

Annual Report
2022



الشبكة العالمية
للحقوق الاقتصادية
والاجتماعية والثقافية



ESCR-Net
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We know that there have been and are many ways of living, organizing societies, understanding humanity and our place in the world. The past few hundred years – a minute in the 200,000-year span of human history – have been marred by colonialism and dispossession, slavery and extraction – treating fellow humans and Mother Earth as objects for domination, and the violent imposition of patriarchal and racialized capitalism via wars, coups and debt crises, among others. We mourn these brutal exterminations of life and cultures, and we denounce those in power who boldly declare that “there is no alternative,” that this is progress, development, national interest, or even freedom (if for markets and individual consumers). Yet alternatives persist, notably in the resistance and sustainable practices of Indigenous Peoples, in the mutual aid of impoverished communities, in the networks of care created by grassroots women leaders. Today, social movements in every region are redoubling their demands and renewing their visions for human rights, for the well-being, equality, equity, dignity, participation, and self-determination of their communities.

“The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed and intensified grave systemic injustices all over the world,” members of ESCR-Net wrote on 1 May 2020, denouncing “the current focus on ‘saving the economy’ instead of ensuring human rights and environment protection” and emphasizing that “even as the pandemic has revealed what is truly essential work, those performing it continue to be systematically undervalued.” While the analysis of the ESCR-Net Global Call to Action was bleak, members concluded, “This is the moment for long-needed systemic transformations, building a global struggle to make human rights and social justice a reality for all,” centering the alternatives and leadership of social movements, Indigenous Peoples, grassroots feminist leaders, care workers and allied environmental and human rights defenders.

Over the past two years, our collective advocacy has transformed in response, despite the immense challenges faced by many members. ESCR-Net’s Strategic Litigation and Corporate Accountability Working Groups have led efforts to reclaim the universal right to public healthcare in the struggle against corporate capture, with the profits of a few pharmaceutical giants prioritized over the lives of millions of people. The Economic Policy Working Group initiated work on alternatives while guiding new advocacy challenging illegitimate and unsustainable debt and its longstanding use as a tool to reshape economies and societies. Members have collectively confronted the IMF and public development banks, as well as the role of the private sector, connecting increased household debt to sovereign debt and imposed public spending cuts. Over the past year, this has led to growing collaboration with ESCR-Net’s Women and ESCR Working Group in their advocacy for a new social pact on care, which has in turn

been connected to advocacy for climate justice. The Environment and ESCR Working Group has been engaged in global efforts to secure the right to a healthy environment and demand new public, grant-based, and accountable funding to address climate-induced loss and damage. With devastating impacts during the pandemic, entire communities were excluded from government data and, thus, public provision. Additionally, numerous people are now being denied access to social services via new digital social or identity cards and related algorithms. In response, the Monitoring Working Group issued its Collective Position on Data for ESCR, intervened collectively in legal cases in Mexico and Serbia together with the Strategic Litigation Working Group, and raised these issues with human rights bodies and via media interventions. With the guidance of the Social Movement Working Group, as well as the support of funding partners, the ESCR-Net secretariat has also built a campaign team with regional representation, committed to coordinating popular political education and campaigning as means to draw on the fuller strength of ESCR-Net and growing alliances to challenge unjust structures and shape new narratives.

In August 2022, ESCR-Net held its first in-person strategic meeting in almost three years, in Kenya, with a focus on debt. The Network, led by members, also began to retake in-person advocacy, including delegations to the Finance in Common Summit, the UN Intergovernmental Working Group on Business and Human Rights, and COP27. These were moments to renew solidarity, mourning and celebrating those lost, and to recommit to collective struggle in the face of rapidly evolving challenges.

Irene Escorihuela Blasco
Observatori DESC
(Spain)

Christina Saiti Iouwa
World Forum of Fisher Peoples
WFPF (Kenya)

Juana Toledo
Consejo de Pueblos Wuxhtaj
(Guatemala)

Ryan Schlieff
International Accountability
Project IAP (US)

Binota Moy Dhamai
Asia Indigenous Peoples
Pact (Thailand)

Maha Abdallah
(Palestine)

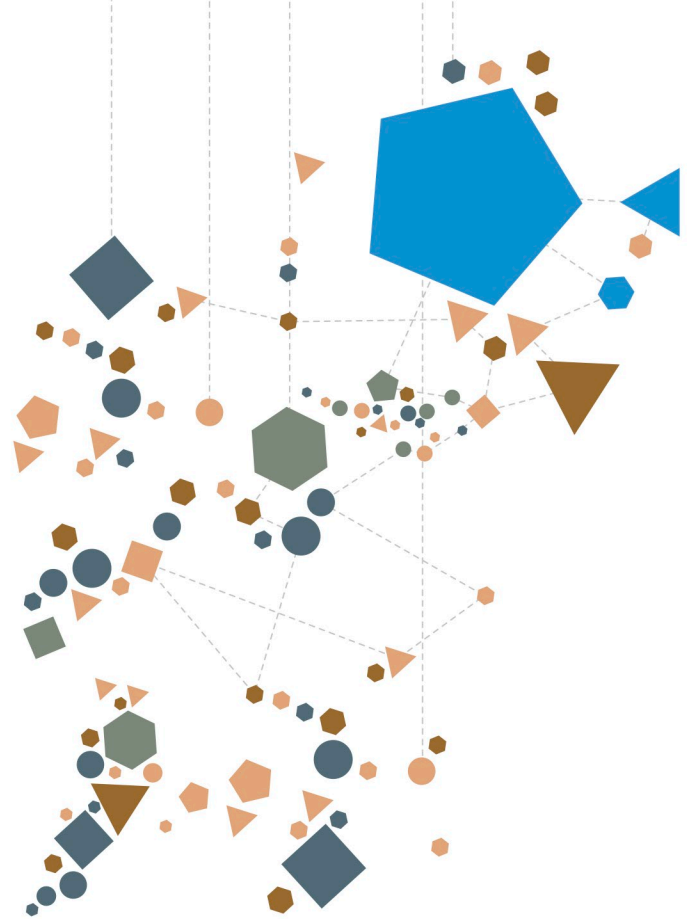
Chris Grove
ESCR-Net (ex-officio)

Mary Ann Manja Bayang
(Philippines)

ESCR-Net is its members: model of work, core principles, and theory of change

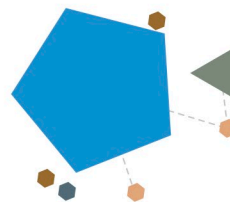
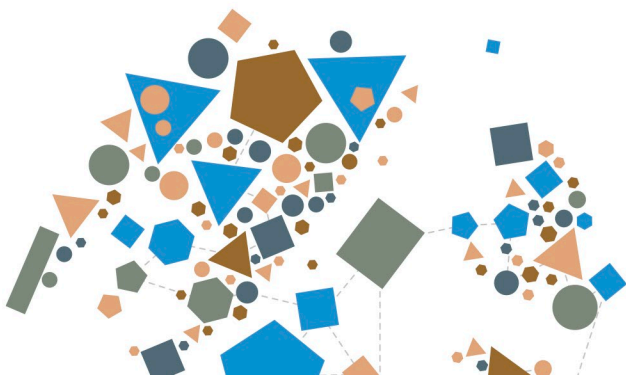
The origins of ESCR-Net can be traced to a small group of social movements, human rights NGOs and advocates who came together in shared recognition that many of the injustices they were confronting were increasingly global in nature and rooted in common structural causes. Established in 2003, the Network emerged as a space for members to connect their struggles across regions to address these often systemic challenges. Reflecting an understanding of human rights as grounded in and realized through peoples' lived experiences and struggles, members defined the centrality of social movements, an intersectional approach foregrounding gender analysis, along with regional and gender balance, as core guiding principles for ESCR-Net. These core principles have been the pillars of our member-led model of work, informing four primary strategies central to ESCR-Net's theory of change:

- **Solidarity**, grounded in a recognition that “your struggle is my struggle,” manifests in collective mobilizations via ESCR-Net's System of Solidarity to defend members facing threat or attack, taking up their broader human rights demands, countering the political economy of violence and racism, and facilitating member-to-member strategic support.
- **Mutual learning** via cross-regional sharing of experiences, strategies and lessons is facilitated through grassroots leaders' exchanges, strategic litigation workshops and our Caselaw Database, security and protection workshops, and multilingual webinars. Solidarity and mutual learning nurture relationships of trust and foster movement-building, which are foundational to the other two elements of our theory of change.
- **Shared analysis** of the global conditions and historical trajectories undermining human rights that is guided by resisting communities is integral to defining issues, strategies, and inclusive demands for systemic change, as captured in our Common Charter for Collective Struggle, Global Call to Action in response to COVID-19, Collective Position on Data for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, collective demands for a new global social pact on care, and series of popular education comics on corporate capture of government institutions and decision-making.
- **Collective action** – drawing on the power of over 300 diverse members across 75 countries to make human rights and social justice a reality for all – involves responding to the fallout of the pandemic and imagining into being a ‘new normal’, advocating for effective regulation and remedy, challenging illegitimate and unsustainable debt as an impediment to societies grounded in care for people and planet, intervening in key legal cases, confronting corporate capture, mobilizing for climate justice, and centering the visions of people's movements in all collective efforts.



Our seven-person Board is elected every three years from and by members, based on our core principles. ESCR-Net working groups, a primary vehicle through which members operationalize shared objectives, currently include: Corporate Accountability (CAWG), Economic Policy (EPWG), Environment and ESCR (ESCR WG), Monitoring of ESCR (MWG), Social Movements (SMWG), Strategic Litigation (SLWG), and Women and ESCR (WESCR WG). Members have increasingly prioritized utilizing the diverse and collective strength of the Network to address the complexity of interconnected challenges and crises. Many initiatives are now cross-working group, including struggles to secure human rights related to land and climate justice; confront corporate capture of government institutions and decision-making; and advance ESCR in situations of conflict.

The point of departure for all collective work is the lived experience, analysis, and leadership of those disproportionately affected by and resisting inequality, impoverishment, injustice, and environmental destruction – particularly women and girls. This baseline informs all Network processes and policies – from the development of political positions to the formation of governance structures to planning for strategy meetings and workshops. Via this necessarily never-ending effort to live into our core principles and create this horizontal and radically democratic space dedicated to a common humanity and the dignity of all, ESCR-Net practices and models a prefigurative politics of the type of world we want to build and the polity that we want to become.



Collective Work Case Study: Securing a loss and damage fund at COP27

Led by social movements, Indigenous Peoples, and allied NGOs – with grassroots women leaders at the forefront, members of the Environment & ESCR Working Group (ESCER WG) continued to push for concrete advances on loss and damage rooted in human rights and a feminist intersectional approach, as well as elevating a systemic analysis of the root causes of climate change and the resulting intensification of global inequalities. To this end, over the course of 2022, ESCER WG members deepened shared analysis and common demands through participation and leadership in numerous UN spaces and processes in preparation for the twenty-seventh session of the Conference of the Parties (COP27) to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in Egypt, advocacy opportunities with allies, and internal strategy/mutual learning exchanges. Via co-organizing an in-person retreat with the new Special Rapporteur on climate change (May 2022), the 56th session of the subsidiary bodies in Bonn (June 2022), actions supporting the ‘Kick Big Polluters Out’ campaign (October 2022), the African Peoples’ Counter COP (October 2022), among many other strategic spaces, members amplified their vision of climate justice grounded in human rights and people’s solutions over corporate interests and profits.

Members also collaborated with the Human Rights Climate Change Working Group and the Loss and Damage Collaboration (of which we are now a part, co-coordinating the human rights workstream) to develop the briefing “What Does a Human Rights-Based Approach to Addressing Loss and Damage Look Like? Key Demands for the Outcomes of COP27 at the Intersection of Loss and Damage and Human Rights.” As one of the principal demands amplified in the briefing, members call for new and additional finance for loss and damage that is needs- and rights-centered, public and grant-based, and gender-responsive. The landscape for amplifying and leveraging shared demands at COP27 was obviously fraught. In addition to contending with corporate capture of this Coke-sponsored multilateral



space, we had grave concerns regarding the human rights situation in Egypt. However, for Egyptian human rights defenders who are not imprisoned, COP27 constituted a narrow opening to shine a light on the repression faced in Egypt, as well as other countries. With the Global Climate Legal Defense Network (CliDef) and the Egyptian Commission for Rights and Freedom (ECRF), we co-hosted a preparatory workshop on legal protection and defense, safety, and security (October 2022).



A diverse delegation of over 30 ESCR-Net members – Indigenous Peoples, movement, and feminist leaders – ultimately carried out highly coordinated advocacy at COP27 (November 2022). Via a well-attended formal side event, collaboration in formal constituencies, leadership in key alliances and cross-constituency actions, and engagement with negotiators, members amplified collective demands on loss and damage rooted in human rights, denounced false solutions, and stood up for defenders, insisting there can be no climate justice without human rights. After 30 years of delay and inaction, States parties at COP27 agreed to establish a Loss and Damage Fund, constituting a first step towards redress and accountability for the human rights harm caused to millions confronting climate impacts on the frontlines. While acknowledging myriad challenges ahead, members celebrated this historic commitment to a fund as a testament to our model of work – to building collective power to confront systemic challenges by connecting our seemingly diverse struggles and centering social movements.

The presence of the Network was very important, even though we know the space is complex, and there are deep inequalities in relation to the participation of civil society. We made our voices heard. We were able to connect with other organizations, movements, and Indigenous Peoples. Important links were established; we'll have to focus on follow up. We positioned ourselves in relation to climate justice and self-determination – these are elements of systemic change that we were able to amplify. - Francisco Rocael, Consejo de Pueblos Wuxhtaj, Guatemala



I'm very happy that I was part of the ESCR-Net team that participated in person. This wasn't my first participation at COP, I have been to a few, but participating as part of this group was important for me and my organization. This has to do with building capacities and knowledge, linking issues related to climate justice and human rights. - Hala Murad, Dibeen Association for Environmental Development, Jordan

Impacts of Collective Work and Members' Reflections

Integral to alternative development models grounded in climate justice and care, members elevated human rights-based demands for debt justice and accountable development finance at the Global Week of Action for Justice and Debt Cancellation, the World Bank Group/International Monetary Fund Annual Meetings, and the Finance in Common Summit. Members' advocacy at the Summit helped to secure the first "Public Development Banks Statement on Human Rights and Human Rights Based Approach" – developed and then endorsed by multiple banks – as well as greater space for civil society participation in formal sessions for the Summit.

We are interrogating how exactly we can make sure that every sector in this world is working towards the alternatives that we are seeking. Our food systems, how do we get them back? How do we reclaim our health systems? We are looking at alternatives that are people-centered, we are looking at alternatives that can protect our food systems, that can protect our environment, that are climate just, that can ensure economies are regenerative, that can look at the redistribution of care work. - Mela Chiponda, Zimbabwe

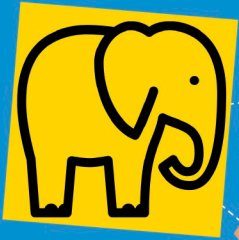


Grassroots women leaders popularized feminist demands and solutions for climate and economic justice centering care. Key spaces included the third Women's Global Strike, with an op-ed in El País outlining members' vision for a new social pact on care; the sixty-sixth session of the Commission on the Status of Women; and a popular education workshop on debt and care at the Feminist Forum parallel to the UN Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean Regional Conference on Women.



Galvanizing cross-regional participation at the eighth session of the UN open-ended intergovernmental working group (IGWG) drafting the treaty on business and human rights, members used advocacy trips and participation in regional gatherings in Colombia and Chile, Thailand, and Ghana to successfully engage more progressive Global South governments. Members' leadership – including powerful interventions by grassroots women leaders – was key to safeguarding the integrity of the process and contributed to several States championing our demands.

A strong communications strategy at the eighth session of the IGWG brought our comic series “The Power of the 99% to Stop Corporate Capture” to life, naming capture of the UN as the ‘elephant in the room’ on buttons, postcards, and in a video animation used on social media. Several allies and States took up this narrative framing and, for the first time, the final report of the session explicitly addressed the need to prevent capture of the treaty process.



Condemning the systemic racism at the root of vaccine inequity, members delivered an urgent appeal to the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination and published a subsequent op-ed in OpenGlobalRights pushing for action. The Committee issued a strong statement denouncing unequal distribution reflective of colonial-era racial hierarchies, and the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism urged for a waiver of the Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights, echoing members' demands.



There is a lot to be said about our collective action generally, since, in a lot of contexts, collaboration doesn't exist, more attention is on individual action. Intervening collectively is incredible. I was also thinking about our COVID work, the exceptional expertise shared was incredible [...] It was powerful having people open to hearing input from people in different contexts. This work was an example of building on the diversity of our expertise. Members are able to learn about lived experiences in other countries. This brings a practicality to litigation that is quite unique and ultimately strengthens cases and changes how Courts engage with issues. - Mandi Mudarikwa, Amnesty International, South Africa



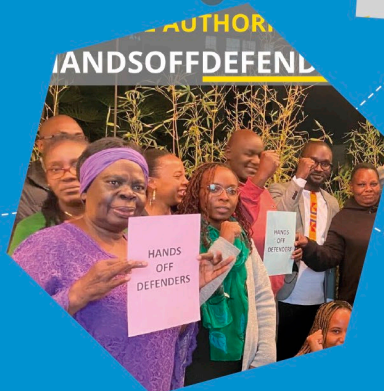
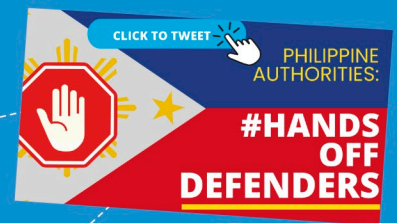
Grassroots women leaders from Indigenous Peoples and other land-dependent communities played an integral role in the negotiation process for the Post-2020 Global Diversity Framework, helping to secure strong rights-based language within the landmark Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework. Explicit recognition of Indigenous Peoples' Rights, including in relation to land/tenure and self-determination, was a critical step towards preventing false solutions and violations in the name of conservation.

The United Nations' recognition is a very important call for States to recognize that the environment involves essential elements without which our existence on the planet would not be possible. Most of the Constitutions in the continent already recognize the healthy environment as a right, and citizens claim it daily through different mechanisms. The step taken undoubtedly strengthens these efforts and advances us towards the construction of societies where this right is a reality. - Liliana Avila, Interamerican Association for Environmental Defense, Colombia.

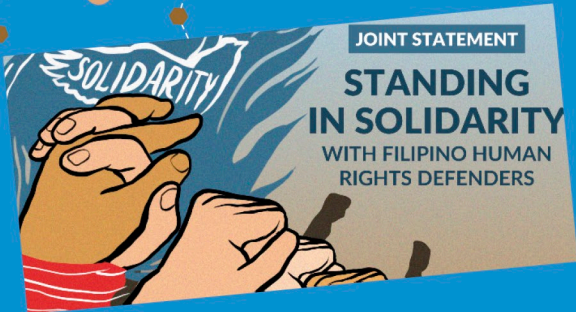


ESCR-Net played an active role in the Global Coalition for the Right to a Healthy Environment, supporting strategic communications, advocacy in UN spaces, and various actions, including helping to mobilize over 1350 organizational signatures from 75 countries for a global call in September 2020, leading to the international recognition of the right to a safe, clean and sustainable environment by the UN General Assembly in July 2022. Working to secure progressive interpretation and implementation of this right, members collectively intervened in La Oroya vs. Peru before the Inter-American Court of Human Rights.

ESCR-Net's System of Solidarity (SOS) mobilized in defense of members facing violent repression in Algeria, Colombia, Guatemala, India, the Philippines, South Africa, and beyond. Ten human rights defenders in the Philippines – including six from member Karapatan – were acquitted of illegitimate perjury charges, a win they attributed to the power of international solidarity.

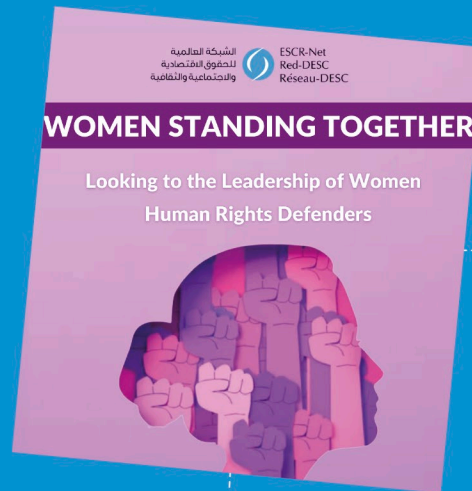


This is to express our deepest appreciation and thanks to you all and those in the international community who kept watch, pushed messages, and made things happen for this legal victory. In our view, you played a very important role in this – a testament to the power of international solidarity – and how we win sometimes, and how we take these wins forward! - Cristina Palabay, Karapatan, Philippines



Members submitted third-party interventions in two cases before the European Court of Human Rights, foregrounding climate justice perspectives and States' duty to prevent climate change-related human rights harm and effectively regulate businesses (*Duarte Agostinho and Others v. Portugal and 32 Others* and *Verein KlimaSeniorinnen Schweiz and Others v. Switzerland*). The cases are now pending before the Grand Chamber and will provide the Court with its first opportunity to pronounce itself on climate change-related human rights claims.

Women human rights defenders' (WHRDs) analysis – on the common threats they face, their perpetrators, obstacles to security and/or access to justice, and holistic community-based strategies to stay safe and support others – informed the report “Women Standing Together: Looking to the Leadership of Women Human Rights Defenders”. This strengthens our collective analysis of the root causes of systemic repression, contributing to a more gender transformative System of Solidarity (SOS) that is responsive to the situations of diverse WHRDs.

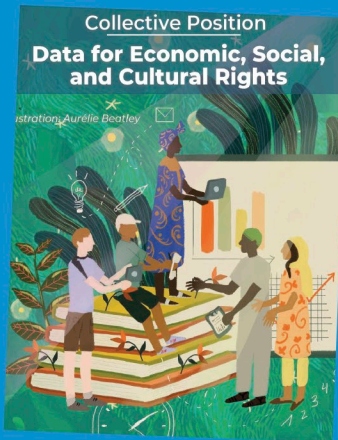


Referring to the series of mutual learning exchanges for women human rights defenders: I think this is a fundamental space to expand debate informed by a gender perspective, which contributes to our direct work with women defenders. - Daniele Duarte, Justiça Global, Brazil

Five grassroots groups built a powerful corrective to “official” data and narratives via our first community-led research project focused on corporate capture and women’s rights related to land, housing, and territory, which concluded at the end of 2022. These members and their communities are now positioned to use this research to claim and defend their rights, seek remedy in the case of violations, and strengthen local campaigns while contributing to global advocacy and campaigning via ESCR-Net.



Articulating principles that are foundational to “good” data, members launched the Collective Position on Data for Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights, which is serving as a basis for advocacy vis-à-vis regional and global human rights mechanisms and in key civil society spaces. A cross regional group of members drew on the position in a collective intervention on personal data protection, digital IDs, and social security filed before the Constitutional Court of Serbia.

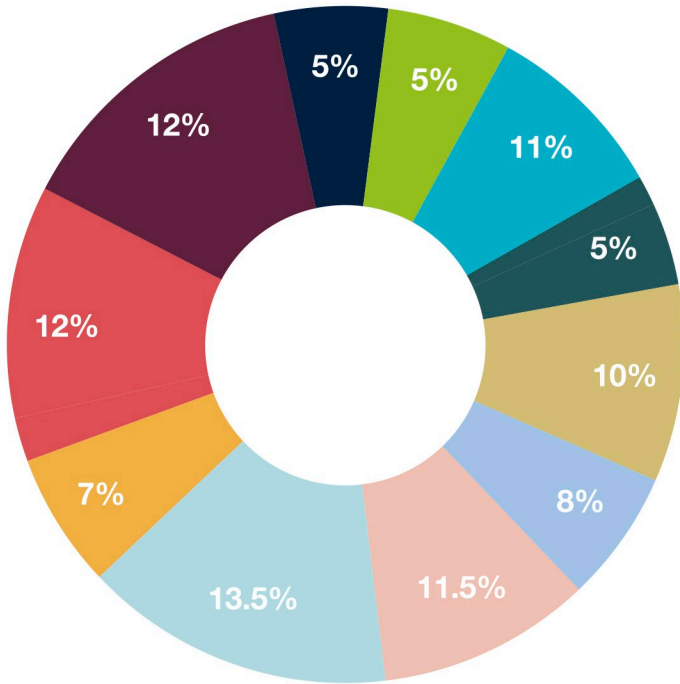
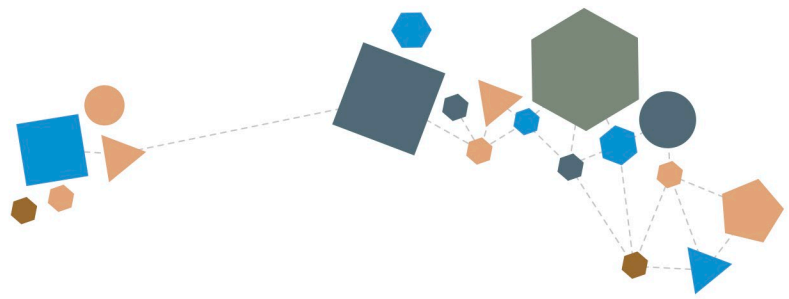


What has been really interesting is how responsive the Network was when we started talking about specific issues and cases (such as the one on social cards). It’s very important to note this responsiveness, how quickly we can discuss issues together, thinking about ways to work together on different cases. This is not important just because of the case, but also, it sends an important message to domestic institutions at the same time as strengthening advocacy, support, and recognition internationally. - Danilo Čurčić, A11, Serbia



Despite the increasing challenges and deteriorating state of our world - on environmental, economic, political and social fronts - we honor and celebrate the work of Indigenous Peoples’ groups, social movements, community leaders, human rights defenders, and civil society groups for their perseverance and commitment towards social and environmental justice, even at the bleakest of hours. We are confident that this will inspire and contribute to the required systemic change.

ESCR-Net Financial Information



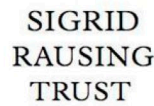
Fiscal Year 2022

- Administration
- Campaign and Membership
- Social Movements
- Corporate Accountability
- Environment and ESCR
- Development
- Economic Policy
- Monitoring
- System of Solidarity
- Strategic Litigation
- Women and ESCR

Total Income: \$2,013,545 / Total Expense: \$2,041,013

THANK YOU!

By mobilizing in solidarity actions, engaging in mutual learning, deepening shared analysis and common demands, and, ultimately, advancing collective action, ESCR-Net members have made important advances towards a reality of human rights and social justice for all. ESCR-Net thanks the many members and allies who dedicated immense time and effort to collective work in 2022, as well as those who shared financial resources to help advance ESCR-Net’s work, including:



Learn more

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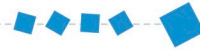
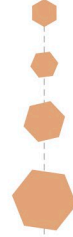
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