DIGITAL DEMOCRACY AMPLIFIED

HACKATHONS ADVANCE IN LATIN AMERICA, LAUNCH IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

Eight winning teams are now piloting civic tech innovations in LATAM. The Sub-Saharan Africa hackathon competition is taking place on 9-10 May!

DIGITAL ACTION LAB (DAL) 2025: 20 APPLICANTS SHORTLISTED!

Twenty finalist organisations were selected from more than 900 applicants and have begun their journey to become one of the 10 that will join the 2025 DAL cohort.

BUILDING RESILIENCE

The Digital Resiliency Grants continue to support frontline civil society organisations with funding, capacity strengthening, and peer learning opportunities. Partners are building resilience and even driving innovation.

WELCOME TO DIGITAL DEMOCRACY AMPLIFIED!

We're excited to share the April 2025 edition of the Digital Democracy Initiative (DDI) newsletter! This issue highlights milestones from the first quarter of the year. From the results of our first regional hackathon in Latin America and the Caribbean, the upcoming hackathon in Sub-Saharan Africa, the selection of 20 finalists for the 2025 DAL Cohort, to progress on Digital Resiliency Grants and the release of important research on the global digital democracy ecosystem, this issue captures the energy and momentum driving DDI's mission forward.

CIVICUS

INNOVATION HEATS UP AS HACKATHONS LAUNCH!

The Digital Democracy Initiative officially launched a series of hackathons that will take place in several regions around the world to spark civic innovation and support civil society in co-creating digital solutions that promote inclusive democracy.

Hackathons are already fueling innovation in Latin America & the Caribbean and Sub-Saharan Africa:

- **LATAM Hackathon**

In partnership with **Innovation for Change**, the LATAM Hackathon was held virtually across five days in March. It brought together 96 participants from 21 countries across Latin America and the Caribbean, with 51% of teams led by youth. Focused on underrepresented communities, participants co-developed 13 civic tech prototypes tackling pressing democracy challenges. Eight winning teams were awarded a US$3,700 subgrant each to pilot their solutions, supported through three months of mentoring and testing.

The LATAM Hackathon sparked 17 cross-organisational collaborations and 12 strategic alliances.

- **SSA Hackathon**

In partnership with **Magamba Network**, the Sub-Saharan Africa Digital Democracy Virtual Hackathon accepted applications until 30 April. The virtual hackathon event is set for 9–10 May. Five winning teams will receive a US$7,500 subgrant each, plus tailored incubation and mentorship support. More information here.

- **What's Next?**

Coordination for the virtual hackathon in the MENA region is also underway. Hackathons in East Asia, South Asia, and Eastern Europe & Central Asia will take place in November, during CIVICUS ICSW 2025 event in Bangkok, Thailand.

CIVICUS

DIGITAL ACTION LAB: FROM IDEAS TO IMPACT

Celebrating the 2024 DAL Cohort
Eight organisations selected in 2024 wrapped up their DAL journey, having designed and implemented innovative digital strategies in their local contexts. Stay tuned for our upcoming virtual magazine with details about their projects and impact!

20 Shortlisted for 2025 DAL Cohort
In March, 20 shortlisted organisations, chosen from over 900 applicants, joined the final race to become one of 10 participants in the 2025 DAL cohort. These 10 organisations will receive subgrants to implement impactful digital initiatives to promote inclusive democracy. They will also benefit from group learning opportunities, tailored mentorship and expert-led workshops for the rest of the year.

Later this year, the DAL will celebrate an in-person co-design convening in Kenya, where members from both 2024 and 2025 cohorts will connect, collaborate and co-create.

DAL Voices
"DAL helped us explain democracy to children through storytelling, theater and media."
— Fundacion Niñas de Luz, Colombia

"We're using data to track and resist protest restrictions in Nepal."
— Freedom Studio, Nepal

"Scrum and Agile methods transformed how we manage our digital projects."
— MAAN, Lebanon

DIGITAL RESILIENCY GRANTS: STRENGTHENING DEFENSES

DDI's Digital Resiliency Grants continue to empower civil society actors facing civic space and digital threats, from surveillance to online harassment. Grants have supported initiatives such as:
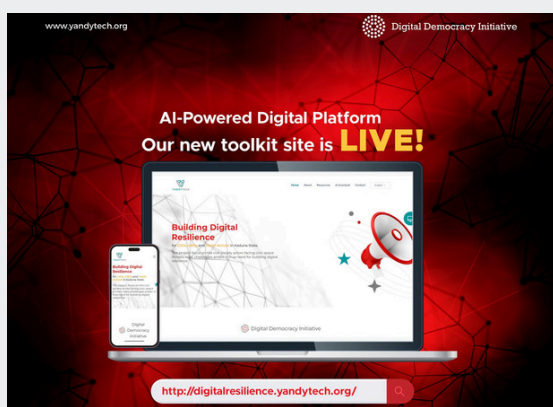
- Enhancing digital security for LGBTQI activists
- Improving organisational resilience for online civic engagement
- Supporting legal and digital literacy for civil society actors
- Offering psychological support for activists
- Establishing digital networks to monitor human rights violations

Peer Learning in Focus
Recognising the need for collective growth, a peer learning group for partners was launched this year. This space enables grant recipients to connect, share lessons and engage in expert-led sessions on topics like digital security, citizen engagement and reporting.

Apply anytime: web.civicus.org/crf-ddi

Innovation Spotlight

YandyTech Community, a youth-led organisation in Nigeria that received a digital resiliency grant, launched a great GPT-4 powered online digital security toolkit and hosted a digital security training for 30 young activists in Kaduna.

PUBLICATION ALERT!

Analysis of the digital democracy ecosystem in East Asia, Eastern Europe and Central Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, Middle East and North Africa, Sub-Saharan Africa, and South Asia.

The report highlights how digital tools are being used to either promote democratic engagement or reinforce authoritarian control in different regions. It also offers evidence-based recommendations to strengthen civil society's digital capacities, enhance democratic engagement, and overcome barriers to inclusive and secure online civic participation.

Upcoming Case Studies
Three new case studies on civil society support ecosystems in Côte d'Ivoire, Egypt, and Uganda will be published soon. They explore how local actors build resilience and navigate restrictive environments.

Blog: Electoral Technology Evolution: A Journey from 2024's Lessons to 2025's Opportunities
In this article, CIVICUS' Seun Akinyemi and Vincy Masaka explore how digital democracy is shaping elections and how civil society actors are adapting by using digital technologies to continue their key roles educating and engaging voters, supporting electoral transparency and tackling mis- and disinformation. Read here.

Opinion: Digital Democracy at a Crossroads. Key Takeaways from RightsCon2025
CIVICUS' Carolina Vega and Chibuzor Nwabueze share insights from RightsCon2025, explore the future of digital democracy and discuss the urgent need to protect civic freedoms in the face of rising surveillance and censorship. Read here.

CIVICUS