

# ANNUAL PLAN 2022 – 2023



## BACKGROUND

In the run up to our annual planning process this year, we completed our strategy amendment process with the Board approving our revised **Strategic Plan 2022- 2027** to guide us for the next five years. Key shifts outlined in the amended plan include:

### ONE OVERARCHING GOAL

We now have a single goal statement, i.e. to strengthen civil society and civic action for expanded civic and democratic space. The goal reflects our emphasis on actions that are not just defending but also improving civic and democratic freedoms- through a combination of influencing, organising and solidarity interventions.

### ADDRESSING THE COMBINED IMPACT OF CIVIC SPACE RESTRICTIONS AND STRUCTURAL FORMS OF DISCRIMINATION

An explicit focus on working with and for groups affected by the combined impact of civic space restrictions and structural forms of discrimination is also integrated across the revised strategy. This implies a greater emphasis on solidarity and alliance building across all levels of our work, including within the membership, and the stronger representation of issues of civic and democratic freedoms from a social justice lens.

### ARTICULATING OUR CONTRIBUTIONS TO LONG-TERM, SYSTEMIC CHANGE

A clearer articulation of our contributions to long-term, systemic change is captured in four outcome statements that connect and consolidate the impact of our work across all levels. Our core objectives will be the basis for a comprehensive framework to measure results and communicate lessons from our progress more effectively.

**THE REFRESHED PLAN IS EXPECTED TO STRENGTHEN THE CONTRIBUTION WE MAKE BY ALLOWING US TO FOCUS MORE ACTIVELY ON CONTEMPORARY CHALLENGES FOR CIVIC AND DEMOCRATIC SPACE AND ENGAGE MORE EFFECTIVELY WITH OPPORTUNITIES TO STRENGTHEN AND AMPLIFY CIVIL SOCIETY INTERVENTIONS AND OUTCOMES.**



# STRATEGIC PRIORITIES FOR 2022/23:

Generating **timely knowledge and analyses** on civil society actions in relation to civic and democratic space:

**1** Our knowledge offerings will continue draw on inputs from diverse civil society voices with a view to advancing rights, particularly those of the excluded from a global south perspective. In addition, we will closely monitor the trajectory of civil society mobilisations and actions around the world, anticipate impending restrictions and use this information and knowledge to power our campaigning efforts.

Coordinating **targeted advocacy** to defend and expand civic and democratic space:

**2** We will continue to act in solidarity with those facing the brunt of repression, exclusion and discrimination by engaging with and supporting strategic advocacy from the local to global levels. We will find new ways to amplify the voices of actors working on the frontlines of economic, political and social transformation while leveraging our access at various forums to enable their direct engagement with decision-making agencies and processes.

Contributing to stronger **emergency and sustained support ecosystems** for activists and organisations at risk:

**3** We will find and validate meaningful ways to support activists and organisations through improved mechanisms and better relationships with various stakeholders in the civic space ecosystem. We will improve our understanding of how civil society activism can be sustained and supported in both offline and online contexts and support initiatives that contribute to effective civil society resourcing and infrastructure across locations.

Strengthening **public discourse** on civic space and reinforcing **civil society narratives**:

**4** By enabling and promoting locally led public deliberations and context-relevant analyses in diverse locations and languages around the world, we will contribute to an improved public discourse that reflects greater value for civic and democratic space, and greater recognition of the relevance and sustained impact of civil society. These actions will result in greater public trust, that is reflected through increased solidarity with the work and priorities of civil society.

Building **counter power with most affected groups** and their movements:

**5** We will forge alliances with groups that are most affected by civic and democratic space restrictions and structural forms of discrimination. We will co-design opportunities to diversify and upscale opportunities for solidarity action with local movements and strengthen mechanisms for civil society to challenge unjust social norms and build greater public trust.



# KEY INITIATIVES & EXPECTED OUTCOMES:

# 1.

Generating **timely knowledge and analyses** on civil society actions in relation to civic and democratic space



## INITIATIVES

**CIVICUS Lens:** Our newest research offering will provide analytical commentary and perspectives on key global events from a civil society perspective.

**CIVICUS Monitor:** In addition to our People Power Under Attack report and Civic Space Watchlist, we will publish topical briefings on civic and democratic space, which include deepening our thematic series on COVID-19 and the Freedom of Peaceful Assembly.

**State of Civil Society:** We will continue to analyse the health and conditions for civil society at the global level, and drawn on this data to generate analyses on civic and democratic developments to support civil society's engagement in policy and public discourse.

Our knowledge and analysis are increasingly used to inform initiatives, approaches, advocacy initiatives, direct influencing, and joint mobilisations across the CIVICUS alliance.

## EXPECTED OUTCOMES

Our knowledge and analysis are more strategically and consistently used by external stakeholders, decision makers and media to strengthen civil society and citizen action for expanded civic and democratic space.

**Learning Question:** How does our knowledge and analysis contributes to our partners' achieving their outcomes? What critical components (trust, capacity, relationships, accessibility, related calls to action, etc.) are required to accompany our knowledge and analysis to improve its value to our target groups.

# 2.

Coordinating  
**targeted advocacy**  
to defend and  
expand civic and  
democratic space



## INITIATIVES

**Strengthening civic space norms and standards:** We will continue to work towards defending and advancing civic space norms and standards by pursuing avenues to integrate international norms and standards into regional and national action and creating systems for civil society at large to meaningfully access these bodies, advocate and represent their concerns. This includes engaging with UN, regional and multilateral mechanisms to advance civic space norm settings and contributing to comprehensive country reports on civic space restrictions through Universal Period Review submissions.

**Targeted advocacy:** Acting on requests from CIVICUS members and partners to respond to civic and democratic space developments they directly experience continues to be an important part of our work, and one we will seek to improve through a greater number of networked actions, including solidarity statements, petitions, open letters and media interviews

**75 years of UDHR:** The 75th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (2023) will be a galvanising moment for the CIVICUS alliance. We will co-design and activate a number of networked advocacy and campaigning engagements stressing the relevance of citizen action and civic freedoms.

## EXPECTED OUTCOMES

Our regional and local advocacy strategies are becoming as influential as our international advocacy.

Partners and members are supported to achieve their own advocacy goals, and examples of well-coordinated national, regional and international advocacy efforts are readily available and widely shared.

**Learning Question:** What aspects of our advocacy support are most effective in contributing to the achievement of the goals of our national and local members?

# 3.

Contributing  
to stronger  
emergency and  
sustained support  
ecosystems for  
activists and  
organisations at  
risk:



## INITIATIVES

**Increased support to civil society in restricted contexts:** We will deepen our analyses and understanding of on alternative models of activism, solidarity and resourcing in contexts where civic space is restricted. This effort will include a focus on better supporting the digital expression of civic activism as well as increasing our efforts to defend activists who have been targeted for exercising their right to freedom of peaceful assembly.

**Making civic space resourcing more equitable and effective:**

Through our **Grassroots Solidarity Revolution** initiative, we will call for more and better resourcing for grassroots groups and activists, by humanising narratives, promoting safe spaces for dialogue and co-creation and underscoring trust-based relationships are a key enabler for activism. In line with our **Rebuilding for Good** briefing paper, we will also facilitate actions promoting narratives, investments, policies and mechanisms enabling civil society resourcing and resilience through networked, trans-national advocacy efforts.

**Improving mechanisms for support & solidarity:** We will improve the reach and impact of solidarity mechanisms such as the **CIVICUS Solidarity Fund** and **Crisis Respond Fund**, while working to develop further tools and resources, such as the next iteration of the **Donor Finder**. Our work with the **Innovation for Change** network will also allow us to draw on lessons related to new models of organising, collaboration and sustainability and make these available across the CIVICUS alliance.

Activists experience increased access to emergency and sustained support that is relevant, empowering and not burdensome or oppressive.

CIVICUS' members, partners, and stakeholders, including donors and other enablers, are using the knowledge, relationships, and tools curated by the alliance to transform their support and solidarity practices.

CIVICUS offerings are developed with and informed by expertise of smaller, less formal groups and movements in the Global South who face the dual challenges of civic space restriction and structural forms of discrimination. We reflect their innovations and better respond to their needs and priorities within and across the alliance.

## EXPECTED OUTCOMES

**Learning question:** Where have we evidenced how support offerings have resulted in impact, and how can we use this knowledge to determine the most effective approaches and scale our work and to improve the support ecosystem for activists and organisations at risk?

# 4.

Strengthening public discourse on civic space and reinforcing civil society narratives:



## INITIATIVES

**Contributing to increased public trust in civil society:** Through initiatives like the **Accountability Accelerator** training course and **Global Accountability Week** we will work to enhance civil society accountability and in turn build public trust in civil society. We will continue to champion the importance of civil society across all our engagements and enable more actors to understand and present compelling arguments in this regard.

**Improving our understanding of shifts in public discourse and engagement:** We will review available lessons from peer networks on the systems and capabilities needed to engage publics at scale. This will include a targeted examination of tools, tactics and spaces to amplify grassroots narratives and support local actors to engage publics with their causes and struggles. In doing so we will focus on lessons related to public engagement in restricted contexts and in relation to efforts to address systemic discrimination.

## EXPECTED OUTCOMES

We will have an improved understanding of CIVICUS' role in strengthening public discourse around and support for issues of civic and democratic space in restricted contexts, and in relation to issues relevant to groups facing systemic discrimination.

This results in an agreement on the nature and extent of CIVICUS' role and investment in this relatively new and undefined area of impact for the alliance across the remainder of the strategic plan period. As part of this agreement, we will ideally define the tools, tactics and metrics that we help us achieve meaningful outcomes and grow alliance-wide learning in this area of work.

**Learning question:** What types (providers, coordinators, innovators, gap-fillers, amplifiers) of narrative support for activists and organisations at risk are resulting in changes in local narrative in which contexts and why?

# 5.

Building counter power with most affected groups and their movements:



## INITIATIVES

**Strengthening solidarity:** We will grow our contribution to multi-faceted solidarity initiatives. This includes expanding our effort to raise support for the release of prisoners of conscience through the [#StandAsMyWitness](#) campaign.

**Supporting mobilisations for change:** We will deepen our work on supporting protest movements and mass mobilisations for change by engaging with movement-building communities and networks, including the [Vuka! Coalition for Civic Action](#) and the Global Resource Hub for Freedom of Peaceful Assembly.

**Co-designing tools for transformation:** We will collaborate with relevant networks to improve the design and application of tools and resources for diversity and inclusion across civil society; and support the co-creation of strategies for youth-focused activism and civic space monitoring through the [CIVICUS Youth](#) community and the [Youth Action Lab](#).

## EXPECTED OUTCOMES

CIVICUS has tested and validated models that are deemed relevant and valuable by our constituent groups as they intersect with building counter-power.

Alliances and joint actions are progressively owned and led by target groups and continue to evolve without CIVICUS' direct engagement.

**Learning question:** How effective are we in catalysing joint action for mutual solidarity and collective impact? How can we make these connections and actions more sustainable?





# ORGANISATIONAL PRIORITIES

## STRATEGY: A

Strategic Implementation Roadmap, which outlines specific processes to enable greater coherence, alignment and engagement with the priorities and outcomes outlined in the revised strategic plan, has been agreed in March 2022. The implementation of this roadmap will be CIVICUS' core institutional priority for the 2022-2023. In keeping with agreed principles around the strategy development process, a focus on ensuring we are cautious and efficient in directing institutional attention and resources towards internal processes has been maintained.

### PEOPLE:

We will continue to progress in key areas of our Human Resources workplan. Key outcomes this year include the design and adoption of a Learning and Development framework that will define our approach to performance management and staff development. We will continue to implement the Racial Justice Action Plan and conclude efforts towards the development of a holistic Diversity and Inclusion framework. Overall, we will ensure that our internal and external engagements reflect our commitment to constituent accountability, equity, diversity, and inclusion.

### SYSTEMS:

We will continue to strengthen our ability to utilise systems to strengthen our efficiency and effectiveness, specifically adopting a new contract management system, dashboards, and improved combined programmatic and financial reporting. More broadly, we will aim to ensure that CIVICUS staff and members are utilising key frameworks such as our Programme Quality and Innovation and Integrated Results frameworks that incorporates best practice from across the organisation and broader alliance. We will increase CIVICUS' innovative monitoring and evaluation capacities to collect and analyse outcomes and use these lessons to foster a stronger understanding of impact and accountability across the alliance.

### SUSTAINABILITY:

A dedicated focus on progressing the CIVICUS' Resourcing and Sustainability strategy is planned in this period. Activities to grow and diversify our supporter base will be accordingly prioritised, with an emphasis on creating a more diverse pool of institutional donors and encouraging more actors to invest in the long-term changes needed to protect and expand civic and democratic space. We will also align our resourcing base with our strategic objectives so that we are better equipped to implement and support partners in delivering the work plan outlined above.





# KEY EVENTS FOR 2022-23

## JULY - SEPTEMBER 2022 (QUARTER 1)

- High Level Political Forum
- UN General Assembly
- Campaign events linked to #StandAsMyWitness and #GrassrootsSolidarityRevolution
- Networking events for International Youth Day
- Financial Audit 2021-2022 & IATI reporting
- Innovation for Change Inter-Regional Retreat

## OCTOBER - DECEMBER 2022 (QUARTER 2)

- Human Rights Council
- Global Accountability Week
- CIVICUS' Member Month
- Thematic report on Freedom of Peaceful Assembly
- Launch of 2023 campaign on citizen action & civic freedoms
- Strategic Plan 2017 – 2022 Review

## JANUARY - MARCH 2023 (QUARTER 3)

- State of Civil Society Report
- Human Rights Council
- UN Commission on the Status of Women
- International Women's Day activities
- Contribution to Fair Share Monitor report

## APRIL - JUNE 2023 (QUARTER 4)

- People Power Under Attack report
- Human Rights Council
- Annual and Budget Planning for 2023-2024
- Elections & Voting for Board Members

*This calendar will be updated through the year*



## MONITORING OUR PLAN

We will monitor progress against this plan through our quarterly reporting, which will include a trend analysis per Strategic objective. We will be developing and testing our integrated results framework, aligned to our new Strategic Plan, providing an update on initiatives status as well as indicators, informed by our impact reflection process, where we will reflect on how our activities and initiatives are responding to our external environment. As per our Board Reporting Guidelines, update on progress against our plan will be shared through the Secretary General Update and there will be dedicated time allocated on the Board meeting agendas to discuss each Goal in more detail. Our formal [Annual Report](#) which will be produced at the end of this annual plan (October 2023) will highlight achievements, outcomes and learnings.