

*International Network  
for Economic, Social and  
Cultural Rights*

# **Annual Report 2015**



ESCR-Net

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## Greetings

### ESCR-Net Board 2013-2015



▼  
**Hossam Bahgat,**  
Board Chair  
EIPR (Egypt)

▼  
**Cathy Albisa,**  
Treasurer  
NESRI (United States)

▼  
**Ximena Andión-Ibañez**  
ILSB (Mexico)

▼  
**Saeed Baloch**  
PFF (Pakistan)

▼  
**Minerva Gonzales**  
ESCR-Asia (The Philippines)

▼  
**Legborsi Saro Pyagbara**  
MOSOP (Nigeria)

▼  
**Sandra Ratjen**  
ICJ (Switzerland)

Human rights—secured through people’s struggles to confront inequalities and assert common dignity—provide a vital source of political, moral, and legal legitimacy for our pursuits of justice, self-determination and shared well-being. This framework unites ESCR-Net Members across over 76 countries, working together to hold governments and private actors accountable, articulate alternative models of development, advance women’s substantive equality, defend rights related to land and natural resources, strengthen litigation and implementation guided by affected communities, and facilitate access to and strategic use of information to advance ESCR.

Events of the past year again revealed a precarious global economy, shaped by policies and practices that promise an ongoing crisis of deepening inequality, impoverishment, and environmental destruction for many communities. Analysis led by these communities could guide a reorientation of our economic and political models attentive to our global interdependence, yet their analyses and resistance are often met with repression, criminalization in the name of national interests, and sophisticated campaigns of defamation. In November 2015, ESCR-Net’s Board Chair, Hossam Bahgat, was detained by the Egyptian military. Two months later, another Board member, Saeed Baloch, was detained by Pakistan’s paramilitary Rangers and remanded to 90 days of interrogation. In many countries, this repression increasingly involves a politics inciting fear and prejudice.

In response, ESCR-Net Members have deepened both South-South and South-North connections and mobilized cross-regional advocacy. Members from multiple countries joined the struggle of Detroit residents to challenge the denial of rights to water and sanitation to 30,000 households, as well as struggles to resist dispossession in the Philippines, Guatemala and Kenya. On the tenth anniversary of Hurricane Katrina and the fifth anniversary of the BP oil spill, grassroots groups from eight countries gathered on the US Gulf Coast for strategic exchange aimed at confronting the root causes of injustice. Advocacy to challenge corporate capture of state institutions and processes has united Members across all regions.

Over the past three years, our Board members have provided exceptional leadership in these efforts – participating in working groups, supporting institutional and resource development, and upholding our mission, principles and model of work. In December, a new Board was elected from and by Members based on principles of regional and gender balance and the centrality of social movements. This new Board will oversee ESCR-Net’s move to independent status in the US this July (the Tides Center has been our fiscal sponsor since 2004). The Board will also work with Members to convene a global strategy meeting in November 2016, to evaluate our collective progress, deepen analysis of global challenges, and set shared objectives in line with our mission “to build a global movement to make human rights and social justice a reality for all.”

**Chris Grove**  
Executive Director, ESCR-Net

### ESCR-Net Board 2016-2018

● **Francisco Rocael**  
Board Chair  
Consejo de Pueblos Wuxhtaj  
(Guatemala)

● **Cathy Albisa**  
Treasurer  
National Economic and Social Rights Initiative  
(United States)

● **Sandra Ratjen**  
Secretary  
Franciscans International  
(Switzerland)

● **Ruth Aura-Odhiambo**  
Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA)  
(Kenya)

● **Saeed Baloch**  
Pakistan Fisherfolk Forum  
(Pakistan)

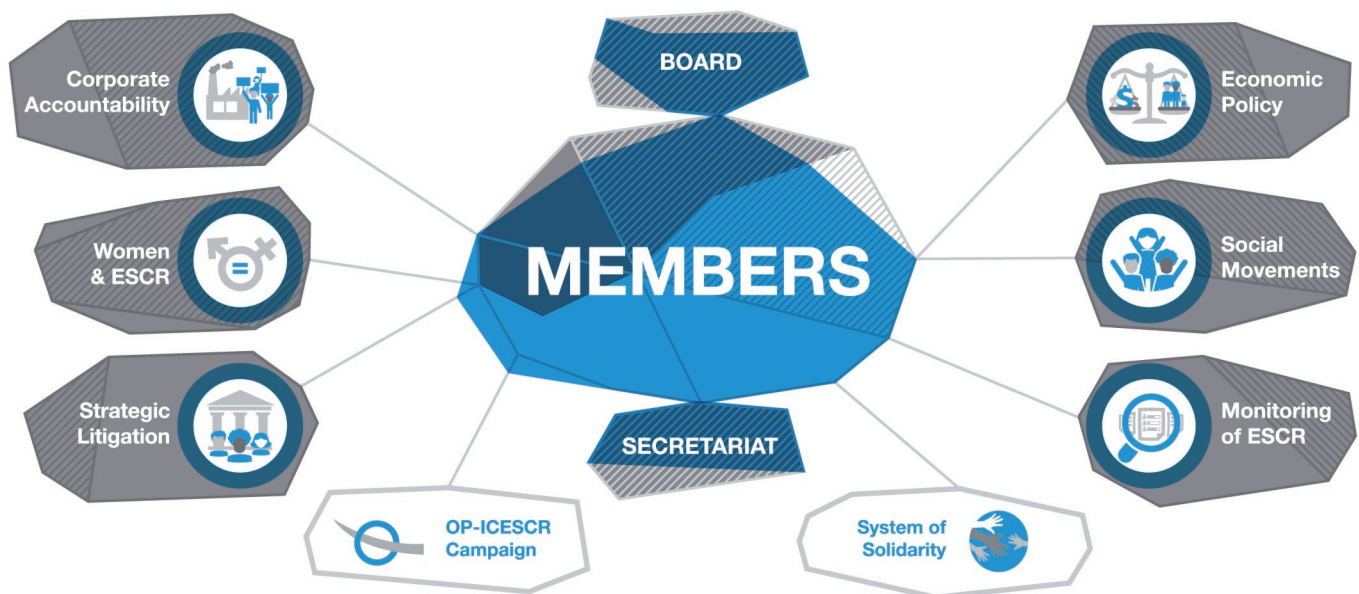
● **Hasan Barghouthi**  
Democracy and Workers' Rights Center  
(Palestine)

● **Herman Kumara**  
National Fisheries Solidarity Movement  
(Sri Lanka)

## Our model of work

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ESCR-Net **Members**—over 270 social movements, NGOs and advocates across 76 countries—“seek to build a global movement to make human rights and social justice a reality for all.” Our **Board** is elected from and by Members based on principles of regional diversity, gender balance and centrality of social movements. ESCR-Net is led by Members, who build shared analysis, define strategies and undertake collective action, foremost through **Working Groups**, including: Women and ESCR, Corporate Accountability, Strategic Litigation, Economic Policy, Monitoring of ESCR and Social Movements, as well as the NGO Coalition for the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the System of Solidarity for human rights defenders under threat. Working groups annually evaluate their progress, revise objectives, and prioritize collective actions as part of shared work plans. **Secretariat** staff facilitate the strategic dialogue and joint advocacy of Members, with 13 staff members in New York City, Montevideo, Toronto, London and Cairo.



Launched in 2003, as “a collaborative initiative of groups and individuals from around the world working to secure economic and social justice through human rights,” several **principles** have consistently guided ESCR-Net:

- Advancing all human rights, as universal, indivisible and interdependent, with a specific focus on ESCR issues;
- Ensuring regional diversity, the centrality of grassroots groups and social movements and gender balance in leadership and intersectional analysis;
- Grounding network activities in the lived experience of people affected by ESCR violations and advancing concrete, collective actions able to affect systemic change; and
- Striving for shared analysis and consensus in decision-making as a member-led network, while respecting the autonomy of individual participants' positions.

ESCR-Net Members and Board participated in a network-wide strategic planning process in 2013, setting the following **objectives for 2013-2016**, to:

1. Advance collective, strategic, transnational efforts to realize economic, social and cultural rights (ESCR) for all, in interdependence with civil and political rights;
2. Strengthen international standards and accountability mechanisms related to ESCR, ensuring that they are accessible to and shaped by the realities and advocacy of affected communities, grassroots groups and national-level NGOs;
3. Deepen Member-to-Member capacity building and advance shared analysis and strategy between groups across geographic, linguistic and historic divisions;
4. Further role as a trusted global repository and collective source of vital information and key resources relevant to the ESCR field; and
5. Coordinate mutual support and solidarity to advance Members' struggles.

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## Our impacts

Social movements and grassroots groups have strengthened cross-regional alliances, deepened shared analysis of evolving global conditions and shaped the strategic direction of ESCR-Net's collective work, via a meeting in the US Gulf Coast on the Anniversaries of Hurricane Katrina and the BP oil spill and participation in multiple thematic events.

Harnessing the collective voice of ESCR-Net's membership has advanced justice for human rights defenders under threat, contributing to the release from prison of activists in Cambodia, Mexico and Egypt and to a trial against the perpetrators of attacks in South Africa, while fostering cross-regional collaboration to challenge large-scale development projects in the Philippines and Guatemala.



24 new members, including organizations in seven new countries

4 new country ratifications of the OP-ICESCR

Human rights defenders now enjoy expanded access to tools and resources to bolster their security and protection, thanks to ESCR-Net's participation in the new consortium [ProtectDefenders.eu](http://ProtectDefenders.eu).

A regional workshop for 35 African women's rights advocates inspired a coalition of indigenous organizations to draft a parallel report focused on the dispossession of women and girls in Kenya, leading to strong recommendations from the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights.

12 Monitoring Working Group monthly discussions

**TOGETHER  
WITH  
HUMAN  
RIGHTS  
DEFENDERS  
WORLDWIDE**



A Joint Briefing for the UN CEDAW Committee and Committee on ESCR facilitated robust dialogue on women's rights and substantive equality related to land, work and health, working to strengthen concluding observations and new General Recommendations / Comments on rural women, work and sexual and reproductive health.

Treaty Initiative consultations and regional strategy meetings in Asia and Africa led to joint statements, regional coordination points to guide ongoing advocacy for an international treaty on human rights and business and plans to advance accountability at the national and regional levels.



42 new ESCR cases published in the ESCR-Net Caselaw Database

65% of Members participated in Board elections

The Corporate Capture Project is investigating and denouncing undue corporate influence on state institutions and decision-making, as a root cause of systemic human rights violations, via an initial scoping report, new online communication tools and public awareness-raising events.

Over 20 countries across Africa, Asia, Europe and Latin America have advanced access to justice through ratifying the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on ESCR, with additional ratification campaigns underway in multiple countries.



570,385 page views in the website (72% increase compared to 2014)

A positive decision on the right to housing in the first case under the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on ESCR (*IDG v Spain*) affirmed the principle of access to justice for all human rights violations and created an opening for third party interventions, following an intervention by the Strategic Litigation Working Group.

Endorois women have become central to the struggle to secure indigenous land rights recognized by the African Commission, composing over half of community representatives at a recent meeting that decided to register all Endorois women—including those who marry non-Endorois partners—as community members.



75 grassroots leaders and human rights defenders from 40 countries participated in the 2015 Peoples' Forum on Human Rights and Business

124 Member News published on the website

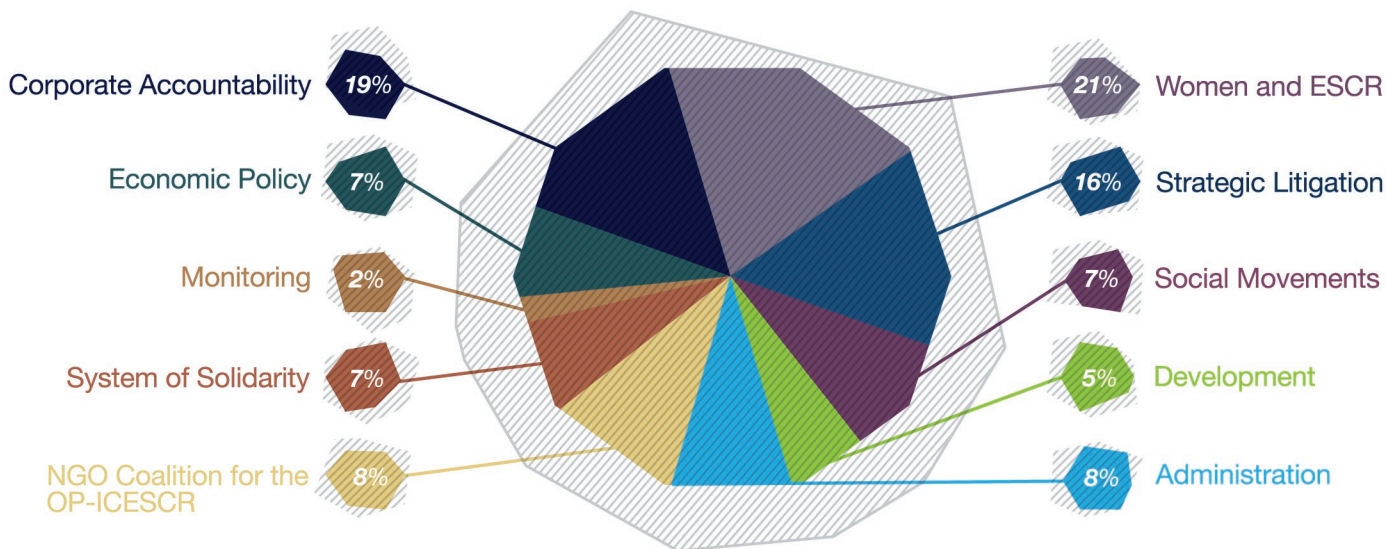
Activists, advocates and organizations working to promote economic, social and cultural rights enjoy greater access to information, resources and interactive venues via ESCR-Net's new trilingual website, while informing key developments in the international media, the United Nations and regional human rights systems.

Asia Pacific Regional Consultation on the  
Treaty Initiative Project  
May 1-3, 2015  
Duangtawan Hotel, Chiang Mai



# Financial Information

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Total Revenue: \$1,894,680.46/ Total Expenditure: \$1,584,287.34

ESCR-Net Members contribute to joint advocacy, strategic exchanges, and solidarity actions. These contributions are vital to the network and its collective impact. **ESCR-Net thanks the many Members and allies who dedicated immeasurable time and effort to cooperative work, as well as those who shared financial resources, in 2015.**

ESCR-Net expresses its appreciation to anonymous donors and to the following for their generous support:



SIGRID RAUSING TRUST



Each of these contributions is vital to building a global movement to make human rights and social justice a reality for all.

Learn more

[www.escr-net.org](http://www.escr-net.org)

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 **@ESCRNet**

 **vimeo.com/escrnet**

Contact us

[info@escr-net.org](mailto:info@escr-net.org)

**+1-212-681-1236**



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