

International Network
for Economic, Social
and Cultural Rights

2013

Annual Report

Celebrating the 10th Anniversary
of the Network



ESCR-Net

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Greetings



Hossam Bahgat
Board Chair



Chris Grove
Director

We are excited to share this annual report on the occasion of our tenth anniversary. Today, ESCR-Net connects 214 social movements and NGOs and 46 individual advocates across 70 countries, working together “to build a global movement to make human rights and social justice a reality for all.”

The past decade has reinforced the founding principles of ESCR-Net. Amid economic crisis, political uprisings, and growing repression, the interdependence of economic, political, social, civil and cultural rights is evident. Human rights provide a basis for unity, political legitimacy, and critical questions of existing economic and political structures. Our questions and challenges are often global in scope, reaffirming the importance of building a global movement. The disproportionate impact of economic crisis and related political responses on women, as well as migrants and minorities, has also reinforced our commitment to intersectional human rights analysis and substantive equality in the face of multiple forms of exploitation, oppression and structural discrimination. Human rights emerged from struggles for social justice, and human rights will ultimately advance and be meaningful to the lives of people affected by injustice, if their communities and social movements are central to the human rights movement and ESCR-Net. Ultimately, we are clear that ESCR-Net is its Members, and our strength is the shared leadership, collective analysis, and joint advocacy of Members.

In the past decade, ESCR-Net has been central to reinforcing the justiciability of economic, social and cultural rights (ESCR). In the past few years, we have grappled with the challenges of implementation of positive legal decisions, advocating dialogical and multi-dimensional approaches by courts and treaty bodies, engaging with specific political contexts, and reinforcing the necessary centrality of affected communities and grassroots groups. While continuing to facilitate technical support for litigation, ESCR-Net is critically approaching litigation as a powerful tool but one of multiple tactics to secure widespread realization of human rights.

In 2003-4, parallel to the launch of ESCR-Net, openings emerged at the UN to advance corporate accountability for human rights. For a decade, dozens of members have led collective advocacy to strengthen human rights regulation and remedies for violations, ensuring that affected communities are central to their development. Today, few large corporations can avoid at least discussing their responsibilities, and UN treaty bodies are increasingly reinforcing States’ obligations to regulate corporations beyond their borders. Members are energized to address collectively corporate capture of the State while continuing to push for effective remedies and binding regulation at all levels.

These efforts have intersected with advocacy to strengthen respect, protection and fulfillment of human rights in economic policy, most recently via the Bank on Human Rights campaign targeting development finance safeguards, while encouraging attention to intersections between human rights and environmental protection. Collective advocacy has been consistently complemented by strategy exchange and mutual learning. In 2013, this involved new resources on Claiming Women’s ESCR and a joint publication by social movements on Land in the Struggle for Justice: Social Movement Strategies to Secure Human Rights, as well as leadership exchanges in South Africa and Brazil. Further strengthening these resources, collective advocacy, and human rights defense, ESCR-Net hired its first communications coordinator. On a final note of celebration, years of advocacy by the NGO Coalition for the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on ESCR (OP-ICESCR) culminated in the entry into force of the OP-ICESCR in May 2013, allowing individuals and groups to seek justice at the international level for violations of their ESCR.

Our tenth anniversary has provided an opportunity to evaluate and plan strategically. We believe that a network of engaged organizations and social movements, working to build a global human rights movement, has never been more relevant. ESCR-Net is well-positioned, via its growing membership, to address emerging challenges of the next decade with a vision of a world in which human rights are a reality for all.

The International Network for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ESCR-Net) is a collaborative initiative of groups and individuals from around the world working to secure economic and social justice through human rights. ESCR-Net seeks to strengthen the field of all human rights, with a special focus on economic, social and cultural rights, and further develop the tools for achieving their promotion, protection and fulfillment. Through ESCR-Net, groups and individuals exchange information, cultivate a collective voice, amplify their actions, and develop new tools and strategies. By facilitating joint actions, enhancing communications and building solidarity across regions, the network seeks to build a global movement to make human rights and social justice a reality for all.

ESCR-Net is now comprised of 214 organizational and 46 individual Members, across 70 countries. In September 2013, Members approved a three-year strategic plan, which built on focused conversations with over 20

Members, annual assessments and plans of working groups, Board discussions and ultimately review by the full Membership. Emerging from this process, the following objectives inform joint work through ESCR-Net:

- Advance collective, strategic, transnational efforts to realize economic, social and cultural rights (ESCR), in interdependence with civil and political rights.
- Strengthen international standards and accountability mechanisms, particularly in relation to ESCR, ensuring that affected communities, grassroots groups and national-level NGOs are central to their development and able to access them.
- Deepen learning between Members and advance shared analysis and strategy across geographic, linguistic and historic divisions and expertise.
- Serve as a trusted global repository and collective source of vital information and resources relevant to the ESCR field.
- Coordinate mutual support and solidarity to advance Members' struggles.

Financial Information



Total Revenue: \$1,553,670.53 / Total Expenditure: \$906,334.33

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



FORD FOUNDATION



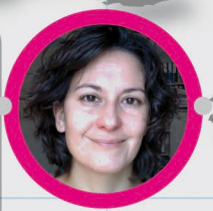
SIGRID RAUSING TRUST

Support from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Finland was facilitated by the International Commission of Jurists and additional support from the Ford Foundation was facilitated by the Norwegian Centre for Human Rights.

ESCR-Net is its Members, whose contributions to joint advocacy, strategic exchanges and workshops, resource development and learning, and solidarity actions are vital to the Network and its collective impact. ESCR-Net thanks the many Members, as well as allies, who included collaborative projects in their own work plans and shared financial resources in 2013.



The entry into force of the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on ESC Rights last year is a milestone in the promotion and protection of ESCR and a success of the international human rights movement working for these rights. ESCR-Net has played a crucial role in coordinating civil society efforts towards this historic achievement. This is what constitutes the great value of the Network: it is a ... forum for coordinated and collective work, and a bridge across disciplines, experiences, expertise and above all countries.
Sandra Ratjen, International Commission of Jurists (Switzerland)



After attending a training on the OP-ICESCR organized by CHRD and ESCR-Net in April 2013, a lawyer [working] on the Burenkhaan phosphate deposit highlighted at a hearing at the Supreme Court that this case had been discussed in the training and that international experts had assessed the possibility of taking this case to the Committee on ESCR under the OP procedure. The Court was influenced by the lawyer's determination and issued an unprecedented decision which protected for the first time in Mongolian history the constitutional right of local herders to live in a healthy and safe environment.
Urantsooj Gombosuren, Centre for Human Rights and Development (Mongolia)



We at the Poverty Initiative appreciate the opportunity to share experiences and strategize with other global social movements. We look forward to working together more in the coming year. Thanks to ESCR-Net for your vision and leadership.
Rev. Liz Theoharis, Poverty Initiative (USA)



Being in the Network means being part of a global movement for ESCR and able to connect the regional, the national and the global. We have much to learn from each other and have common challenges. The strength is that it is a global movement that brings together organizations from many countries and that gives collective strength to influence more forcefully at regional and national levels to advance economic, social and cultural rights.
Ximena Andión-Ibáñez, Equis/Instituto de Liderazgo Simone de Beauvoir (Mexico)



Working together with ESCR-NET brings a loud and compelling voice on the issues of forceful displacement of 20,000 people against a South Korean-based company POSCO at Jagatsinghpur district of Odisha, India. It gave an immense hope and courage to work for a society in which people co-exist with nature, equality prevails in the society.
Sandeep Kumar, National Centre for Advocacy Studies (India)



The Network is quite important and strategic for the work we do on the ground locally. The different actors we are contending with have a transnational character. The forces of the globalization are also transnational... This is why the importance of the Network cannot be overemphasized. It allows people to connect with different voices in different locations around the world. And helps us to build needed solidarity... That can only be done if we are in a Network where we understand each other's situations and where we take each other's hands to advance together.
Legborsi Saro Pyagbara, Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (Nigeria)

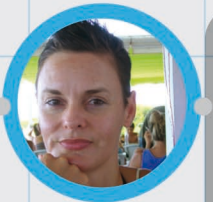
Through ESCR-Net, Dejusticia has developed relationships with key partners in Africa and Asia, helping to expand our work to the international level. Recently, we have deepened our involvement in strategic dialogues facilitated by the Corporate Accountability Working Group, finding a shared commitment to the inclusion of marginalized communities and the leadership of Global South organizations in international advocacy. As a network of human rights organizations across 70 countries, ESCR-Net is well-positioned to identify emerging issues and facilitate collective, international responses vital to advancing human rights.
César Rodríguez, Dejusticia (Colombia)



On July and October 2013, regional trial courts of Lagawe, Ifugao and Labo, and Camarines Norte respectively revoked and suspended the warrants of arrest issued against trade union leaders Roy Velez and Amelita Bravante who had been charged with fabricated murder cases.... We believe that this is a huge victory for victims of political persecution. And this is due to our unwavering and collective campaigns to stop the criminalization of human rights defenders. We are very thankful to you and to ESCR-Net for the hard work and continued support that you've shared to us for this campaign.
Melona R. Daclan, Defend Job (Philippines)



In a context where human rights violations occur in a coordinated manner and on a global scale, it is increasingly necessary to think and act internationally. For this reason, globally connected efforts by civil society groups and social movements to advance ESCR are critical. Working to advance human rights within a network presupposes the use of mechanisms which recognize, as protagonists, the people who suffer most from human rights violations, with particular focus on the actions of popular social movements.
Fernando Prioste, Terra de Direitos (Brazil)

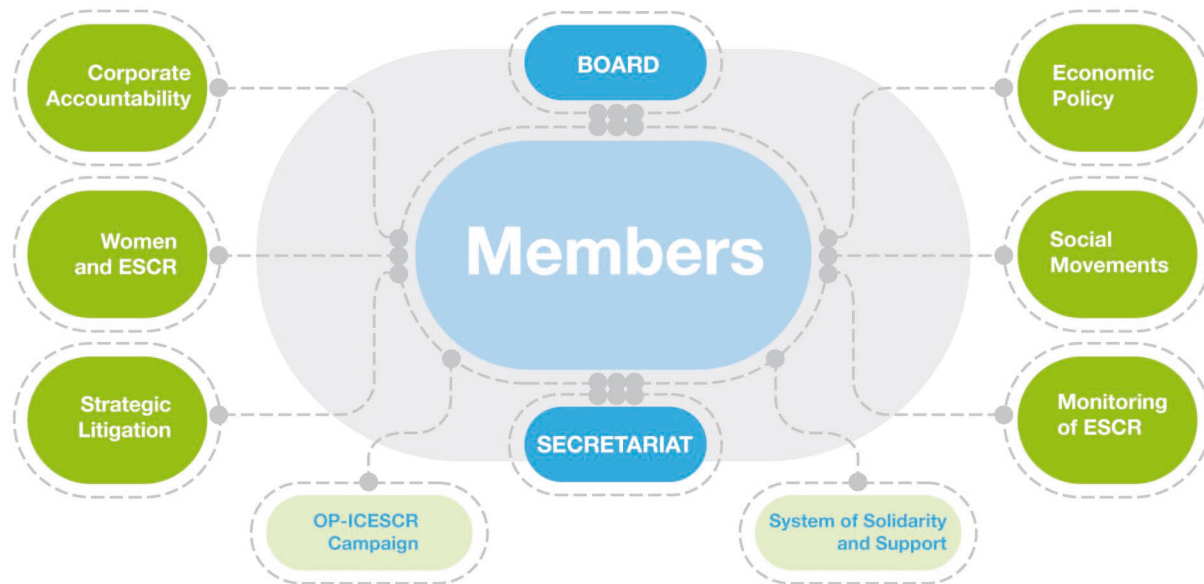


From convening regional meetings, responding to requests for training and supporting specific interventions, to raising consciousness always and everywhere regarding the primacy of socio-economic rights, ESCR-net is a powerful agent for change in the international human rights arena and a key partner in SERI's work both domestically and internationally.
Jackie Dugard, Socio-Economic Rights Institute (South Africa)

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Our model of work

ESCR-Net is led by Members—social movements and NGOs—from all regions of the world. Our Board is elected from and by Members based on principles of regional diversity, gender balance and inclusion of social movements. Members build shared analysis, develop resources and advocate collectively through thematic working groups, supported by a small secretariat staff.



● Board

Elected from and by Members based on principles of regional diversity, gender balance and inclusion of grassroots groups. The Board safeguards and advances the mission; works to identify key gaps in the human rights field; conducts outreach and facilitates new relationships; oversees institutional decisions; and assesses progress. Elected for a three-year term in December 2012, ESCR-Net's current Board members are:

- Hossam Bahgat, Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights (Egypt), Chair
- Cathy Albisa, National Economic and Social Rights Initiative (USA), Treasurer
- Ximena Andión-Ibañez, Equis/Instituto de Liderazgo Simone de Beauvoir (Mexico)
- Legborsi Saro Pyagbara, Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (Nigeria)
- Minerva Gonzales, ESCR-Asia (The Philippines)
- Saeed Baloch, Pakistan Fisherfolk Forum (Pakistan)
- Sandra Ratjen, International Commission of Jurists (Switzerland)

● Working Groups

Members initiate and guide thematic working groups, which include Corporate Accountability, Strategic Litigation,

Economic Policy, Women and ESCR, Monitoring of ESCR and Social Movements (with a recent focus on land and development-induced displacement). Working groups annually evaluate their progress, revisit strategic objectives and create a work plan for the year, with the support and facilitation of the Secretariat. Beyond working groups, Members periodically take collective, urgent action on behalf of other Members and close allies through the System of Solidarity and Support (SOS) and endorse Network-wide campaigns, including adopting and hosting the coordination of the NGO Coalition and Campaign for the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (OP-ICESCR).

● Secretariat

The Secretariat, based in New York City, is composed of a small team that facilitates the collective actions of Working Groups and implements the decisions of the Membership and Board. In ongoing dialogue with Members, the Secretariat staff is well-positioned to critically assess emerging gaps in the realization of human rights, identify connections between groups and coordinate collaboration on common issues, while facilitating outreach to strengthen regional diversity, gender balance and engagement of social movements.

- **Strengthened strategic coordination of the corporate accountability movement:** In 2013, the global Peoples' Forum on Business and Human Rights brought together over seventy grassroots groups and NGOs to deepen a common strategic agenda. Over the past decade, ESCR-Net has kept regulation of corporate actors, effective remedies, and the central role of affected communities on the agenda of UN bodies, while advancing strategic cases.

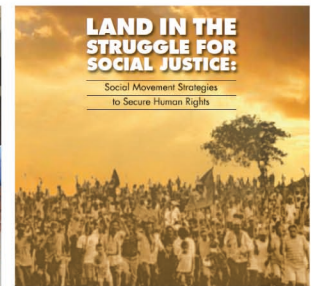


- **Collectively developed new tools and resources to address gaps in the human rights field:** The Women and ESCR Working Group developed a Guide: Claiming Women's ESC Rights Using OP-CEDAW and OP-ICESCR, which will complement ongoing workshops for women's human rights litigators and advocats. The Adjudication Working Group facilitated the monthly expansion of the bilingual ESCR Caselaw Database, utilized by over 500 unique visitors per month.
- **Reinforced the extra-territorial human rights obligations of home states to regulate their corporations abroad:** In one case, ESCR-Net coordinated joint advocacy and engaged nine UN Special Rapporteurs to send separate allegation letters to the POSCO Corporation, India and South Korea, addressing their respective obligations in India's largest foreign direct investment case, attracting media coverage and increasing investor attention.



- **Strengthened strategic litigation of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights while advancing enforcement of positive decisions:** Regional workshops on enforcement have led to collective work with indigenous communities in Paraguay, the Sarayaku in Ecuador and the Endorois in Kenya. Workshops in countries that have ratified the OP-ICESCR have strengthened domestic litigation, deepened knowledge of international mechanisms and provided technical support to key cases.

- **Facilitated deepened solidarity between members to respond to urgent threats and advance human rights struggles:** In April 2013, ESCR-Net launched a bilingual, secure SOS website to harness the collective power of the Network to prevent human rights violations and increase protection for defenders. In one instance, the SOS helped to secure the release of human rights defenders from prison and dropping of false charges in the Philippines.



- **Advanced strategic learning between social movements:** Groups in Brazil, India, Nigeria, the Philippines, and South Africa collectively developed and are now utilizing the resource Land in the Struggle for Justice: Social Movement Strategies to Secure Human Rights.

- **Coordinated a global campaign to secure the entry into force of the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (OP-ICESCR) on 5 May 2013:** The OP-ICESCR closes a historic gap in the protection of human rights by providing an international remedy mechanism for violations of ESCR, when individuals or groups of individuals cannot access justice in their own country.

Learn more

www.escr-net.org

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