The CIVICUS Annual Report 2020-21 represents a year of remote work for our staff and virtual engagement as an alliance. While we miss gathering face-to-face, the past year has proven that we can celebrate, promote, and defend citizen action and civil society through safe and inclusive virtual collaboration.
YEAR IN REVIEW

The past year tested civil society like never before. The COVID-19 pandemic proved the need for civil society, but many used the pandemic as an excuse to crack down on rights. When freedoms were restricted, civil society took a stand. When states failed the pandemic test, millions mobilised to demand action.
THE YEAR IN NUMBERS

“Vuka! has been enormously helpful to the HRD mandate – we’ve had a couple of consultations organised by Vuka!, and they’ve been very rich and useful... We hope to use Vuka! again and again.”

Mary Lawlor, UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders

**8** Number of human rights defenders released with CIVICUS’s support.

**196** Number of times the CIVICUS Monitor data was cited by the media or academia and used for action by key institutions and decision makers.

**37** Number of policy or legislative changes linked to CIVICUS advocacy.

**12** Number of countries where CIVICUS offered urgent advocacy support and coordination: Afghanistan, Bahrain, Benin, Colombia, Egypt, Guatemala, Honduras, India, Maldives, Myanmar, Philippines, Rwanda, Tanzania, Uganda, Venezuela, Zimbabwe.

**12,773** Members around the world that are connected and convened by CIVICUS to take action and enable solidarity to advance civic space – a 18.6 per cent increase from 2019-20.

**697** Number of participants and panellists who took part in the International Civil Society Week/virtual global conversations on people power – the collective power of people acting together to drive social and political change.
CIVICUS exists to defend people power. As a growing global alliance of more than 12,000 members in 175 countries, we work together to monitor restrictions of basic civic freedoms, call out the perpetrators of violations and strengthen the power of people to organise by supporting a more accountable, effective and innovative civil society. We strive to promote excluded voices, especially from the global south.

**MISSION: TO STRENGTHEN CITIZEN ACTION AND CIVIL SOCIETY FOR A MORE JUST, INCLUSIVE AND SUSTAINABLE WORLD**

CIVICUS welcomes all in civil society who demonstrate that they are committed to strengthening civil society and citizen action, adhere to the principles enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and use peaceful means to pursue their objectives. Our membership is diverse, spanning a wide range of issues, sizes and organisation types, transcending thematic, geographic and sectoral divides, and yet unified in solidarity towards our common purpose.
Over the past year, CIVICUS worked to strengthen civil society resilience in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, which included improving the data and digital capabilities of the alliance, advancing civil society resourcing reforms and emphasising the role and relevance of civil society in guiding communities through the pandemic (e.g., Solidarity in the Time of COVID-19) and contributing to a more just, inclusive and sustainable world post-pandemic (e.g., Rebuilding for Good).

We focused on acting on the outcomes of our mid-term strategy review – reviewing our theory of change, strengthening our understanding of people-powered movements and making our operations fit for purpose – while also identifying strategic amendments needed to better reflect and respond to the current context.
DEFENDING CIVIC FREEDOMS AND DEMOCRATIC VALUES

Over the past year, we continued to **defend civic freedoms and democratic values** by sharing compelling narratives of the power of civic action, as exemplified by the 10th edition of our State of Civil Society Report, which draws on numerous in-depth interviews and consultations with civil society activists, leaders and experts.

We monitored COVID-19 and civic space impacts. Our 2020 People Power Under Attack Report highlighted how the number of people living under severe civic space conditions increased, but civil society also won improvements in civic space in some places.

We continued to share ownership of research and data of, from and for civil society, including the CIVICUS Monitor, whose research partners keep information on the platform up to date, accurate and grounded in local realities, and Explorador, a resource-sharing platform co-created with activists and civil society organisations working in highly restricted civic space in Central America.

We explored how to complement our proven track record in advocacy with the United Nations with new tactics such as the WethePeoples campaign to enhance people’s participation at the UN, while also coordinating with others through the Vuka! Coalition for Civic Action to enhance our collective impact.

We used digital campaigns to ramp up pressure for the release of imprisoned civil society activists through #StandAsMyWitness, while also shining a light on online harassment and the unique challenges faced by women human rights defenders, activists, feminists and journalists.

“We are grateful for the space and opportunity to share our experiences [in the State of Civil Society Report].” Mohammed Ndifuna, Justice Access Point, Uganda
STRENGTHENING THE POWER OF PEOPLE TO ORGANISE, MOBILISE AND TAKE ACTION

As part of our work to strengthen the power of people to organise, mobilise and take action, we facilitated connections between different forms of civil society through the launch of the CIVICUS Online Community space for solidarity and collective action, and convenings such as International Civil Society Week, which brought together more than 700 organisers, presenters and participants to learn – and relearn – how to support and sustain people-powered change.

We tested and shared models and approaches to support youth-led and grassroots networks to be effective, resilient and sustainable through initiatives such as the Youth Action Lab and Grassroots Changemakers.

We utilised new communications tools to amplify local voices, including the podcast series CIVICUS Voices, provided members with information critical to the protection and resilience of civil society in more than 150 countries and tracked over 900 media mentions in 50-plus countries.

“Without CIVICUS’s support through the Youth Action Lab this [Youth award from the Organisation of American States, Social Inclusion, Access to Rights and Equity Secretariat] wouldn’t have been possible. We would have closed out our collective and now it is a registered organisation winning national and regional awards. Thank you very much.” Banesa Farfán, Ñañaykuna
EMPOWERING A MORE ACCOUNTABLE, INNOVATIVE AND EFFECTIVE CIVIL SOCIETY

To empower a more accountable, innovative and effective civil society, we worked with members and partners to foster dynamic accountability in civil society through initiatives including Resilient Roots, Global Accountability Week and the Dynamic Accountability Community of Practice.

We concluded our Diversity and Inclusion pilot project and worked to embed key learnings such as these captured in the D&I Diaries in our interventions and resources for members.

We continued to facilitate spaces for diverse groups and people to co-create responses to civic space challenges, including the Innovation for Change (I4C) network, and worked to scale impactful solutions across the alliance.

We piloted different approaches to address civil society resourcing challenges, such as the curation of the first iteration of the CIVICUS Donor Finder, a multilingual directory of progressive funders that support activists, civil society organisations and small, informal civil society groups.

“We realised that good constituent accountability practice is a bit like the safety instructions you get on an aeroplane – you must put on your own oxygen mask on before helping others. So, we needed to first address our internal accountability challenges with our staff and volunteers to then be able to enhance our accountability externally to our supporters.”

OVD-Info, Russia
Launch of the new CIVICUS online community

By signing in for the pilot phase of this project you will be part of the global movement expanding solidarity and ensuring we grow stronger together!
PROGRAMME HIGHLIGHTS

ICSW

ICSW VIRTUAL RECAP

OVER 7 MONTHS

11 HOURS of streaming

152 ORGANIZERS
SIMULTANEOUS INTERPRETERS
COORDINATION TEAM
PARTNER HOST TEAMS
GRAPHIC RECORDERS
VIDEO EDITORS
TECH SUPPORT

WEBINAR TOPICS
RESOURCING, YOUTH ACTIVISM,
SOCIAL MOVEMENTS AND
COVID-19, POSITIVE NARRATIVES,
ARTIVISM, DIGITAL SPACE,
GLOBAL GOVERNANCE, SELF
AND COLLECTIVE CARE

7 WEBINARS

656 EVENT ATTENDEES

1,642 VIEWS

BY 41 PANELISTS

FROM 25 COUNTRIES

Click here to view
Annual Report 2020:21
Outcomes and learnings of the Youth Action Lab 2020

HOW IT WORKS

1. ACCESSING RESOURCES
The Lab provides participants with an unrestricted award of up to U$5,000, access to in-kind support, training and other non-financial resources, as well as capacity strengthening to support more sustainable and resilient movements.

2. DEVELOPING STRATEGY
The Lab provides opportunities for capacity strengthening through peer-to-peer learning, coaching and skills-building workshops with the aim of supporting youth activists to be more strategic and targeted in their campaigning.

3. BUILDING ALLIANCES
The Lab, through online and regular peer-learning sessions, creates spaces for movements and collectives of young people to connect, share experiences and heal together to build stronger alliances and more connected movements.
CIVICUS MONITOR

CIVICUS Monitor tool for tracking civic space
#StandAsMyWitness campaign to end harassment and imprisonment of human rights defenders
PROGRAMME HIGHLIGHTS

MEMBER CASE STUDIES

Member case studies on innovation for resilience
PRACTISING DYNAMIC ACCOUNTABILITY

As part of our accountability commitment, we submit annual accountability reports to Accountable Now. In the last review, the Independent Review Panel commended us for our approach to stakeholder engagement in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. We remain committed to giving, receiving and responding to feedback from members, and in 2020-21, we received 23 submissions through our online feedback form, mostly relating to partnerships. The feedback received was addressed and used to enhance our communication and engagement with our various stakeholders.

SUPPORTING EVIDENCE-BASED DECISION MAKING

We continued to roll out our developmental evaluation framework at organisational and project level and use development evaluation methods that deepen understanding, learning and accountability. Partners and other stakeholders benefitted from our Monitoring and Evaluation online toolkit while CIVICUS programmatic and operational teams have started to use the Grow Log more systematically as a powerful qualitative tool that helps us capture constituent feedback to identify key successes, tensions and challenges in our interventions.
ENHANCING OUR FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

We made progress on key recommendations to enhance CIVICUS’s sub-granting processes that were adopted following an internal review. These included: developing strategies to reach smaller, less formal groups in the global south; introducing mechanisms to ensure contract adherence and donor compliance; enhancing accessibility of partner agreements; and improving document management related to sub-granting. We also introduced strategic budgeting that facilitates monitoring and analysis of our resource allocations against our strategic objectives and across the alliance.

BEING AN ENABLING ORGANISATION

Significant effort was invested in operational and systems improvements to help us become a more enabling organisation, including the finalisation of our delegated and financial authorities framework that outlines responsibilities and due processes related to the decision-making authority framework, outlining clear lines of responsibilities in decision-making processes; guidelines to improve staff engagement with internal policies and procedures at all levels; a new operations dashboard that brings together all operations policies, procedures and templates for enhanced access; and the roll out of a change management system to monitor the implementation of new policies and processes.

PROMOTING DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

CIVICUS values and promotes an inclusive and diverse working and operating environment. During the reporting period, we initiated an internal conversation to create safe spaces to speak about experiences of race within the organisation, which was followed by an externally facilitated process that identified key issues related to race and racial privilege and provided recommendations on organisational responses to address discriminatory practices in the workplace. Actions agreed upon aim to strengthen our internal culture, policies and systems and allow us to operate more effectively in carrying out our mandate.

STRENGTHENING OUR DATA AND DIGITAL SECURITY

In 2020-21, CIVICUS mandated a new cross-cluster forum to strengthen our duty of care to staff, members and civil society by identifying gaps and proposing constructive solutions to mitigate data and digital security challenges with the assistance of experts. Since its inception, the Data and Digital Security Group reviewed and provided guidance on internal and external communications platforms and supported organisational compliance with data privacy regulatory frameworks such as the European Union’s General Data Protection Regulation and South Africa’s Protection of Personal Information Act.
CIVICUS is committed to being a learning organisation. Key learning areas where we worked to make progress during 2020-21 include:

**NETWORKING AND CONNECTING ACTORS AND PARTNERS FOR GREATER IMPACT:** defining our ‘offer’ to members to facilitate meaningful engagement, systematising how we connect members with each other, and building community organisers in the alliance.

**UTILISING NEW MEDIA FORMATS THAT CONTRIBUTE TO THE NARRATIVE FOR CIVIL SOCIETY AND CIVIC SPACE:** expanding data analytics to facilitate informed decisions on how we use new formats and to better understand our audiences and their communication preferences, while also adopting more human-centred storytelling approaches.

**CONVERTING OUR WORK TO DIGITAL IN WAYS THAT ARE SAFE, RELEVANT, INCLUSIVE AND EFFECTIVE:** developing a more robust understanding of our digital security and introducing new practices that safeguard our constituents, while also testing new tools for better engagement.

**RESOURCING AND SUB-GRANTING IN TIMES OF COVID–19:** aligning internal practices with best practice, while testing and understanding new ways of mobilising resources in restrictive environments, as a means to enhancing legitimacy and resilience.

**INFLUENCING APPROACHES THAT BUILD COUNTERPOWER:** redefining our approach and collaborations with peaceful protests and grassroots groups and movements using an intersectional and intergenerational approach and accompaniment throughout a movement’s life cycle.
CIVICUS is a membership alliance dedicated to strengthening civil society and citizen action throughout the world. CIVICUS’s total membership grew 18.6 per cent during 2020-21, and currently stands at 12,773 members in 175 countries.
The CIVICUS Board of Directors leads the alliance and is elected from the membership by members. The 12-member board has a majority of women, with members coming from six regions and representing a broad range of civil society and thematic interests.

“[2020] was the hardest of years. The trends on intensifying restrictions on civic space, increasing poverty and inequality, deteriorating democratic institutions and attacks on human rights defenders, to name a few, have not let up while the world’s health systems and economies have been brought to their knees by the COVID-19 pandemic. In fact, many of the trends that CIVICUS monitors have been aggravated as a direct consequence of the chaos that has ensued.

So, the work that we do at CIVICUS has never been as needed and impactful... the publications, online events, convenings and representations have been so well appreciated and so timely. CIVICUS has played a leadership role in the dialogue, denunciations and actions in response to COVID-19 and in anticipation of a post-COVID-19 world. I am very proud to be associated to this work and hope each one of you is too!”

Julia Sanchez

New Year’s Message from CIVICUS Board Chair Julia Sanchez
CIVICUS SOLIDARITY FUND

A central tenet of membership in the CIVICUS alliance is belonging to a global movement that stands in solidarity. In this spirit, the CIVICUS Solidarity Fund facilitates member-led and member-resourced support to CIVICUS members that normally struggle to access the resources they need for their work. The Member Advisory Group is a dynamic team of CIVICUS members who form the decision-making body for the CIVICUS Solidarity Fund.

“We are very happy to be part of the CIVICUS Solidarity Fund... You feel like you belong to the alliance!... I felt that we were accompanied and valued.”

Diego Dalmasso
Our talented and committed staff include activists, researchers, country specialists, communicators and project implementers of diverse backgrounds. During the reporting period, we employed 76 staff and seven interns, distributed across 23 countries spanning Africa (seven), the Americas (six), Asia (four) and Europe (six). The greatest number of team members (38) are in Johannesburg, South Africa, where CIVICUS is headquartered, with small satellite teams working from the UN New York Hub (three) and UN Geneva Hub (four).

During 2020-21 we continued to support CIVICUS staff to thrive in the pandemic operating environment through new initiatives aimed at supporting staff wellbeing and collective care, such as flexible working arrangements and employee wellbeing days.

We completed a job grading process as a critical element of a Board-approved remuneration policy aimed at promoting fairness, transparency and internal equity in the recruitment and progression of CIVICUS staff.

We introduced new human resources systems and processes as part of our Race and Racial Justice review and management response. As part of our commitment to gender equality, we continue to report progress in promoting parity, equality and representation of women at different organisational levels to the FAIR SHARE Monitor, an initiative founded to put into action the principles and values of feminist leadership and measure the proportion of women in leadership positions.

"I think feminist leadership...involves reinforcing and reclaiming collective leadership and making that the norm rather than the exception."

Lysa John, CIVICUS Secretary-General
CIVICUS SUPPORTERS

We believe that a stable relationship with our donors remains critical to CIVICUS’s financial security. In 2020-21, we engaged donors through regular donor coordination group meetings, bilateral meetings and exchanges, representation in donor events and strategic collaboration on thematic and country-specific initiatives.

2020–21 DONORS

Charles Stewart Mott Foundation
Danish International Development Agency
European Commission
Ford Foundation
Lifeline Embattled CSO Assistance Fund

Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Netherlands
Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation
Open Society Foundations
Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency

TOP 5 FUNDERS

Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency,
US$3,586,330
Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs,
US$2,743,378
Open Society Foundations,
US$956,142
European Commission,
US$916,897
Ford Foundation,
US$756,969

Lifeline Embattled CSO Assistance Fund
Swedish International Development
Approximately **38 per cent (US$4,047,402)** of CIVICUS’s total grant income in 2020-21 was passed on to CIVICUS members and partners, mostly in the global south.

These funds largely contributed to our work to protect and promote civic freedoms and democratic values **(GOAL 1)**, with US$2,745,544 disbursed through the Consortium for Human Rights and Media Freedoms in Sub-Saharan Africa. Smaller amounts were allocated towards work related to strengthening the power of people to mobilise, organise and take action **(GOAL 2)** and enhancing civil society accountability, innovation and effectiveness **(GOAL 3)**.
FINANCIALS

TOTAL INCOME: US$11,279,552

Donor income: US$10,381,717
Membership income: US$108,038
Increase from 2019-20: 5.91%

TOTAL EXPENDITURE: US$10,967,404

Goal 1 (Defend) programmes: US$5,369,747
Goal 2 (Strengthen) programmes: US$2,169,690
Goal 3 (Innovate) programmes: US$1,020,790

BOARD RESERVE: US$1,000,000

The board reserve is intended to cover operating costs of three months or more in case of funding shortage or business interruption due to unforeseen circumstances. This reserve was established during the 2017 financial year after an agreement with the Ford Foundation for an initial grant allocation of US$1 million. The funds are maintained in an interest-bearing account in accordance with the CIVICUS Investment Policy and distributions from the reserve are only allowed after approval from the Board of Directors.

The aggregate audited financial statements for 1 July 2020 to 30 June 2021 can be found here:
CIVICUS Audited Statements June 2021
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