



### Call for Concept Notes:

#### Civic Space Monitoring for Connect, Defend, Act! (CDA) Project

Date of Issue: 13 February 2025

Funding Type: Partnership Mini Grant

Budget Size: Maximum 14,300 Euros per organization

Duration: 6 months

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#### Overview of Hivos

**Hivos** is an international development organization that helps build social movements that strive for just, inclusive and sustainable societies. Together with citizens and their organizations, we aim to contribute towards just, inclusive and life sustaining societies where people have equal access to opportunities, rights and resources. We work in partnership with others in the Middle East, Africa, Asia and Latin America on three impact areas: Civic Rights in a Digital Age; Gender Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, and Climate Justice. Our approach is solution driven, and we build wider movements for change by amplifying and connecting voices.

#### Mission

Hivos works for a world where people can realize their full potential, unleashing their ingenuity and creativity to build fair, just and sustainable societies for themselves and generations to come. Our mission is to amplify and connect voices that promote social and environmental justice and challenge power imbalances. We particularly empower marginalized groups to raise their voice and demand freedom of choice.

Hivos supports the development of innovative solutions to deep-seated problems so that individuals and communities can make informative, responsible and equitable choices within political and economic systems that serve their needs and preserve the planet. We connect people and organizations offering transformative alternatives to those looking for solutions in their fight for social and environmental justice.

## Vision

Hivos firmly believes in every person's right to live in freedom and dignity, with equal opportunities and the ability to influence decisions that shape their communities and futures. We envision a world in which individual differences and backgrounds are respected and used to strengthen communities. A world in which people join forces to challenge the power imbalances that drive injustice, including environmental destruction, exploitation, oppression, and gender inequalities.

## Project Context and Background

All around the world, those in power, including both autocracies and democracies, are increasingly imposing restrictions on civil society actors to freely express themselves, to protest against systemic injustices and to organize themselves to defend fundamental human rights. Digital tools and platforms carry the potential to create safer and more inclusive spaces for trust-based collaboration and access to information. But they are also shaped by digital divides and increasingly sophisticated surveillance tactics deployed by both state and non-state actors.

With support from the Government of Norway, Hivos is implementing a five-year project (2024-2029) called 'Connect, Defend, Act!'. The project aims to counter shrinking civic space and amplify civil society-led action in Colombia, Indonesia, Malawi and Palestine (oPt) by supporting civil society actors in their efforts to defend and expand civic space. Civil society actors and rights-engaged in this work face an array of political, institutional, legal, and societal forces actively working against their goals. Civil society actors urgently need secure and trustworthy spaces for evidence-based learning and strategizing **enhanced** capacity to counter digital threats, and access to funding that ensures organizational **resilience and adaptability**.

## Project goal

- Civil society Actors in Colombia, Indonesia, Malawi and Palestine (oPt) can positively influence the openness of and respond to changes in the civic space.

## Project Objectives

- i. Promote coalition building among diverse civil society actors, including human rights defenders, rights holder-led civil society organizations, and independent media actors, grounded in civil society-led evidence gathering and knowledge production, and facilitated by context-specific communities of action.
- ii. Contribute to safe and inclusive digital civic spaces for sustained collaboration and action among civil society actors through localized holistic digital security capacity strengthening, knowledge production, and active referral to digital protection providers.
- iii. Increase civil society actors' flexibility to rapidly respond to changes in civic space through organizational capacity strengthening and the provision of strategic funding for sustainable action.

The project aims to strategically support relevant actors within civil society whose work actively contributes to civic space from the perspective of different sectors and interests, particularly including groups who are marginalized within civil society. Across all activities and outcomes, the

project will promote local ownership and leadership, with Hivos taking a facilitating and supporting role that emphasizes civil society actors' agency and existing knowledge.

The project is currently in its second year of implementation, and we seek up to **four** partners in **Palestine (oPt)** to conduct civic space monitoring reports for 2025.

### **Civic Space Situation analysis in Palestine**

The civic space in Palestine has been experiencing a significant decline<sup>1</sup> This deterioration is primarily driven by the intensified repression on civil society organizations (CSOs), journalists, and human rights defenders (HRDs) by the Israeli Occupying Forces (IOF) and Palestinian authorities.<sup>2</sup> The IOF has been particularly aggressive employing tactics such as harassment, imprisonment, physical violence, and deadly force against CSOs and HRDs, including raids on their offices.. For instance, in August 2022, the IOF forcefully entered and sealed the entries to the offices of seven CSOs, confiscating and damaging property. Additionally, six leading Palestinian human rights organizations were designated as "terrorist organizations" under Israel's Counter-Terrorism Law, further restricting their operations.

Furthermore, **individuals who organize or participate in peaceful protests are routinely targeted with excessive force, including live ammunition, mass arrests, and prolonged detention**The media typically reflects the position of the state, and any independent voices are systematically targeted through raids, physical attacks or legal harassment.

The shrinking civic space is also evident online, where Palestinian voices are systematically silenced on social media platforms such as Meta (Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, and TikTok). During the latest genocide on Gaza that started in October 2023, content was deleted, accounts were blocked, hashtags were hidden, and content reach was reduced. Offline, Palestinians who express their discontent through protests often face violence from the IOF and its settlers as well as from the Palestinian authorities.

The occupation also imposes restrictions on the funding of CSOs. The political conditions on funding imposed by European and particularly US funders have led not only to the cessation of work by hundreds of CSOs<sup>3</sup> but also led to increased conflicts and gaps among the civil society actors.

### **Efforts by CSOs and Human Rights Defenders to combat shrinking of civic space**

Civil society in Palestine has largely responded reactively to the shrinking civic space, often lacking a unified, strategic approach. While many organizations work individually, there has been limited collective action through coalitions and networks.

Despite these challenges, CSOs and HRDs continue their fight for rights and freedoms through legal support for political prisoners, documentation of human rights violations, and advocacy for

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<sup>1</sup>[Palestine - Civicus Monitor](#)

<sup>2</sup>[Palestine: New Research brief documents escalation of attacks on civic freedoms](#)

<sup>3</sup>[PALESTINE: 'Lack of a political horizon leading to the liberation of Palestinians has brought us here'](#)

accountability. In the digital sphere, they amplify Palestinian voices, expose violations, and collaborate with international organizations to raise awareness and mobilize support.

While restrictions and attacks on civic space persist, Palestinian CSOs and HRDs remain resilient, actively challenging repression and advocating for their rights.

## **Partnership in Conducting Civic Space Monitoring**

In Palestine, where freedoms are increasingly restricted, partnerships in civic space monitoring are crucial. CSOs face structural, political, and legal obstacles, struggling to push back against powerful actors. Strong partnerships enable local organizations to analyze and respond to these challenges effectively.

By fostering collaboration, these partnerships empower civil society actors to lead civic space monitoring rather than relying solely on external assessments. This approach strengthens local agency, enhances adaptability, and ensures that monitoring efforts translate into strategic action against repressive policies.

## **Call for Concept Notes**

To support evidence-based, decision-making, planning and action by civil society actors defending and promoting civic space, Hivos will support civil society actors-led monitoring of civic space through the provision of resources and by connecting selected partners to a global community of civil society actors engaged in monitoring civic space and the enabling environment.

Monitoring partners selected to contribute to this output will regularly report back to Hivos and advise on key leverage points for action based on identified trends. In addition, the evidence and data they collect will be connected to a global monitoring system on civic space being developed in parallel to this project under the leadership of Hivos. These insights will be publicly available and can, therefore, be leveraged by other civil society actors beyond the primary target group to develop evidence-based strategies to influence the openness of civic space.

Indicative activities that can be included in Civic Space Monitoring are:

- Monitor** civic space
- Assess** capacity gaps in civic space and **civil society actors, providing** recommendations for improvement
- Engage** in regular exchanges with civic space actors, relevant stakeholders, and global monitoring partners

## **Eligibility**

We encourage applications from national civil society actors including Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), community-based organizations (CBOs), grassroots organizations, action-based/movement groups, etc. It is essential that the organizations have balanced representation of youth, women, local/traditional/indigenous, diverse groups and, if applicable, persons with disabilities.

Organizations that meet the following criteria are encouraged to apply:

- Registered organizations, that have a physical presence (office & staff) in the oPt and serving Palestinians residing in oPt.
- If unregistered organizations are interested, they must submit a joint proposal with a registered organization. The application must **clearly define** the roles and responsibilities of each party.
- Demonstrated experience in monitoring civic space.
- Proven track record in defending human rights and civic space, particularly the rights of marginalized groups.
- Strong operational and financial management capacity.
- **Commitment to human rights principles**, with no involvement in sexual violence.
- **Intersectional approach**, reflected in both work and principles. Led by, in close collaboration with, youth, women, and diverse groups.
- **Willingness to challenge** restrictions on Palestine’s civic space and collaborate with stakeholders to **protect and expand civic space**.

### Selection Criteria

Applications will be assessed using a weighted scoring approach, as specified below:

Quality of proposed design and methodology Demonstrating a strong understanding of the analytical /contextual /logistical issues relevant for conducting civic space monitoring	40%
Organizational quality Relevant expertise, experience, understanding of the issues, and ability to collaborate productively	20%
<b>Demonstrated track record</b> – Quality of past work	20%
<b>Budget, compliance, and references</b> – Cost-effectiveness and value for money	20%

### The submission of the concept note should be guided by the following:

- Clear Aim and Objective: Clearly define the purpose of civic space monitoring. Context Analysis Explain the **Who, What, When, Where, Why, and How** (5W1H) of civic space monitoring, demonstrating a deep understanding of the context in which the organization operates.
- Rights Holder Representation: The extent to which the organization will **engage and amplify** marginalized voices (youth, women, diverse groups, persons with disabilities). Utilization of Monitoring Results Explain how findings will be used **for advocacy, knowledge-sharing, and campaigns**.
- Innovation: Present **accessible, inclusive, innovative** and easy-to-understand monitoring methods.
- Intersectionality: Integrate an intersectional approach into monitoring.

- Geographic Presence: Preference will be given to organizations with both local and national reach

### Partners' Responsibilities and Grant Value

Partner organization(s) will be responsible for:

- **Producing an inception report** in English outlining the civic space monitoring process.
- **Reviewing relevant documents** for conducting civic space monitoring.
- **Developing monitoring designs and tools** in collaboration with Hivos.
- **Planning fieldwork schedules** (if needed) with Hivos.
- **Drafting and submitting** a civic space monitoring report (English).
- **Incorporating Hivos' feedback** into the report.
- **Finalizing a high-quality civic space monitoring report.**
- **Creating accessible and inclusive information packages** based on the findings.

Project indicators related to civic space monitoring:

<b>Expected Result</b>	<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Target per year 2025 for oPt</b>	<b>Data Sources</b>	<b>Comments</b>
Monitoring and evidence gathering on factors influencing civic space	# of monitoring reports received from Civic Space Monitoring partners  <i>Breakdown by topics and locations covered by monitoring</i>	4 monitoring reports	Monitoring reports	Monitoring partners have sufficient capacity and resources to perform civic space monitoring AND share evidence proactively with community of action members and other project stakeholders

### Application Deadline and Requirements

Applicants who meet the requirements should submit a Concept Note in English, not more than 10 pages. The following documents, which serve as annexes, should be included in application (and are not part of the 10 page limit):

- Updated organization's profile and organogram
- Organization's proof of legal entity
- Contact details of three valid references, which could be partners, donors, and other stakeholders.

- A detailed proposed civic space monitoring methodology, including a draft work plan with a timeline
- A budget in USD for the six-month period
- Two previous similar or related reports developed by the organization
- Signed Annex A

The submission should be sent to [grantsmena@hivos.org](mailto:grantsmena@hivos.org) with **“CDA Civic Space Monitoring” in the subject heading by Tuesday, 4<sup>th</sup> March 2025**. Applications after this will not be considered. Only shortlisted candidates will be contacted.

### **Further Information**

For further information, questions, or clarifications regarding this Call for Concept Notes, please contact [grantsmena@hivos.org](mailto:grantsmena@hivos.org) with **“Queries – CDA Civic Space Monitoring” in the subject heading**. All questions or queries to be submitted no later than Thursday, 20<sup>th</sup> February. Replies will be within 4 days from the date of inquiry submission.

### **Note that:**

- Hivos may request further information from organizations after the submission of their concept note. Any additional information must be provided within five working days.
- The onus is on the organization to ensure that their submission is complete and meets Hivos’ requirements. Failure to comply may lead to the submission being rejected without any reason being given. Therefore, please ensure that you read this document carefully and answer all questions in full.

### **Disclaimer**

- Hivos reserves the right to alter the date of the call evaluation process stated above and the awarding of contract.
- Hivos reserves the right to alter the call specifications and quantities.
- Hivos reserves the right to cancel this call process at any time and not to award any contract.
- Hivos reserves the right not to enter into or award a contract as a result of this invitation to call.
- Hivos shall consider value for money (VFM) and as such does not bind itself to accept the lowest or any call.
- Hivos shall not be liable in respect of any costs incurred by the Organization in the preparation of the offer nor any associated work effort, including the production of presentation materials, brochures, product specifications or manuals for evaluation.

### Applicant's Declaration

We, the undersigned, accept in full and without restriction the conditions governing this application as the sole basis of this competition, whatever its own conditions of sale may be, which we hereby waive.

We have examined carefully, understood and comply with all conditions, instructions, forms, provisions and specifications contained in this application dossier. We are aware that failure to submit a application containing all the information and documentation expressly required, within the deadline specified, may lead to the rejection of the application at Hivos discretion.

We hold no reservation in regard to the application dossier; and are aware that any reservation may result in the rejection of the application by Hivos.

We are not aware of any corruption practice in relation to this competition. Should such a situation arise, we shall immediately inform Hivos in writing.

We declare that we are not affected by any potential conflict of interest, and that we and any of our staff have no particular link with other Applicants or parties involved in this competition. Should such a situation arise during performance of the contract, we shall immediately inform Hivos in writing.

*Organization name and address:* \_\_\_\_\_

*Organization Representative name:* \_\_\_\_\_

*Title of Representative in the Organization:* \_\_\_\_\_

*Representative's signature:* \_\_\_\_\_

*Place, date:* \_\_\_\_\_