

Civic Charter Community Meeting

Date	27– 29 June 2018
Location	MS TCDC, Usa River, Arusha, Tanzania

Outcome

The Civic Charter Community Meeting brought together 28 civic rights campaigners from 18 countries to:

- Increase international solidarity between frontline activists fighting for democracy and human rights;
- Build capacity of civic rights defenders in the fields of digital security and strategic litigation;
- Foster the exchange of experiences and best practices for resisting threats to civic rights in various contexts around the world; and
- Develop a decentralised leadership model for the Civic Charter Community lead by activists within the group.

The Community Meeting kicked off with presentations from activists in Congo Brazzaville, Kenya, and Macedonia who have used the Civic Charter in their countries to demand their rights. Leveraging the skills and expertise of campaigners in our transnational community, participants had a chance to present a campaign that they are currently working on and receive advice from others on how to make it more successful. After applying a methodological approach to our campaigns using tools from Beautiful Rising, we identified as a group common trends, challenges, and opportunities we are facing. These included:

- A **trend** of increased group and individual persecution of those taking a rights-based approach to campaigning and advocacy, with powerful social movements often emerging to fight back against this.
- Common **challenges** of competition between CSOs and a lack of support from the international community for civic rights defenders working in extremely repressive environments.
- Growing **opportunities** for greater international solidarity, young social movements to bring about change, and digital tools to help us all circumvent restrictions on our work.

After getting to know one another by sharing campaigning experiences and advice from different political contexts, the second day of the meeting focused on building the skills needed to strengthen our movement for civic rights. Participants received training on bringing forth strategic litigation and ensuring secure digital communications in their work from experts in the field. Following the capacity building sessions, participants reflected on what our global



struggle is currently missing out on. They identified that *access to resources, international solidarity between CSOs, and attention to stress management of human rights defenders* are key areas for us to improve.

The final day of the meeting was devoted to strategising how to strengthen the Civic Charter Community as a global movement for solidarity and joint action among civic rights defenders. We announced a newly decentralised leadership model for the Civic Charter, led by activists from Congo, Kenya, Macedonia, and Hong Kong and coordinated by the International Civil Society Centre. Leadership team members identified areas of work to focus on in the coming year and pitched these to other participants who could join their groups. The areas of work are:

- Building a system where members of the community can request support on specific skills, and in turn offer specific skills to other members of the group using a digital intake and database model.
- Developing a year-long “12 Stories” public awareness campaign to tell one story per month of a campaign within the Civic Charter Community that needs support or international solidarity.
- Providing mentorship and coordination to develop regional campaigns and coalitions on defending civic rights, led by members of the community who have already done this successfully.