



Digital Democracy
Initiative

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DIGITAL DEMOCRACY AMPLIFIED

DAL: NEW COHORT APPLICATIONS OPEN

We are pleased to announce that applications for the next cohort of the Digital Action Lab are now open. More information [here](#).

ELECTION-RELATED INITIATIVES

DDI is contributing to election-related efforts in Venezuela, Tunisia, Mozambique, and Ghana, with a focus on countering misinformation, promoting civic participation, and enhancing electoral integrity through digital tools.

OVERCOMING DIGITAL REPRESSION IN SENEGAL

Senegal case study examines how civil society countered internet shutdowns, censorship, and surveillance during Senegal's 2024 presidential elections. Read it [here](#).

WELCOME TO DIGITAL DEMOCRACY AMPLIFIED!

This edition of the Digital Democracy Initiative newsletter features updates on the progress of the [Digital Action Lab](#), including new applications for the next cohort. We also highlight our election-related work in four countries, the release of the [Overcoming Digital Repression in Senegal](#) case study, and the ongoing impact of the [Digital Resiliency Grants](#).

Read on for more details on how DDI is enabling civil society to strengthen civic space and democracy in the digital age.



HIGHLIGHTS FROM KEY PROJECTS

As the Digital Action Lab (DAL) projects reach their fourth month of implementation, several successes and milestones have been achieved. The projects are actively incorporating recommendations from technical partners, while adapting to their respective local contexts.

- [Advokc](#) has effectively applied digital tools to amplify civic spaces, enhancing engagement between citizens and their elected representatives.
- [Development360](#) has strengthened its institutional culture, improving its capacity to gather and analyse data to shape interventions for young leaders.
- [Fundacion Niñas de Luz](#) has utilised digital transformation to enhance project management, using the Jira
- [Keiyo Women Trust](#) has been utilising digital platforms to engage indigenous women in governance, using the Voice Messaging Service (VMS) to provide essential information on their rights and governance responsibilities.
- [Fundacion Vayalo](#) has integrated digital transformation into their strategic planning for the first time in eight years, recognising technology as a key driver of change for their 2024–2030 roadmap.
- [MAAN](#) has enhanced its digital security protocols by introducing encryption technologies and secure communication channels. These tools ensure that all communications, particularly those related to advocacy, are conducted

platform to track progress on their project, *La Gracia de la Democracia*.

- **Freedom Studio** Nepal has focused on enhancing digital security and tackling misinformation. By integrating tools such as two-factor authentication and educating their network on fact-checking, they are protecting activists from misinformation and cyber threats.

securely, safeguarding the privacy of their team and partners.

Organisations are now beginning to benefit from one-on-one cybersecurity support, which is expected to address specific digital security needs as they progress.

Applications for the second cohort of the Digital Action Lab opened on 21st October. The selection process involves three stages:

- An initial online application
- Video submissions from 30 preselected candidates
- Interviews with the DDI team.

More information and the application link for Digital Action Lab can be found [here](#).

RESEARCH PRODUCTS: INSIGHTS INTO DIGITAL REPRESSION AND CIVIL SOCIETY RESILIENCE

A key objective of the DDI is to create knowledge products that document and share valuable insights to help civil society actors navigate civic space challenges. We are excited to announce the release of our first knowledge product, *Overcoming Digital Repression in Senegal*. This case study explores how civil society organisations in Senegal adapted to and countered digital repression during the 2024 presidential elections, focusing on strategies used to combat internet shutdowns, censorship, and surveillance.

You can read the full case study [here](#).

NEW CALLS FOR APPLICATIONS IN EAST ASIA, SOUTH ASIA, AND SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA.

The Digital Democracy Initiative (DDI) team at CIVICUS is launching new calls for applications in the East Asia, South Asia, and Sub-Saharan Africa regions. We are seeking regional partners to lead the implementation of DDI regional support mechanism prototypes, co-designed to sustain, strengthen, and expand the work of local civil society actors promoting inclusive democracy and protecting civic space in the digital age. Each region will benefit from a range of support, including sub-grants, learning resources, and technical accompaniment to build

core organisational capacities and digital skills, advancing civic space and inclusive democracy both online and offline.

EAST ASIA

Re-D Fund

(Financial): Flexible, long-term funding for CSOs in Southeast Asia focused on digital security and rights, aiming to boost digital literacy and test adaptable funding models.

Young Tech Collective for Change (Non-Financial): A volunteer network to support CSOs with digital infrastructure and human resource plans, fostering sustainability without reliance on external funding.

[Read more](#)

SOUTH ASIA

South Asia Diversity

Fund (SADF) (Financial): Provides flexible funding to CSOs addressing digital democracy, transparency, and civic participation in response to shrinking civic space in South Asia.

South Asia Democracy

Solidarity Block (SADSB) (Non-Financial): A platform for strengthening digital democracy through capacity building workshops, research access and peer-to-peer learning.

[Read more](#)

SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

Empower

(Financial): Supports local innovators and grassroots organisations by addressing digital inequalities and fostering sustainable innovation through a holistic approach.

Innovate and Connect (Non-

Financial): Builds capacity in local innovators and grassroots organisations through workshops, mentorship, and networking to develop digital tools responsibly.

[Read more](#)

ELECTION-RELATED WORK UNDER THE DIGITAL DEMOCRACY INITIATIVE

The Digital Democracy Initiative is currently also supporting election-related work. The focus is on countering misinformation, supporting electoral integrity, and promoting civic engagement through the use of digital tools.

Key Countries and Initiatives:

- **Tunisia:** Supporting fact-checking campaigns and public awareness drives to increase voter literacy regarding electoral disinformation.

- **Ghana:** Supporting a digital literacy programme aimed at encouraging youth participation in elections, with a focus on first-time voters.
- **Venezuela:** Supporting voter education for young people, countering fake news, and providing analysis of the electoral process.
- **Mozambique:** Supporting efforts to counter fake news, promote political participation, and deploy observers to monitor elections.

DIGITAL RESILIENCY GRANTS: SUPPORTING CIVIL SOCIETY AT RISK

This year we launched the digital resiliency grants to help civil society organisations, groups and movements counter or mitigate the increasing risks, threats and challenges they face when promoting inclusive democracy in the digital age. **More civil society actors are dealing with cyber-attacks, online surveillance and arbitrary laws that threaten digital civil engagement.**

Thanks to these digital resiliency grants, civil society at risk can access funding, from **USD 10,000 to USD 20,000**, to implement short-time responses or solutions to these issues and build digital resilience.

“Thanks to this grant, AFRAD is now equipped with a website with robust cybersecurity features and our team now has the knowledge and skills to navigate Uganda’s shrinking civic space and digital surveillance,” Brian Mutebi, Associate Director of the [African Feminist Research Initiative for Advocacy and Development \(AFRAD\)](#), a grassroots civil society organisation in Uganda.

In Tanzania, [Reach Out Tanzania \(ROT\)](#) is implementing a digital resiliency grant to equip civil society organisations with skills to navigate challenges posed by potential

internet shutdowns and surveillance during the 2024 local and 2025 general elections. Recent arbitrary arrests of opposition party members, activists, and journalists, as well as attempts to ban social networks like Clubhouse and X, are concerning civil society.

[“It happened during the 2020 election, and it could happen again,” says Kumbusho Dawson, Executive Director of ROT. “Tanzanians found themselves in darkness as the internet was shut down on the eve of the election. Since it was the first time, many lacked the skills to manage its impact. Civil society organisations and human rights defenders had no or limited skills to respond effectively,” recalls Dawson.](#)

International media reported that the shutdown aimed to hide electoral fraud. ROT's training is preparing civil society actors in five cities to navigate future shutdowns and effectively monitor civic and human rights violations.

Civil society actors can apply for our digital resiliency grants year-round. More information and application details are available at web.civicus.org/crf-ddi

HACKATHONS: FOSTERING DIGITAL SOLUTIONS FOR CIVIC SPACE

As part of the Digital Democracy Initiative's strategy to enable civil society organisations to tackle civic space challenges, applications for hackathons in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), Latin America (LATAM), and Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) regions have been launched. These hackathons aim to support the development of innovative digital tools that strengthen local efforts to protect and expand civic space. With applications now closed, the hackathons will begin shortly.

Follow for more updates as they progress. [*Join our mailing list!*](#)

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