



Members participating in our Global Strategy Meeting in Chiang Mai, Thailand. September 2024.

# Building Collective Power to Shape Our Futures

ESCR-Net Strategic and Institutional Development Plan  
2025-2029

## Introduction

Beginning in early 2024, a series of member-led spaces have deepened shared analysis of current global conditions and taken stock of collective responses by ESCR-Net – International Network for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights over the past several years. These spaces have included an in-person Social Movement Working Group gathering in Brazil, as well as online state-of-the-field discussions, regional consultations focused on intersecting crises, and Working Group meetings. These laid the groundwork for our in-person **Global Strategy Meeting (GSM): Building Collective Power to Shape Our Futures**, bringing together over 100 representatives of member movements and organizations in Thailand (16-20 September). More than 30 social movements, independent unions, and Indigenous Peoples organizations gathered a day earlier, and some 50 members participated in a *feminist encuentro* on the morning before our official opening. Both spaces helped to ground the GSM in our core principles of social movement centrality and feminist intersectional analysis, with members affirming the importance of creating these spaces moving forward to further embed these principles and strengthen our related commitments and practices. To begin the first full plenary of the GSM, in addition to hearing from leaders who attended both of these gatherings, members were welcomed by Indigenous elders from the surrounding communities and, in turn, remembered and honored their ancestors in the struggle, including those who had given their lives to secure dignity, justice and well-being for their communities. We also reflected on our collective story as ESCR-Net, working over 20 years to unite our diverse struggles across regions in the face of global challenges and long histories of capitalism, colonialism/imperialism, and patriarchy. As reflected below, over the course of the next four days, we revisited points of shared analysis via our updated Common Charter for Collective Struggle, developed guiding stars or shared visions for positive changes over the next five years, rooted in the right to self-determination, refined our strategic approaches or path towards these changes, and then articulated two-year stepping stones or concrete wins to guide plans within and across working groups, our System of Solidarity, strategic communications and narrative work, and global campaigning.

## Sections

● History: Reflecting on 20 Years of Collective Struggle	3
● Mission and Model of Work	5
● Collective Analysis of Global Conditions and Positioning of ESCR-Net	7
● Our Guiding Stars / Shared Visions for Change	9
● Our Path / Strategies for Building Network-wide Power	11
● Our Stepping Stones / Priorities for the Next Two Year and Ongoing Planning	12
● Institutional Development Priorities	16



Members participating in our Global Strategy Meeting in Chiang Mai, Thailand. September 2024.

## History: Reflecting on 20 Years of Collective Struggle

Our 2024 Global Strategy Meeting marked a return to Chiang Mai, just over 20 years after the official launch of ESCR-Net in the same city in 2003. Initiated with a three-day social movement gathering, our inaugural meeting examined a series of global injustices driven by corporate and finance capital, imposed via International Monetary Fund (IMF) structural adjustment plans and trade agreements, and enforced via military might. This meeting also led to the election of ESCR-Net’s first formal Board - chosen from and by members based on principles of gender and regional balance and inclusion of social movements - and to the adoption of our Governance Document. This document and its core principles addressed legacies of colonialism and patriarchy, as well as recognized the importance of movements - emerging from and accountable to communities affected by injustice - in the face of massive power imbalances. The Women and ESCR Working Group, advocating substantive equality, and the Strategic Litigation Working Group, advancing the justiciability of ESCR, were formalized as the first cross-regional, member-led spaces, alongside the Social Movement Working Group.

Our next General Assembly in Nairobi, Kenya, at the end of 2008, led to a strengthening of several working groups and facilitated important discussions to address the challenges of collaboration between diverse grassroots groups, social movements, NGOs and academics. Deepening their commitment to cross-regional solidarity, members also empowered the secretariat to act on their behalf in times of urgent threat against fellow members or their communities. In September 2013, a series of online member consultations led to a new three-year strategic plan, which included prioritizing more consistent in-person strategic exchanges of working groups as spaces to build cross-regional solidarity, shared analysis and coordinated advocacy. These have included multiple Peoples' Forums on Human Rights and Business, regional workshops and cross-regional strategy meetings of our working groups, and regular gatherings of the Social Movement Working Group.

Building on this foundation, the Board called for a Global Strategy Meeting in November 2016, Buenos Aires, Argentina. Social movement and Indigenous Peoples leaders, campaigners and litigators – 140 representatives of ESCR-Net member organizations from over 40 countries – charted a course towards transformative, Network-wide action responsive to global conditions, including via a new focus on campaigning and popular political education. Members discussed, refined, and ultimately affirmed the social movement-led analysis in ESCR-Net's Common Charter for Collective Struggle, providing a base of shared analysis across our membership. Reinforcing our core principles, this gathering placed the analysis and leadership of social movements, Indigenous Peoples, independent trade unions, resisting communities, and grassroots women leaders within them, at the center of the Network. Through the Common Charter, members foregrounded the need to unite struggles across all regions, confronting the common global conditions and explicitly reclaiming human rights as a vital framework for struggle and common basis for advocating alternative socio-economic models. This provided the basis for a daylong facilitated process - working across four languages - in which members for the first time shaped shared objectives to guide the Network for the next five years (2017-2021). In shaping these objectives, the need for intersectional analysis to be central to collective action was re-prioritized, moving from pilot projects to more consistent practices in terms of investigating how policies, laws, budgets and practices impact differently situated communities and centering the demands of long exploited and marginalized communities in our advocacy. Members also called for new attention to ESCR in situations of conflict and occupation, as well as pushing for intensified work on environmental rights, with a focus on climate justice.

The COVID-19 pandemic interrupted plans to hold a next Global Strategy Meeting in 2021, as well as slowing initial momentum towards campaigning, which had begun to be piloted in robust days of action like the Women's Global Strike (8 March 2020), and popular political education, including our first systemic critique workshop (February 2019, Chiapas, Mexico). With important Board and member leadership, ESCR-Net quickly pivoted, launching our Global Call to Action in response to Covid-19 on 1 May 2020, following a series of Working Group and full Network discussions, and our first corporate capture comic and background note (February 2021). From mid-2022, ESCR-Net began to retake small in-person strategy meetings and advocacy delegations and to again build campaign capacity. While continuing to update our 2017-2021 strategic plan via annually revised member-led project plans, in late 2023, the Board agreed to formally call for a new Global Strategy Meeting and related

process over the course of 2024. In 2023, the Board established an International Planning Committee for this meeting, including all Board members and additional representatives from each region, including the Asia Indigenous Peoples Pact (our co-host) and the Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development in Chiang Mai.

## Mission and Model of Work

While our analysis and strategies have continued to evolve, our mission, core principles, and member-led model of work have persisted. As articulated in ESCR-Net's Governance Document:

Economic, social and cultural rights concern essential values for a life of dignity and freedom - work, health, education, food, housing, and social security amongst others. People throughout the world share the struggle to make these human rights a reality for themselves, their families, communities, and nations.

ESCR-Net is a collaborative initiative of groups and individuals from around the world working to secure economic and social justice through human rights. ESCR-Net seeks to strengthen the field of all human rights, with a special focus on economic, social and cultural rights, and further develop the tools for achieving their promotion, protection and fulfillment. Through ESCR-Net, groups and individuals exchange information, cultivate a collective voice, amplify their actions, and develop new tools and strategies. By facilitating joint actions, enhancing communications and building solidarity across regions, **the Network seeks to build a global movement to make human rights and social justice a reality for all.**

We understand that human rights emerge from and will ultimately be realized through the common demands, visions, and connected struggles of communities for dignity, self-determination, substantive equality, and well-being, including the right to a healthy environment. Over the past several years, members have been clear that realizing human rights and social justice requires simultaneously advancing climate justice, building on and strengthening a focus on environmental justice throughout ESCR-Net's history.

ESCR-Net is its over 300 members - social movements, Indigenous Peoples' groups, independent trade unions, feminist and human rights organizations, academic centers and advocates across 80 countries - united by this common mission. Our strength is found in member-led collective advocacy and campaigning guided by our core principles including:

- Advancing all human rights, as universal, indivisible and interdependent, with a focus on economic, social, cultural and environmental rights (ESCR) issues;
- Ensuring regional and gender balance in leadership, intersectional gender analysis, and the centrality of grassroots groups and social movements;

- Grounding Network activities in the lived experience of people affected by and often resisting ESCR violations, and advancing concrete, collective actions able to affect systemic change; and
- Striving for shared analysis and consensus in decision-making as a member-led Network, but respecting the autonomy of individual participants' positions.

These core principles embody human rights-aligned values and reflect an understanding of how we will effectively build a global movement with shared power to secure transformative change. ESCR-Net strives to create horizontal, inclusive, and radically democratic spaces to deepen critical analysis and build shared strategies for collective action, working to model a political approach that reflects the world we want to build. Our core principles are foundational to our theory of change, which involves four elements:

- Facilitating practical member-to-member solidarity;
- Creating space for mutual learning across regions and movements;
- Deepening shared analysis of the global conditions facing our communities; and
- Advancing member-led collective action towards systemic change.

Practically, working groups continue to be the primary vehicle through which members coordinate efforts towards the Network's shared visions for change or guiding stars. All working groups have a defined membership consisting of ESCR-Net members who have decision-making power. Working groups are expected to outreach to ensure that the group composition embodies regional and gender balance, expertise in intersectional gender analysis, and the centrality of movement members, as well as a diversity of organizations across regions that are able to collectively build inclusive analysis and demands. Working groups have continued to evolve their governance structures to ensure that their steering committees and other leadership structures reflect similar principles. Working groups currently include Women and ESCR (WESCR WG), Corporate Accountability (CAWG), Strategic Litigation (SLWG), Economic Policy (EPWG), and Social Movements and Grassroots Groups (SMWG). Demonstrating both a substantive and institutional strengthening of collective work on environmental and climate justice, what was initially the network-wide project on Environment & ESCR was transformed into the Environment & ESCR Working Group (ESCR WG) in 2022. Additionally, via discussions before, during and after the GSM, the Monitoring Working Group has transformed into the Community-Led Research Hub. Guided by an expanded advisory group of members, the Hub will facilitate participatory and community-led research across the Network. ESCR-Net's System of Solidarity (SOS), led by an advisory group of members and drawing on the strength of the wider membership - including through deepening collaboration with the Strategic Litigation Working Group - responds to urgent threats facing communities or individual defenders and works to strengthen their security and protection. Over the past several years, building on the mandate of our last strategic plan, much of the collective advocacy, litigation and campaigning of ESCR-Net has involved the collaboration of two or more working groups, in line with members' priorities to deepen connections between struggles and build collective power. This has also involved working to build a more coherent collective voice, strategically targeted to certain actors and audiences, via growing communications capacity in

the secretariat and in coordination with members across all regions. Guided by social movement members, ESCR-Net has also initiated spaces and resources for popular and political education, working to deepen shared systemic analysis and strategic reflection across members. This has been foundational for moving into Network-wide action or campaigning.

## **Collective Analysis of Global Conditions and Positioning of ESCR-Net**

In 2016, ESCR-Net Members affirmed the Common Charter for Collective Struggle on the final day of the Global Strategy Meeting. In the 18 months prior to the GSM, over 20 social movements – members of ESCR-Net – deepened a shared analysis of common global conditions facing their distinct communities and articulated emerging points of unity among their movements as a foundation for Network-wide action and campaigning. A draft of the Common Charter was then shared with ESCR-Net working groups and further revised based on their input.

Over the past several years, the Common Charter has become a shared base of analysis guiding ESCR-Net, with all new members asked to affirm their support for the mission, core principles, and Common Charter. Beginning in 2022, more than 40 social movements began to revisit the analysis of the Common Charter in a series of online discussions, followed by in-person gatherings in Durban, South Africa (2023) and São Luis, Brazil (2024). These were complemented by a series of systemic critique workshops, taking up themes of the political economy of violence and of debt, care, and climate in 2023. While these discussions affirmed the ongoing relevance of the Common Charter, social movements also refined aspects of their analysis.

The Common Charter emphasizes the interconnected global conditions undermining peoples' human rights around the world, including impoverishment and dispossession amid abundance, corporate capture of the State, deepening inequality, degradation of ecosystems and climate crisis, and growing repression and the political economy of violence. In revisiting the Common Charter, social movement members more fully linked these conditions to histories of patriarchy, colonialism and imperialism, and capitalism - built on the violence of dispossession, slavery, and exploitation and entwined with other systems of oppression. The past several years have made the failures of the neoliberal capitalist system glaringly evident, as the profits of a few pharmaceutical companies were given precedence over the lives of millions during the COVID-19 pandemic; as corporate capture of intergovernmental decision-making allowed the climate crisis to intensify, as fossil fuel extraction grew despite decades of scientific evidence regarding its impacts; and as public provision of care and the rights of care workers were sacrificed in order to service illegitimate and unsustainable debts. As the contradictions and inequalities of our economic and political systems led to discredited institutions and growing anger, we advanced struggles for human rights amid growing militarism and surveillance, rightwing populism, ethnic and religious nationalism, and an ever closer relationship between the State and legal and illegal business interests.

These common global challenges require deepening solidarity and coordination between diverse social movements, Indigenous Peoples, trade unions, and allied feminist, environmental and human rights NGOs across regions, strengthening the resilience of members and building collective power to address systemic injustices and advance community-led alternatives grounded in human rights. Due to social struggles for dignity, equality, and well-being, human rights were codified in the wake of world war and have evolved via ongoing struggles, creating domestic and extraterritorial obligations of States. The human rights framework provides a shared vision and language to unite diverse organizations across regions and historic divides, to reinforce the legitimacy of our struggles, and to analyze and transform societal structures. In returning to points of unity in the Common Charter, movement members emphasized the central importance of the right to self-determination, articulated in Article 1 of both International Human Rights Covenants as the result of powerful anti-colonial struggles and developed via subsequent Indigenous, anti-imperialist and feminist struggles. Care for people and the planet – the right to care and to a healthy environment, the rights of care workers and of nature – also received further focus as a point of unity, recognizing care as all that sustains life and as a collective responsibility. Global conditions are pushing new groups into action for the survival of their families and communities, while these same communities are reinforcing alternatives grounded in solidarity and care. Building and connecting inclusive movements remains critical to secure transformative change in the face of powerful interests eager to maintain the status quo. This requires the diverse leadership of those impacted by and resisting dispossession, exploitation, and environmental devastation, together with those who have made a political commitment to secure human rights.

In advance of the GSM, a series of online state-of-the field discussions, open to all Network members began by examining an advanced draft of the updated Common Charter for Collective Struggle and then took up specific global challenges, planned and led by different groups of members active in confronting them, including:

- Denouncing corporate capture of government institutions and decision-making
- Demanding debt cancellation, centering care for peoples and the planet
- Confronting the political economy of violence and shrinking democratic space
- Strengthening access to justice
- Centering communities' narratives and demands in public decision-making
- Self-determination: ensuring peoples' control over their bodies, territories, ways of life, and economies in face of colonialism/imperialism, capitalism and patriarchy

The analysis emerging from these discussions was complemented by a series of regional consultations examining intersecting issues of care, debt, climate, corporate capture and related issues from regional perspectives. These spaces were complemented by discussions in our existing working groups, with member-led reflections on collective work over the past several years (advances, challenges, learnings), analysis of evolving global conditions related to their area(s) of collective advocacy, and an initial outlining of strategic openings for the coming period. Collectively, these spaces enabled the participation of many members unable to be in Thailand, and for those present at the GSM, they provided an analytical foundation for strategic discussions in-person. During the morning of the second



day of our in-person gathering, members reinforced this foundation by revisiting the global conditions articulated in the Common Charter for Global Struggle, with the leadership of social movement members.

## Our Guiding Stars / Shared Visions for Change

Our Global Strategy Meeting was entitled: Building Collective Power to Shape Our Futures. In shaping this strategic process, members were eager to center and reclaim the right to self-determination emerging from a long history of Left, anti-colonial, Afro-descendant, Indigenous, feminist struggles over the past century. Members have increasingly emphasized this right in collective advocacy for Indigenous Peoples' rights and in solidarity with Palestine, Puerto Rico and others resisting colonialism and imperialism. During the Global Strategy Meeting, several members shared how their movements - Indigenous, Palestinian, feminist, anti-imperialist - had taken up the **right to self-determination** in distinct if often complementary ways. While the discussion was not intended to develop consensus or shape a collective political position related to self-determination, it provided a valuable overview of how different members are claiming this recognized right in the current period. Those present were then asked to reflect on how the world might be transformed if we fully realized the right to self-determination, sharing ideas of solidarity, care for people and the planet, substantive equality, and much more. In a landscape metaphor used throughout the week, this long-term vision for transformation became our sun on the horizon.



For the rest of day two and on day three, members then divided into groups focused on issues of care, climate, corporate capture, and debt, where they co-developed the following guiding stars or positive changes that we need to prioritize advancing over the next five years:

1. Peoples and movements strengthen their power and **lead decision making processes, eliminating corporate capture** and **claiming their right to self-determination** and their sovereignty from governments, corporations and economic elites for the well-being of people, in harmony with the planet, and **abiding by human rights and feminist visions**.
2. People-led movements will use divestment and sanctions to **hold corporations, States, private actors, and financial institutions accountable** and ensure full **reparations** for direct and indirect harms to the people and the planet.
3. Communities strengthen collective action to exercise their **sovereignty, self determination, and care over territories** and lead decolonial evidence, knowledge and **solutions to the climate crisis**.
4. Communities and peoples' movements **hold states, private and financial actors accountable** using **enforceable legal frameworks** that ensure prevention, integral reparation, and the fulfillment of rights of peoples, nature and territories.
5. Generate **just, feminist and equitable care economies** as alternatives to systems of oppression, based on *el buen vivir*, dignity and collective care and security for everyone in all their diversity.
6. End the sexual and gender division of labor and inequalities, **recognise care as decent and dignified work** and fulfill the **right to care as a public and collective responsibility** for a world of work free of all forms of violence and harassment.
7. A strengthened global people's movement to champion **cancellation of unjust / illegitimate debts and the right to default**, towards a self determined and sustainable socio-economic future and to achieve decolonized care systems.
8. A **transformed global financial architecture** where impacted communities can actively and fully participate in development financing processes and

challenge neo-colonial paradigms through popular political analysis.

Members shared and celebrated these Network-wide visions for change to guide collective advocacy and campaigning over the next five years on the afternoon of day three.

## Our Path / Rethinking our Strategies

As highlighted above, ESCR-Net's strategic approach is embodied in our core principles and theory of change, namely **building power by connecting struggles across regions first in solidarity and ultimately in collective action for transformative change** via deepening shared systemic analysis. Our core principles speak to how this happens, namely by **centering and connecting movements, working to overcome colonial legacies** and global inequalities via regional balance in leadership and participation in advocacy delegations and strategic discussions, and **building an inclusive movement** via feminist intersectional analysis and a commitment to gender balance in leadership.

On day four, members critically reflected on our related strategic approaches and considered how these need to evolve in order to more effectively build power to shape our futures, advancing towards our guiding stars in the current political context. Members started by exploring ways to deepen **member-to-member solidarity** and **confront the political economy of violence**, building on a series of solidarity actions throughout the week, a solidarity market on the second evening, and a political education session on Palestine and the recent International Court of Justice (ICJ) Advisory Opinion, which concluded that the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territory is illegal under international law and has impeded the Palestinian people's right to self-determination. In the afternoon, members moved into breakout discussions to assess and critically develop evolving strategic approaches to advancing change, in part exploring how these might contribute to a more coherent Network-wide strategy or campaign. These strategic approaches included:

- **promoting access to justice**, drawing on recent examples of movement-guided implementation efforts and legal interventions aligned with wider Network objectives, and exploring when and how legal work could more effectively reinforce and advance collective struggles, including as a core element of campaigning;
- **building narratives from communities' knowledge**, drawing on our evolving community-led research and strategic communications work, working in alignment with movement and union members, and exploring how to amplify and reinforce the validity and importance of Indigenous Peoples' and other resisting communities' knowledge, demands and visions; and
- **popular political education**, drawing on learning from our systemic critique workshops, corporate capture comics, and existing principles of popular political education, and exploring how popular political education—aimed at building collective understanding of the root causes of injustice—might become central to building cross-Network action or campaigning.

Members reflected on how we build collective power by drawing on and connecting the diverse strengths and shared work of ESCR-Net. We envision that this will mean moving from relatively isolated

campaigning actions to a more coherent, strategic approach to **global campaigns**. These campaigns would ideally serve as an **umbrella connecting strategies**, with our **guiding stars as the broadest parameters of a campaign**, allowing us to amplify related national and regional campaigns. Building on prioritized concrete wins or stepping stones emerging from WG discussions, attentive to openings in the shifting global context, a campaign strategy would also involve articulating global demands/targets that we fight for together.

The GSM represented the first opportunity in several years to renew Network-wide discussions, affirming widespread support for taking up global campaigns. In response to priorities articulated by social movements in the Common Charter for Collective Struggle and the wider membership at our last GSM and in subsequent moments, we've gradually built a campaign team over the past few years, as well as greater strategic communications capacity. Drawing on this capacity and providing pilots for a global campaign, members have taken up days of action, rallies, and demonstrations alongside intergovernmental processes, periodically co-coordinating alternative civil society spaces. Starting in November 2024, an ad hoc committee of members—drawing on all regions and working groups, with a core of social movements—will begin meeting to refine initial campaign proposals focused on 1) securing debt cancellation and ensuring the right to default, as vital to sustainable futures with public provision of care and resources for adaptation, mitigation, loss and damage related to the climate crisis; and 2) forcing one multinational corporation to suspend and repair activities that violate human and environmental rights, particularly a corporation involved in the fossil fuel industry and with links to the ongoing genocide in Palestine. While there is also strong interest in campaigning within the Environment and ESCR Working Group, members imagine that the groundwork for a global campaign focused on aspects of climate justice will be laid over the next couple years.

## Stepping Stones

On our **final day**, members moved into existing working groups, exploring how they could contribute to achieving the guiding stars via strengthened strategies. This involved identifying and prioritizing concrete wins or stepping stones for the next couple years, which would help to catalyze more transformative change, drawing on the collective strength and capacity of members. These stepping stones served as the starting point for two-year project plans within and across working groups, as well as our System of Solidarity, which were further refined via post-GSM calls open to all members:

### **Corporate Accountability**

- National, regional and international laws are approved or advanced to regulate the activities of companies that affect human rights and natural goods.
- One multinational corporation suspends and repairs activities that violate human and environmental rights through campaigns and litigation from ESCR-Net (\*especially from fossil fuels/ \*in relation to genocide).

As concrete steps, in addition to shaping the development of a legally binding treaty on business and human rights at the UN level, members will identify and focus their collective advocacy on other laws at national and/or regional level which are seen as strategic to curtail corporate power. Also, members will map corporations involved in the genocide and responsible for environmental destruction and strategize to build pressure around one specific company to stop its harmful activities and seek reparations.

### **Economic Policy**

- Global debt governance mechanisms are progressive and consistent with human rights and the UN debt framework.
- Members develop stronger analysis of the global debt crisis in order to mobilize on the global level

As concrete steps, members will systematize existing research and legal analysis on debts, including exploring its linkages to the global tax system, to support collective demands for debt cancellation and for the right to default especially with key actors responsible for the debt crisis – such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Bank (WB), and public development banks. Members of the Economic Policy Working Group (EPWG) will also continue to deepen analysis on the linkages between debt and the global tax system supporting ongoing members' efforts to build a strong UN Tax Convention. Furthermore, in recognizing the need for a broader transformation of the global financial system to meet the needs of people and the planet, EPWG will work with the Environment & ESCR WG (ESCER WG) and WESCR to strengthen members' participation in discussions related to climate and development finance in relevant global conversations, including the thirtieth session of the Conference of the Parties (COP30) to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), Financing for Development, and the Finance in Commons Summit.

### **Environment and ESCR**

- Strengthen and systematize communities' narratives (on false solutions, threat to environment defenders), map climate injustice perpetrators, movements, and strategic forums, and develop creative political educational materials.
- Strategize to conduct a global campaign on climate remedy and just and equitable transition.

Over the next year, the ESCER WG will center people-led solutions to the climate crisis with the aim of decolonizing global climate discussions. Another focus will be to strengthen members' - particularly movements' - participation and influence in global climate policy and regulatory spaces such as those under the UNFCCC and the Biodiversity COP, as well as engagement with relevant institutional actors such as UN bodies and mandate holders and judicial bodies at the regional and global levels.

### **Monitoring**

- A community-led research school that provides support to Network members to gather evidence and data they need for their struggles through a feminist participatory action research (FPAR) approach.
- Together with other WGs, co-create knowledge and develop narratives that reflect grassroots communities and social movements' perspectives on key/priority issues, such as loss and damage resulting from climate change.

As next steps, members will collectively analyze findings emerging from the second community-led research initiative on loss and damage to inform collective advocacy in local and global spaces. The third iteration of the initiative will be launched in the next year to center and amplify alternative narratives and visions of care particularly by women-led movements. In parallel with these efforts, in order to shape the content and pedagogical approach of the informal community-led research school, members will conduct a survey on needs and expertise across the Network along with learning sessions drawing from past and ongoing experiences of FPAR.

### **Strategic Litigation**

- Direct strategic litigation, one case on enforcement and one case on one of the five focus areas (debt, care, climate, corporate capture or HRDs) based on ESCR-Net participatory consensus and embedded in a campaign.
- Strengthen ESCR-Net's capacity to monitor and take a stance in trials against environmental / Indigenous leaders and related to the murder and other forms of persecution of these leaders.
- Capacity building on strategic litigation and implementation to share knowledge by development and deployment of a tool kit for communities and litigators.

In conversation with other working groups, the SLWG will explore initiating or facilitating direct litigation to support broader campaign efforts, for instance on debt and/or corporate accountability. In addition, the SLWG will continue to provide strategic legal advice and guidance to cases led by movement members, in particular to seek implementation of positive judgments and to ensure the protection of environmental and human rights defenders at risk or under trial who seek support through the System of Solidarity. Lastly, the SLWG will continue its work to strengthen access to justice mechanisms at the regional and global level, particularly the Inter-American and the UN treaty body systems, with the goal of expanding the recognition and justiciability of ESCR.

### **Women and ESCR**

- Advocacy for a care-based society that promotes laws, systems, and financing for a care-based society with dignified work and spaces without violence.
- Incorporating feminist care perspectives within the Network and ensuring connections to debt, climate, and our ways of working.

Through online mutual exchanges and the FPAR process outlined above, the WESCR WG will build shared analysis related to just, feminist and equitable care economies, particularly those centered around the strategies and visions of women in communities, trade unions, and Indigenous Peoples' organizations. In addition to informing members' own work, this shared analysis will be reflected in related global advocacy spaces around debt and climate - in conjunction with the EPWG and ESCER WG - as well as in ongoing discussions and spaces advancing the rights of care workers. Lastly, drawing from the encouraging outcomes of the first *feminist encuentro*, the WESCR WG will provide a space to reflect on centering care within our ways of working and strengthen self-care practices among ESCR-Net members.

### **System of Solidarity**

- Strengthen preventative mechanisms for at-risk defenders from an intersectional, decolonial feminist and psychosocial perspective.
- Emergency fund prioritizing social movement members. (The proposal envisions emergency grant funders within the Network committing a small percentage of their grant funding every year to a pool that could be used or accessed more rapidly to address threats to fellow members, building on the model of IM Defensoras.)
- Information and communication sharing to build collective and effective ownership of the System of Solidarity.

The System of Solidarity (SOS) will facilitate online mutual learning spaces for grassroots leaders and other at-risk defenders on topics like psycho-social well-being, digital security, and preventative practices to confront criminalization and other legal attacks, as well as integrating similar spaces into solidarity visits with communities under threat and other ESCR-Net meetings. Based on our legal status and Board decisions, ESCR-Net is currently unable to subgrant to members, so we have relied on fellow members as well as our collaboration with ProtectDefenders.eu to help connect members to emergency security funding. In trying to coordinate and streamline this process more fully, the SOS Advisory Group will also map the existing resources and capacities - including emergency, preventative and related solidarity funding - of members and close allies, including via the Protect Defenders consortium, as a step towards deepening member-to-member solidarity and being positioned to rapidly access allied resources as needed. Through escalating member solidarity actions and solidarity visits - involving movement members and others with particular legal, research or advocacy capacities - the System of Solidarity will reinforce member-to-member solidarity in support of fellow member struggles facing ongoing repression.

## Institutional Development Priorities

In conversation with members, the Board and secretariat have prioritized the following institutional developments to ensure effective facilitation of member-to-member solidarity, shared analysis, and collective member-led action in line with our guiding stars or shared visions for systemic change and core principles.

### Membership and Governance

Aligned with our core principles - including member leadership - and the complementary commitment of all members to be actively engaged in at least one area of collective work, ESCR-Net will prioritize supporting the engagement and collective leadership of its existing members. The **primary role of the secretariat** is to coordinate member-to-member solidarity, shared analysis, and collective action in line with our core principles. This is also a **primary role of the Board and of ESCR-Net's working group steering committees**; our last strategic plan strongly encouraged all working groups embrace the following principles:

- “Defining the role of the steering committee foremost as an advisory body—with certain defined roles of review, articulating internal processes, etc.—meant to support the facilitation of the engagement and collective action of all working group members, in line with the wider mission, strategic plan, and Common Charter for Collective Struggle of ESCR-Net, as well as the two-year action plan of the working group; [and]
- Ensuring that the steering committee does not undermine the ability of the full working group membership to participate in key decisions, positions and external representation of the working group in multiple spaces.”

The Board, elected every three years from and by organizational members, continues to serve as the model for our other governance structures:

- Embodying core principles, including regional and gender balance and the centrality of social movements; and
- Ensuring rotating leadership (in the case of steering committees, elected for set terms by all working group members, based on their active contribution to collective action; or in the case of advisory and planning committees, developing terms of reference with expected duration of service and working to create space for diverse leadership across ESCR-Net).

While the Board plays important roles in institutional development, ensuring the effective functioning of the secretariat and overseeing the implementation of the Network's collective priorities, the ultimate decision-making body and the strength of ESCR-Net is the full general assembly of members.

Facilitating the active engagement and leadership of existing members is the first priority of the Campaign and Membership Team, as well as the wider secretariat. The Campaign and Membership



Team will also undertake outreach to continue to strengthen ESCR-Net's Membership in line with our core principles. This will include a **strong priority for outreach to social movements, Indigenous Peoples' organizations, and independent trade unions** that are politically aligned with ESCR-Net, prepared to provide and receive member-to-member solidarity, and ready to engage in collective advocacy and campaigning at different levels. Secondly, as we work to build inclusive spaces guided by intersectional analysis, ESCR-Net is committed to meaningful representation and ultimately leadership of different groups in working to build shared analysis and collective action towards a world in which "human rights and social justice are a reality for all." Among other gaps, current members have encouraged welcoming additional organizations advancing human rights and climate justice that are:

- Working in conflict situations and confronting militarization or militarism;
- Led by youth and/or substantially involving and developing youth leadership;
- Led by and centering the analysis of persons with disabilities;
- Led by and foregrounding the analysis of LGBTQ+ communities in different local and national contexts; and
- Active in the feminist movement in different contexts.

Members have also noted some subregional gaps, particularly in Central Asia and the Pacific, as well as the need for ongoing outreach in West Africa. To address these gaps, the Campaign and Membership Team will work to set priorities for given time periods in conversation with the Board and different working group steering committees, looking to members to help identify strong potential candidates for membership.

**Working groups** continue to be central to building the collective analysis and action of members. Working groups, as open to all members, have the ability to collectively prioritize joint advocacy and articulate common positions in line with the overall mission, principles and shared objectives of ESCR-Net (with contentious positions, particularly in new areas of work, vetted with the Board and wider membership). All working groups now have defined memberships, methods for internal communication between members, and annually revised plans.

*In the coming period*, building on the trajectory of the past several years, as well as the outcomes of the Global Strategy Meeting, working groups are encouraged to pursue **cross-working group efforts and collaborative advocacy and campaigning** towards the guiding stars or shared positive visions for change prioritized by members for the next five years. To facilitate ESCR-Net **utilizing our Network-wide collective strength to advance systemic transformation**, we envision:

- The **Monitoring Working Group** will transition to the **Community-Led Research Hub**. The Hub will facilitate and support various forms of community-guided, primarily qualitative research in support of advocacy and campaign priorities, as a practice to better ground our work on the lived experiences and perspectives of resisting communities. Guided by a feminist intersectional analysis approach, this research seeks to build the leadership of

- women, non-binary people, and other marginalized groups, and to reflect and amplify the perspectives of social movements, Indigenous Peoples, independent trade unions, and other community-based organizations.
- Reinforcing its evolving practice, the **Strategic Litigation Working Group** will often partner with other working groups to take up litigation and implementation efforts aligned with our guiding stars, exploring new opportunities to proactively advance structural change with movement-aligned legal strategies as one important component.
  - Aware that shared systemic analysis is foundational to shared strategies and collective action, spaces for **popular political education**—collectively building understanding of the root causes of injustice via feminist, anti-imperialist, political-economic, and human rights frameworks—will increasingly be integrated across our work, building on the model of our extended systemic critique workshops. These spaces will be complemented by the development or promotion of accessible, adaptable resources for members to utilize in their own organizations and communities. Members emphasized a few key topics for further analysis and popular education processes that cut across multiple issues or areas of advocacy, including:
    - **the right to self-determination** and how it is being advocated, lived, and developed by different communities and struggles, as well as clarifying our points of unity as a collective; and
    - **the political economy of violence** and its evolving manifestations in different contexts, including via militarism, the rise of rightwing populism and ethnic or religious nationalism, and the entwining of State and non-State actors, as well as the strategic implications of this more historic and structural understanding of repression.
  - Continuing to strengthen our **strategic communications**, an advisory group of communications leads and communicators from member organizations and movements is being formed in the final months of 2024. Responding to the priorities or stepping stones of multiple working groups, the advisory group will work to strengthen ESCR-Net’s narrative work—both by amplifying existing community narratives and co-creating new narratives guided by movement-led demands that challenge dominant narratives shaped by capitalism, patriarchy, and colonialism. The advisory group will have a leading role in strengthening ESCR-Net’s collective narrative power on key human rights issues, co-creating a learning space on human rights-based narratives and informing communications strategies that will support our collective advocacy and campaign efforts targeting different actors.
  - Building on campaigning actions (i.e. days of action, rallies, solidarity visits) over the past few years, **global campaigns**—guided by an advisory group of members drawn from all working groups with a core of movement members and coordinated by our Campaign and Membership Team in partnership with the wider secretariat—will integrate a range of strategies across the Network, serve as an umbrella to amplify individual member

campaigns at different levels aligned with our guiding stars, and articulate Network-wide demands at the global level, striving to achieve concrete wins towards more transformative change. Targets and demands for these campaigns will emerge from working groups for further development by the cross-WG advisory group and ultimately the wider membership. We envision launching an initial global campaign in 2025, with one or more clear targets at the global level.

Significantly, members have given the secretariat the ability to take urgent action in their name on behalf of human rights defenders and their communities under threat (since 2008), and the Board clarified the ability of working groups to take collective positions in the name of ESCR-Net (in 2013), as well as defining processes for Network-wide positions on emerging issues in line with our Governance Document. However, ESCR-Net recognizes the principle of members—particularly social movements and Indigenous Peoples—speaking for themselves, as well as being attentive to who represents the collective positions of members in diverse spaces in line with principles of gender and regional balance and member-leadership.

The **Board**, elected from and by members based on our core principles, has a number of roles, including hiring and reviewing the executive director and working with them and the wider coordination team to guide the institutional development of the secretariat to ensure that it can effectively facilitate the collective work of members. The Board also helps to ensure the coherence, relevance and impact of ESCR-Net's collective work. Substantively, this means ensuring that it is in line with our mission and the strategic priorities agreed by members, working to build analysis and power across working groups and other areas of work, attentive to global conditions. In terms of process, the Board embodies and advocates our core principles, helping ESCR-Net to model a form of pre-figurative, inclusive, more horizontal politics. To fulfill these roles, the Board created a series of officer and committee roles over the past several years, as well as helping to develop and take a role in implementing a few key policies for members and the secretariat. In the coming period, the Board has prioritized the following in collaboration with the secretariat:

- Continuing to hold annual face-to-face board meetings, supplemented by quarterly Board conference calls, to provide institutional and financial oversight and overall coherence in advancing the mission, principles and objectives of ESCR-Net;
- Ensuring that the Board is engaged in and/or following the developments of various working groups and other areas of work; and
- Helping to navigate this current period, both the funding landscape and the political landscape in the US, where the secretariat is officially headquartered. For the past decade, ESCR-Net has enjoyed steady, intentional growth, including in its advocacy delegations, solidarity actions, and strategic and analytical meetings, as well as of its secretariat team around the world. At the same time, over the past decade, many members have been able to access fairly consistent funding from a variety of sources, allowing them to more easily engage in cross-regional solidarity and global advocacy. A member discussion with several funders at our Global Strategy Meeting clarified multiple challenges in continuing to access

funding for human rights and social justice work, in part as a result of shifts to the Right in many contexts.

**Language justice and inclusion** will always be a work in progress for ESCR-Net given the multiple primary languages spoken by members, but it has also been vital to building cross-regional solidarity and learning and facilitating collective action across a growing number of members. Partly due to its commitments to language justice and wider practices of inclusion (i.e. utilizing gender-inclusive language), ESCR-Net is an important source of information, cross-regional exchange, and movement-building for human rights and environmental movements, advocates and academics around the world. In 2017, ESCR-Net made a commitment to begin working consistently in four languages: Spanish, French, Arabic and English, and members have repeatedly affirmed the value of these efforts, allowing learning and collective action across a growing set of members. ESCR-Net will continue to prioritize capacity and funds to ensure interpretation of online and in-person meetings in these working languages, utilizing event registrations whenever possible to assess interpretation needs for specific discussions. ESCR-Net also reaffirms a commitment to maintain its website in these four working languages. For position statements, significant publications and resources, member-related policies, and similar documents, the secretariat will consistently prioritize resources for formal translations. To ensure inclusive language and use of consistent political phrases agreed by members, translators will also be utilized for other important communications and advocacy documents. To support effective translation, the communications team will work with members and the wider secretariat team to regularly update guidance to translators and interpreters on inclusive language, as well as key political terminology important to different areas of Network analysis and advocacy. As ESCR-Net moves into global campaigns, as well as expanding popular political education, there is also a recognition that these four working, colonial languages may not be adequate to engage with many of our social movement members, beyond a handful of international representatives. While the capacity of the secretariat is inevitably limited, ESCR-Net will strive to translate key resources into additional languages, when requested by members, and/or to incorporate translations provided by members into popular education resources, working to make them more easily adaptable. In addition, none of these four languages is the primary language for many current member representatives, so we will utilize editors, online tools, and relevant trainings to improve the clarity and readability of our written materials. Over the next five years, we also envision expanding practices to increase the accessibility of our spaces and resources, including for persons with hearing, vision or other disabilities. In addition, creative commons licensing will invite the use and dissemination of resources by allies and wider audiences.

**Digital and physical security** concerns have continued to grow, including with the expanded capacity and use of artificial intelligence (AI). In a moment of growing surveillance and repression, digital security of Network communications will be a renewed priority, together with related capacity building and/or mutual learning spaces for secretariat staff and members. Consistent assessments of potential meeting and advocacy locations will be utilized to identify, share with members, and work to mitigate risks, particularly for defenders in already precarious conditions. In our System of Solidarity (SOS), we are guided by members under threat and by fellow members in the same context, aware that they are

normally best positioned to assess risks and articulate what will be most effective in both reinforcing their security and advancing their community's or organization's demands. Secondly, ESCR-Net consults with our SOS Advisory Group, composed of many members who specialize in the protection of defenders, together with movements and NGOs that have a long history of confronting repression, providing an important sounding board. In assessing and mitigating risk related to ESCR-Net meeting locations and advocacy delegations, we will utilize a similar approach, turning first to members and allies in the context and secondarily to members following and addressing trends regionally or globally.

### **Secretariat Role and Capacity**

The secretariat's role is foremost to facilitate the member-to-member solidarity, shared analysis, and collective action of members. ESCR-Net's strength comes from the collective action of members, guided by their cross-regional analysis and leadership. The secretariat, now spread across the different regions and 10 countries, plays significant roles in creating spaces for mutual learning and strategic dialogue, coordinating advocacy and campaign actions, supporting cross-regional solidarity, and amplifying member-led demands and narratives through strategic communications. From September 2023, the secretariat transitioned to a coordination team of five directors, working to institutionalize shared leadership in the secretariat while continuing to ensure member leadership of our political and strategic directions, strengthening resilience in moments of transition, and better allocating secretariat capacity and resources in line with member priorities. Additionally, the secretariat is committed to regularly creating time and space for members to take stock of collective work, sharing reflections and learning in relation to both important 'wins' and challenges and assessing how ESCR-Net is positioned vis-a-vis the evolving global context.

Given the funding landscape facing many members and ESCR-Net as a collective, as well as the significant growth under our last strategic plan, the secretariat does not envision substantial growth over the next five years. However, a couple areas of the secretariat team are particularly stretched, namely:

- **Our institutional development team**, which leads on finances, logistics and human resources. In addition to a director, we now have a finance coordinator and an events associate. However, we need additional financial support, ideally via the hire of at least a **part-time finance associate**. Similarly, given the size of our team - now spread across 10 countries - and our commitment to ensuring equivalent benefits and compensation across our team, we would ideally hire at least a **part-time human resources coordinator**.
- **Our strategic communications team** now has two full-time staff members, including both a director and coordinator, working with a range of communications consultants with specific capacities in design, video editing, graphic art, website design, etc. However, given the breadth of members' collective advocacy and intention to launch a global campaign, as well as ongoing solidarity actions and deepening member interests in strengthening narrative work and popular education, ESCR-Net would benefit from additional communications capacity, ideally via the hire of a full-time **communications associate**.
- If addressing the gaps above are the most pressing priorities, we would be excited to find ways to continue to support the learning and growth of emerging human rights advocates

while also welcoming their contributions to collective advocacy. As resources permit, we would look forward to again funding a **legal fellowship**. This would build on an initial pilot of two year-long legal fellowships with the CUNY Law School.

- In addition, **our campaign and membership team** would ideally add a **regional campaign and membership facilitator in Asia**, complementing existing regional campaign and membership facilitators in Africa and Latin America, as well as the membership coordinator based in SWANA. Depending on the growth and targets of campaigning over the next five years, additional regional team members might become important over time.

In line with the 2013 Board decision to keep the primary secretariat office in New York City, the Board endorsed and has continued to actively support **efforts to ensure regionally diverse hires** of team members with similar political commitments but different backgrounds. This includes individual hires based in different regions, who travel to NYC for orientation and periodic meetings. The secretariat has an ongoing mandate to ensure strong language capacity, with a focus on further strengthening its abilities to work in French and Arabic, as well as English and Spanish. In developing this new institutional development plan, the Board has affirmed the value of the secretariat team now including several people who have been part of social movements, Indigenous Peoples' organizations, feminist struggles, and/or community-based organizations in their own countries. Like members, the secretariat is now working across multiple regions and time zones in a period of intersecting crises. In the coming period, attention to **staff well-being and care** will remain a vital priority, supported by our staff-led Work Environment Committee, established in 2022.

In maintaining and strengthening the collective advocacy and campaigning of members, as well as the capacity of the secretariat to coordinate these efforts, we are **confronting challenging political and funding landscapes**. With the important support of Board members, the secretariat will deepen its fundraising efforts in the coming period. Fundraising plans will build on this Network-wide strategic plan and the plans of different working groups, the System of Solidarity, and member-led campaign and communications efforts, in close conversation with member-led steering committees and advisory groups. Over the next five years, the Board will assess whether registering in a second location for security, financial and/or political reasons makes sense.

In turn, ESCR-Net will continue to build alliances with grassroots and protection-oriented funders, who may never directly fund ESCR-Net as a collective, but who are able to bring vital resources to movement, Indigenous and smaller NGO members, as well as human rights defenders and their communities under threat. Within our own membership, particularly in relation to our System of Solidarity, there is a desire and initial commitment to map both the financial and technical capacities of members specialized in different aspects of protection, in order to better coordinate rapid emergency funding and support in times of crisis. Finally, ESCR-Net has benefited from the commitment of a couple existing donors to allow us to slowly build a reserve fund, giving us permission to put a certain percentage of new general support grants into this reserve fund, in order to better navigate inevitable shifts in funding and maintain support for collective action. By the end of this five-year period, we aim

to have the equivalent of six months operating expenses in our reserve fund, allowing us to better face external crises and shifts in the funding landscape.

In relation to immediate funding challenges and, much more importantly in the face of the global polycrisis of climate, debt, and care, we are convinced that the primary issue is not scarcity. Rather, corporate capture of government institutions and wider societal structures maintains a grotesquely unequal distribution of resources and a wider economic system - entwined with histories of patriarchy, imperialism, and racism - that places profit above people and the planet. In developing and affirming these new strategic directions for ESCR-Net as a global collective, members redoubled their commitment to uniting their struggles in practical solidarity and in joint action for transformative change.