



Topic: Youth in Action: Successful Digital Strategies to Navigate a Closing Civic Space

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Key Takeaways [Background](#)

Digital technologies have expanded opportunities for civic participation while also creating new avenues for repression. This peer-learning session explored how activists across different regions are responding to growing digital restrictions, shrinking civic space and emerging protection needs, drawing on experiences from Eastern Europe, South Asia and Africa.

[Digitalisation is reshaping both civic action and repression](#)

Governments are using digitalisation, surveillance and online restrictions to limit civic space.

Online repression including cyberattacks, smear campaigns and disinformation often result in offline consequences, including intimidation, legal action and self-censorship.

Activists in exile are increasingly targeted through transnational repression, with pressure extending to family members in their home countries.

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Protection requires long-term investment, not only emergency responses

- One-off digital security training is not sufficient; support should be tailored and continuous.
- Prevention should be combined with rapid response mechanisms, including legal, psychosocial and technical assistance.
- International organisations can support partners by promoting good digital security practices and facilitating peer learning across regions.

Youth movements are reshaping civic participation

- Recent youth-led protests in Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and Nepal were built on years of mobilisation rather than emerging spontaneously.
- Social media has become an essential tool for organising where traditional media are perceived as compromised.
- Young activists continue to face digital surveillance, political exclusion and limited institutional protection.

Countering disinformation strengthens democratic participation

- Experiences from Cameroon highlighted the growing impact of hate speech, fake news and internet shutdowns during elections.
- Fact-checking initiatives, digital tools and voter education can help strengthen informed civic participation.
- Cross-regional exchanges allow organisations to share practical solutions and adapt successful approaches.

Recommendations

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- Provide **tailored, long-term digital security support**, rather than relying solely on single trainings.
- Ensure **rapid access to legal, technical and psychosocial support** when activists face digital attacks.
- Develop stronger **digital and physical protection mechanisms** for young activists.
- Invest in **fact-checking, digital literacy and voter education** to counter disinformation and strengthen democratic participation.
- Promote **peer learning and knowledge exchange** between organisations and activists across different regions.

Highlighted initiatives/campaigns.

- **Africa Fact Checking Fellowship (Civic Watch)** – Training programme for young people, journalists and bloggers on fact-checking and countering misinformation.
- **VoteCam** – Digital platform developed to provide voter information and civic education ahead of elections in Cameroon.
- **237Check** - Cameroon's fact-checking platform)
- **#EndSARS** (Nigeria) – example of technology-enabled youth mobilisation.
- **Agora campaign** (Sri Lanka) – example of broad citizen mobilisation during the 2022 protests.

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