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This is the second year of CIVICUS’s 2022 – 2027 Strategic Plan. Under this plan, CIVICUS has one overarching goal statement: “to Strengthen Civil Society and Civic Action for Expanded Civic and Democratic Space.”

The goal reflects our emphasis on actions that are not just defending but also improving civic and democratic freedoms through a combination of influencing, organising and solidarity interventions.

CIVICUS’s strategic plan has an explicit focus on working with and for groups affected by the combined impact of civic space restrictions and structural forms of discrimination.

This requires greater solidarity and alliance building across all levels of our work, including within the membership, and the stronger representation of issues of civic and democratic freedoms from a social justice lens.

In the context of pressures on civic space and major global challenges, civil society is growing, diversifying and widening its repertoire of tactics.
In the context of pressures on civic space and major global challenges, civil society is growing, diversifying and widening its repertoire of tactics. Drawing on its special strengths of diversity, adaptability and creativity, civil society continues to evolve. In many of today’s mass mobilisations, young – sometimes very young – people are at the forefront, acting on issues that directly affect them – such as the lack of economic opportunities, the climate crisis that threatens to rob them of their futures and the denial of the rights of excluded groups to which they belong or stand as allies of.

As observed in our annual State of Civil Society reports, much of civil society’s radical energy is coming from outside the non-governmental organisations’ universe: from small, informal grassroots groups, often formed and led by women, young people and Indigenous people.

Many new groups organise horizontally, adopt participatory approaches and cultivate distributed leadership. They’re often more intersectional than their more established counterparts and peers, striving to make connections across society’s traditional fault lines, including of class, race and faith. This was seen in many of this year’s protests, for example in Sri Lanka, as economic shocks with far-reaching impacts brought diverse groups of people together across deep-seated divides.

On the other hand, restrictions on civil society continue to rise across contexts. Our analyses from the CIVICUS Monitor indicate that two billion people comprising 28 percent of the global population are now living in 27 countries and territories where there is absolutely no civic space and where mere expressions of democratic dissent can get one imprisoned for long periods, killed or forced into exile.

Among the top violations recorded are harassment and intimidation of activists, journalists or civil society organisations with the intention of deterring them from their human rights work; widespread arbitrary detentions of protestors as punishment for speaking out against those in power; and restrictive laws designed to prevent people from mobilising and exercising their fundamental civic freedoms.

OUR REASONING FOR THIS ANNUAL PLAN

Based on our internal and external context for expanded civic and democratic space, the annual plan highlights new areas of work we will undertake in this second year of implementing our strategic plan as well as our continued work, focusing our efforts to improve engagement with and for groups combined impact of civic space restrictions and structural forms of discrimination. Both the quality of what and how we do our work will be evaluated by how those most affected engage with us and our work.
The CIVICUS Monitor will add a new feature that will complement the scores and ratings for a timely assessment of the civic space conditions in each country. Based on quarterly assessments by the Monitor’s research partners, a country will show an up arrow if the situation in the country has improved over the past months or a down arrow if the situation has deteriorated. This tool would enable preventive advocacy in countries showing early signs of deterioration to prevent further regression and identify opportunities for additional advocacy where an opening of civic space is being documented.
Local leadership Labs builds on our civil society resourcing work by catalysing inclusive and locally led approaches aimed at strengthening the support ecosystem, especially for most affected groups and communities. Selected civil society groups in the global south will be key drivers of the initiative. They will be responsible for convening inclusive, context-appropriate and transformative spaces at local, national and regional levels, enabling diverse local civil society actors to engage with governments, donors and other key allies. CIVICUS and Network for Empowered Aid Response (NEAR) will serve as catalysts and connectors, brokering relations and direct engagement opportunities with other stakeholders, coordinating with likeminded processes and initiatives, facilitating learning across local leadership labs and with others in the support ecosystem and – where appropriate – amplifying the analysis, asks and solutions to a global audience.

The WE RISE! Campaign builds on the ecosystem analysis carried out as part of our work on the Freedom of Peaceful Assembly (FoPA) this past year. It embraces a radical collaboration approach where we’ll work together with 20 CIVICUS members to co-design local campaigns relevant to their own contexts under the umbrella of CIVICUS’s global campaign for expanded civic space and FoPA. This work aligns with the Ford Foundations’ Weaving Resilience initiative to counter misrepresentation and present new, creative and proactive strategies for change. The campaign will capture and share strategies for sustainable protests, tactics for overcoming challenges and recommendations around FoPA.
This programme has emerged from work to iterate a digital strategy for the CIVICUS alliance that supports diverse civil society actors in the global south to safely harness digital technologies in pursuit of greater civic and democratic freedoms on their own terms. It is one half of the new Digital Democracy Initiative (DDI) funded by the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the European Union that commenced in April 2023. CIVICUS, in collaboration with Global Focus, will strengthen the financial and non-financial resourcing infrastructure to enable local civil society to utilise digital technology to amplify agendas promoting inclusive democratic space online and offline. The second interlinked DDI project (led by Access Now and Digital Defenders Partnership) will work to defend and protect civil society utilising digital technology to promote democracy.

CIVICUS will support both I4C and CHARM through the end of their incubation phase as they transition to independently functioning networks. The I4C programme was initiated in 2015, and our formal role as global host ends in June 2023. As agreed in transition meetings held across 2022, the network will function independently thereafter. CHARM was initiated in 2020, and CIVICUS agreed to host this project during its initial phase on the request of regional partners. This phase concludes June 2023; the project will thereafter transition to the consortium partner Defend Defenders.
IMPLEMENTATION OF OUR STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

CIVICUS’s five strategic objectives (represented by the icons below) work together and reinforce each other to achieve our singular goal. In this year’s plan, we have chosen to focus on the impact we will achieve by building between the five strategic objectives that are outlined in the 2022-27 Strategic Plan.

Our work is accordingly organised into the three intersections within the strategy that we want to shine a light on, rather than five distinct objectives.

If you would like more detail on our work mentioned below, please see our Annual Report 2021/2022.
We will increase media engagement capacity will allow us to strengthen our media partnerships for influencing discourse with our research:

**THE CIVICUS MONITOR**
Providing a trusted source of civic space ratings and data including country ratings, an annual People Power Under Attack Report, quarterly Civic Space Watchlist as well as country and thematic publications for civil society advocacy.

**CIVICUS LENS**
Providing analysis and commentary for ongoing and current events through interviews and other forms of consultation with members and partners to understand the quality of civic space.

**THE STATE OF CIVIL SOCIETY REPORT**
Extracting major trends from the CIVICUS Lens, an annual report reviewing civil society action in every area from the local to the global showing how contemporary events and trends impact civil society and how civil society responds.
IMPROVED PUBLIC DISCOURSE THAT REFLECTS GREATER VALUE FOR CIVIC AND DEMOCRATIC SPACE

WHY?

LONG-TERM OUTCOMES
We expect that our research combined with media outreach will contribute to our long-term outcome of improved public discourse reflecting calling for a more robust civic and democratic space and social and environmental justice.

We will measure our progress towards this long-term outcome both quantitatively and qualitatively:

QUANTITATIVE INDICATOR WITH TARGET
10% increase in the number of publications referencing and using our work from the previous year.

QUALITATIVE INDICATOR
We will assess the relevance and quality of our work by asking networks and movements of young people, women, workers, LGBTQI+ people, Indigenous and/or environmental groups and broader social justice movements to answer our learning question below.

LEARNING QUESTION
In what ways is our research supporting groups affected by the combined impact of civic space restrictions and structural forms of discrimination to create change in local contexts?
We will influence, create solidarity and foster policy change through:

AGENDA SETTING
Engaging with global governance institutions and processes, focusing on ensuring greater civil society participation and actions by member states of the United Nations (UN) to protect civic space and address civic space violations.

This includes the ‘We the Peoples’ campaign and engaging with the Human Rights Council (HRC) and HRC net, diplomatic missions, special procedures, and other relevant UN bodies and processes.

DEVELOPING AND SUPPORTING SOLIDARITY ACTIONS
Responding to civic space emergencies as they arise and coordinating ongoing campaign and engagement initiatives such as #StandAsMyWitness and the Diplomat and Defender Dialogues.

COORDINATING MEMBERS
Bringing together networks enabling the leadership of CIVICUS members on issues of civic and democratic space including the Affinity Group of National Associations and the CIVICUS Member Online Community.
INCREASED AND MORE EFFECTIVE ACTION MOVES DECISION MAKERS TO SAFEGUARD AND EXPAND CIVIC AND DEMOCRATIC FREEDOMS

WHY?

LONG-TERM OUTCOMES
We expect that our advocacy to build counter power will allow us to reach our long-term outcome of improved accountability by decision makers to uphold the fundamental civic freedoms of association, peaceful assembly, and expression. We anticipate that increased, and more effective civil society action moves decision makers to safeguard and expand civic and democratic space.

We will measure our progress towards this long-term outcome both quantitatively and qualitatively:

QUANTITATIVE INDICATORS WITH TARGETS
- One validated contribution towards policy change towards defending or expanding civic space
- Four validated incidents of influencing at national, regional or international levels towards defending or expanding civic space
- Ten solidarity actions at national, regional or international levels led by members or partners for defending or expanding civic space
- Ten solidarity actions at the international bodies level led by CIVICUS for defending or expanding civic space

QUALITATIVE INDICATORS
We will assess the relevance and quality of our work by asking networks and movements of young people, women, workers, LGBTQI+ people, Indigenous and/or environmental groups and broader social justice movements to answer our learning question below.

LEARNING QUESTION
In what ways is our work supporting more sustainable advocacy for groups affected by the combined impact of civic space restrictions and structural forms of discrimination?

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MONITORING
INSTITUTIONAL
MILESTONES
CIVICUS CONTRIBUTES TOWARDS STRONGER EMERGENCY AND SUSTAINED SUPPORT ECOSYSTEMS FOR ACTIVISTS AND ORGANISATIONS AT RISK

WHY?
BECAUSE SMALLER, LESS FORMAL GROUPS IN THE GLOBAL SOUTH ARE ON THE FRONTLINES OF SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION

WORK WE DO

We will support eco-system strengthening through:

WORKING WITH PEERS AND PARTNERS
Fostering intersectional networks that amplify and expand civil society’s relevance and impact. Our current engagements include Innovation for Change (I4C), Consortium for Human Rights and Media Development in Sub-Saharan Africa (CHARM), Vuka! Coalition for Civic Action and the Dynamic Accountability Community of Practice.

COORDINATING MECHANISMS
Providing solidarity funding and support to activists and organisations at risk through the CIVICUS Solidarity Fund and Crisis Response Fund.

TESTING AND DEFINING NEW WAYS TO SHIFT POWER
Building local leadership with youth and civil society on the frontlines of change through initiatives such as CIVICUS Youth and Strengthening 21st Century Citizen Action.
IMPROVED ABILITY OF EXCLUDED GROUPS TO CHALLENGE OPPRESSIVE POWER AND TRANSFORM POLICY MAKING

WHY?

LONG-TERM OUTCOMES
We expect that our advocacy to build counter power will allow us to reach our long-term outcome of improved ability of excluded groups to challenge oppressive power and transform policy making.

We will measure our progress towards this long-term outcome both quantitatively and qualitatively:

QUANTITATIVE INDICATORS WITH TARGETS
• 1 validated incident of influencing at national, regional or international level improving the ecosystems for smaller, less formal groups
• 5 solidarity actions at national, regional or international level led by members and partners improving the ecosystems for smaller, less formal groups

QUALITATIVE INDICATORS
We will assess the relevance and quality of our work by asking networks and movements of young people, women, workers, LGBTQI+ people, Indigenous and/or environmental groups and broader social justice movements to answer our learning question below.

LEARNING QUESTION
In what ways is our work supporting the ecosystem for activists and organisations at risk?
MONITORING, EVALUATION, ACCOUNTABILITY & LEARNING

We will measure our progress against these targets:

- Ten percent increase in the number of publications referencing and using our work from the previous year
- One validated contribution towards change towards defending or expanding civic space
- Five validated incidents of influencing at regional or international levels
- Support 25+ solidarity actions at regional or international levels
CIVICUS’s strategic plan has an explicit focus on working with and for groups affected by the combined impact of civic space restrictions and structural forms of discrimination. Therefore, we will assess the relevance and quality of our work by asking networks and movements of young people, women, workers, LGBTQI+ people, Indigenous, environmental groups and/or broader social justice movements to assist us in answering our learning question: In what ways is our work supporting those groups affected by the combined impact of civic space restrictions and structural forms of discrimination?
Improved ability of excluded groups to **challenge oppressive power** and transform policy making.

Improved public discourse that reflects **greater value for civic and democratic space**.

Increased and more effective action **moves decision makers** to safeguard and expand civic and democratic freedoms.

Improved **accountability** by decision makers to uphold the **fundamental civic freedoms**.
INSTITUTIONAL COMMITMENTS

Our external commitment to those most affected must also be reflected in CIVICUS’s internal systems and processes. Therefore, CIVICUS will continue the following institutional strengthening and accountability practices:

RESILIENT SYSTEMS
Actively manage and further integrate risk, continue automation of processes and stronger data and digital security protocols and processes, strengthen our programme quality and innovation and address recent SIDA audit recommendations.

RESILIENT FINANCES
Update the resourcing and sustainability strategy and coordinate a costed plan for the ambitions outlined in the CIVICUS strategic plan. Continue our targeted donor outreach and related activities to grow and diversify our supporter base.

RESILIENT PEOPLE
Increase our people power by implementing the learning and development framework, which incorporates concepts and leadership practices to foster a culture of a commonly shared identity and enhance collaboration and cohesion across teams. It will include examining our mental models to promote greater diversity, equity and inclusion and will connect to our ongoing commitments to racial justice. We will also clarify the roles and responsibilities for implementing performance management across all levels in CIVICUS, which in turn will drive individual and team accountability and advance the practice of distributed leadership.
HIGHLIGHTED INSTITUTIONAL CHANGES

The completed ways of working analysis provided insights on strategic alignment and ways of working following the launch of the Strategic Plan 2022 - 2027. Based on this work, we are deepening our programmatic focus through three workstreams: Evidence & Engagement, Advocacy & Solidarity Action and Innovation & Sustainability. Each thread will be led by a Chief Officer. Several new leadership hires and realignment of the current senior leadership team will ensure greater collaboration towards our one common goal.

Some teams will transition to better align to these new workstreams.

Proposals include:
- Creation of a programme quality and innovation (PQI) cluster to continue its work contributing to broader program quality, co-design and incubation processes within CIVICUS.
- Iterating our civil society resourcing work stream, to better deliver our eco-system strengthening strategic objective.

Additional capacity in this financial year will take the form of:
- A dedicated team for resourcing and partnerships to drive our resourcing and sustainability strategy.
- A media advisor to advance strategy-related public engagement objectives.
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<td><strong>High Level Political Forum</strong>&lt;br&gt;New York: Jul 10 - 19</td>
<td><strong>CIVICUS Youth</strong>&lt;br&gt;Youth Int’l Day: Aug 12</td>
<td><strong>UN General Assembly</strong>&lt;br&gt;New York: Sept 5 - 19</td>
<td><strong>Global Resource Hub Convening</strong>&lt;br&gt;Solutions Evaluation</td>
<td><strong>Universal Periodic Review</strong>&lt;br&gt;Geneva: Nov 6 - 17</td>
<td><strong>Universal Declaration of Human Rights</strong>&lt;br&gt;75th Anniversary</td>
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<td><strong>Right to Protest Toolkit</strong>&lt;br&gt;Launch</td>
<td><strong>Strengthening 21st Century Citizen Action</strong>&lt;br&gt;Final Webinar</td>
<td><strong>Membership Engagement Month</strong></td>
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**KEY MILESTONES 2023-2024**
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**JAN 2024**
- Universal Period Review
  - Geneva: Jan/Feb
- State of Civil Society Report
- Monitor Watchlist
- #StandAsMyWitness
  - Anniversary: Feb 23

**FEB 2024**

**MAR 2024**
- Human Rights Council
  - Geneva: Mar/Apr
- UN: Commission on Status of Women
  - New York: March
- Global Resource Hub Convening
  - Future Planning
- Digital Democracy Initiative
  - Resourcing Mechanism Opens

**APR 2024**
- We the Peoples Campaign
  - Geneva

**MAY 2024**
- Universal Period Review
  - Geneva: Apr/May

**JUN 2024**
- Monitor Watchlist
- Human Rights Council
  - Geneva: Jun/July
- WE RISE! Campaign
  - Public Event
- Rights Con