

CIVICUS DIGNA STRATEGIC PLAN 2020–2024

December 2019



Who are we?

The Diversity & Inclusion Group for Networking and Action (DIGNA) brings together change-makers and thought leaders from all around the world, passionate about strengthening an inclusive and diverse civil society. This working group seeks to understand, conceptualise and identify innovative practices on what diversity and inclusion (D&I) can look like within different thematic areas and operating models.

The group is a safe space where members can support each other to improve organisational structure and processes, ways of working and impact with a focus on D&I. Regardless of our fight against all the backlash and consequences of inequality and segregation, we will shine a spotlight and learn from positive examples and benchmarks from around the globe.

This group encourages discussion and debate on D&I issues, sharing positive experiences and practices, resources and tools, and lessons learned, and offers a channel to request for help, support and collaboration.

What do we understand by Diversity & Inclusion?

Diversity is a free and safe space in which complex perspectives, differences and intersectionality are celebrated as strengths and opportunities for innovation, acceptance and collaboration. Trust is a key concept, between and within diverse communities and groups.

Inclusion is the action point of diversity, a dynamic and continuous process that works on multiple political, economic and social levels, and leaves no one behind. It works to build meaningful connections between groups, and sometimes unlikely allies, toward a positive outcome for disenfranchised populations. Tokenism and quotas vs meaningful inclusion as a complex system (there is no 'one size fits all') was emphasized.

What is our Vision?

We envision a world where everyone, regardless of age, race, religion, sex, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, nationality, displacement or any other characteristic have equal access to rights and opportunities.

What is our Mission?

To continuously strengthen dialogue and efforts on strengthening and safeguarding the inclusion of diverse groups and individuals in civil society programming, systems and practices.

Purpose of this Strategy

DIGNA'S Strategic Plan 2020-2024 sets the strategic goals we want to achieve and the direction in which we want our actions to go in the next four years. It brings together the main priorities the group has established as a roadmap for action towards achieving our mission. It also identifies the initiatives thought for each priority, as well as the partnerships we will be working on in order to boost out impact; all in line with our mission & vision, as well as with our shared values.

This Strategic planning is a key document that will allow us to anticipate the best scenario to fulfill our goals, as well as helping identify the strategies needed as a group to act in each of them.

The link with the CIVICUS Strategic Plan

CIVICUS' 5 year strategic plan is from 2017-2022 in which we are currently at the midpoint. This strategic plan focuses on the following three goals:

- Defending Civic Freedoms and Democratic Freedoms
- Strengthening the Power of People to Organise, Mobilise and Take Action
- Empowering a more Accountable, Effective and Innovative Civil Society

The DIGNA platform and strategy connects to all three goals of the strategic plan.

Goal 1: DIGNA encourages a tolerant and accepting civil society and society at large. By having a platform connecting people from around the world, the DIGNA community can assist their civil society counterparts with advice and support on defending civic freedoms and fighting against persecution. DIGNA also supports international campaigns promoting excluded populations.

Goal 2: DIGNA is a platform that embodies goal 2. It provides a space, information and opportunities for civil society members to organise, mobilise and take action. By providing opportunities to interact, connections can be made and people power is put at the forefront.

Goal 3: DIGNA's main purpose aligns directly with goal 3. DIGNA was created as civil society is not up to standard on its internal inclusion mechanisms, as well as encouraging inclusive programming. By creating a dynamic accountability community, civil society can encourage good practice and behaviour from each other to push towards an accountable, effective and innovative civil society.

As the CIVICUS 5 year strategy will come to an end 2 years into the DIGNA strategy, it will be a perfect opportunity to combine CIVICUS' new strategy with DIGNA's midpoint strategy review to see how it can be aligned further.

Why do we need a strategy?

Entrenched systems and power dynamics stand as a key obstacle to diversity and inclusion. This is reflective in multiple arenas including; the workplace, justice systems, funding mechanisms, homes, religious spaces and even in language or framing of concepts (e.g. victims vs survivors).

We recognise that the shrinking space of civil society prevents its actors from voicing the concerns of different communities and in ensuring governments and other democratic institutions perform their duties responsibly and effectively. This is problematic as an active and well-developed civil society provides an essential protection against the erosion of values such as the respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality and the rule of law.

Better policies, practice and capacities on diversity and inclusion must therefore be promoted and supported so that collective action has greater potential to address the shrinking space, and unfair treatment of excluded and marginalised groups.

Strategic Priorities



Capacity strengthening: In order to strengthen an inclusive and diverse civil society, we believe that accompanying the process of strengthening capacity on Civil Society Organizations (CSO) is a key element. We will work together with CSO's staff members on action learning initiatives and exchanging innovative practices on what diversity and inclusion (D&I) can look like, as well as toolkits that will help CSO go more practical (call to action) in terms of D&I policies; improving the way D&I is included in their planning focusing on the integration of D&I as core principles into the organizations' programs and operations.

Exchange resources: We believe that by creating spaces that facilitate activists and CSO's to connect, exchange and share ideas, good practices and materials- as well as offering a platform for support and collaboration- we will collaborate in democratizing the access to information on D&I, boosting action and social change.

Representative membership: We offer an open space where we share holistic and intersectional approach on D&I, sharing common values when referring to D&I. We foster a representative participation amongst our members, trying to include all voices and groups. We believe that this is the best way to amplify our voices and accelerate our actions.

Promotion of D&I: The group will work on creating safe spaces to promote D&I values and practices to implement in daily actions. We aim to reach not only CSO but also any institution that wants to work in improving their implementation of D&I policies in their structure and activities in an intersectional way.

Main Goals

PRIORITY 1- CAPACITY STRENGTHENING

Main goal	Initiatives	Outcomes	Key allies
Facilitate strengthening of CSO knowledge, attitudes and practices (KAP) on D&I	Share key principles of inclusion that are central to all capacity strengthening	Document on key principles done and shared	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Academia I4C
	Harness existing resources to share	Creation of a digital library with resources	
	Usage of Micro learning (facilitated and self-directed)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2 (two) online workshops conducted 2 (two) podcasts done 	
	Implementation of Mentoring / Coaching activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3 (three) Webinars per year 1 (one) Face to face training per year 	

PRIORITY 2- EXCHANGE RESOURCES

Main goal	Initiatives	Outcomes	Key allies
Open up and democratize access to information, knowledge and practical tools	Creation of a platform for exchange of good practices on diversity and inclusion	Dedicated DIGNA resources webpage (within CIVICUS website)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CIVICUS • Others
	Stimulate collaboration between individual and organisational members	Organic and fluid collaborations	
	Support virtual spaces for dialogue and mutual support on challenges, lessons learned and mutual support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facebook, • Podcast and • DIGNA webpage 	

PRIORITY 3- REPRESENTATIVE MEMBERSHIP

Main goal	Initiatives	Outcomes	Key allies
Ensure excluded groups, development practitioners and activists have a safe, plural space to voice their concerns and aspirations.	Set minimum criteria for ensuring consistent representation of diverse groups	A consistently balanced representation of voices from diverse groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Youth groups, • LGBTIQ+ networks, • Disabled People's Organisations (DPOs) • Indigenous rights groups • International NGOs • Others
	Engage and support regional chapters / champions	Engage and support regional chapters / champions	
	Constantly stimulate a sense of belonging and community through a variety of personalized on-line and off-line activities	The network is valued by its members who feel they belong and benefit from participating	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CIVICUS Members, • Members of the DIGNA Advisory group • Members of the Facebook page

PRIORITY 4- PROMOTION OF DIVERSITY & INCLUSION

Main goal	Initiatives	Outcomes	Key allies
Encourage key stakeholders (influencers donors, CSOs, media, private sector etc) to adopt a commitment to Diversity and Inclusion in their policies, strategies and funding.	Strengthen visibility and awareness of the network	A recognised brand value for its contribution to the debate on diversity and inclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CIVICUS Board, Member and donors • Members of the DIGNA Advisory group • Members of the Facebook page
	Top Ten Tips on Inclusion	A useful resource to orient members when commencing or reviewing their journey on diversity and inclusion	

Bringing the Strategy to Life

In order to bring this Strategy to life DIGNA will work closely with CIVICUS, particularly its membership and youth affiliates. We will actively encourage members to share their stories of success, their challenges and how they have overcome them, examples of resources and tools used to promote and strengthen diversity and inclusion in the workplace environment, in communities and with governments. We will initially use the Facebook platform to generate interest and meaningful discussion on diversity and inclusion and explore other ICT options to extend reach, coverage and impact.

We will develop a detailed workplan that help put the goals into practice and regularly check in on progress regarding our goals and outcomes. We will conduct an annual review, garnering inputs from members so that we can adapt planning where need be.

Partnership

DIGNA brings together activists and organizations that live and operate in very diverse contexts in different parts of the world, who believe in the power of acting together. That is why we encourage collaboration and support amongst our members and with different stakeholders. For each of our goals and activities we will be working collaboratively with the Public Sector, the Private Sector, Civil Society Organizations, Activists, Academia, Students and Volunteers - amongst other key actors - in our fight for equal access to rights and opportunities for everybody in the world.

Underpinning Principles and Values

As a collective, DIGNA values connecting diverse communities as we promote and strengthen inclusion through thought leadership and collaboration while constantly advocating human rights-based approaches to working with the most marginalized and underrepresented communities.

We value and commit to applying intersecting and multiple identity frameworks, concepts and politics in our work.

Our convening and engagement shall be centered on safeguarding the rights, identities and safety of all stakeholders. This includes respecting the invisible, inherent, universal and indivisibility of human rights.

We fervently believe in advancing the case diversity and inclusion across all contexts regardless of the repression of civic space, persistent volatility of politics, increase in crises and high prevalence of human rights violations globally.

Belief in the benefits of Diversity and Inclusion is the cornerstone of our working relations and engagement, ensuring the most marginalised and vulnerable are centered in representation, networking and action that results in a society where no-one is left behind.

For more information, you can check our MANIFESTO.

Want to get involved or get more information?

 Please, contact the group by e-mail: digna@civicus.org

 To join the facebook group: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/CIVICUSDIGNA/>

 Do you want to become a CIVICUS MEMBER? Please, visit:
<https://www.civicus.org/index.php/get-involved/become-a-member>