

Participation (P)

Enhancing participation and protecting civic space



PUBLIC MOBILIZATION



Global campaigns

11.5 million followers on social media

(across all UN Human Rights platforms, 7.6% more than in 2021)

108 feature stories

(UN Human Rights website and social media)

4,300 persons from **158** countries expressed support (by sharing a photo on social media with a filter inspired by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights on the opening of the year-long Human Rights 75 campaign in December 2022)

33 active personalities (profiles of social media influencers supporting UN Human Rights messaging on digital platforms)

221 video stories

(including video messages from the High Commissioner)



In the field

805 advocacy campaigns

Data coverage in **93** countries (226% increase, compared to 41 countries in 2015, in global reporting on killings and enforced disappearances of human rights defenders, journalists and trade unions)

2,789 press releases/statements

INFORMATION AND OUTREACH MATERIALS



Publications

Over **290,000** publications/advocacy materials distributed (in more than 60 countries)

30% increase in visitors to UN Human Rights website (since the launch of the new website in March 2022)

BUILDING PARTNERSHIPS



With CSOs

6,417 women's rights organizations

860 youth-led organizations

781 organizations of persons with disabilities

ENGAGEMENT WITH UN HUMAN RIGHTS MECHANISMS



HRC and UPR Voluntary Trust Funds

19 delegates of **16** States supported to attend UPR reviews and/or HRC outcome adoptions

51 requests processed by the HRC Help Desk for Small States (during regular sessions of the HRC)



Intimidation and reprisals against those cooperating with the UN

New cases/developments from **42** countries



Social Forum

Over **500** participants attended online and in person (focusing on good practices, lessons learned and challenges in the implementation of the International Decade for Action on "Water for Sustainable Development," 2018-2028)

Ensuring the meaningful participation of children and youth in Asia in climate justice

When a young climate activist from Pakistan joined other children and youth from across Asia at a Regional Dialogue on Climate Justice, in May, little did she know that her country would soon be hit by the most severe flooding in its recent history. Scientists believe it was likely caused by human-induced climate change.

The activist was selected by her peers to share their collective ideas and experiences at the event.

The first “Asia Regional Dialogue on Climate Justice for Children, Youth and Future Generations,” held from 28 to 30 May, focused on climate change and its impacts on young people, their hopes and dreams and how they could become agents of change.

Co-convened by the OHCHR Regional Office for South-East Asia, the UNEP Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, UNICEF and other local partners, the Regional Dialogue provided a platform for children and youth to learn, inspire one another and discuss how to engage in meaningful climate action.

The event gathered together more than 986 children and youth between nine and 35 years of age, who had shared their experiences and ideas in 31 national consultations held in 12 Asian countries, including Bangladesh, Cambodia, India, Indonesia, Lao People’s Democratic Republic, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, the Philippines, South Korea, Thailand and Viet Nam. The Regional Dialogue enabled the participants to discuss the ideas, plans and goals that emerged from those enriching consultations.

“[Children] are already suffering some of the worst effects of environmental destruction and climate change,” said Katia Chirizzi, Deputy Representative of the UN Human Rights Office for South-East Asia. “The Regional Dialogue sought to ensure that the best interests of children and youth are placed at the core of relevant policies and that they...can contribute and participate meaningfully in any decisions that affect them.”

“[T]his conference and these discussions...mean so much to young people like me and...people across the region who see this venue [as an opportunity] to influence reality and build a movement to create a better reality and a better understanding of our world,” said Louise Mabulo, while sharing her experience when Typhoon

Ulysses hit her home in the Philippines, in 2020, forcing her and her family to flee for their lives. The Philippines is one of the countries in Asia that is most adversely affected by climate change.

“May the fire of hope that sparked in us during this event keep us going as we continue to tackle climate change and climate justice,” said a nine-year-old boy from South Korea. The country’s capital city, Seoul, was subjected to the heaviest rain in a century, in August, which experts confirmed was due to climate change. “The protection of our planet is an intergenerational responsibility. We merely inherited this home from past generations. We must take good care of it or [improve it] so that the next generations can also enjoy it,” he said.



The main banner of the Asia Regional Dialogue on Climate Justice for Children, Youth and Future Generations. © OHCHR, UNDP, UNEP, UNICEF

Highlights of pillar results

Participation (P)

The participation of rights holders and their representative organizations, reflecting the diversity of society and ensuring those most underrepresented are involved, is key to realizing the promise of human rights for all people. When civil society engages freely and actively in policy development and implementation, policies are more informed, effective, efficient and sustainable. Furthermore, civil society is

generally the closest point of assistance for victims of human rights violations and provide legal, medical, social and financial support. Major obstacles to civil society participation exist at all levels, including within UN forums, and shrinking civic space creates a major gap in the promotion and protection of human rights. While new technologies facilitate the expansion of civil society networks,

they also create new avenues for control of civil society movements and speech, often under the pretext of security. UN Human Rights is uniquely placed to monitor and protect civil society space and the international human rights mechanisms rely heavily on civil society to collect information and support the implementation of their recommendations.

PILLAR RESULTS / SHIFTS / SDGs

P1 – ENABLING NORMATIVE FRAMEWORK for civil society

Stronger laws, policies and practices protect the right to participate and civic space, including online. The environment for civil society is increasingly safe and enabling.



RESULTS / SPOTLIGHTS



OHCHR supported the organization of and participated in the pre-COP 1 and COP 1 meetings of the **Escazú Agreement**, during which a **resolution on HRDs was adopted**. In addition, participants decided on a **road map to draft a Plan of Action on article 9 of the Agreement**, which could become one of the most important regional policies on protecting environmental HRDs. That resolution led to the organization of the “First Annual Forum on Human Rights Defenders in Environmental Matters in Latin America and the Caribbean,” which was co-hosted by OHCHR, UNEP and ECLAC. The Forum provided a space for dialogue regarding the protection of environmental HRDs and gathered together authorities, judges, prosecutors, human rights specialists, NHRIs, HRDs, Indigenous Peoples and community representatives, with a view to discussing the Plan of Action.

In **Thailand**, OHCHR and the UNCT submitted comments and recommendations on the draft second NAP on Business and Human Rights, including on environmental and climate change-related issues, as well as the **protection of environmental HRDs**. The Ministry of Justice is finalizing the second NAP, which is expected to be launched in mid-2023.

In **Libya**, following a number of cases of surveillance and arbitrary detention of civil society representatives, OHCHR collaborated with the Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association to support HRDs in the preparation of a **draft law on proceedings, collecting evidence, investigations and the protection of victims**. This was instrumental to introducing the concept of civil society-run referral mechanisms for HRDs.

In the **Democratic Republic of the Congo**, the United Nations Joint Human Rights Office (UNJHRO) undertook advocacy and provided technical assistance to the Parliament for the preparation of a **draft law on the protection of the rights of HRDs**, which was adopted by the National Assembly, in December. OHCHR’s sustained advocacy campaign included the delivery of workshops and the mobilization of NHRIs, CSOs and HRDs and other relevant partners to ensure their voices were heard. The campaign culminated in the enactment of the Maniema Edict for the protection of HRDs in early

November. Ongoing advocacy will focus on the **draft laws on access to information and peaceful demonstrations**, which are tabled for the National Assembly's session from March to June 2023.

OHCHR increased its advocacy regarding the application of an **HRBA to the use of digital technologies**, including in a **landmark report to the Human Rights Council on surveillance technologies**. It also shared key messages related to major threats to civil society activism, such as the widespread marketing of surveillance tools, the imposition of restrictions of encryption and the promotion of surveillance of public spaces and monitoring of social media. In doing so, it contributed to a growing global awareness about the multifaceted human rights implications of digital technology. Further, OHCHR engaged in hearings on the use of surveillance at the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) and the EU Parliament and reviewed and analysed national legislation on human rights and the digital space.

P2 – PROTECTION of CIVIL SOCIETY ACTORS

The UN system and international, regional and national mechanisms provide increased, timely and effective protection to civil society organizations and individuals, including from reprisals.



In **Mexico**, OHCHR contributed to **strengthening the capacities of the Mechanism and authorities responsible for protecting HRDs and journalists** to comply with international human rights standards and increasing public awareness about the central role played by HRDs/journalists in democratic societies. This was particularly relevant in light of the difficulty in holding dialogues between civil society and the Government in the context of the pandemic. In August, OHCHR proposed that the Governing Board of the Mechanism form a Working Group for the Strengthening of the Protection Mechanism. The Working Group is composed of different government institutions and a consortium of 15 NGOs ("Espacio OSC"). The Office prepared draft guidelines for its operation and a tool for monitoring and evaluation. OHCHR's findings and recommendations were fully accepted by the Government and were also referred to in the ruling handed down by the Inter-American Court for Human Rights (IACtHR) in the case of the *Family of Digna Ochoa y Placido v. Mexico*, as part of a plan to reinforce the Mechanism. OHCHR will continue to provide technical assistance and mediation in the two-year-long evaluation process (formally established in September).

In **Madagascar**, the HRA contributed to the establishment of nine **regional human rights observatories** in Antananarivo, Antsiranana (Diego), Fianarantsoa, Mahajanga, Morondava, Sambava, Taolagnaro, Toamasina and Toliara. This was achieved in the context of the HRA's work with the Rary Aro Mada Project, funded by the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF), which includes engagement with youth HRDs, peacebuilders and civil society networks to facilitate information-sharing on human rights activism and the protection of HRDs. The observatories are fully functioning and the youth HRDs are active participants in civic space, empowered by their skills, networks and support from OHCHR. The Office regularly collected quantitative data on human rights violations to increase awareness about human rights trends in Madagascar. Data collected by the youth observatories addressed a gap in the collection of regular and reliable data on human rights violations in the country. Reports are shared through social media and with the Ministry of Justice, UN and national partners. As a result, responses to human rights concerns are better informed and more strategic.

OHCHR co-led the Generation Equality Action Coalition on Feminist Movements and Leadership. More specifically, the Office contributed to the development of the Coalition's working methods and accountability framework and the organization of events. It also continued strengthening the visibility of positive, inclusive narratives around gender equality through its communication campaign, "#IStandWithHer." Regional Gender Advisers in Central America and the Caribbean, Eastern Africa, the Middle East and Northern Africa and Western Africa supported the **establishment of networks and the capacity-building of WHRDs**.

P3 – PUBLIC SUPPORT for CIVIC SPACE

Business, policymakers and the public at large increasingly value and support civic space.



The **UN-EU High-level Policy Dialogue, “Protecting the safety of journalists, media freedom and pluralism in the European Union: Challenges and opportunities”** took place on 24 February. Approximately 100 attendees participated in the dialogue, both online and in person, including high-level representatives of UN bodies, all three EU institutions and the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, the Council of Europe, OSCE, member states, civil society, media actors, representatives of online platforms, academia and think tanks. It provided an opportunity for OHCHR to showcase its work and identify areas for cooperation and synergy between the UN and EU.

In **South Sudan**, the Human Rights Division of UNMISS took steps to sensitize the public through the radio talk show, **Know your rights**, on UN Radio Miraya. A total of 31 segments were aired that were facilitated by panels of experts composed of CSOs and government partners. The segments covered various topics, including the protection of victims and survivors of human rights violations, women’s empowerment, prolonged detention, the equal and effective participation of women in decision-making processes, equal access to education for persons living with disabilities and the role of the Government and CSOs in the implementation of transitional justice initiatives. The goal of the segments was to increase the community’s awareness about human rights issues and empower citizens to claim their rights, denounce violations and share early warning alerts with UNMISS to prevent human rights violations.

P4 – ASSISTANCE TO VICTIMS

Civil society assistance to victims of human rights violations is strengthened.



The **United Nations Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture (UNVFVT)** awarded 174 annual direct assistance grants, seven capacity-building grants and five emergency grants to rehabilitation centres and legal aid programmes in 92 countries, in all five of the world’s regions, thereby assisting more than 46,000 survivors of torture and their family members. During its fifty-sixth session (10 to 14 October) the UNVFVT Board of Trustees recommended strengthening this support in 2023 through 184 annual direct assistance grants and six capacity-building grants for CSOs, which will assist over 53,000 torture survivors in 90 countries.

The **United Nations Voluntary Trust Fund on Contemporary Forms of Slavery (UNVTFDFS)** awarded 43 direct assistance grants to rehabilitation centres, trade unions, shelters for victims and legal redress programmes in 33 countries, in all five of the world’s regions, thereby assisting more than 13,000 survivors of slavery. In addition, the Fund launched a Special Call for the Sahel region (Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger) to address the needs of survivors of traditional/descent-based slavery, under which nine grants were awarded in four countries to assist more than 4,400 slavery survivors. During its twenty-seventh session (28 November to 2 December), the UNVTFDFS Board of Trustees recommended strengthening this support in 2023 through 38 annual grants for CSOs, which will assist over 7,700 slavery survivors in 32 countries.

From 12 to 14 December, in Yemen, OHCHR facilitated a three-day consultation to **empower the National Union of Yemeni Disabled Associations in relation to CRPD**. Discussions focused on identifying issues of concern, intervention priorities and practical implementation mechanisms. In addition, OHCHR disseminated its recent thematic report on the situation of persons with disabilities and presented a short film it developed, which addresses the right to education of persons with disabilities. The sessions were attended by 28 participants, including eight women. The report was disseminated at an event organized by OHCHR to mark the International Day of Persons with Disabilities (4 December). The event was held in collaboration with the Ministry of Human Rights and was attended by 30 participants (six women, 24 men). It provided a unique forum for the exchange of views and experiences between associations of persons with disabilities and relevant authorities, including the State Handicap Care and Rehabilitation Fund.

P5 – CIVIC SPACE MONITORING

More systematic monitoring of the environment for civic space, including threats to it, takes place.



In **Nicaragua**, the Office focused on **monitoring and reporting on the human rights situation in order to protect HRDs**. OHCHR submitted two reports to the HRC, in March and September, and delivered two oral updates, in June and December. Following the submission of the report, in March, the High Commissioner for Human Rights reiterated that accountability measures needed to be strengthened for serious human rights violations. In response, the Council adopted resolution 49/3 to create a group of human rights experts for Nicaragua and reinforce the Office's work in the country. OHCHR and international NGOs advocated for the establishment of the group of human rights experts, which is promoting accountability measures and the verification of human rights violations to identify individual perpetrators wherever possible. The Office provided monthly flash reports about Nicaragua, which have been cited by international and national media outlets, thereby increasing the visibility of the situation of Nicaragua.

In **Honduras**, OHCHR significantly strengthened its work on civic space by developing and implementing **a comprehensive system for monitoring and documenting attacks against HRDs, journalists, demonstrators and other persons of interest**. This enabled OHCHR to identify 224 victims of attacks during 2022 and to coordinate emergency responses. Further, OHCHR contributed to preventing the misuse of criminal law against HRDs and those who exercise their right to freedom of expression in Honduras through an analysis designed to identify patterns and trends. The Office created several tools, including a documentation methodology that is based on case files related to criminalization and a file registration system that allows findings to be systematized, providing disaggregated data on types of victims, criminal charges and the contexts in which they are brought, arrest records and the exercise of the right of access to information by victims. The findings of this process were shared with the national HRD community at the National Meeting of HRDs, which took place from 27 to 28 February 2023, with the participation of approximately 200 Honduran HRDs, providing a platform to discuss the human rights situation in Honduras and generate proposals for concrete actions.

Expansion of the data coverage for SDG 16.10.1 (killings and other attacks against journalists, human rights defenders and trade unionists) continued with the establishment of national data collection mechanisms in Kenya and the Philippines. The NHRI and the National Statistics Office of the Philippines agreed to recognize the NHRI as the national custodian of SDG Indicator 16.10.1. The UN Joint Programme for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights in the Philippines (UNJPP) utilizes this Indicator as a part of its results-based monitoring and evaluation framework. In Kenya, the adopted methodology for data collection on SDG 16.10.1 incorporates citizen-generated data and envisages the designation of the NHRI as the national custodian of SDG Indicator 16.10.1.

In raising awareness about the **negative human rights impacts of Internet disruptions**, OHCHR engaged with different actors, including academic organizations, tech companies, UN partners and civil society, to expand their capacities to process data on shutdowns by gathering real-time data on countries undergoing apparent shutdowns. As a result, OHCHR and human rights mechanisms publicly commented on at least 22 Internet shutdowns around the world, including in India, Iran and Kazakhstan.

P6 – PEOPLE HAVE a VOICE

The voices of people affected by decisions, particularly victims and those who face discrimination, are more clearly heard.



OHCHR strengthened its **engagement with youth**, including through the organization of an all youth workshop, in collaboration with UNESCO and OSGEY, in the margins of the ECOSOC Youth Forum, held in April. During the workshop, participants discussed how education can contribute towards just, sustainable and peaceful futures for all. In addition, the **Youth Rights Advocacy Toolkit was developed**. The Toolkit focuses on young people in situations of vulnerability and seeks to empower them to stand up for their human rights. It is anticipated that it will be implemented at the country level in 2023.

In November, OHCHR supported the organization of and participated in the annual Southern Africa Human Rights Defenders Summit in Lusaka, Zambia. The theme of the Summit was “A journey to sustainability: Protecting civic space through strengthening institutions for and networks of environmental and human rights defenders in Southern Africa.” More than 200 HRDs from across Southern Africa were in attendance. OHCHR used the opportunity to launch an **advocacy brief on *Protecting Human Rights and Civic Space Online in Southern Africa***. The brief provides an overview of the online civic space landscape and the challenges faced with respect to content regulation and censorship, surveillance, Internet connectivity and disruptions and makes recommendations on how civil society, States and private entities can address associated risks in accordance with international human rights law. OHCHR will use the brief in its work to encourage the revision of laws, policies and practices in the region. Further, during the Summit, the **Southern Africa Women Human Rights Defenders Network (SAHRDN) was formally launched** on the International Day for Women Human Rights Defenders (29 November). This is an initiative that OHCHR has supported since 2019. The Network will work to ensure that gender-specific responses are strengthened as most mechanisms in the region are not exclusively designed for WHRDs. It is also a recognition that specific responses are needed to address the particular risks and forms of violence that WHRDs face in conducting their work.

The **United Nations Voluntary Fund for Indigenous Peoples** supported the participation of 126 Indigenous representatives, including 69 women and 57 men, in 11 UN meetings and processes relevant to Indigenous issues, such as the eleventh session of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (PFII) (20 grantees from 19 countries), the fifteenth session of the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (EMRIP) (25 grantees from 20 countries) and the United Nations Expert Workshop on Enhancing the Participation of Indigenous Peoples in the Work of the HRC (24 grantees from 21 countries). Grantees of the Fund also received preparatory training delivered in English, French, Spanish and Russian to enable them to fully and effectively participate in these processes. Further, the Secretariat of the Fund provided the necessary technical and substantive guidance to the grantees to strategically enhance their advocacy work. Under the Senior Fellowship Programme, the shadowing training programme continued in 2022. A total of 32 former Indigenous and Minority Fellows from 27 countries, including 14 women, were posted to OHCHR headquarters and field presences for up to two years.

With the support of UN Human Rights, in the **Republic of Moldova**, 22 human rights activists and representatives of groups at risk of exclusion from the Transnistrian region completed an 18-month **human rights capacity-building programme**. As a result of the programme, four advocacy papers and one video animation were developed and submitted by human rights activists to duty bearers to address human rights issues and concerns in relation to persons with disabilities, survivors of domestic violence, Roma and persons living with HIV/AIDS. In addition, during April and May, human rights activists from the Transnistrian region organized and conducted 19 human rights awareness-raising trainings and informational sessions for 280 representatives of groups at particular risk, including persons with disabilities and family members, persons from the Roma community, persons living with HIV/AIDS and women who experienced GBV. Participants increased their knowledge and practical skills related to the application of an HRBA and relevant regulatory frameworks, international standards and human rights obligations.

Senegal: Civil society and human rights defenders mobilize for a transparent election

“As human rights defenders, it is important that we help mobilize young people to become more involved in defending their civil and political rights,” said Jaly Badiane, a Senegalese human rights activist and blogger.

Badiane was part of Senegal Vote, a “civi-tech” initiative that combined citizen engagement and ICT to encourage participation in the country’s recent election, especially among younger people. The initiative was led by the Wa Mbedmi Association (“those in the street” in Wolof), a non-profit dedicated to participatory citizenship.

“[T]he Wa Mbedmi Association... challenges those in power and engages in collaborative and community dynamics,” Badiane said. “The goal of our initiative is to make relevant electoral information understandable, in a language that is accessible to a large number of voters.”

To guarantee the fairness of the 2022 elections in Senegal, human rights defenders and CSOs worked to ensure free, fair and transparent elections. One of those was the Women’s Watch Platform for Peace and Security, known as Ètu Jamm (Peace Space in Wolof), which is an election monitoring group composed of 50 Senegalese and pan-African women’s CSOs that is coordinated by Femmes Africa Solidarité (FAS).

Ètu Jamm monitored and observed the election from 30 July to 1 August. According to Coumba Fall Venn, Director of the Pan-African Centre for Gender, Peace and Development and the FAS Regional Director of Programmes, Ètu Jamm served as “an early warning and rapid response mechanism to possible unrest or other forms of violence during electoral processes.” Its establishment was “inspired by [Security Council resolution 1325](#) and the African Union Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa.”

Ètu Jamm and Senegal Vote were supported by the UN Human Rights Regional Office for West Africa. OHCHR “strengthened the capacities of election observers through trainings on human rights, gender and elections,” said Mouhamadou Sow, a Programme Analyst for the Office. “OHCHR provided two training sessions over two days to a group of over 100 observers from different parts of the country, who were deployed by Ètu Jamm to monitor parliamentary elections.”



Mouhamadou Sow, OHCHR Programme Analyst, speaks to Emmanuel Baloucoune, a volunteer in charge of election observation at the Demba Diop Stadium voting centre, and Jaly Badiane of the Senegal Vote initiative. © Habibou Dia/OHCHR

Senegal Vote undertook online monitoring before and during the elections and young people were given online tools and content they could use before election day. It also deployed volunteer observers, primarily in the 14 regions of Senegal, who provided regular feedback on the conduct of the election with images and videos.

During the elections, Ètu Jamm deployed 60 women observers and 20 journalists, who monitored the elections at 350 polling stations in Dakar and in the regions. At the polling stations, many women voters asked women monitors for guidance about the process and were reassured that they had the right to enter the polling stations to cast their votes. The interventions of Ètu Jamm and Senegal Vote contributed to an election day with few incidents of violence, both online and offline.



At the Demba Diop Stadium voting centre in Dakar, Senegal, a voter puts her ballot paper in a box at polling station number 1.

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