

ESCR-NET

Annual Report 2017

ESCR-Net — International Network for
Economic, Social & Cultural Rights



ESCR-NET EXISTS THROUGH THE COLLECTIVE ACTION OF MEMBERS ACROSS 75 COUNTRIES, COMMITTED TO BUILDING
"A GLOBAL MOVEMENT TO MAKE HUMAN RIGHTS AND SOCIAL JUSTICE A REALITY FOR ALL."

strategic openings

Human rights emerge from the dignity inherent to every person, as well as from the legitimate demand to participate in decisions affecting our lives, and the expectation of material well-being for our families and communities

Impoverishment and dispossession—particularly amid global abundance—are a failure of our economic system, magnified by overlapping inequalities and the growing concentration of power and wealth. Corporate capture of our government institutions and decision-making undermines public interest and democracy, sometimes prompting greater repression while failing to address climate change and other global challenges. Human rights offer a framework for common demands, reinforce the legitimacy of our struggles and—when embodied in law—provide tools to complement popular mobilization and targeted advocacy.

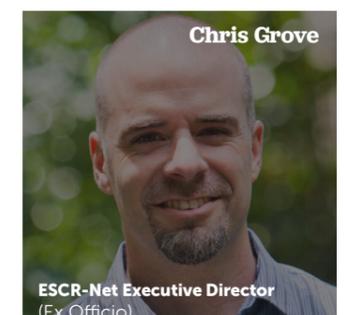
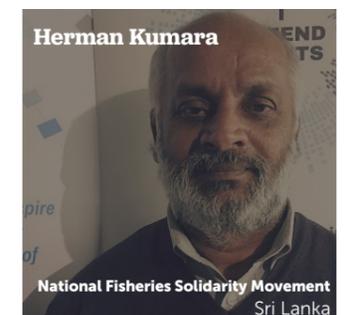
Upholding the centrality of the role of social movements and affected communities, ESCR-Net members are pushing the ongoing development of the human rights framework to address evolving global conditions. Whether confronting the impacts of climate change or entering into international economic agreements, the human rights obligations of States do not end at their borders. Parent companies have a responsibility for the actions of their subsidiaries, and the undue influence of corporations on government institutions need to be checked. In addition, confronting the substantive inequality represented by unpaid or underpaid care work is key to reinforce labor and social protections. Land has social, cultural and ecological values, and communities should be the ones determining its use under the stewardship of grassroots and women leaders. These understandings often collide with mainstream models of development, yet there are openings to shape public discourse as growing groups of people question existing social relations, strengthen accountability for systemic violations, and elevate alternatives—often long practiced by indigenous groups or emerging from poor and marginalized communities.

Members have worked together to use these openings to advance human rights and social justice, building on the outcomes of their Global Strategy Meeting in November 2016. Members prioritized new collective work on economic policy, with ESCR-Net hiring its first dedicated program coordinator for the Economic Policy Working Group. New emphasis was also placed on strategic communications, popularization and the role of community-led documentation. The Corporate Accountability Working Group facilitated a cross-regional strategy meeting of social movements and civil society organizations to confront corporate capture, beginning to identify model legislative and policy reforms and working to develop tools for advocates. The Women and ESCR Working Group brought together grassroots women leaders to exchange experiences working on labor issues, while facilitating targeted advocacy and legal interventions. Cross-working group actions to confront large-scale dispossession—drawing on the diverse strengths of members across every region—reinforced the recognition between members that “your struggle is my struggle.”

ESCR-Net exists through the collective action of members across 75 countries, committed to building “a global movement to make human rights and social justice a reality for all.” This cooperation is made possible by the contributions of many partners and enriched by a growing set of allies. If you have been engaged and supported these efforts, we are grateful; if you are new to ESCR-Net, you are welcome. Building a world where we all belong – a world that affirms our common dignity and ensures our universal rights to well-being and participation – will depend on all of us and on our collective work.

Sincerely,

ESCR-Net Board



WHAT WE DO

Shared objectives

Advocate shared alternatives to the dominant socio-economic model, grounded in an inclusive vision for realizing human rights and environmental justice;

Center ESCR in public debates, decision-making, structures and practices, intensifying cross-network strategies for investigation, popularization, strategic action and campaigning, attentive to the roles of States, corporations and other actors;

Secure justice for systemic ESCR violations, pursuing effective accountability, regulation, remedies and implementation through participatory approaches;

Counter growing repression, reinforcing the credibility and capacity of human rights defenders and connecting reprisals to underlying ESCR issues;

Strengthen connections between diverse struggles, challenging common global conditions and foregrounding the analysis and leadership of social movements; and

Operationalize an intersectional approach in practice, foregrounding gender analysis and guided by communities confronting overlapping forms of oppression, exploitation and dispossession.



Our model of work

We are our members. ESCR-Net is a member-led network. Together, we build shared analysis, define strategies and undertake collective action, primarily through our **working groups**.

Working groups annually evaluate their progress, revise objectives, and prioritize collective actions as part of shared work plans. By harnessing the collective power of our network to address urgent threats to human rights defenders, ESCR-Net coordinates a **System of Solidarity (SOS)**. All of our work is guided by ESCR-Net's board, which is elected by and composed of members based on principles of regional diversity, gender balance and inclusion of grassroots groups. The secretariat works to facilitate the above mentioned actions and the collective work of ESCR-Net members.

The Common Charter for Collective Struggle was affirmed by members during our latest Global Strategy Meeting as a shared analysis of common conditions and deepening inequalities, which has led to the impoverishment and dispossession of communities around the world. The Charter provides an overview of the global forces affecting people living in both rural and urban areas in the Global South as well as North. It also contains an emerging vision for forging unity across struggles and concludes with initial points of consensus relating to shared demands for justice that might inform a global campaign or coordinated actions in line with ESCR-Net's mission "to build a global movement to make human rights and social justice a reality for all."

The Women and ESCR Working Group is advancing women's rights related to land, housing and natural resources and at the intersection of women and work, as well as supporting our wider network operationalize an intersectional gender analysis and approach.

The Corporate Accountability Working Group coordinates collective actions and builds capacity to challenge emblematic cases of corporate abuse, advocating for new accountability and remedy structures. It engages in collective advocacy, campaigning and collaborative research, member-to-member capacity building, and is actively confronting corporate capture of government institutions and decision-making.

The Economic Policy and Human Rights Working Group seeks to develop critical analysis of the global economic system via the human rights framework, facilitate collective advocacy to challenge unjust structures and policies, and promote alternative models of development.

The Monitoring Working Group builds persuasive evidence for ESCR advocacy, for the purpose of ensuring that States and other key actors act in accordance with their human rights obligations. It does so by facilitating mutual learning and knowledge-sharing, deepening critical analysis, coordinating collective action to advance the realization of human rights in practice, and strengthening a network-wide focus on community-led monitoring.

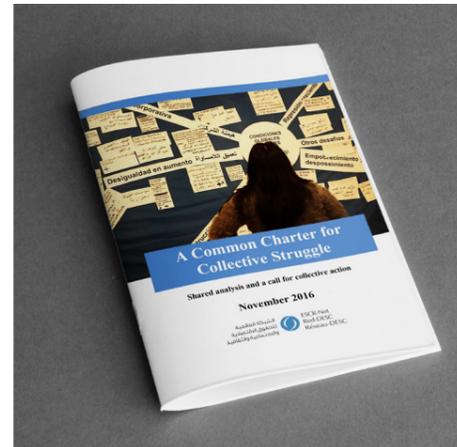
The Strategic Litigation Working Group aims at ensuring accountability for violations of economic, social and cultural rights by strengthening access to competent adjudication and effective remedies within domestic, regional and international systems, developing contextualized models on implementation and making resources available to advocates.

The Social Movement Working Group builds solidarity, facilitates mutual learning, deepens a shared analysis and nurtures global alliances, while promoting the active participation and leadership of grassroots leaders in all areas of our network's collective work.

IMPACT

Common Charter strengthened our resolve.

The Common Charter for Collective Struggle, originally developed by social movements in our network, informed the direction of collective projects across working groups.



Stemming from a commitment to deepen and popularize a human rights analysis of the economic system, ESCR-Net welcomed **our first dedicated coordinator for the Economic Policy Working Group.**



After years of **ESCR-Net members documenting and advocating against it, POSCO officially withdrew its proposal to create a steel mining complex in Odisha, India** — a project that was set to displace up to 20,000 people. The community is still demanding a full termination project in the face of potential investment by domestic capital.



Social movements opposed the project for 12 years

In 2017, ESCR-Net members continued to proactively mobilize and resist when their communities and the safety of human rights defenders were threatened.

An activist from Egypt was released from prison, after we collectively called on the government to set him free in partnership with other allies.



The power of that advocacy reverberated with ESCR-Net members in Nigeria and Colombia, where human rights defenders were facing similar threats as business interests gained undue influence in their communities.

From South Africa to Guatemala to Liberia to Cambodia, we facilitated member-to-member connections that provided direct material protection for human rights defenders under threat.



Those connections put us in a position to advocate for human rights defender protections in the treaty on business and human rights currently being developed through the UN Human Rights Council.

When the **UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR)** was writing their General Comment on business activities, our collective advocacy helped ensure that it included conflict of interest and anti-corruption language.



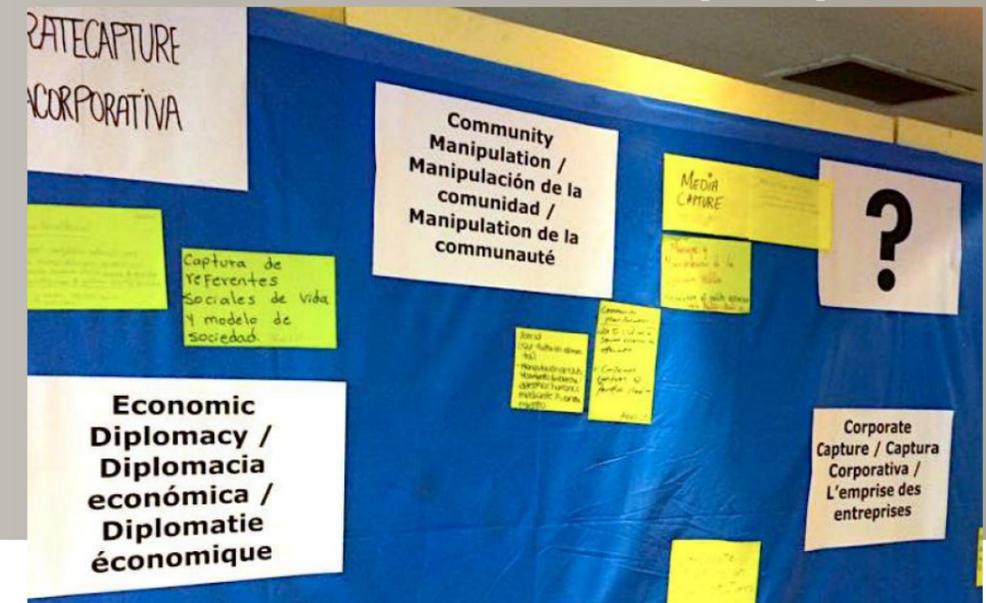
By amplifying the unique and disproportionate challenges women and girls face when corporations are behind human rights abuses, “Feminists for a Binding Treaty” — a collective led mostly by ESCR-Net members — urged the evolving UN treaty on business and human rights to embrace a feminist perspective.

ESCR-Net helped bring grassroots women’s analysis and leadership to multiple spaces focused on issues of land and work, furthering coordination and learning between movements.

#Feminists4BindingTreaty
#StopCorporateAbuse



Leading with a robust gender analysis, ESCR-Net members are informing the development of a CESCR General Comment on land.



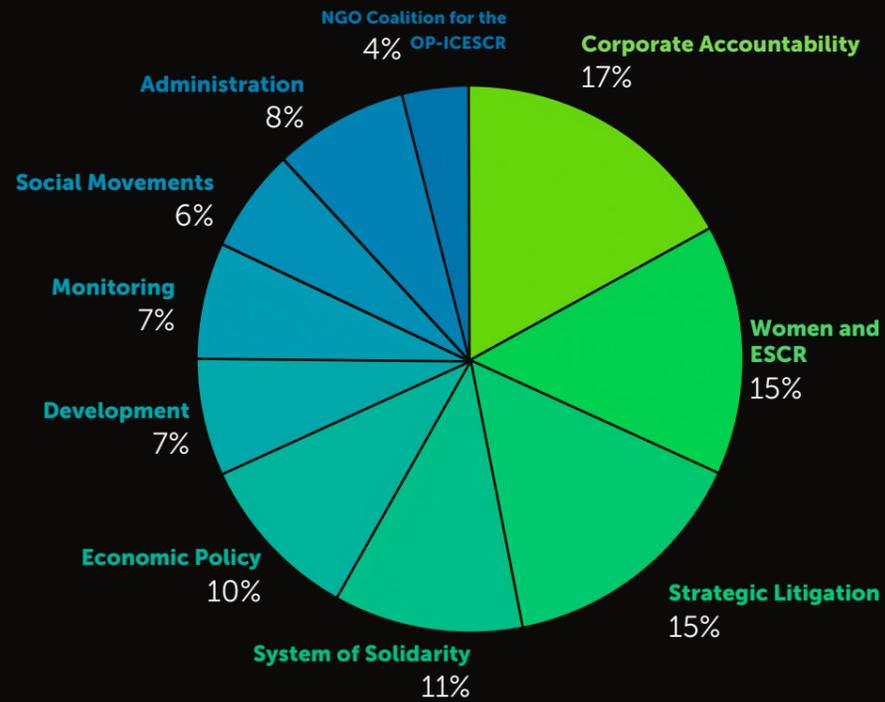
A diverse cross-section of ESCR-Net members and allies increasingly identified, highlighted, and documented manifestations of Corporate Capture.

After ESCR-Net members intervened in the case by providing international and comparative material, CESCR affirmed that all persons—including renters in public and private housing—have the right to adequate housing.



Collectively and through local activities, the corporate capture framework revealed commonalities and facilitated international advocacy on business and human rights, climate change and sustainable development.

ESCR-Net - International Network for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights connects over 280 NGOs, social movements and advocates across more than 75 countries to build a global movement to make human rights and social justice a reality for all.



Total Revenue \$1,265,463
Total Expense \$1,321,102



Thank You

Through joint advocacy, strategic exchanges, and solidarity actions member contributions were vital to ESCR-Net's collective impacts. ESCR-Net is grateful for a growing group of allies and the partners who shared financial resources that strengthened and sustained our network in 2017, including:



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PROTECT DEFENDERS.EU

***building
“a global
movement to
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social justice a
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