



Community Legal Help and Public Interest Centre, Inc.

Annual Report 2025

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The Guide will soon be available in additional Filipino languages.

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Community Legal Help and Public Interest Centre (C-Help) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to advancing environmental human rights and promoting social justice through legal and policy advocacy, community empowerment, and public interest initiatives.

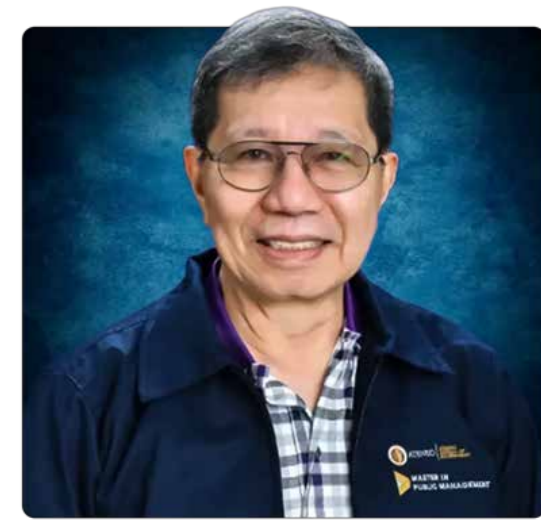


C-Help envisions a society where communities are empowered to defend their rights against threats posed by corporate interests and environmental harm. Its mission is to pioneer strategic legal actions and policy advocacies, amplify marginalized voices, and foster resilient movements for collective well-being and ecological integrity.

Guided by values of integrity, equity, and solidarity, C-Help operates with a commitment to professional rigor and transparency. The organization centers the lived experiences of affected communities, ensuring they are not only beneficiaries but leaders in the pursuit of environmental justice and policy reform.

Since its founding by Zeldá Soriano, C-Help has built a legacy of legal innovation and community-driven change, continuously pushing legal boundaries and policy changes to create new protections, defend advocates, and link local struggles to global movements. The organization's history is marked by landmark cases, transformative advocacy, and unwavering dedication to defending the defenders and promoting transboundary solidarity.

Message from the Board Chair: **Criteria and Impacts of our Work in 2025**



In 2025, C-Help marked a year of significant achievements, guided by clear and rigorous criteria for evaluating our work:

1. Strategic precedent and legal and policy change pioneering. We evaluate our success by our ability to carve out new legal paths and policy reform. In 2025, this was evidenced by elevating the first-of-its-kind “greenwashing” case to the Court of Appeals and our persistence in the Supreme Court En Banc to uphold the precautionary principle in GMO regulation. We do not merely follow the law; we push its boundaries to create protections where none existed.

2. Narrative dominance and shifting accountability. Meaningful change requires winning the battle of ideas. We judge ourselves by how effectively we shift the burden of proof from the marginalized to the powerful. In 2025, we successfully challenged the “blame the consumer” narrative in the Plastics Consumer Case, squarely placing the burden of liability on the root cause: the corporations responsible for the plastic packaging.

3. Community agency and sovereignty. True change is not done for communities, but by them. Our strength is measured by the agency of those we represent. By centering the lived experiences of farmers, fisherfolk, workers, and concerned citizens in our litigation, we ensure that those most affected by environmental problems are not just beneficiaries of our work, but the strategic leads in the charge for justice.

4. Institutional integrity and professional rigor. C-Help is only as strong as its internal engine. We hold ourselves to the highest standards of

operational excellence and efficiency to ensure our work is beyond reproach. The formalization of our three-layer review process and the modernization of our e-case management systems in 2025 guarantee that our advocacy remains principled, professional, and built for long-term resilience.

5. Defending the defenders. In a climate of increasing hostility, our success is measured by the safety and resolve of our partners. By securing victories in harassment suits and launching the Environmental Human Rights Defenders Guide, we have begun to neutralize the “chilling effect” of weaponized litigation. We judge our performance by our ability to ensure that no advocate stands alone.

6. Transboundary solidarity and global influence. Environmental harm knows no borders, and neither should our strategy. We measure our impact by how effectively we link local struggles to global movements. Through our effective participation in peoples' movements against reclamation, regional roundtables, and international anti-plastic networks, we have ensured that our national work serves as a blueprint for global corporate accountability.

Genuine progress is not about fleeting attention or surface-level metrics; it is about transformative change and lasting influence. Together, we remain resilient, committed, and unwavering in our mission to defend the environment and the human rights of every Filipino.

Project Reports



PROTECT MANILA BAY, **PROTECT OUR FUTURE**

The Protect Manila Bay, Protect Our Future project is a legal and advocacy initiative challenging reclamation and seabed quarry activities in Manila Bay that threaten coastal ecosystems and the livelihoods of fisherfolk and residents. While proponents argue reclamation expands territories for urban development and economic growth, the project emphasizes the severe environmental and social costs, mangrove destruction, seabed dredging, and displacement of livelihood and communities, that outweigh these benefits. Its mission is to defend the rights of affected communities, safeguard marine biodiversity, and ensure that protecting Manila Bay remains vital to securing the future of both the people and the environment.

In 2025, the project advanced from the Petitions for Writ of Kalikasan and Continuing Mandamus with Prayer for

Damages under the Writ of Continuing Mandamus that were filed in Dec. 2024 at the Supreme Court of the Philippines, demanding that reclamation and seabed quarry permits be declared null and void until a legally mandated cumulative impact assessment confirms safety. The petition stresses that without



a comprehensive evaluation of collective environmental and social consequences, reclamation activities pose irreversible harm to ecosystems and livelihoods.

Early in the year, the High Court impleaded permit holders, corporations, and local government units, and directed them to submit comments to the petition. By midyear, C-Help filed a consolidated reply to all submissions, reinforcing the position of fisherfolks and coastal residents. Reports also surfaced about the supposed release of the 2024 Cumulative Impact Assessment, intended to evaluate reclamation's collective effects, but the full study was not made publicly accessible. This prompted petitioners to file a Motion for Production of Documents to demand transparency and accountability. As of this report, the resolution of the case remains pending before the Supreme Court.

The project has faced considerable challenges, particularly the voluminous paperwork required for court filings, which drives up costs and strains petitioners and supporting organizations. Each submission demands extensive documentation, making the process resource-intensive and financially burdensome. Thanks to the timely support of our partners and petitioners, we have

been able to manage the financial and workload challenges of litigation effectively, ensuring our continued progress. Access to crucial documents, such as environmental assessments and government permits, has also been limited, with many not readily available to the public, delaying proceedings and weakening transparency. Despite these obstacles, the case has achieved significant impacts, including exposing the complex ties between corporations and local government units involved in reclamation projects. It strengthened the right to information by prompting disclosure of key documents, raised public awareness by bringing reclamation issues into mainstream discourse, and fostered stronger coalitions among environmental and human rights advocates, reinforcing collective action to protect Manila Bay.



CORPORATE ACCOUNTABILITY IN PLASTICS POLLUTION

In partnership with environmental groups and people's movements, C-Help seeks to hold major corporations accountable for plastic pollution in the Philippines.

Corporations must be held accountable for their relentless production of plastic packaging, which lies at the root of the plastic pollution crisis. Contrary to their claims, plastic cannot be genuinely recycled on a meaningful scale, and the recycling process itself often poses environmental and health risks. Businesses frequently justify the continued use of plastic packaging by falsely and misleadingly advertising it as "recyclable," despite the dangers and limitations of recycling, lack of infrastructure

and genuine capability to process these materials safely and effectively. By holding corporations responsible for these practices and unchecked plastic production, we can demand transparency, corporate responsibility, and protection for both current and future generations against the harms caused by plastic. This is done through a combination of litigation strategies, negotiation, policy advocacy and improving public consciousness on the plastic problem.

The Philippine Consumers Case against Coca Cola, Pepsi, Nestle, Unilever, Colgate Palmolive and Universal Robina Corporation

This project tackles the systemic issue of plastic pollution by demanding transparency in how products are marketed. At its heart, the case seeks to prove that "recyclable" labels on plastic packaging are false and misleading. By leveraging the Consumer Act of the Philippines, C-Help is working to bridge the gap between consumer rights and environmental protection, ensuring that corporations are held to the same standards of truth in advertising for their packaging as they are for their products.

In 2025, the case was successfully elevated to the Court of Appeals following its initiation as an administrative complaint with the Department of Trade and Industry in 2023. By the end of the year, the team had completed all identification requirements and submitted a consolidated reply to the corporate respondents' comments, which uniformly called for the dismissal of the case.

Elevating the Andrade case to the Court of Appeals is a significant win, as it stands as the only pending litigation in the country challenging corporate "greenwashing" and false advertising.

By centering individual consumers as plaintiffs, we are successfully carving out a new legal path where consumer rights and environmental protection are no longer treated as separate silos but as a unified front against corporate misrepresentation.

Dialogue with Procter and Gamble





A modest yet potentially transformative effort, the ongoing dialogue between consumer complainants—represented by C-Help and with resource persons from the Break Free from Plastic Movement and Greenpeace Philippines—and Procter & Gamble stands out as a crucial initiative. This engagement seeks to secure voluntary commitments for packaging redesign and enhanced waste management protocols, shifting environmental advocacy from litigation into direct boardroom negotiations. By fostering high-level engagement, it aims to influence the corporation's ESG (Environmental, Social, and Governance) policies in meaningful ways.

On July 22, 2025, a meeting focused on packaging improvements resulted in the submission of formal, expert-supported recommendations from consumer complainants to Procter & Gamble. The corporation is expected to respond to these recommendations and present its ongoing efforts and position at the next scheduled meeting in February 2026.

Legal Consultations and Case Conferences



Growing numbers of individuals are voicing concerns about the harmful impacts of plastic on their health, livelihoods, and environment. Fisherfolk report that plastics damage their boat propellers and nets, while waste workers experience health problems and face greater challenges in collecting



unrecyclable plastics. Sachets and other single-use plastics clog waterways, and young people spend their own time and resources on coastal cleanups, only to witness the problem worsen year after year.

The issue is not simply poor waste management or a “throwaway” culture. At its core, the crisis is driven by corporations’ relentless production of plastic. The dominant narrative often shifts blame to governments and individuals, ignoring the fact that corporate plastic production has reached unmanageable levels and is the true source of the problem.

More experts and authorities are recognizing this reality. Their research and expert opinions increasingly conclude that plastic pollution can only be effectively addressed

if producers take responsibility and reduce plastic output.

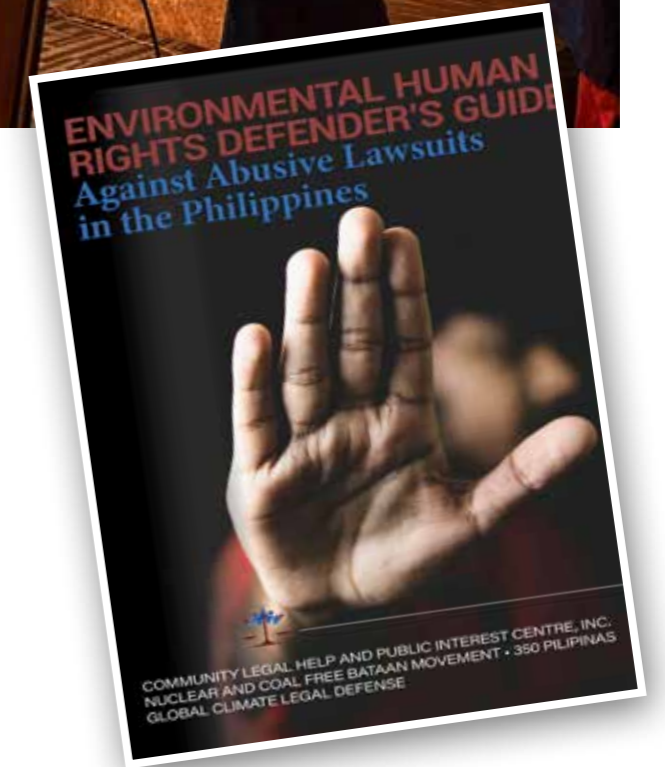
In 2025, C-Help encountered these urgent concerns during case meetings and conferences, where affected communities actively sought legal remedies. In both May and September, C-Help listened to these communities and provided counsel on possible legal solutions.

Outreach to Schools and Youths

After a client at Z. Soriano & Associates, a sponsor of C-Help, secured a successful outcome in her case, she generously donated a substantial sum, which C-Help used to organize an engaging and meaningful outreach program for schools and youths—an essay writing contest. The initiative served two main purposes: to actively involve students and young people, and to gather their innovative ideas on tackling the plastic pollution crisis for policy advocacy. The contest yielded an impressive array of fresh, creative solutions!

Participants from across the country joined the competition, and the winners were celebrated in a virtual ceremony attended by special guests and speakers from YOUNGBEAN, Greenpeace, and the BFFP.





DEFENDING DEFENDERS



The Defending Defenders project of C-Help is dedicated to safeguarding Environmental Human Rights Defenders (EHRDs) in the Philippines from legal harassment and violence. The initiative provides defenders with essential legal support,

including mechanisms to counter strategic lawsuits against public participation (SLAPP), frameworks such as the Legal Risks Assessment and Management (LRAM), and direct legal aid, enabling them to confront threats effectively and uphold their safety.

To achieve this initiative, C-Help has actively provided legal representation in SLAPP and SLAPP back cases, ensuring that EHRDs are not silenced by harassment suits intended to intimidate or exhaust them. In February, 2025, two SLAPP cases were dismissed under C-Help's representation involving members of grassroots communities, charged for opposing evictions and expansion of coal yard in Bataan. Currently, C-Help is actively handling six SLAPP cases and two SLAPP back cases. Another important initiative under the Defending Defenders project is the development of the Environmental Human Rights Defenders (EHRD) Guide. The guide outlines key rights, security measures, legal risks assessment tools and legal remedies available to defenders, while also promoting collective action and solidarity among grassroots organizations.

As a result of these actions, communities have become more empowered to act on their own in defending their rights and the environment. In fact, in one of the SLAPP cases where we achieved victory, it helped counter the chilling effect of SLAPP suits on grassroots defenders, inspiring them to stand firm and continue their advocacy with renewed courage.

These cases also opened opportunities to deepen the discourse on SLAPP in the Philippine context where activism is often criminalized, highlighting the rarity of countering by SLAPP-back cases and the importance of building stronger legal and community-based mechanisms. Ultimately, these efforts have contributed to the strengthening of resolve of defenders and communities to persist in the fight for environmental justice.

REFORMING GMO REGULATIONS & FOOD SECURITY PROJECT

This project seeks to ensure liability and accountability measures, application of precautionary principle, and effective public participation in the regulation of Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs) in agriculture, promote agroecology, and community-based and accepted technologies, for food security.

In February 2025, the Supreme Court consolidated the petitions filed by PhilRice and several government agencies, including the DA and DENR, and referred the case to the Supreme Court En Banc. These are appeals from the successful case against GMOs, that halted the commercialization of

Golden Rice and Bt Eggplant. In May 2025, the team filed the petitioners' comment responding to the petitions for review filed by the DA, DENR, DOH, BPI, and UPLB.

The litigation is now positioned for a definitive ruling by the full Supreme Court.

Beyond the courtroom, the team developed a policy paper, Reforming GMO Regulation in the Philippines Based on Legal Benchmarks of MASIPAG and Greenpeace Cases for publication in 2026. This document establishes a formal roadmap for systemic biosafety reform based on recent environmental jurisprudence.

This landmark case stands as a major victory for the people, as it shifts the responsibility of demonstrating safety onto those seeking to introduce changes to the status quo. It also unveiled the close connections between entities that claim to conduct independent research and the very regulatory bodies tasked with oversight. It stands as a powerful call for independent science and accountability not just in biosafety but in government regulation in general.





CLEAN AND SAFE ENERGY PROJECT

C-Help's Clean and Safe Energy Project promotes sustainable, carbon-neutral power while opposing high-risk technologies. It centers on three pillars: a Just Transition to a debt-free low-carbon economy, maintaining a Nuclear-Free stance to avoid ecological risks in disaster-prone areas, and opposing Waste-to-Energy (WtE) incineration as a violation of clean air standards. The goal is to protect marginalized communities from predatory debt and toxic energy solutions.



In 2025, C-Help submitted motions to reaffirm the legal petitions of small drivers and operators of public utility vehicles before both the Supreme Court and the LTFRB. These filings emphasized the Just Transition framework within the transport sector and challenged oppressive provisions in the implementation of the government's Public Transport Modernization Program.

Additionally, C-Help initiated comprehensive policy and legal research into the government's proposed nuclear energy and waste-to-energy initiatives.

This project plays a pivotal role in shifting the national energy narrative toward inclusive sustainability and upholding the constitutional right to a balanced and healthful ecology. The main challenge remains overcoming deeply rooted interests that favor centralized, high-risk energy investments while protecting vulnerable sectors from so-called "false solutions" to climate change.

By maintaining a resolute stance against nuclear and waste-to-energy projects, C-Help ensures that the transition to clean energy is both equitable and non-toxic.

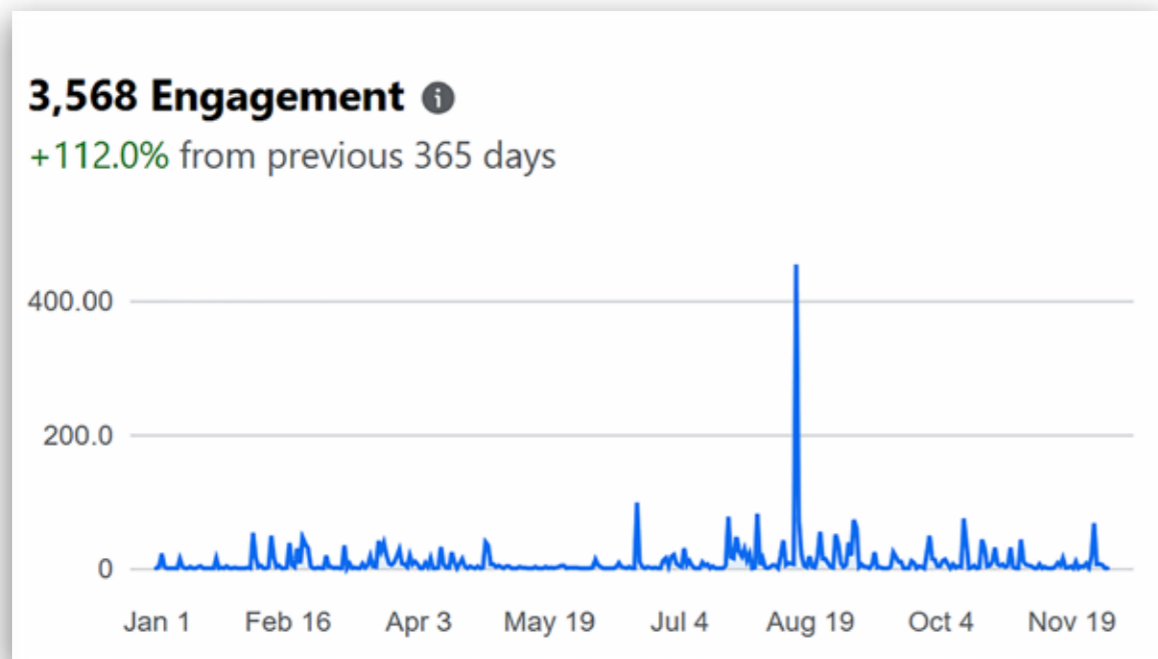
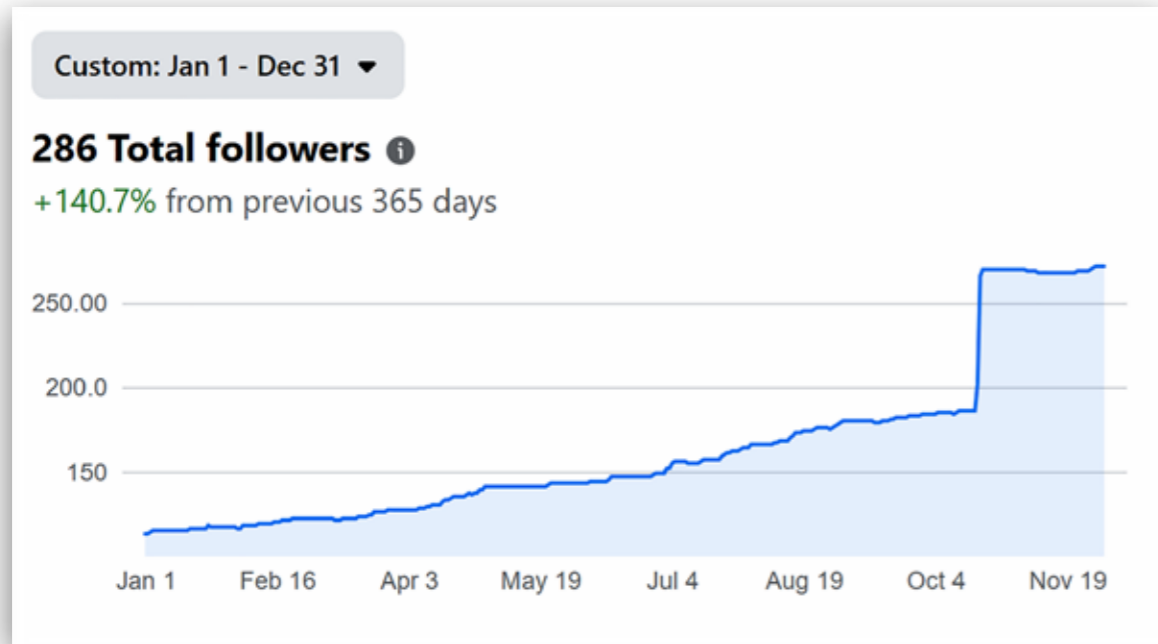
C-Help Communications



C-Help's digital presence—particularly through Facebook, X, Instagram, and website—continued to serve as a vital platform for advocacy, education, and mobilization. Our content strategy focused on human rights, environmental justice, legal empowerment, and community mobilization, aligning with our mission to challenge government inaction, hold corporations accountable, and empower communities.



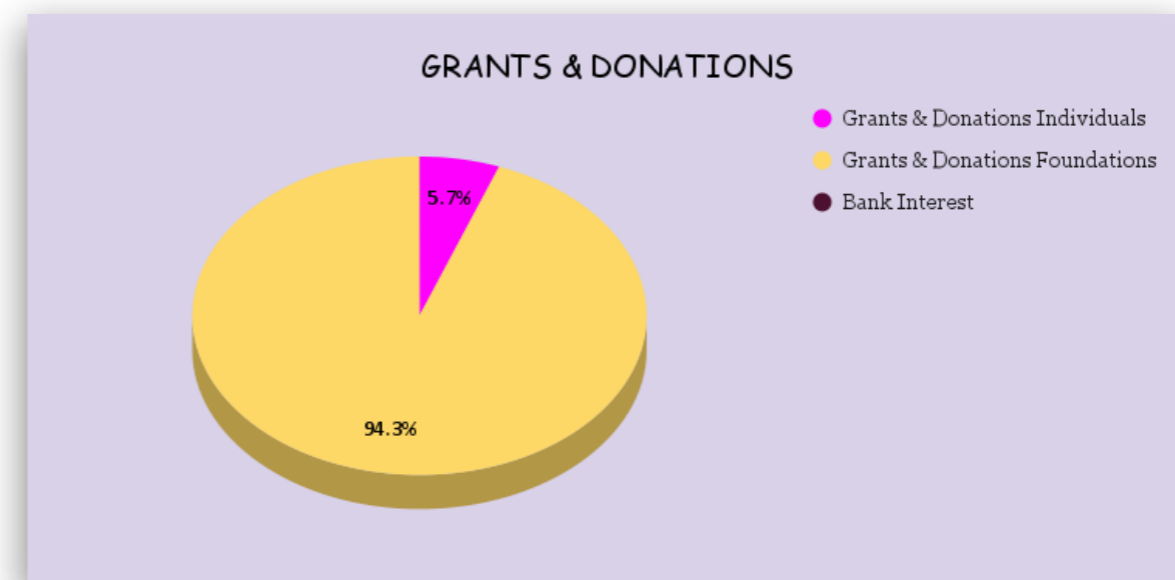
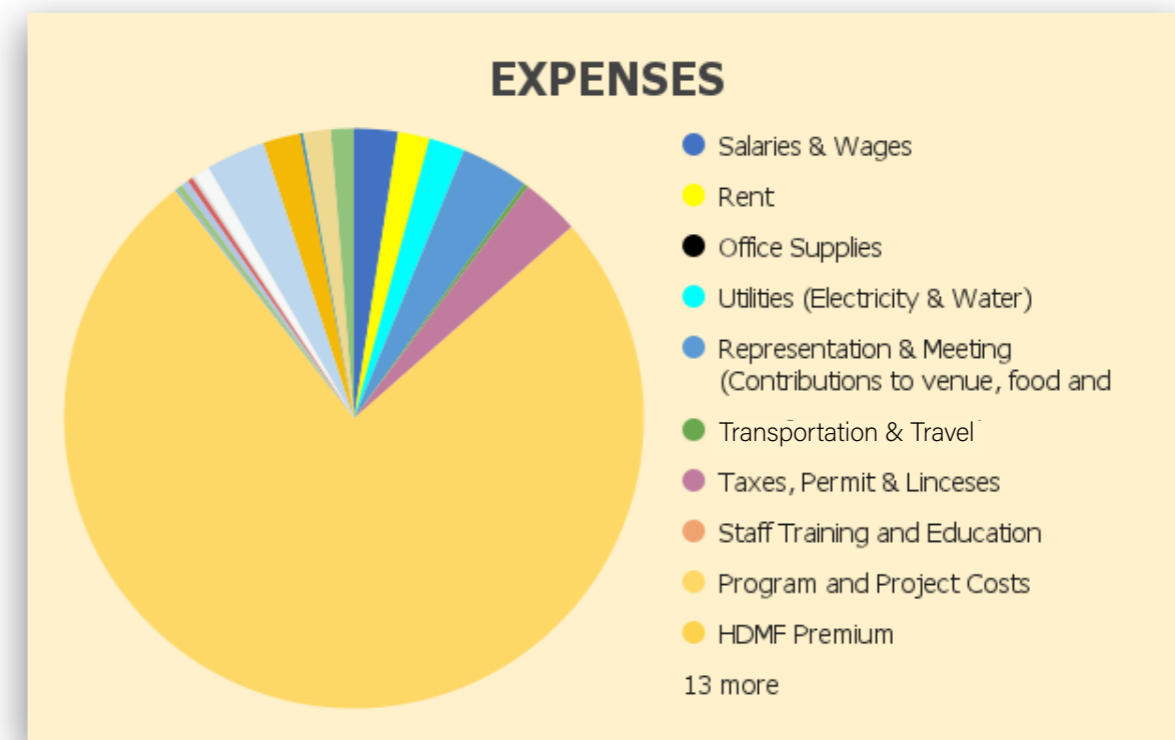
We had an upward trend in total followers throughout the year, a 140.7% increase. C-Help's Facebook page also recorded a 112.0% increase in engagement. This impressive growth reflects the rising relevance and resonance of our advocacy content, particularly around environmental human rights and community mobilization.



C-HELP was cited across major media and academic platforms in 2025, showcasing its expanding influence in public discourse on environmental issues. These mentions highlighted both organizational initiatives and expert commentary from its leadership.

FINANCE REPORT

C-Help extends its heartfelt gratitude to its donors, sponsors, partners, and clients for their unwavering support through grants, donations, volunteer services, and other valuable contributions. This collective generosity enabled C-Help not only to fulfill its commitments but also to exceed all its targets in 2025.



GOVERNANCE



C-Help strengthened its institutional clarity by creating comprehensive office manuals for all staff roles, ensuring consistent guidance and continuity. A rigorous three-layer review process for outgoing documents further enhanced accuracy and professionalism.

Governance is supported by proactive policy development, with protocols updated as new challenges arise. In 2025, the introduction of electronic case folders modernized case management, enabling secure and accessible collaboration for both internal teams and external partners.

Transparency and data privacy remain core values, with open communication and strict confidentiality measures reinforcing trust and integrity throughout the organization.



NETWORK



Regional Legal Workshop on SLAPPs in Kuala Lumpur



Regional Roundtable Dialogue on Operationalizing Access to Environmental Justice under ASEAN Declaration on Environmental Rights in Bangkok



Break Free From Plastic event in Sri Lanka

C-Help made new friends and joined networks in 2025! It participated in a Regional Legal Workshop on SLAPPs in Kuala Lumpur. At the Regional Roundtable Dialogue on Operationalizing Access to Environmental Justice under ASEAN Declaration on Environmental Rights in Bangkok, C-Help contributed critical insights on barriers faced by defenders and helped shape recommendations for ASEAN's forthcoming Regional Plan of Action.

Locally, C-Help joined the Kapihan on Human Rights in Manila, connecting with academics, grassroots campaigners, and regional institutions to integrate scientific expertise and strengthen advocacy strategies for environmental human rights protection. Internationally, participation in the Break Free From Plastic event in Sri Lanka expanded solidarity and learning-sharing networks.