitation. The organization's collaboration with local governments ensures that these initiatives are sustainable and aligned with national development goals (Jung & Bhabha, 2019).

For its part, the Pluralist Model emphasizes the role of multiple, competing interest groups in balancing state power. This model suggests that a healthy democracy is characterized by the presence of diverse civil society organizations that compete to influence public policy and hold the state accountable. In Southeast Asia, while there is diversity within civil society, the collaborative nature of many CSOs with the state does not align well with the adversarial or competitive stance suggested by pluralism. For instance, in countries like the Philippines and Indonesia, CSOs often engage in joint efforts with governmental agencies to improve education, health, and social welfare, rather than merely acting as counterbalances to state power. This partnership approach is better encapsulated by the Interdependence Model, which acknowledges the cooperative relationships essential for effective governance and development (Carroll, 2010; Asia Foundation, 2020).

The Corporatist Model involves the formal inclusion of key interest groups in the policymaking process. In this framework, the state collaborates with specific sectors, such as labour unions and business associations, integrating them into decision-making structures to ensure that a broad spectrum of interests is represented. While elements of corporatism are present in Southeast Asia, particularly in structured negotiations involving economic policies, this model does not fully capture the broader collaborative nature of CSOs addressing human development issues. For example, in Malaysia, labour unions and business associations play significant roles within a corporatist framework, but the diverse array of CSOs working on environmental and social issues operate more dynamically and collaboratively with the state outside of these formal structures (Crouch, 1996). The Interdependence Model, with its emphasis on flexible and adaptive partnerships, better reflects how CSOs and the state work together in addressing multifaceted development challenges.

Finally, the Conflict Model views the relationship between civil society and the state as inherently adversarial. This model is rooted in critical theories that highlight the role of civil society as a force for resistance and opposition against state oppression and failures. While this adversarial dynamic has historical precedents in Southeast Asia, such as during the authoritarian

regimes of Suharto in Indonesia and Marcos in the Philippines, the current context is more collaborative. Today, many CSOs in Southeast Asia actively seek to work with the state to achieve shared development goals, rather than primarily engaging in opposition. For instance, in Vietnam, CSOs collaborate with government agencies on health and environmental projects, demonstrating a cooperative rather than conflictual relationship (WHO, 2021; Hien, 2020). The Interdependence Model, therefore, provides a more accurate depiction of the contemporary interactions between CSOs and the state in promoting human development and sustainability.

7. Conclusion

In conclusion, civil society organizations play a pivotal role in advancing human development and human flourishing in Southeast Asia, operating within a framework best explained by the Interdependence Model. This model, emphasizing partnership and collaboration between CSOs and the state, captures the essence of the cooperative efforts that have significantly contributed to the region's socio-economic progress.

CSOs in Southeast Asia have made substantial contributions to education, health, and social welfare, working alongside state mechanisms to address gaps in public services and promote sustainable development. In the health sector, CSOs have been instrumental in providing essential healthcare services, particularly in rural and isolated communities. CSOs also address critical social welfare issues, such as poverty, inequality, and social justice. These initiatives not only address immediate needs but also promote long-term solutions through education and empowerment, contributing to broader social welfare.

The Interdependence Model is particularly suitable for explaining these dynamics as it underscores the cooperative relationships that characterize the engagement between CSOs and the state in Southeast Asia. Unlike the Pluralist Model, which focuses on competition among interest groups, the Interdependence Model highlights how CSOs and the state can work together towards common goals. This collaborative approach is evident in various initiatives where CSOs complement state efforts, leading to more effective and sustainable development outcomes.

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