

Terms of Reference

Mapping of support mechanisms to mitigate digital attacks on Human Rights Defenders in the Majority World

Submission deadline: 9 March 2025

Estimated start date: 1 April 2025

Location: Remote

1. Background

The contextual background for this mapping assignment is the increasing challenges that restrict the space for Human Rights Defenders (HRDs) to operate in the digital age. The emergence of digital technologies has provided many HRDs with a new sphere to organize and conduct their activities. However, these new opportunities also put HRDs under new risks and attacks in the form of e.g. digital surveillance and online harassment, and these digital threats often interlink with physical attacks against civil society actors.

These challenges are the overall focus of the [Digital Democracy Initiative](#) (DDI) which this mapping assignment is a part of. Global Focus is one of the civil society partners in this initiative funded by Denmark, Norway and the EU. The overall objective of the initiative is to promote and protect local inclusive democratic space in the digital age, running from 2023-2026, with the following two key outcome areas:

1. **Enable and Amplify:** Inclusive democracy and civic space are expanded and protected through the improved use of digital technology for civic engagement by local civil society actors operating in restrictive contexts in the Majority World.
2. **Defend and protect:** Strengthened digital resilience and security of pro-democracy civil society actors and more rights-respecting policies and standards safeguarding the use of digital technologies and online space.

Global Focus acts as secretariat for the Advisory Board of the initiative, consisting of civil society actors across the Majority World, who provide strategic and operational advice based on their technical and contextual expertise. Furthermore, Global Focus is collaborating with CIVICUS on establishing a Global Digital Knowledge Hub, both curating knowledge materials and providing peer-to-peer learning with civil society actors.

2. Objective of the mapping assignment

On this background, the overall aim of the mapping assignment is to mitigate the trend of closing digital spaces for HRDs by curating already existing resources and toolkits that support HRDs operating in this restricted space to prevent and react to these digital threats and attacks. As a lot of useful resources and toolkits already exist for HRDs, the assignment is not to create a new support mechanism but rather to map the already existing ones, thereby providing overview and easy access for HRDs to use these.

Support mechanisms are here broadly defined as mechanisms that provide support (financial or other) for HRDs to counter threats to their digital civic space. The primary example and scope of the assignment include rapid response/emergency support mechanisms specifically targeted at preventing or responding to digital attacks on Human Rights Defenders (HRDs). Another example of support mechanisms which the mapping can include is capacity strengthening offered to HRDs to mitigate digital attacks, such as security audits.

On the background of the mapping, the consultant should analyze the data and identify potential existing gaps in support to HRDs that face digital attacks, such as lack of long-term support mechanisms, groups not eligible for support from existing mechanisms and other potential gaps, that can inform external actors on potential needed support mechanisms. This brief analysis based on the mapping can take point of departure in potential interviews with existing rapid response providers.

The mapping is expected to complement and enhance an already existing mapping of existing knowledge management actors, forums, programmes and infrastructure related to digital democracy and civic space. The data of this present mapping assignment should thus be interoperable, in such a way that it can be integrated into a relational database format. The existing mapping and documentation will be made available to the consultant.

Definitions:

- Human Rights Defenders (HRDs) here refers to ‘individuals or groups who act to promote, protect or strive for the protection and realization of human rights and fundamental freedoms through peaceful means’ in accordance with the UN declaration on human rights defenders. It can include civil society actors, activists, journalists and other individuals or groups falling under this definition.
- The term “Majority World” was coined by Bangladeshi photographer Shahidul Alam as an alternative to the demeaning term “Third World”. While not a strictly defined technical concept, Majority World here is used interchangeably with “Global South” meaning countries across Africa, Asia and Latin America, home to a majority of the world’s population, and many with a history of colonisation by countries in the Global North.

3. Scope and deliverables of assignment:

The scope and deliverables of the assignment include:

1. **Conducting the mapping of support mechanisms:**
 - a. Find potential already existing mappings of support mechanisms and identify those related to digital threats and attacks
 - b. Look for support mechanisms that are not already part of existing mappings
 - c. Make a consolidated mapping of the identified relevant support mechanisms in an interoperable format and based on parameters agreed on at the initial meeting.
2. **Conduct a brief analysis of gaps in existing support mechanisms:**
 - a. Based on the identified relevant support mechanisms in the mapping, conduct a brief analysis (max 5 pages) of gaps in existing support mechanisms in terms of reaching HRDs experiencing digital threats and attacks.

4. Outputs and timetable

The consultant is expected to deliver the following outputs:

- **Participate in two closed meetings** with Global Focus' secretariat and members of the DDI Advisory Board:
 - First meeting: Discuss expectations to the mapping of support mechanisms
 - Second meeting: Present the findings of the mapping and an outline of the brief analysis based on the mapping
- **Deliver a mapping** of existing support mechanisms for HRDs facing digital attacks
- **Deliver a brief analysis** of gaps in existing support mechanisms
- **Present the mapping** at relevant open meetings (maximum 3), e.g. a Global Digital Knowledge Hub webinar or relevant spaces or events accessible to civil society.

Timetable for outputs:

Task	Deadline/date
Initial meeting between consultant, members of the DDI Advisory Board and Global Focus	1 April depending on schedules
Delivery of mapping	15 May 2025
Delivery of brief analysis	30 May 2025
Presentation of mapping and brief analysis at Global Digital Knowledge Hub webinar	Maximum 5 hours, including preparation, before October 2025

5. Expected qualifications and experience of the consultant

The preferred consultant must have:

- Knowledge of rapid response/emergency support mechanisms for HRDs.
- Understanding of civic space issues and the digital threats and attacks targeted at HRDs.
- Experience working with structured datasets.

6. Application procedure and evaluation

Interested consultants must express their interest by submitting their proposal containing the following:

- A **technical offer** including:
 - Methodology for the mapping, including examples of materials/resources to be reviewed and included, sampling methodology, work plan.
 - Brief description (maximum ½ page) of the consultant's understanding of the topic of the assignment and the Terms of Reference.
 - CV and/or portfolio
 - Two proposed references and web links to previous work, if available.
- A **financial offer** including:
 - The consultant should include their proposed daily rate, including all costs, and an estimate of days used.

We currently have two consultancy tasks related to the DDI. The other assignment is *Forms of attacks on Human Rights Defenders in the Global Majority World (ToR)*. In case you are interested in applying for both, you are welcome to send one proposal covering both assignments, including a proposed timeline for conducting the assignments.

You can apply through the Jotform template [here](#).

7. Payment schedule

The fee for the assignment will be paid in two tranches:

1. 50% upon delivery of mapping.
2. 50% upon delivery of brief analysis and presentations at the end of consultancy.

If you have any questions about the assignment, don't hesitate to reach out to Julie Arrildt, Policy Advisor and Thematic Coordinator on Human Rights and Civic Space at Global Focus, jua@globaltfokus.dk