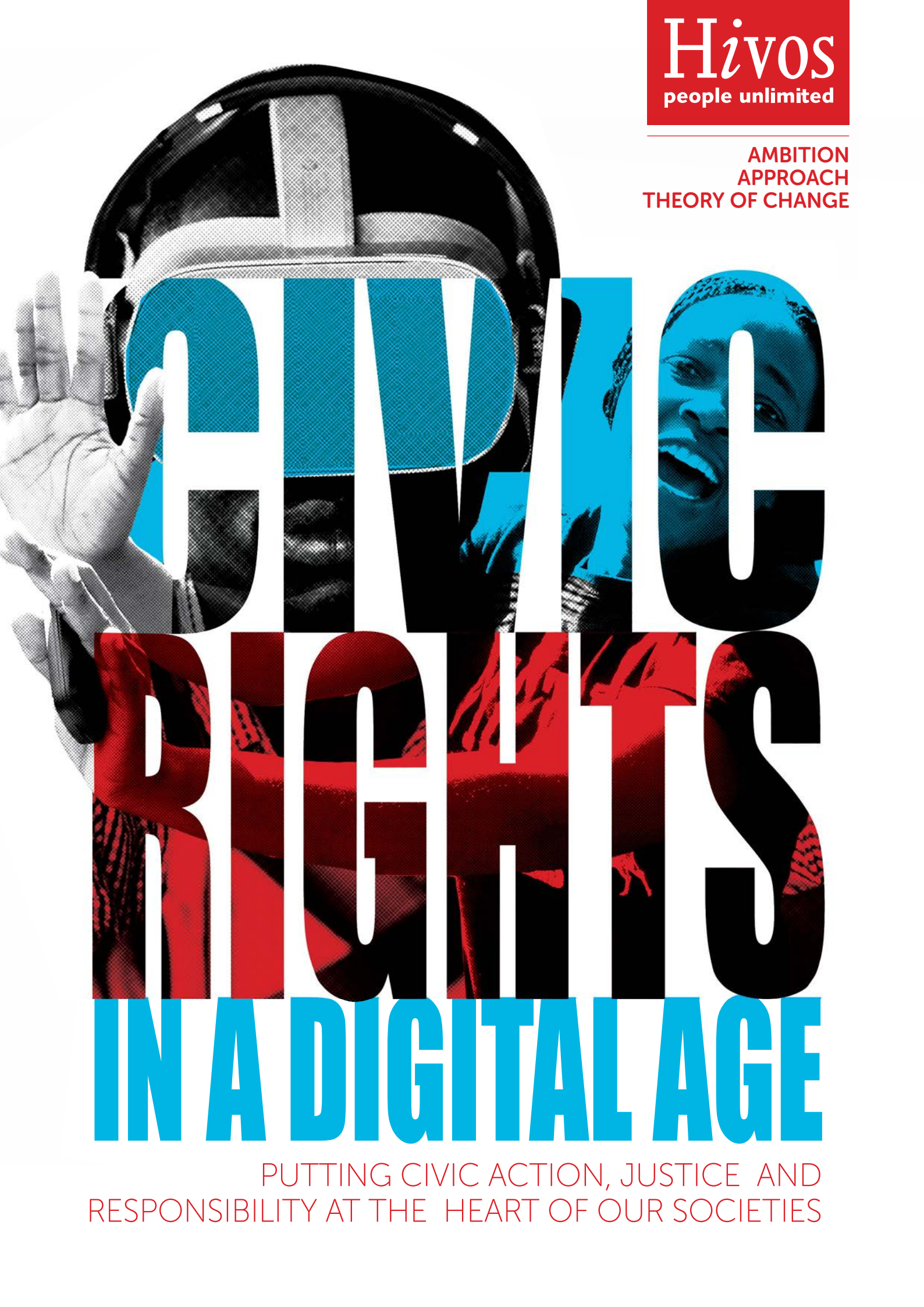


Hivos
people unlimited

AMBITION
APPROACH
THEORY OF CHANGE



GIVING RIGHTS IN A DIGITAL AGE

PUTTING CIVIC ACTION, JUSTICE AND
RESPONSIBILITY AT THE HEART OF OUR SOCIETIES

This white paper outlines the ambition, approach and Theory of Change of one of Hivos’ three impact areas:

Civic Rights in a Digital Age

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01 HIVOS' AMBITION ON CIVIC RIGHTS IN A DIGITAL AGE

SUMMARY

Across the regions we work in, we observe shrinking civic space and freedom, the spread of narratives that divide people and undermine truth, deepening exclusion of the most marginalized people, and collapsing trust in democratic institutions. Corruption and tax avoidance remain major scourges. These challenges relate intimately to a global economic system that incentivizes exploitation of people and natural resources. They are magnified by rapid, unequal digitalization of our societies.

Yet, we also see vital opportunities to strengthen the people, initiatives and organizations who confront these challenges, and who imagine and push for alternatives. They work across civil society, academia, in the media and culture sectors – and with progressive allies in government and business. They are guided by social justice values, and they work to build a public sphere where people exercise agency, where their rights are protected, and which supports healthy, democratic debate.

Hivos works with them to put their agency and priorities at the center of global and local efforts to promote Civic Rights in a Digital Age. Deeper and broader collaboration between these diverse actors from the Global South is at the core of our approach.

Our work is guided by three impact goals: 1) Vibrant civic spaces, 2) Responsible use of technology, and 3) Just use of public resources. To achieve them we are following four interconnected pathways of change:

- **Building Civic Influence:** Civic actors from the Global South have stronger influence policies and practices that safeguard civic rights and space, including in the digital sphere.
- **Defending Activists:** Human rights defenders, journalists and other civic actors and activists make safe, responsible and effective use of data and technology.
- **Reshaping Narratives:** Content creators, independent media, and other civic actors reach wide audiences with narratives that promote social justice and humane digital futures.
- **Influencing Public Spending:** Social justice actors and rightsholders have stronger influence on (local) public spending priorities, and governments are held to account for these.

02 THE CONTEXT

Our societies are undergoing a digital transformation. Technologies such as artificial intelligence could contribute to increased human welfare and freedom. Yet, the ways in which technologies are designed and used reflect power imbalances in society. This can drastically amplify inequalities. To date, the profit interest of multinational corporations and their investors have been a key driver of digitalization. At the same time, technological advances have quickly been exploited by authoritarian governments and malicious private actors.

Our digital age is marked by paradoxes. We are seeing a burst of online civic organizing and open-data driven campaigning against corruption. At the same time, we live in an age of supercharged electronic surveillance and vicious disinformation campaigns. Digital commerce has created enormous wealth for some, convenience for many – and drastic economic exploitation for the least privileged workers. Automated decision-making in government can increase efficiency, but it can also cut the most vulnerable people off from social assistance with no recourse. Always-on digital connections are a given for many people around the world. Yet, billions are still not online or not represented in digital data and thus barred from full political participation and basic services. And while popular awareness of invasive data collection has grown, many people do not see viable alternatives to using tools designed to amass and exploit data about them.

Promoting civic rights today and in the future requires us to understand the profound effects of this digital transformation on the nature of civic space, on our information ecosystems, and ultimately on human freedom and agency. This means viewing the digital transformation – the way technologies are designed, regulated and used – as a political process. This does not imply an exclusive focus on “the digital.” Rather, we must redouble our defense of civic rights and space offline and as fundamental norms in an increasingly digital world.

CHALLENGES

Democracy and human rights are under pressure worldwide. Political, civic and media freedoms have been in decline for more than a decade¹. Two thirds of people worldwide live in countries that are highly restricted or in crisis when it comes to freedom of expression². Civil society activists, artists and journalists face mounting legal and administrative restrictions, defamation, and lethal threats. Persistent corruption, misuse of public resources and tax avoidance undermine trust in democratic institutions, worsen inequality, and deepen exclusion.

Fundamental norms for access to information, freedom of expression, and participation are essential for accountability. Yet, few of the freedom of information laws in place³ are of high quality⁴, and civil society reports regularly decry poor implementation. In practice, meaningful transparency, civic participation and oversight, especially by the most marginalized groups, is often lacking⁵.

Independent media, critical content creators, and civil society increasingly depend on digital connections and platforms, but these civic spaces are fragile⁶. State actors block critical content, use internet shutdowns, and run disinformation campaigns at will⁷. Systematic digital surveillance is also a growing risk for activists and journalists, as the Pegasus Project has shown⁸.

Global social media companies censor content, while allowing fake news, hate speech and sexual violence to proliferate on their platforms. But to date, they have remained largely unaccountable. The people on the receiving end are often already vulnerable to attack and marginalization, such as LGBTIQ+ communities and women. In fact, online sexual abuse and disinformation overwhelmingly targets women civil society activists, journalists and politicians – with the effect of driving them out of public debates and even office⁹.

A key aggravating factor is that public policy and practice has not kept up with rapidly evolving uses of technology by public and private actors. Thus, powerful commercial and geopolitical interests are staying many paces ahead

of policy on technology. Broad political pressure is needed to ensure robust and inclusive legislation, oversight and enforcement in order to prevent human rights violations.

Finally, longstanding misuse of public resources by corrupt networks and interests¹⁰ is a thread running through all these challenges. Yet a just and human-rights based response to climate change, social and economic exclusion, and digitalization all crucially depend on public investments and the accountability of officials and businesses involved with them.

COVID-19 AND CIVIC RIGHTS IN A DIGITAL AGE

In the wake of the pandemic and often, but not always justified by public health concerns, governments around the world have taken measures that, if not rolled back, will have continuing effects on democracy and governance¹¹. Globally, freedom of assembly, expression and privacy have been restricted¹². Press freedoms¹³ and access to information rights have been suspended¹⁴. Governments have extended digital surveillance¹⁵. Tech corporations have used the pandemic to grow their business with governments¹⁶. Obscure, non-competitive public contracts are a major vector through which this has happened¹⁷.

And at the same time, civil society has played an essential role in exposing failures, such as severe misuse of public funds, as well as supporting the response to the pandemic itself. New digital civic spaces have been created, from government-led consultation platforms to human rights fora that attracted significantly larger and more diverse participation. This acceleration is a core feature of the pandemic, and is a crucial opportunity for further expansion and reinforcement of digital civic spaces post-pandemic¹⁸.

OPPORTUNITIES

Despite these challenges, we see positive developments. Around the world, people are voicing growing demand for action on inequality, racism and the climate crisis. Powerful narratives that have long shaped public policy are beginning to be questioned. Digital civic spaces are precarious, but fast-evolving.

In recent years, we have seen the beginnings of a much more thorough public discussion of the role of technology in our societies. UN human rights bodies have called attention to the severe effects of unaccountable digitalization on freedom of expression¹⁹, poverty, and inequality²⁰. In a growing number of countries and multilateral fora, policies for digital rights and platform accountability are being discussed.

A vibrant movement of activists, academics and journalists advances understanding and advocacy for digital rights. Civic actors provide sophisticated tools and support to human rights defenders under threat, confront disinformation challenges, and support open and responsible data practices in government.

The landscape for free and creative expression is changing, too. In the countries where we work, a new generation of content creators are making innovative use of digital channels to reach large audiences. They produce critical audio-visual stories that can help shape public narratives for social justice. Globally, opportunities are growing to profile journalism, podcasts, music, art, film, literature and games rooted in diverse local realities.

And while there is still a long way to go, corporate transparency and government openness have increased over the last decade. This is largely in response to civic pressure and groundbreaking investigative journalism, but also to collaboration between government and civil society. For example, around 70 local and national governments have started to open up public procurement data and decision-making²¹, helping ensure that public spending is more responsive to communities. Decentralization of governance and the growth of the local open government

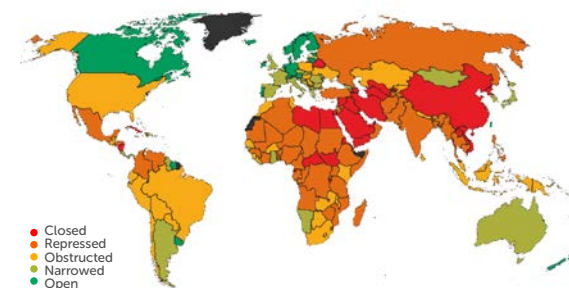
movement provide opportunities to build on these experiences.

However, capacities to address issues such as open government or digital rights remain concentrated among relatively few specialized civil society organizations. Social justice actors or rights-holder-led organizations have been much less involved to date. Globally, Northern perspectives

and voices continue to shape analysis and policy debates. This limits the extent to which policies address the most pressing concerns in highly diverse contexts and for those facing the greatest risks. It also reduces broader public engagement and political attention.

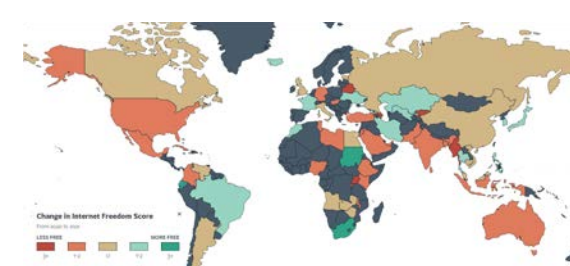
Civic Space

Source: Civicus 2021



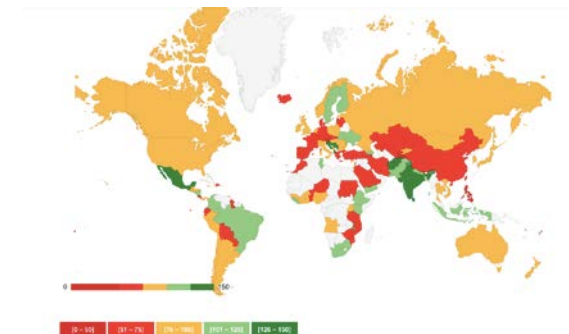
Internet Freedom: Trends

Source: Freedom House 2021



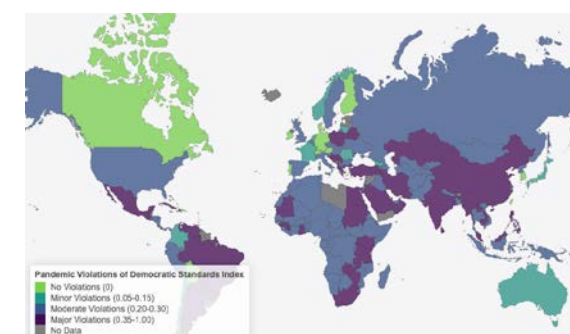
Quality of Access to Information Laws

Source: Access Info and Centre for Law & Democracy 2021



Pandemic Backsliding: Democracy During COVID-19

Source: v-dem 2020-2021



03 OUR THEORY OF CHANGE FOR CIVIC RIGHTS IN A DIGITAL AGE

To safeguard Civic Rights in a Digital Age, we must confront longstanding and newer challenges. In our analysis, this means in particular:

- Defending, expanding and using the fundamental norms and practices that guarantee **civic rights and space, off and online**: freedom of expression, access to information, the right to privacy, and political participation. These are essential to building more open and just societies.
- Translating growing awareness of digital rights concerns into broad-based demands for public policies and practices that promote uses of technology that are **inclusive, safe and that shift power balances**.
- Maintaining pressure for **accountability** in public spending as a mainstay of social justice and a responsible digital transformation. This is a crucial area for the exercise of civic rights and to promote our other impact areas: Climate Justice and Gender Equality, Diversity and Inclusion.

Key to this is deeper and broader collaboration between different types of civic actors to overcome elite versus grassroots divides within civil society. This will also forge more diverse coalitions that can bring different perspectives and capacities to bear.

Our vision:

A public sphere where civic rights are protected, where inclusive public debate flourishes, and where people exercise influence and agency so that technology and public resources are used justly and responsibly.

The following are our *impact goals*:

- Civic spaces expand and diverse civic actors use them effectively to influence public debates (Vibrant Civic Spaces)
- Policies and practices that safeguard human rights in public uses of technology are adopted and implemented at local, national and international levels (Responsible Use of Technology)

- Public spending, in particular at local levels, is more open and responsive to social justice actors and their priorities (Just Use of Public Resources)

In our Theory of Change, four interconnected *pathways of change* contribute to these goals:

- 1. Building Civic Influence:** Civic actors from the Global South have stronger influence on policies and practices that safeguard civic rights and space, on and offline.
- 2. Defending Activists:** Human rights defenders, journalists and other civic actors and activists make safe, responsible and effective use of data and technology.
- 3. Reshaping Narratives:** Content creators, independent media and other civic actors reach wide audiences with narratives that focus on social justice and humane digital futures.
- 4. Influencing Public Spending:** Social justice actors and rightsholders have stronger influence on (local) public spending priorities, and governments are held to account for these.

Underpinning these pathways is our focus on strengthening civic capacities for **digital activism, campaigning, content creation and collaboration**.

Theory of Change: Civic Rights in a Digital Age



Assumptions

RESPONSIBLE USE OF TECHNOLOGY		VIBRANT CIVIC SPACES		JUST USE OF PUBLIC RESOURCES	
1. Building Civic Influence		2. Defending Activists		3. Reshaping Narratives	
Involvement of more and more diverse types of civic actors will contribute to stronger political influence and more just solutions		The use of rights-restricting technologies by public actors can be controlled/limited through public pressure (in democratic contexts)		Narratives combining evidence and affective messaging can catalyze broader coalitions and societal demand (move the middle) for Civic Rights in a Digital Age, including in a context of widespread disinformation	
				4. Influencing Public Spending	
				Deeper collaboration between open government and social justice actors helps translate increased transparency to more substantive and inclusive participation	
Transparency and participation in public spending is an important basis for rights-based digital infrastructure					
Civic actors can take advantage of/connect effectively with technical reform agendas promoted by other actors					
A sufficient number of diverse civic actors are willing to deepen collaboration, but they lack spaces and support in doing so (in a systematic way)					
Contextualized understanding of the digital transformation, resources and skills for digital activism, campaigning, content creation and collaboration are limiting factors for broader-based civic action					

04 PATHWAYS TOWARD CHANGE

The challenges and opportunities outlined are complex and interdependent. This calls for a focus on interventions that can contribute to larger, transformational changes in societies, without tackling all aspects of these problems on our own. In our *pathways toward change* we build on our track record and partnerships, while being mindful of the related work of others and remaining adaptive to changes in the contexts in which we work.

1. BUILDING CIVIC INFLUENCE

This pathway is about ensuring that at local, national and international levels, public policy and practice fosters civic space and respect for Civic Rights in the Digital Age. At the center of this work are diverse civic actors in the Global South, including frontrunners in academia and independent media. They build public awareness, influence public regulation, and act as independent watchdogs. They work to increase the engagement of rightsholders and social justice organizations in digital rights efforts. This is crucial if we want the concerns of those impacted the most to be reflected in public policy and practice.

- Interventions include:
- Policy advocacy and campaigning for fundamental norms and practices of access to information, freedom of expression, privacy, and participation in public affairs
 - Support for more civic actors, especially rightsholder-led organizations, to monitor and influence technology design, regulation and use, in particular by state actors
 - Policy advocacy for transparency and accountability of public spending on technology, and for human rights-based digital policy and practice (e.g. AI regulation)
 - Contextualized research, investigations and reporting on public tech uses and their impacts (e.g. surveillance tech, automated decision-making systems) and public campaigning (e.g. to prevent or stop uses of specific technologies)²²

Strategic goals: Expanding and using civic spaces, democratizing public use of technology
Track record: We build on our cross-cutting

advocacy work on civic space and the specific approaches and experiences of Hivos programs like: Open Up Contracting, Internet Governance MENA, Promoting Freedom of Expression and Information (Tunisia), and the Digital Defenders Partnership.

2. DEFENDING ACTIVISTS

The aim of this pathway is to ensure that human rights defenders, social justice activists and content creators, and independent media are able to make safe, responsible and effective use of data and technology. Their work is increasingly digital and thereby vulnerable to digital threats like surveillance, theft and misuse of sensitive data, targeted disinformation, and deep fakes that discredit and attack activists and other civic leaders. A key assumption is also that activists who demonstrate responsible uses of data and technology can be more effective and credible advocates.

- Interventions include:
- Holistic and emergency support for human rights defenders, journalists, and other civic actors and activists under digital threat
 - Strengthening knowledge and capacity of response networks for digital and holistic protection at regional and country levels
 - Research and advocacy to counter emerging (digital) threats, e.g. to female leaders in civil society, media and politics
 - Increasing awareness of digital threats and access to digital safety tools among a broader audience of civic actors

Strategic goals: Expanding and using civic spaces (primary), democratizing public use of technology
Track record: Digital Defenders Partnership and components of programs such as Open Up Contracting and All Eyes on the Amazon.

3. RESHAPING NARRATIVES

This pathway focuses on narrative change to foster support and action for civic rights across larger parts of our societies. Prevailing narratives often legitimize existing power relations. Reshaping those narratives involves strengthening diverse voices that contest the status quo, while increasing public understanding of and support for humane and just alternatives.

At the center of this work are pioneering independent media producers, artists, journalists, and civil society groups. They challenge police corruption, discrimination, and outdated gender norms with fresh, creative perspectives. They build media literacy and tolerance among young people. And they articulate community-centered alternatives to the prevailing model of top-down digitalization. Interventions include:

- Creating opportunities and spaces for unusual collaborations, e.g. between content creators and social justice advocates
- Supporting the work of a new generation of audio-visual content creators, artists, and journalists who challenge dominant political, social, economic, and technological worldviews
- Strengthening the ability of content creators, artists, independent media, academics, and civil society groups to reach much wider audiences and respond effectively to the challenges of the digital media environment
- Carrying out research, experimentation and campaigning to demonstrate alternatives for a humane digital future

Strategic goals: Expanding and using civic spaces (primary), democratizing public use of technology and ensuring just use of public resources

Track record: R.O.O.M, African Crossroads, Digital Earth, Community Media Fund, Promoting Freedom of Expression and Information (Tunisia), Creative Youth for Tolerance program (Indonesia)

4. INFLUENCING PUBLIC SPENDING

This pathway is about supporting the efforts of social justice actors and open government reformers to ensure transparency and inclusive participation (on and offline), with a particular, though not exclusive, focus on local public spending. Government openness and responsiveness at the local level is essential because it is the most vulnerable citizens (subject to exclusion and climate impacts) who depend on the just use of public resources by local authorities. Decentralization, urban digitalization, and advancing local open government initiatives offer opportunities for positive change. Our assumption is that locally-led action by rightsholders and social justice actors, and their knowledge, are essential for sustained civic participation and gaining influence over public spending.

Key interventions include:

- Supporting the efforts of social justice advocates, rightsholders, and government actors to co-create and use mechanisms that ensure transparency and inclusive participation (on and offline) in public spending, especially at local levels.
- Supporting investigative, data-driven journalism on public spending (e.g. corruption)
- Supporting efforts to increase participation and accountability in areas that benefit the most vulnerable, (e.g. the response to Covid-19, the socio-economic rights of LGBTIQ+ groups, climate finance), as well as in public planning and procurement of technology infrastructure.
- Advocating for improvement and implementation of global, regional and national frameworks that set key incentives and accountability mechanisms for reform (e.g. the Open Government Partnership)

Strategic goals: Ensuring just use of public resources (primary), expanding and using civic spaces and democratizing public use of technology (secondary)

Track record: Open Up Contracting, PROTECT, VAAM, O4C19

STRENGTHENING CIVIC CAPACITIES

Hivos believes that the work under these pathways – which is typically led by our partners – requires continuous strengthening of civic capacity across a diverse ecosystem of actors, including Hivos itself. Our Theory of Change outlines four areas for this:

- **Digital Activism:** Understanding current and emerging digital technologies, their use, regulation and impact in society (digital transformation), and foundational digital security, data and tech skills
- **Campaigning:** Developing skills and resources for investigation, litigation, advocacy, campaigning, and other accountability tactics
- **Content Creation:** Developing skills and resources for audio-visual production, digital content distribution, resilience, and self-sufficiency among content creators, artists, and independent media
- **Collaboration:** Articulating shared goals and working with diverse civic actors and progressive media, governments, and businesses

One important contribution we believe we can make is to connect data and technology-savvy civic actors with rightsholder-led organizations. This requires having a strong understanding of emerging digital technologies, their potential, and their risks. It means having strong relationships with leading tech researchers, developers, and digital rights advocates. Hivos has relevant experience doing this, e.g. by supporting HIV activists and Indigenous groups who collaborate with civic technology specialists. We will further strengthen and expand partnerships in this area.

To underpin this work, we have already created the position of Digital Specialist within Hivos. We are also creating opportunities for ongoing learning for Hivos staff and partners through individual professional development, communities of practice, and through learning cycles within programs and projects. And importantly, we are strengthening our data and technology systems, in particular to ensure that robust measures and processes are in place to protect staff, partners and the people we work with.

LINKS WITH HIVOS' OTHER IMPACT AREAS: GENDER EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION (GEDI) AND CLIMATE JUSTICE

Guided by the principles articulated in our strategy for Gender Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (GEDI)²³, we apply **a feminist and gender perspective** in our work, accentuating the voices and agency of women, LGBTIQ+ and Indigenous people as well as focusing on intersectional exclusion in our interventions. An essential part of this is questioning existing power relations and working to shift them towards full and equal participation of those who are marginalized by traditional norms, hierarchies, and new (digital) forms of discrimination.

We develop interventions together with rightsholders and social justice organizations, and also focus new program development and advocacy on areas of intersection with key GEDI and Climate Justice change pathways. This includes:

- Increasing support and protection for women activists, journalists and politicians who play leading roles in challenging power and promoting progressive narratives, yet face drastic attacks in the digital sphere²⁴. (GEDI pathway: Women's Political Leadership)
- Boosting inclusion of rightsholders in efforts to increase transparency, participation and accountability of public spending, building on existing experience²⁵ and the key priorities of our climate justice programs (GEDI pathway: Socio-economic Rights; Climate Justice pathway: Just Distribution of Climate Finance and Local Solutions).
- Supporting participation of rightsholders in governance of tech and data, amongst others by contributing to movements that push for feminist policies and practices in open government²⁶ and the digital sphere²⁷.

05 OUR TRACK RECORD

Hivos has a strong track record of promoting civic rights in the context of co-developing and implementing programs that provide financial and technical support to diverse civic actors, centering their agency and leadership.

We are currently operationalizing efforts for Civic Rights in the Digital Age through programs and initiatives in 15 focus countries and support to partners in many more, as well as work at regional and global levels.

WHERE WE WORK



For the latest news, opinion articles and stories of change from around the world about our Civic Rights in a Digital Age work please visit [our website](#). There, you will also find [an overview](#) of current and finalized programs that collectively make up our track record.

CURRENT PROGRAMS

Digital Defenders Partnership (DDP)

Strategic focus: Expanding and using digital civic spaces, democratizing public uses of technology

Scope: Worldwide

Key partners: Media Defence, Front Line Defenders, VirtualRoad, DDP is a member of CiviCERT and Rarenet Program snapshot: DDP provides a holistic response to digital threats and creates resilient and sustainable networks of support to human rights defenders. DDP provides emergency response and sustainable protection funding, strengthens rapid responders and local protection networks, increases trainers' capacities through field building efforts, and contributes to long-term organizational safety through Digital Integrity Fellowships.

Resource of Open Minds (R.O.O.M)

Strategic focus: Expanding and using digital civic spaces, democratizing public uses of technology

Scope: Egypt, Lebanon, Tanzania, Kenya, Uganda, Malawi, Zambia, Zimbabwe

Key partners: More than 100 partners worldwide, including creative hubs, artists, artist collectives, civil society organizations, research institutes and social enterprises. Program snapshot: R.O.O.M. supports artists and creative hubs around the world in diversifying dialogue and using the power of creative expression through digital channels to spark debates and bring about structural social change.

African Crossroads

Strategic focus: Expanding and using digital civic spaces, democratizing public uses of technology

Scope: Africa

Key partners: multiple, varying by location Initiative snapshot: African Crossroads is a community of

future-oriented African thinkers and doers. They meet every year to reflect critically on the most cutting-edge developments anchored in African intellectual and technological traditions.

Digital Earth

Strategic focus: Democratizing public uses of technology, expanding and using digital civic spaces

Scope: Global

Partners: Ashkal Alwan (Lebanon), Electric South (South Africa), MIT Global Media Technologies and Cultures Lab (US), Strelka Institute (Russia), New Center for Research and Practice (US), Khoj (India), ArtEz (Netherlands), Kër Thiossane (Senegal), Jameel Arts Centre (Dubai, UAE), Chronus Art Center (China), Het Nieuwe Instituut (Netherlands), Centre Pompidou (France)

Initiative snapshot: Digital Earth aims to imagine a more humane digital future. As a social justice initiative, it invites participants to reimagine and shift current narratives of our digital futures. Digital Earth hosts fellowships, produces films, publications, campaigns, events and shares the insights of its global community with the public.

Freedom of Expression and Information in Tunisia

Strategic focus: Expanding and using digital civic spaces

Scope: Tunisia

Key partners: National Union of Tunisian Journalists (SNJT) Program snapshot: The project furthers efforts to improve journalists' and media actors' ability to effectively exercise their rights to Freedom of Expression. It also promotes participatory and inclusive ways of developing and implementing a strong legal framework that protects freedoms of expression and information, and campaigns to increase public understanding and support.

Creative Youth for Tolerance (CREATE)

Strategic focus: Expanding and using digital civic spaces

Scope: Indonesia

Program snapshot: The program uses art and cultural approaches to improve pluralism and tolerance in high schools and Islamic senior high schools in West Java, East Java and South Sulawesi, including by addressing rising challenges around disinformation. The program focuses on students, parents and school committees.

Community Media Fund

Strategic focus: Expanding and using digital civic spaces, ensuring just use of public resources

Scope: Africa, Nigeria, South Africa, Kenya

Partners: multiple community media organizations and initiatives

Program snapshot: The purpose of the CMF is to elevate voices from marginalized communities through the development and advancement of citizen and community reporting on financial and economic issues. The CMF seeks to enhance the financial literacy of citizens, improve their access to relevant data, strengthen the capacity of community media, and further governance and public and private accountability through improved analysis and reporting.

Protecting Rights, Openness and Transparency Enhancing Civic Transformation (PROTECT)

Strategic focus: All pathways with an emphasis on expanding and using digital civic spaces and ensuring just use of public resources

Scope: Kenya, Myanmar

Partners: Article 19 (Lead), Internews, ICNL and multiple Kenya and Myanmar-based organizations

Program snapshot: PROTECT's innovative and holistic approach addresses three key challenges underpinning the problem: shrinking civic space; repression of independent media and infomediaries; and data, transparency and accountability failures. PROTECT works towards free and open societies, where civil society – including infomediaries – are able to hold governments to account, make critical data accessible and understandable, and drive social and political change for the better for all groups in society. PROTECT empowers local civil society actors, while also influencing decision makers at all levels.

Note: This FCDO-funded program was originally also designed and planned to be implemented in Malawi.

Openness 4 Covid-19 Response and Recovery in Kenya (O4C19)

Strategic focus: Ensuring just use of public resources

Scope: Kenya

Partners: Institute of Economic Affairs (IEA- Kenya) and local CSOs

Program snapshot: Working at the sub-national level, the program strengthens the capacities of civil society organizations (CSOs) and community accountability mechanisms to monitor, influence and participate in auditing public spending during the Covid-19 response and recovery.

Voices and Actions for Accountability in Malawi (VAAM)

Strategic focus: Ensuring just use of public resources

Scope: Malawi

Partners: Malawi Local Government Organization (MALGA)
Program snapshot: VAAM works with civil society organizations, area development committees in seven districts, media houses, journalists, bloggers, influencers, ministries, departments and agencies, parliament and local government authorities. VAAM provides training for analysis and reporting on public expenditure and

providing citizens with critical information on public budgeting and expenditure so they are able to effectively hold duty bearers to account.

KEY RELATED PROGRAMS

All Eyes on the Amazon

Strategic focus: Climate Justice, expanding and using digital civic spaces, ensuring just use of public resources

Scope: Ecuador, Peru, Brazil

Partners: Greenpeace, COICA, COIAB, Alianza Ceibo, ECA-Amarakaeri, Global Forest Watch, ISS, Digital Democracy, Article 19, AIDA, among 26 partners.

Program snapshot: AEA uses innovative technologies to collect evidence, monitor and evaluate deforestation, ecosystem degradation and rights violations. Using this evidence, we catalyze land defense and forest protection through communications, campaigning, legal and policy strategies, and fight for structural changes to guarantee the rights of Indigenous Peoples, defend environmental defenders, promote transparency and accountability, and strengthen access to justice. This is supported by collective learning, exchange, and capacity building, and partnerships to expand relevant networks and collaborative initiatives.

Additionally, we bring additional know-how from related programs in the Climate Justice and Gender Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (GEDI) impact areas. Some of the most relevant initiatives are: [Voices for Just Climate Action](#), [RUAF](#), [VOICE](#), [Free To Be Me](#) and [WE LEAD](#).

RELEVANT RECENT PROGRAMS

Open Up Contracting (2016-2020)

Strategic focus: Ensuring just use of public resources

Scope: Guatemala, Bolivia, Kenya, Tanzania, Malawi, Philippines, Indonesia

Partners: ARTICLE19, Open Contracting Partnership, School of Data, Engine Room and more than 20 civil society organizations at regional level and in the program countries

Program snapshot: Open Up Contracting worked with local civil society, media, activists, businesses and civic watchdog organizations and government to develop their ability to open up data and participation processes on public procurement, to enable oversight and accountability of public spending.

In addition, our work on Civic Rights in a Digital Age builds on the experiences, networks and approaches generated in past programs such as [Making All Voices Count \(MAVC\)](#) and Internet Governance MENA.

1. [Brown et al 2020](#)
2. [ICNL, ECNL, UN 2020](#)
3. [RSF 2020](#)
4. [CLD & AccessInfo 2020](#)
5. [Privacy International 2020](#)
6. [OECD DAC 2020](#)
7. [Bradshaw, Bailey & Howard 2020](#)
8. [The Guardian 2021](#)
9. See [Data & Society 2016](#), [IPU 2016](#), [Khalid 2019](#), [UN WOMEN 2020](#), [International Women's Media Foundation 2018](#), [Di Meco & Brechenmacher 2020](#).
10. For example, reporting on corruption is one of the leading causes for the murder of journalists ([IPI 2018](#))
11. [Brown et al 2020](#)
12. [ICNL, ECNL, UN 2020](#)
13. [RSF 2020](#)
14. [CLD & AccessInfo 2020](#)
15. [Privacy International 2020](#)
16. [Klein 2020](#)
17. [Foxglove 2020](#), [Wylie 2020](#)
18. [Gros & Eisen 2021](#)
19. [Kaye 2016](#), [Kaye 2018](#)
20. [Alston 2019](#)
21. [OCP \(n.d.\)](#)
22. Where relevant, this may include support for strategic litigation.
23. Championing gender equality, diversity and inclusion, applying a human-rights-based approach, promoting self-determination, intersectionality, community-led and owned partnerships & accountability, and safeguarding integrity. See position paper on Gender Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (GEDI) for more detail.
24. Female activists, journalists and politicians have been at the forefront of important progressive movements, such as the mobilization against Jair Bolsonaro's presidential campaign. Yet, women in publicly exposed roles are subject to severe personal attacks. Online targeting is a growing concern and involves e.g. defamation, revenge porn and deep-fake nudes. More than 40% of women parliamentarians had seen extremely humiliating or sexually charged images of them spread through social media ([IPU 2016](#)). Nearly 2/3 of female journalists report being threatened or harassed online ([International Women's Media Foundation 2018](#)). More than 90% of deep fake content is non-consensual pornography targeting women ([Quartz 2019](#)). This directly contributes to marginalization of women in the public sphere ([Carnegie Endowment 2020](#))
25. See Hivos' work on [inclusive public procurement](#)
26. See [Feminist Open Government](#)
27. In particular the [Feminist Principles for the Internet](#) and ongoing work on feminist tech policy (see e.g. [Superrr 2021](#)) and data feminism (see e.g. [Pollicy 2021](#))

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