Digital Democracy Initiative

Special Update: Elections, Regional Prototypes & Innovation Pathways into 2026

web.civicus.org/DDI
digitaldemocracy@civicus.org

From Pilots to Practice: Regional Prototypes Move into Implementation (2026)

Following successful design and testing phases, DDI's regional prototypes will transition into full implementation in 2026. This phase prioritises scaling, localisation, and deeper collaboration with regional partners, whose leadership remains central to success.

Each prototype is grounded in the political, digital, economic, and cultural realities of its region and delivered with organisations deeply embedded in local ecosystems.

Implementation will emphasise:

- **Regional ownership and locally led decision-making**
- **Continuous adaptation through real-time learning**
- **Integration of flexible funding and sustainable support models**
- **Long-term ecosystem strengthening and movement building**

Regional Partners and Approaches

Latin America & the Caribbean (LAC)

Led by Wingu, Kubadili, and Civic House, the LAC prototype focuses on strengthening digital civic engagement and collective action.

Wingu
Kubadili
Civic House

Middle East & North Africa (MENA)

Delivered by the Innovation for Change MENA Hub, this prototype prioritises digital security, civic space navigation, and advocacy in highly sensitive political contexts.

Innovation for Change

East Asia

In partnership with the TIFA Foundation, the East Asia prototype supports civil society to counter shrinking civic space and advance institutional accountability.

Tifa Foundation

Eastern Europe & Central Asia (EECA)

Jointly led by Metamorphosis Foundation and TechSoup, the EECA prototype strengthens open information ecosystems, transparency, and digital literacy.

Metamorphosis Foundation
TechSoup

South Asia

Implemented by Accountability Lab Pakistan, the South Asia prototype centers on participatory governance, youth engagement, and grassroots-led digital mobilisation.

Accountability Lab

Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA)

In partnership with OpenUp, Civic Tech Innovation Network, and Wits University, the SSA prototype prioritises ecosystem building to connect civic tech innovators, data activists, movements, and researchers.

OpenUp
Civic Tech Innovation Network

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Reach, Benefits, and Impact

By late 2026, prototype implementation will extend beyond the 600+ CSOs supported in 2025, with a strong focus on systems change rather than one-off outputs.

Impact will be tracked across four core areas:

Capacity Strengthening:
Growth in digital, organisational, and advocacy skills

Policy & Systems Influence:
Evidence of civil society shaping reforms and accountability mechanisms

Flexible Funding Access:
Increased resourcing of locally led initiatives

Community Impact:
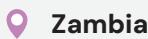Improved civic participation, inclusion, and decision-making

Elections & Digital Integrity: Priorities for 2026

As global electoral cycles intensify and online manipulation becomes more sophisticated, DDI's election-focused work in 2026 will prioritise locally led, adaptive responses rather than one-size-fits-all models.

Key Lessons from 2025

- **Local partnerships are decisive**
- **Hybrid online–offline strategies outperform digital-only approaches**
- **Early intervention prevents disinformation harm**
- **Digital safety is essential, not optional**
- **Open and credible data strengthens advocacy**

Where Election Work Will Intensify

📍 **Peru**   📍 **Brazil**   📍 **Lebanon**   📍 **Zambia**

Additional countries will be confirmed as risk assessments progress.

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Digital Strategies for 2026

DDI will scale tools to:

- Strengthen verification systems and civic media networks
- Detect disinformation patterns in real time
- Support secure communication and digital safety
- Expand access to credible election data
- Amplify citizen participation through trusted platforms

Digital Resiliency Grants: Strengthening Preparedness

In 2025, **Digital Resiliency Grants** supported **16 CSOs** across East Asia, LAC, MENA, South Asia, and SSA. Grantees strengthened digital security skills, navigated restrictive legal environments, explored tools for operating under surveillance or shutdowns, documented human rights violations, and supported the mental well-being of activists and journalists.

This work lays critical foundations for **safer, more resilient pro-democracy action** in digital spaces. Collaboration with additional organisations will continue in 2026.

Digital Action Lab (DAL): Innovation in Practice

Cohort 1: Completing the Journey

DAL concluded its first cohort with eight partners across Africa, Latin America, the Middle East, South Asia, and EECA—supporting the design, testing, and refinement of locally grounded digital solutions.

Cohort 2: New Solutions Launched

The second cohort brings together ten partners across Brazil, Bolivia, Malawi, Tanzania, Kenya, Nepal, Nigeria, and Ethiopia, advancing experimentation and adaptive learning.

Co-Design in Mombasa

In June 2025, Cohort 2 partners convened in Mombasa for a three-day co-design workshop with technical partner MAKAIA, strengthening collaboration and shared problem-solving.

DAL on the Global Stage

At International Civil Society Week 2025, DAL partner Fundación Niñas de Luz showcased and live-tested their solution, highlighting the global relevance of locally built innovations.

Voices from the Field – DAL Podcast

DAL launched Voices from the Field, a podcast series capturing partners' lived experiences navigating digital transformation, civic space challenges, and applied learning.
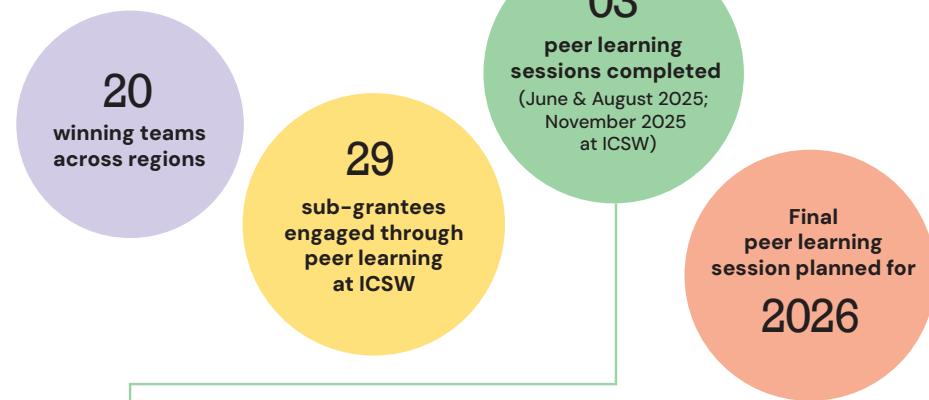
View Episodes here

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Hackathons: Regional Innovation Labs

DDI hackathons operate as **regional convenings across six focal regions**, bringing together civil society, civic tech innovators, and communities to co-create practical digital solutions to urgent civic space challenges.

Beyond tool development, hackathons:

- **Strengthen local capacity**
- **Foster durable partnerships**
- **Build scalable, community-driven civic tech ecosystems**

To Date:

20
winning teams across regions

29
sub-grantees engaged through peer learning at ICSW

03
peer learning sessions completed
(June & August 2025; November 2025 at ICSW)

Final peer learning session planned for **2026**

DDI In person Hackathons and Peer Learning Convenings Video, ICSW 2025, Bangkok

Watch highlights from our sessions in Thailand, where ideas turned into action

Looking Ahead

- **CIVICUS DDI's priority for 2026 is democratic health ensuring civic actors are protected, informed, connected, and resourced.**

- **CIVICUS DDI Project timeline extension has now been approved by the donors and Project Management Team it has been extended until December 2027.**

- **CIVICUS DDI plans to introduce 4 new work areas in the year 2026.**

- **By combining regional specificity, technological creativity, and movement-driven energy, DDI will continue advancing digital democracy where it matters most.**

Read our earlier newsletters here!

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