



CIVICUS STRATEGIC PLAN 2017-2022





Women's March on Washington, USA, 2017.

Credit: Molly Adams via Flickr

IMAGE CREDITS

FRONT COVER TOP: Protest outside Parliament, Pretoria, South Africa, 2017. Credit: Ashraf Hendricks/GroundUp.

FRONT COVER BOTTOM: "Resist", Protesting the Muslim ban in Iowa, USA. Credit: © 2017 Michael F. Hiatt mfhiattphotography.com.

BACK COVER TOP: Ethiopian Israelis protest against discrimination. Credit: Wikimedia Commons.

BACK COVER BOTTOM: Civil society mobilizes in Budapest, Hungary, to protest proposed law against foreign funded NGOs, 2017.
Credit: Civilizáció / Pethe Attilia.

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“The March of the Swallows” drawing attention to the fight against corruption and the promotion of peace, Tunisia.

Credit: LAM ECHAML

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR



AS WE LAUNCH OUR
NEW STRATEGIC
PLAN, WE ARE
FORTUNATE TO
FIND OURSELVES
IN A POSITION
OF STRENGTH AT
CIVICUS. WITH A
STABLE FINANCIAL
BASE, A COMMITTED
AND DIVERSE
BOARD, A BROAD
AND GROWING
MEMBERSHIP
AND A TALENTED
SECRETARIAT TEAM,
WE ARE POISED TO
BE BOLD AND BRAVE.

I am honoured to be writing this message for CIVICUS' Strategic Plan 2017-2022 as the Chair of the CIVICUS Board of Directors. I have been involved with CIVICUS for many years and it is with great pleasure and pride that I continue my journey with the alliance as it embarks on an important phase in its history.

As CIVICUS enters a new strategic period, we face massive global challenges as a people and a planet. Despite them, I am optimistic about our world and collective future. This is because in the face of these challenges, I see so many inspiring examples of citizens and civil society fighting for and contributing to a more just, inclusive and sustainable world.

CIVICUS exists to strengthen and support citizens and civil society as they take these actions. We are first and foremost a membership alliance and serving our diverse members, who cross geographic, thematic and organisational boundaries, is at the heart of who we are and what we do. In formulating new strategic priorities, we listened carefully to thousands of members and partners across the world who shared with us their needs, aspirations and advice. We hope the strategic direction that we set here excites, supports and mobilises them. Our membership is the key source of our strength.

As we launch our new strategic plan, we are fortunate to find ourselves in a position of strength at CIVICUS. With a stable financial base, a committed and diverse board, a broad and growing membership and a talented secretariat team, we are poised to be bold and brave. We will continue much of the important work strengthening, convening and advocating for civil society that we have done for over two decades. But we also have the opportunity to tackle new issues, try new approaches and forge new partnerships to enhance the impact of citizen action and civil society. As we work to promote transparency, accountability, inclusivity and diversity across the world, we will also embed these values in our operations at CIVICUS and our work with civil society and other partners. As we work to realise a just, inclusive and sustainable world, we will work to ensure a just, inclusive and sustainable CIVICUS alliance.

We believe that when people and organisations come together in engaged and empowered ways, we can change the world. Our job at CIVICUS is to support citizens and civil society to be that change. I invite you to join us on this journey.

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read 'Anabel Cruz'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Anabel Cruz
Chair, CIVICUS Board of Directors

MESSAGE FROM THE SECRETARY-GENERAL



I WRITE THIS MESSAGE AT A TIME OF BIG GLOBAL CHALLENGES FOR CIVIL SOCIETY AND THE WORLD, BUT I KNOW THAT OUR MEMBERS AND PARTNERS HAVE SOME BIG RESPONSES. OUR JOB OVER THE NEXT FIVE YEARS IS TO CONNECT, AMPLIFY AND SCALE THESE RESPONSES AND, IN DOING SO, STRENGTHEN THE CONTRIBUTION OF CITIZEN ACTION AND CIVIL SOCIETY TO REALISING A MORE JUST, INCLUSIVE AND SUSTAINABLE WORLD.

During my time at CIVICUS, I have had the privilege of meeting some of the most inspiring citizen activists. The brave colleagues fighting for Dalit rights in India in an increasingly challenging civil society environment. The team at Wingu who created Caminos de la Villa to map and demand action on the state of public services in some of Buenos Aires' poorest neighbourhoods. The Pacific Climate Warriors who are rising peacefully and powerfully to protect their islands from climate change. The pioneers at Earthrise Trust whose farm shows a practical way of defeating the legacy of dispossession and suppression in South Africa. The #EventItUp team at Oxfam who found a way to shine a light on the extreme and vulgar inequality that plagues our world. I could go on...

We at the CIVICUS secretariat have the humble honour of serving these activists, our members and millions of others in civil society who are fighting for a more just, inclusive and sustainable world. We recognise our responsibility to use our precious resources – financial and non-financial – as effectively as possible to serve civil society.

The next five years present some urgent challenges and opportunities. We must reverse the worrying trends in civic freedoms before they become the new normal. We must build a new economic system before inequality, insecurity and climate change tear our societies apart. We must promote a new, progressive internationalism in the face of a retreat into extremism, nationalism and populism. The changes we make now are likely to make or break our chances of achieving the vision embodied in the Sustainable Development Goals.

I hope this strategic plan shows that CIVICUS is not just committed to strengthening civil society for the sake of it. We see citizen action at the heart of addressing these challenges. As we mark our 25th anniversary in 2018, we also enter a critical period in our organisational history. Thanks to our donor partners, we have a stable foundation on which to build a confident and coherent programme of work going forward. We will build on the work that we have done over the past quarter-century and find new ways to maximise our impact.

I write this message at a time of big global challenges for civil society and the world, but I know that our members and partners have some big responses. Our job over the next five years is to connect, amplify and scale these responses and, in doing so, strengthen the contribution of citizen action and civil society to realising a more just, inclusive and sustainable world.

A handwritten signature in black ink, which reads "Dhananjayan Sriskandarajah".

Dhananjayan Sriskandarajah
Secretary-General, CIVICUS



WHO WE ARE



Women Human Rights Defenders workshop, Commission on the Status of Women, New York, USA, 2017.

Credit: CIVICUS

OUR VISION:

A WORLDWIDE COMMUNITY OF INFORMED, INSPIRED, COMMITTED CITIZENS ENGAGED IN CONFRONTING THE CHALLENGES FACING HUMANITY.

OUR MISSION:

TO STRENGTHEN CITIZEN ACTION AND CIVIL SOCIETY THROUGHOUT THE WORLD.

CIVICUS is a global alliance of civil society organisations and activists dedicated to strengthening citizen action and civil society throughout the world.

We were established in 1993 and since 2002 have been proudly headquartered in Johannesburg, South Africa, with additional hubs across the globe.

We are a membership alliance with more than 4,000 members in more than 175 countries. Our definition of civil society is broad and covers non-governmental organisations, activists, civil society coalitions and networks, protest and social movements, voluntary bodies, campaigning organisations, charities, faith-based groups, trade unions and philanthropic foundations. Our membership is diverse, spanning a wide range of issues, sizes and organisation types.

WE WERE ESTABLISHED IN 1993 AND SINCE 2002 HAVE BEEN PROUDLY HEADQUARTERED IN JOHANNESBURG, SOUTH AFRICA, WITH ADDITIONAL HUBS ACROSS THE GLOBE.

OUR UNIQUE CONTRIBUTION TO CHANGE

At CIVICUS, our identity is informed by:

- Our diverse global membership, with a strong presence in the global south.
- Our clear mandate to defend civic space and promote civil society.
- Our focus on strengthening citizen action and civil society writ large, working across issues, geographies and organisation types.
- Our role as a trusted convener and thought leader on civil society issues and trends.
- Our ability to amplify civil society voices and enable activists and organisations to speak truth to power.
- Our commitment to standing in solidarity with actors across civil society.
- Our capacity to incubate and support ambitious strategies and initiatives to improve civil society's effectiveness and inclusivity.

Our work at CIVICUS is guided by these values and principles:

- We believe in justice and dignity for all, while putting the most excluded first.
- We believe that people and their organisations, working together, can change the world.
- We stand for a strong, independent and progressive civil society.
- We challenge power with principled courage.
- We are champions of accountability, diversity and inclusion.
- We are committed to global solidarity and believe in building from below and beyond borders.
- We seek systems change to tackle the universal and inter-related nature of the world's most pressing challenges.



Rally calling on world leaders to raise their ambitions as the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals are adopted, New York, USA, 2015.

THE WORLD WE LIVE IN

We listened to thousands of members and partners across the world to shape CIVICUS' Strategic Plan 2017-2022. Through the consultation process, we heard people's deep concerns about challenges facing humanity, how civil society can best address these challenges and how CIVICUS can best support civil society to enact change.



CIVICUS STRATEGIC PLAN 2017-2022: Consultation Highlights

CIVICUS is listening



CIVICUS listened to thousands of stakeholders through surveys, consultations, collaborations and conversations to get their views on what CIVICUS' strategic priorities for 2017-2022 should be.

We listened to CIVICUS members, local, national, regional and international civil society organisations and networks, social movements, activists, voluntary bodies, charities, philanthropic organisations, international organisations and governments.

We spoke to people in 28 countries in all regions of the world.

What are the greatest CHALLENGES facing humanity?



3

What can CIVIL SOCIETY do to address these challenges?



Unite: Work in solidarity for causes we believe in

Demand accountability: Hold decision makers to account for commitments

Advocate: Work to influence policy and gain public support

Mobilise: Support citizen action and participation

Innovate: Experiment and innovate to drive transformative change

Walk the talk: Be transparent, accountable, inclusive and diverse organisations and movements and tackle power imbalances within civil society

How can CIVICUS best support civil society?

Strengthen civil society **CAPACITY** and **RESILIENCE**

CONNECT civil society with each other and with others in ways that transcend issues, geographies and organisational models

Provide **THOUGHT LEADERSHIP** on trends in and affecting civil society

Mobilise **RESOURCES** for civil society

INSPIRE and **ENERGISE** global movements of civil society and citizens

ADVOCATE to promote and protect civil society

AMPLIFY civil society voices at the global level, particularly the perspectives of the most marginalised

INCUBATE new ideas and approaches to bolster civil society's impact





Tokelaun Pacific Climate Warriors protest against climate change.

Credit: 350.org

This important feedback from our members and partners, complemented by the analysis of the CIVICUS secretariat and others, informs our understanding of the world we live in. It informs our conclusion that the most pressing issues we need to collectively and globally grapple with over the next five years are: inequality, insecurity and climate change; sustained attacks on human rights; the crisis of democracy and global governance; new and disruptive forms of participation and partnership; and threats to civil society credibility and legitimacy.

INEQUALITY, INSECURITY AND CLIMATE CHANGE

Unfettered capitalism, patriarchal social structures and legacies of exclusion are deepening inequities, instability and environmental degradation in our societies. Blinkered focus on economic growth is resulting in extraordinary levels of inequality, pushing poor people further to the margins of society and leaving many middle-income people feeling left behind. Compounding this problem is a perception that governments are withdrawing from their obligations to meet basic needs, which leaves the provision of basic services to the market, and historical patterns of inequality and exclusion are continuing and deepening in many places. These patterns are not only unjust, but also fuel anger that leads to social unrest. We need a new global economy that works for all people and protects our planet – now and for future generations.

SUSTAINED ATTACKS ON HUMAN RIGHTS

We see sustained attacks on human rights across the world, including the fundamental civic freedoms of association, peaceful assembly and expression. Many governments are becoming intolerant of dissent and seek to suppress it by intimidating their citizens. Attacks come from autocratic political leaders, unaccountable government agencies, criminal elements linked to large companies, religious and ideological extremists and terrorist groups. Restrictions are imposed when civil society exposes high levels of corruption, probes the power of elites or unearths abuses by security forces. Spikes in attacks on civil society are experienced around elections, particularly in countries with long-



Protest for migrants' rights, Lausanne, Switzerland, 2014.

Credit: Gustave Deghilage via Flickr

established leaders. Minorities defending their rights often face particularly punitive measures. A range of tactics are used to suppress dissent, including rules that restrict the operation of CSOs, harsh penalties for protest such as arbitrary detentions, biased judicial proceedings to prevent activists and organisations from carrying out their mandates, the imposition of travel restrictions and the use of force from physical attacks to assassinations. The restriction of online freedom of expression, including the targeting of social media commentators and the use of censorship, surveillance and internet shutdown, is now a marked trend.

WE SEE SUSTAINED ATTACKS ON HUMAN RIGHTS ACROSS THE WORLD, INCLUDING THE FUNDAMENTAL CIVIC FREEDOMS OF ASSOCIATION, PEACEFUL ASSEMBLY AND EXPRESSION. MANY GOVERNMENTS ARE BECOMING INTOLERANT OF DISSENT AND SEEK TO SUPPRESS IT BY INTIMIDATING THEIR CITIZENS.

CRISIS OF DEMOCRACY AND GLOBAL GOVERNANCE

Around the world, democratic values are under threat and progressive movements are being weakened. Economic inequality, the rapid rate of social change and the perceived distance of elites are stoking citizens' anger and political polarisation. In many countries, people are using elections and referendums to express their discontent with the political status quo by supporting populist leaders and parties that espouse a narrow vision of nationalism tinged with xenophobia. These leaders and parties are opposed to internationalism, the rule of law and human rights. Such political shifts have negative repercussions for civil society: populist leaders ride waves of dissatisfaction to win power, but are intolerant of alternate

points of view, and civil society is attacked when it is associated with progressive values. There is too little public resistance to such intolerance and attacks – in very few countries is the argument that a vibrant and diverse civil society is necessary for a thriving society being made effectively.

At the global level, multilateral governance is undermined by the facts that much decision making is opaque and undemocratic governments are legitimised and given equal voice. Citizen engagement is often tokenistic and far outweighed by private sector influence. Since the world's most pressing problems are acknowledged to cross national borders, decision making at the global level matters now more than ever.

NEW AND DISRUPTIVE FORMS OF PARTICIPATION AND PARTNERSHIP

In the face of many challenges, citizens and civil society remain engaged in driving transformative social change. Indeed, we are witnessing a thirst for citizen participation that has never been seen before. Many tried and tested tactics of connecting, networking and mobilising are still proving effective, but as new alliances and forms of organising emerge, we also see new tactics and strategies come into play. Technology offers huge opportunities for organising solidarity movements – it can enable global coordination, enhance reach and amplify voices.

There is much work to be done to bridge gaps between traditional CSOs and activists who are part of new protest and social movements. In many cases, they do not know how to relate to each other and at times there is mutual distrust: established CSOs may see protest movements as flash-in-the-pan incidents, while activists see those CSOs as too bureaucratic and institutionalised to catalyse effective change.

While “multi-sector” has become a buzzword, examples of civil society engaging effectively with governments and the private sector are hard to come by at the national and supra-national levels. Too often civil society actors take an oppositional stance that makes engagement difficult or they are seen as unable to engage in constructive policy dialogue. Yet as the boundaries between traditional sectors blur, we need civil society to be prepared to engage in constructive relationships with others. This seems particularly important in the context of “hybridisation” that we are seeing between traditional CSOs and social enterprises, in which many young social good activists see themselves as social entrepreneurs rather than founders of non-governmental organisations.

The private sector is an increasingly important economic decision maker and political influencer. Large transnational corporations can have major impacts on human rights and civic space. Issues such as land grabbing, large-scale corporate tax avoidance and worsening employment standards are increasingly fuelling citizens’ anger. We need new relationships between civil society and the private sector that encompass not only partnership, but also critical engagement, including civil society initiatives to make the private sector more accountable. When civil society partners with the private sector, it must retain its ability to advocate for improved corporate practice. Partnerships must be rooted in principles of equality and respect and unlock the distinct advantages of civil society and business to address contemporary challenges.

THREATS TO CIVIL SOCIETY CREDIBILITY AND LEGITIMACY

Civil society faces critical internal challenges that affect its credibility and legitimacy. In too many cases, civil society does not “walk the talk” when it comes to transparency, accountability, inclusion and diversity. Civil society is too often more accountable to donors than citizens, which can negatively impact public trust in CSOs and movements. Significant power imbalances exist in civil society when it comes to resources, profile and influence – between large and small, urban and rural, global north and global south, and formal and informal civil society actors. In many instances, gaps in power and resources are widening rather than narrowing. National civil society infrastructure, which is critical for supporting civil society to tackle its own internal challenges, building solidarity and sharing best practice, seems to be weakening across the globe.

This is the landscape we find ourselves in and it is these challenges that CIVICUS will work with others to tackle over the next five years.

TOO OFTEN CIVIL SOCIETY ACTORS TAKE AN OPPOSITIONAL STANCE THAT MAKES ENGAGEMENT DIFFICULT OR THEY ARE SEEN AS UNABLE TO ENGAGE IN CONSTRUCTIVE POLICY DIALOGUE. YET AS THE BOUNDARIES BETWEEN TRADITIONAL SECTORS BLUR, WE NEED CIVIL SOCIETY TO BE PREPARED TO ENGAGE IN CONSTRUCTIVE RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHERS.



Hong Kong Umbrella Revolution, 2014.

Credit: Studio Incendo via Flickr

OUR THEORY OF CHANGE

GLOBAL CONTEXT

Inequality, insecurity & climate change

Sustained attacks on human rights

Crisis of democracy & global governance

New & disruptive forms of participation & partnership

Threats to civil society credibility & legitimacy

DEFINING ISSUES OF OUR TIME

Justice
Inclusion
Sustainability

OUR MISSION: We exist to strengthen citizen action and civil society throughout the world.

OPPORTUNITIES TO ACT

Responding to civic space emergency
Addressing the democratic deficit
Improving civil society practice

HOW WE MAKE A DIFFERENCE

- Build solidarity among civil society across borders and at scale
- Support civil society to connect with others
- Produce timely and world-class knowledge and analysis
- Advocate for open spaces and systemic change
- Amplify voices of those usually not included
- Promote resourcing of diverse and resilient civil society
- Innovate and incubate bold initiatives
- Promote, model and disseminate civil society best practice

WHO WE WORK WITH AND INFLUENCE

- CIVICUS members
- Civil society organisations and platforms
- Youth, grassroots and social movements
- Governments
- Media
- International organisations
- Private sector

STRATEGIC GOAL 1:

Defending civic freedoms and democratic values

STRATEGIC GOAL 2:

Strengthening the power of people to organise, mobilise and take action

STRATEGIC GOAL 3:

Empowering a more accountable, effective and innovative civil society

OUR VISION: A worldwide community of informed, inspired, committed citizens engaged in confronting the challenges facing humanity.

OUR GOALS



May Day Parade, Lausanne, Switzerland, 2017.

Credit: Gustave Deghilage via Flickr

OUR GOALS

Over the 2017-2022 period, we will work to strengthen citizen action and civil society toward a more just, inclusive and sustainable world by:

1. Defending civic freedoms and democratic values.
2. Strengthening the power of people to organise, mobilise and take action.
3. Empowering a more accountable, effective and innovative civil society.

These three strategic goals reflect our belief that people-powered and collective action is at the centre of transformative change. They build on our assessment that CIVICUS is in a strong position to respond to the civic space emergency, address the democratic deficit and improve civil society practice.

STRATEGIC GOAL 1:

DEFENDING CIVIC FREEDOMS AND DEMOCRATIC VALUES

We will continue to defend the fundamental civic freedoms of association, peaceful assembly and expression in all countries, particularly when they are under threat. We will do this by providing activists and organisations targeted for their activism or operating in oppressive contexts with emergency and sustained support. We will track civic space trends globally and seek to better understand when, how and why crackdowns on civic space occur and the most effective ways to respond. We will incubate and share ways of creating early warning systems for threats to civic space as well as tools for supporting the safety of activists under attack. We will work to ensure that civic freedoms and civil society rights get the attention they deserve on national, regional and global agendas.

We will increase momentum in civil society to safeguard democratic values and strengthen participatory democracy in form and substance from the local to the global level. We will work to ensure that people have the opportunities and tools for full, effective and creative participation in the decision-making processes that affect them.



Student-led protests in Santiago, Chile, 2011.

Credit: Nicolás15 via Flickr

STRATEGIC GOAL 2:

STRENGTHENING THE POWER OF PEOPLE TO ORGANISE, MOBILISE AND TAKE ACTION

We will strengthen the power of people to take collective action to realise a more just, inclusive and sustainable world. We will work in solidarity with change-seeking activists, organisations and movements on inequality, injustice, insecurity and climate change. We believe that there is much value to be unlocked by bringing together different types of progressive civil society actors to learn from each other. We will work more purposefully with and learn from activists, protest and social movements, and online and youth-led platforms. We will also work to support civil society to take the lead in mobilising and working in partnership with other stakeholders, including governments, the private sector and intergovernmental institutions, to catalyse transformative change.

We will invest in making global agendas relevant to local actors and bringing local voices to global fora. We will support people and their organisations to monitor progress and hold governments accountable for commitments that they have made nationally and internationally, including those on international human rights frameworks, the Sustainable Development Goals and the Paris Agreement on climate change. At the global level, we will work to ensure citizens and civil society can influence global governance reform processes, demand spaces for citizens to advise decision makers, and push new and reforming international organisations to put people and their needs at the centre.

WE WILL WORK IN SOLIDARITY WITH CHANGE-SEEKING ACTIVISTS, ORGANISATIONS AND MOVEMENTS ON INEQUALITY, INJUSTICE, INSECURITY AND CLIMATE CHANGE. WE BELIEVE THAT THERE IS MUCH VALUE TO BE UNLOCKED BY BRINGING TOGETHER DIFFERENT TYPES OF PROGRESSIVE CIVIL SOCIETY ACTORS TO LEARN FROM EACH OTHER.

STRATEGIC GOAL 3:

EMPOWERING A MORE ACCOUNTABLE, EFFECTIVE AND INNOVATIVE CIVIL SOCIETY

We will empower civil society to become more accountable, effective and innovative agents of change by encouraging collaboration among and the engagement of our diverse alliance members and partners. We will continue to provide opportunities for civil society actors to maximise their capacity in networked and sustainable ways by creating opportunities for shared learning. We will promote and advocate for the institutional architecture that supports and sustains civil society, including coalitions, umbrella bodies and networks, and invest in finding ways to make that architecture more adaptable and responsive. We will experiment with, learn from and share innovative strategies and technologies that position civil society at the forefront of change. We will explore new funding and operational models that shift more resources to the advocacy, accountability and human rights work of civil society actors in the global south that are often on the frontline of social transformation. We will strive to support a new generation of civil society leaders who have the skills, instincts and networks required to lead civil society and the world in the 21st century. We will challenge ourselves and ask our alliance members and partners to reflect on our diversity and take specific steps to be truly inclusive agents of change.

HOW WE WILL MAKE A DIFFERENCE

We will draw on over 20 years of experience as an alliance to carry out our strategic plan. We will continue doing much of what we have done well over the past two decades and seek ways to do it even better. To meet our ambitions, however, this will not be enough. We will also need to work in new ways, with new partners, in new spaces and with clearer focus to have the greatest impact. Given the nature and extent of the challenges facing humanity, it is our responsibility to take bold and brave action. This is what we will do.

WE WILL BUILD SOLIDARITY AMONG CIVIL SOCIETY ACROSS BORDERS AND AT SCALE

Civil society will not be able to tackle the global challenges that we face by working in silos. We must work together in solidarity. CIVICUS will build connections across civil society that transcend issues, geographies and organisation types. We will prioritise working through our alliance while also collaborating with new partners and allies. We will facilitate connections that offer opportunities for mutual learning, partnerships and collective action by leveraging 21st century technologies and approaches and share what we learn to help enhance the impact of other civil society alliances and networks. We will connect traditional CSOs with youth, grassroots and social movements.

WE WILL SUPPORT CIVIL SOCIETY TO CONNECT WITH OTHERS

Civil society alone cannot achieve the scale of global change that we need. We must work with others. CIVICUS will support civil society to connect with and have greater influence over stakeholders that seek to work with and be informed by civil society, such as governments, international organisations and the private sector. We will find new ways to connect and collaborate to drive change. We will invest in working with new partners who can boost our impact. We will support civil society to lead multi-stakeholder efforts to realise a more just, inclusive and sustainable world.

WE WILL PRODUCE TIMELY AND WORLD-CLASS KNOWLEDGE AND ANALYSIS

Insufficient data, evidence and analysis limit the impact of civil society advocacy and programming. We must understand trends in and affecting civil society to bolster our impact. CIVICUS will be a global thought leader on citizen action and civil society by conducting cutting-edge research and offering expert analysis. We will be a source of comparative information on these issues and invest in real-time and citizen-generated data that feed directly into advocacy efforts, policy decisions and programming choices.

WE WILL ADVOCATE FOR OPEN SPACES AND SYSTEMIC CHANGE

Civil society needs to build on tried and true advocacy tactics while also harnessing the power of technology and new ways of organising to win hearts, minds and influence. CIVICUS will support members and partners in their advocacy efforts at the local and national levels. We will provide leadership while also opening space for others at the global level. We will demand bold and courageous change and experiment with new ways of influencing decision makers, especially in pursuit of systemic change.

WE WILL AMPLIFY VOICES OF THOSE NOT USUALLY INCLUDED

Civil society should not rely on a select few to represent its rich diversity in the corridors of power. We must celebrate, promote and defend our diversity. CIVICUS will work in partnership with others to amplify grassroots struggles and local civil society perspectives in global fora and prioritise voices that are not typically heard. We will speak up for civil society when the occasion demands it, but more often seek to open spaces for activists and organisations to speak truth to power themselves. We will work to bring the voices of people and their movements to the media and public sphere.



Business case for civic space event, UN Human Rights Council, Geneva, Switzerland, 2017.

Credit: CIVICUS

WE WILL PROMOTE THE RESOURCING OF A DIVERSE AND RESILIENT CIVIL SOCIETY

Civil society is too often resourced in ways that are unpredictable and inflexible and too many of these resources are captured by large, powerful organisations. CIVICUS will promote the resourcing of a diverse and resilient civil society and challenge operating models that result in resources flowing to a small number of powerful actors. We will work with traditional donors and philanthropists who have a track record of supporting civil society. We will also seek out new donors and philanthropists who can bring new energy and perspectives to civil society resourcing. We will invest in funding innovations that see greater, more sustainable and more flexible resources flow to civil society and pilot new ways of moving funds to Southern and smaller organisations.

WE WILL INNOVATE AND INCUBATE BOLD INITIATIVES

Civil society cannot leave harnessing the potential of new ways of solving problems, including with technology, to others. Civil society needs to be at the frontier of innovation for social transformation. CIVICUS will bring innovation, experimentation and technology to the work of civil society to enhance its impact. We will connect innovators across countries and contexts and invest particularly in incubating, learning from and scaling bold initiatives that are likely to have disruptive impact.

WE WILL PROMOTE, MODEL AND DISSEMINATE CIVIL SOCIETY BEST PRACTICE

Civil society needs to live up to the demands that it makes of others. To be sure that we practice what we preach, CIVICUS will engender a learning culture across the secretariat and alliance and foster partnerships and practices that leverage collective resources to bolster civil society impact. We will invest in practical measures that promote diversity, inclusion, transparency, accountability and sustainability in everything we do, which will model the behaviour that we expect of others.

HOW WE WILL DEFINE OUR SUCCESS

Going forward, CIVICUS will invest in a new monitoring, evaluation and learning framework that will help us consistently and systematically track our progress and impact for both accountability and learning purposes. This framework will enable us to document, understand and learn from our successes and failures. It will give us robust and useable data and evidence that can help us identify where we are contributing to social transformation and where we need to do things differently. With it, we will be able to respond more effectively and efficiently to the changing context in which we work. The framework will help us truly understand the contribution that CIVICUS makes to social transformation and communicate it in ways that resonate with our members, partners and the world.

Our monitoring, evaluation and learning framework will:

- Position CIVICUS as an adaptive, change-seeking alliance.
- Make use of feedback loops to put people at the centre of our work, enable more iterative and participatory programming and allow faster responses when changes in direction are required.
- Rely on mixed-method approaches to measure our contribution to social transformation, which will include the use of citizen-generated data produced by the communities our alliance serves as well as qualitative data to present social narratives that capture the difference that our work makes in people's lives.

Below, we identify our high-level ambitions and changes to which we will seek to contribute. Our monitoring, evaluation and learning framework will outline how we will track progress and impact in greater detail.



STRATEGIC GOAL 1:

DEFENDING CIVIC FREEDOMS AND DEMOCRATIC VALUES

By 2022, there will be an improvement in civic space in countries where civic freedoms are under attack, improved recognition and protection of civic freedoms at the national, regional and global levels, and improved participation of people and organisations in democratic processes at all levels.

Changes we will seek to contribute to include:

- More people living in societies where civic space is open and fewer people living in societies where civic space is closed.
- Increased recognition of the importance of civic freedoms across the world, including in national parliaments and intergovernmental institutions.
- More and better quality participation by people in democratic and governance processes at all levels.
- Improved legal and regulatory environments for civil society in more countries.

STRATEGIC GOAL 2:

STRENGTHENING THE POWER OF PEOPLE TO ORGANISE, MOBILISE AND TAKE ACTION

By 2022, there will be many and diverse examples of how people have organised and mobilised to drive positive change from influencing local actors to changing global policies.

Changes we will seek to contribute to include:

- More CIVICUS members reporting involvement in new and impactful initiatives made up of a diverse range of civil society actors that result in direct action to drive change for a more just, inclusive and sustainable world.
- More CIVICUS members leading multi-stakeholder initiatives.
- More civil society actors receiving support for training, collaboration and travel that strengthens their ability to build coalitions and catalyse change.
- More meaningful opportunities for citizens and civil society, particularly grassroots movements, to come together to participate in and influence global governance institutions and processes.

STRATEGIC GOAL 3:

EMPOWERING A MORE ACCOUNTABLE, EFFECTIVE AND INNOVATIVE CIVIL SOCIETY

By 2022, civil society actors will have greater capacity to deliver their mandates, will be experimenting more often, will be taking calculated risks and will be more inclusive in the ways that they organise themselves and their work.

Changes we will seek to contribute to include:

- More civil society actors testing new tools and approaches that could transform the ways that they work, including the use of citizen-generated data and constituency feedback loops.
- Southern, smaller and informal civil society formations having better access to resources that support their resilience.
- Increased number of effective national civil society platforms across the globe.
- More CIVICUS members having designed and implemented appropriate diversity and inclusion policies and practices.
- Greater levels of public trust in civil society.



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