

## **Project title: Our Rights, Our Future!**

### **Context:**

The rise of populist and authoritarian political tendencies, visible over the past decade worldwide, has been amplified by the Covid-19 epidemic, as authorities have used the pandemic in many contexts to justify oppressive laws and policies and violations of civil and political rights. According to the Freedom House Report 2023, "a total of 52 countries have declined over the past year, while only 21 have improved. Today, about 38% of the global population lives in unfree countries, the highest percentage since 1997". The trend, highlighted by both the UN Human Rights Committee and the Special Rapporteur on freedom of association and peaceful protest, is to use contingent and temporary measures in the areas of health, environment and security (e.g. anti-terrorism, anti-launders, anti-terrorism, anti-terrorism, anti-cybercrime, etc.). anti-terrorism, anti-money laundering) to drastically and permanently curtail people's right to assemble and demonstrate and to hinder the activities of civil society organisations (through smear campaigns, administrative obstacles, laws criminalising and restricting civic space, restrictions on the registration or deregistration of organisations, SLAPP - Strategic Lawsuits Against Public Participation brought by public officials, companies and powerful individuals against journalists and activists, intimidation and arrests, restrictions on foreign funding). Increasingly recurrent is the use of digital tools of control and surveillance, targeted use of propaganda and manipulation of information. Globally, civil society faces criminalisation of its activities, persecution of activists and an unfavourable media climate that downplays the importance of democratic values and international instruments dedicated to their protection.

The needs expressed by civil society in the regions in which the project operates (Latin America, MENA, Sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia) are to strengthen the operational and security capacities of grassroots groups and organisations, with particular priority for young people from marginalised and discriminated groups, expand civil society coalitions, strengthen international instruments, foster spaces for participation and gain wider recognition for their work and commitment.

### **Project:**

The proposed action aims to improve the capacities and opportunities for a diverse and independent civil society (at national, regional and international level) to participate in civic and political spaces in a safe and effective manner, thereby contributing to the defence and promotion of human rights and the strengthening of democratic spaces and values. The action aims in particular to improve the conditions for participation, organisation and activism of young people, with priority given to unrepresented and discriminated groups. The action focuses on 9 target countries where consortium members have well-established links with activists and youth movements in contexts that have been classified as 'repressed' (Colombia, Eswatini, Tunisia, Palestine) or 'obstructed' (Brazil, Senegal, Kenya, Indonesia and Sri Lanka) according to international indicators, i.e. where civic freedoms of expression, assembly and association are significantly or severely restricted. As democracy is in decline around the world, populist movements and politicians seek to use young people to advance their political agenda or to intimidate political opponents, often pushing young people towards religious radicalisation or crime and gangs. The

Action will support youth activists and their movements to be advocates for change for social, climate, economic and human rights justice in their communities through three interrelated strategic areas of intervention 1) strengthening the transformative, organisational, operational and institutional capacities of youth organisations through participatory tools of training and financial support for direct action, regional and international exchange opportunities for peer-to-peer learning, production of research papers, communication materials and digital tools; 2) increasing the security of grassroots groups and activists and the capacity of their national networks/platforms to monitor violations of freedom of association and assembly, through a programme of training and cascading funding to design and activate risk mitigation and response mechanisms and collect and disseminate data on human rights violations that will feed into a digital map; 3) increasing opportunities for action in public and civic spaces and alliances to promote and protect the right to peaceful assembly and association, through awareness-raising, information and collective advocacy at the national, regional and international levels realised through funding directly managed by youth movements.

ORIGINAL TITLE	Our Rights, Our Future!
LOCATIONS	Colombia, Eswatini, Tunisia, Palestine, Brazil, Senegal, Kenya, Indonesia and Sri Lanka
DIRECT BENEFICIARIES	local organisations, informal and grassroots civic groups, registered NGOs, youth-led civil society organisations (3,000 young people), civil society (up to 500,000 people)
CAPOFILA	ForumCiv
PARTNERS	COSPE CENTRE FOR CIVIL AND POLITICAL RIGHTS
FUNDING BODY	European Union
DURATION	36 months