



*International Network
for Economic, Social
and Cultural Rights*

2014

Annual Report



ESCR-Net

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Greetings



We celebrated significant human rights victories in 2014. Coordinated global advocacy led the UN Human Rights Council to initiate the development of binding standards on human rights and business. Paraguay's Congress and President passed a law to restitute the land of the Sawhoyamaya. And new strategic connections were forged between social movement members in Peru and women's rights advocates in Mexico. However, these celebrations were tempered by repression facing many ESCR-Net members, systemic violations involving private actors and their home states, and multiple inequalities.

In refining our model of work, we have reinforced certain core principles that seem vital "to build a global movement to make human rights and social justice a reality for all" amid rapidly evolving global conditions. Human rights provide an internationally recognized framework for interrogating our political and economic systems and making moral and legal demands. This framework unites members, who form ESCR-Net and guide joint advocacy. The strength of this collective action involves connecting members across 70 countries, insisting on the centrality of social movements and grassroots groups, and ensuring gender balance in leadership and intersectional analysis. These core principles entail working across languages and historic divisions, exploring the particularity of every situation but also identifying common root causes of injustice, and creating spaces to deepen strategic vision.

We keep learning and exploring new partnerships. The stakes are high for our families, communities and increasingly interconnected world. We believe that social justice and substantive equality can be a reality for all. But we are aware that this means contending with current power imbalances. Our response is to strengthen the shared analysis and united action of over 220 grassroots groups and civil society organizations and 50 individual advocates and academics. These members of ESCR-Net represent a vital core of a global movement organized to secure human rights for all.

Hossam Bahgat, Board Chair
EIPR (Egypt)

Cathy Albisa, Board Treasurer
NESRI (United States)

Ximena Andión-Ibañez
ILSB (Mexico)

Saeed Baloch
PFF (Pakistan)

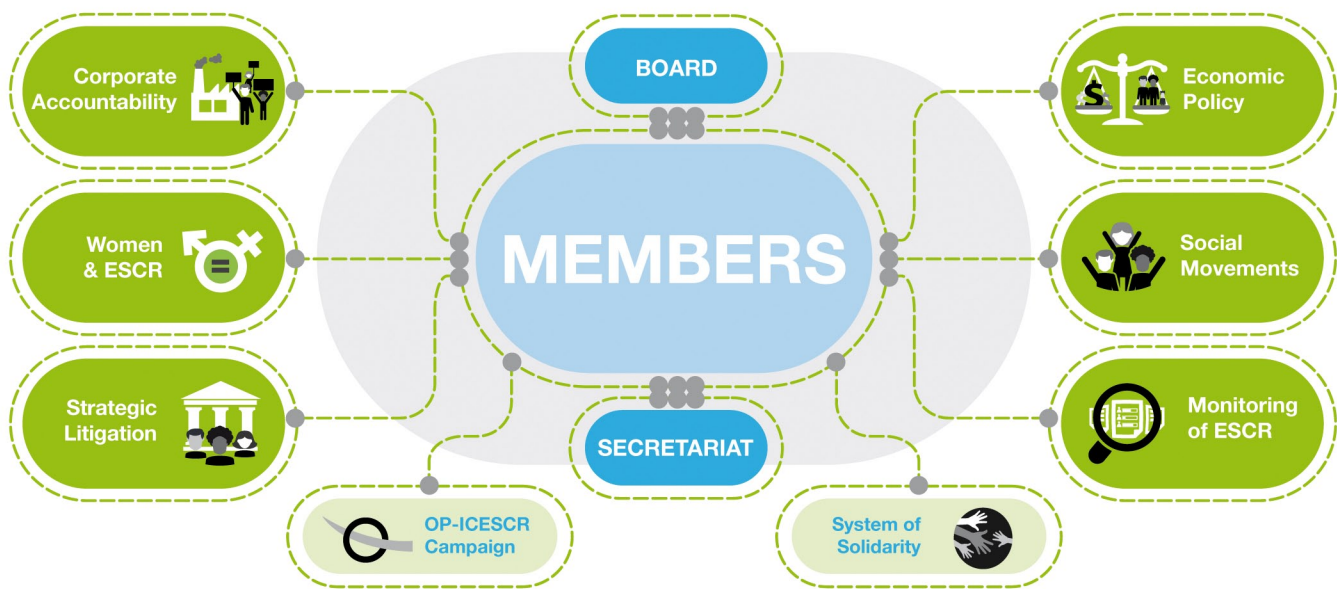
Minerva Gonzales
ESCR-Asia (The Philippines)

Legborsi Saro Pyagbara
MOSOP (Nigeria)

Sandra Ratjen
ICJ (Switzerland)

Chris Grove
Director, ESCR-Net

ESCR-Net **Members**—over 270 social movements, NGOs and advocates across 70 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 inclusion 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 11 staff members in New York City, Montevideo and London.



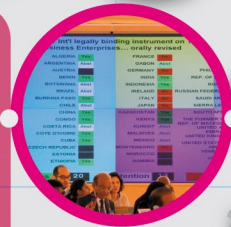
Launched in 2003, as “a collaborative initiative of groups and individuals from around the world working to secure economic and social justice through human rights,” a few **principles** have consistently guided ESCR-Net:

- Advancing of 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, 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, but 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.

The 26th UN Human Rights Council established an open-ended Intergovernmental Working Group with a mandate to begin drafting a binding **treaty on human rights and business**, following coordinated advocacy in 20 capitals and support of grassroots groups and NGOs across more than 90 countries. This advocacy also ensured a robust mandate for the UN Working Group on Human Rights and Business and has given new energy to advocacy for accountability at the national and regional level.



After co-founding **Bank on Human Rights**, the Economic Policy Working Group has been central to engaging members and allies in the campaign to strengthen World Bank Safeguards and enforce human rights obligations in relation to development finance at multiple levels. A regionally diverse steering committee is now facilitating the advocacy of some 50 organizations, including several strong grassroots ESCR-Net members like Ekta Parishad (India), Chiadzwa Community Development Trust (Zimbabwe), and Otros Mundos (Mexico).



Twenty-five women's rights advocates engaged in a Latin America regional workshop and deepened knowledge of international human rights standards and mechanisms, intersectional gender analysis, and advocacy strategies, utilizing the newly translated Guide: Claiming Women's ESC Rights Using OP-CEDAW and OP-ICESCR. The workshop also facilitated identification of new focuses for **collective advocacy of women's rights**, including areas related to housing and land.



Following a weeklong strategic exchange of 25 social movement leaders in Peru, **social movements deepened relationships of solidarity** and took up new roles in the Women and ESCR and Corporate Accountability Working Groups. Representatives of the Ogoni struggle in Nigeria, informal settlements in Kenya and people living in poverty in the United States were invited to a youth leadership training coordinated by a movement of landless people in India, while spokespeople from movements in India and South Africa joined dialogues in the US.



Following an extended struggle by the Sawhoyamaxa, in close partnership with Tierraviva and ultimately the Strategic Litigation Working Group, a law securing restitution of their lands—in line with a 2006 Inter-American Court ruling—was approved in the Paraguayan Senate in late April 2014 and signed by the President in June 2014, representing a major **victory for the Sawhoyamaxa**, as well as for other indigenous communities worldwide.



The Strategic Litigation Working Group launched **Claiming ESCR at the United Nations**: A manual on utilizing the OP-ICESCR in strategic litigation, in three languages, including via workshops in Nepal and Montenegro, and disseminated it to litigators in multiple regions. Together with the ESCR Caselaw Database, this manual is strengthening domestic litigation and supporting increased engagement with the Committee on ESCR and other treaty bodies.



The Corporate Accountability Working Group (CAWG) launched Global Economy, Global Rights at a briefing for new UN Special Procedures mandate holders in September, **reinforcing recognition of the extraterritorial obligations of States to regulate corporations** and investors. This led to follow-up discussions with several mandate holders and members of treaty bodies.



Sustained ESCR-Net member **advocacy pushed POSCO**, a Fortune 500 company, to develop a Code of Conduct and Human Rights Management Guidelines. Advocacy has generated pressure in several countries—including via the collective action of eight UN Special Rapporteurs—in coordination with a powerful grassroots movement. This led progressive investors to interrogate POSCO intentions to develop massive steel operations with substantial human rights and environmental impacts in India. The project remains stalled.



The **System of Solidarity** mobilized the collective strength and resources of ESCR-Net members in support of fellow human rights defenders. This included generating a response from the Government of Mexico and temporary suspension of the "Independence Aqueduct," helping to secure charges against South African officials allegedly involved in the assassination of a social movement leader, and winning the release from prison of women human rights defenders involved in an ongoing struggle for the rights of Boeung Kak Lake communities in Cambodia.



The Monitoring Working Group launched a new online platform (monitoring.escr-net.org) in April, with monthly blog posts from members in different regions, multilingual resources and interactive discussions. Between May and September, online visitors doubled while a growing number of regionally-diverse organizations participated in discussions aimed at **strengthening human rights monitoring**.



The **first three African States ratified the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (OP-ICESCR)**, namely Gabon, Cabo Verde, and Niger, following successful push for African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights Resolution 223 calling for OP-ICESCR ratification in 2012, ongoing advocacy at the Human Rights Council chaired by Gabon, and support for peer-to-peer advocacy via the Group of Friends by the NGO Coalition for the OP-ICESCR.



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From our Members

ESCR-Net is its Members across 70 countries, working together to make human rights and social justice a reality for all.



● **Ebenezer Duroyaje, Community Law Centre, University of the Western Cape, South Africa.**

The NGO Coalition for the OP-ICESCR and its support for advocacy work at the national-level have been very instrumental to South Africa's ratification of the ICESCR. The Coalition has also been of tremendous help in supporting regional advocacy work, including organizing side events during the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights.



● **Ida LeBlanc, National Union of Domestic Employees, Trinidad and Tobago.**

It is always a privilege for a grassroots-based organization like ourselves to be able to collaborate with and exchange experiences with other organizations around the world, and ESCR has provided that platform...which will benefit not only low income workers in Trinidad but low income workers within the Caribbean Region.



● **Claire Padilla, EnGendeRights, Philippines.**

Issues related to the ESCR of women are common throughout the world, especially for poor women...As part of the Women and ESCR Working Group, for us, it is very important to have all these experts working together.



● **S'bu Zikode, Abahlali baseMjondolo, South Africa.**

To our comrades, friends and partners who stood and continue to stand in solidarity with us through protests, petitions and other forms of solidarity actions, we wish to say thank you...It has been a year of illegal evictions, a year of shack fires, a year of death threats, a year of arrest, violence and assassination...In this difficult journey we have discovered true friends, real partners and real comrades who have walked the journey with us without being judgmental, we are grateful...We urge you to continue demonstrating real solidarity to others facing similar repression as well, just as you did to us. We wish to offer the same real solidarity to others in need as well.



● **Allison Corkery, CESR, USA.**

As a global network, ESCR-Net's ability to bring together social movement leaders, practitioners and academics with diverse experiences, perspectives, and expertise has been hugely beneficial in facilitating collective thinking around how to monitor economic, social and cultural rights. Exchanging ideas, building knowledge, sharing innovations and discussing critical issues through the Monitoring Working Group allows us to address a common challenge in our advocacy: the difficulty of connecting patterns of preventable deprivations of rights to policy failures and, therefore, to hold responsible institutions to account.



● **Debbie Stothard, Altsean-Burma, Thailand.**

I believe that a treaty on business and human rights could be the Geneva Convention of our generation. The impacts of the worse forms of human rights abuses linked to business resemble that of war. ESCR-Net has played a critical role to generate the global solidarity and activism necessary to get us through these first steps...Holding back the POSCO juggernaut hasn't solved the problem, but it has given local communities a much-needed reprieve, and created the space for negotiating solutions. It would have been impossible without the engagement of ESCR-Net.



● **Alexandra Montgomery, Justiça Global, Brazil.**

ESCR-Net's publication 'Global Economy, Global Rights' is a very important tool for organizations and communities' worldwide working on the issue of corporate accountability, providing a benchmark of States' extraterritorial obligations (ETOs) to respect, protect and fulfill human rights based on the developing work of different UN Treaty Bodies and Special Procedures mandate holders. From our perspective at Justiça Global, dedicating time to this tool was a priority...Being able to hold home States accountable, based on their ETOs, may provide a vital venue for communities to access justice.



● **Bret Thiele, Global Initiative for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, USA.**

ESCR-Net consistently plays a crucial role in helping the Global Initiative for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights fulfill its mission. In particular, ESCR-Net not only brings together powerful coalitions and coordinates collective advocacy, but has played an essential role in gaining increased access to the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, resulting in greater effectiveness at shaping human rights norms and achieving remedies for victims of ESC rights violations.



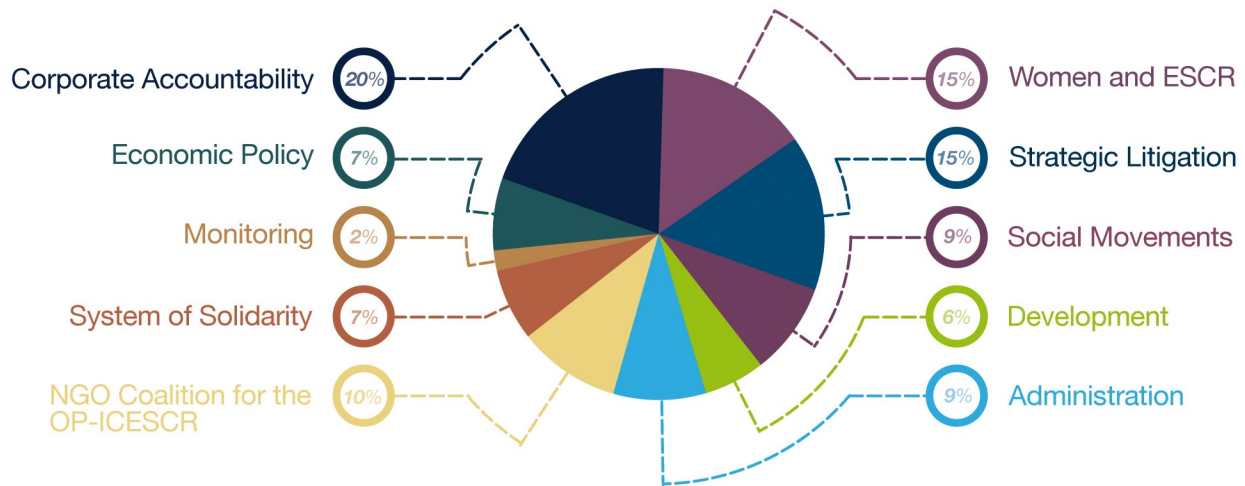
● **Oscar Ayala, Tierraviva, Paraguay.**

The ability to connect the expertise, solidarity and global knowledge of ESCR-Net in concrete exchanges and in support at the local level, such as occurred with the Sawhoymaxa case, is an experience which we greatly value at Tierraviva.



● **Touré Yaba Tamboura, Collectif Femmes du Mali (COFEM), Mali.**

We have found that we can only coordinate our actions and our efforts in a space in which each person or member contributes something, where there exists an exchange of experiences and a consolidation of strengths. I believe in the advancement of economic, social and cultural rights through our work with ESCR-Net.



Total Revenue: \$997,284.70 / Total Expenditure: \$1,066,437.85

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 2014.**

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.



In September 2014, ESCR-Net hosted an Open House to welcome members and supporters to our new office.

Learn more

www.escr-net.org

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