

The
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Center

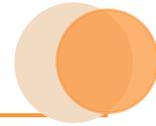
2022-2025

STRATEGY

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INTRODUCTION



The Oslo Center (TOC) was established in 2006 with the aim to help those in need. During the years, the center initially engaged in inter-religious dialogue and has since advocated for human rights, peace, and democracy across the world. To harness its expertise, reinforce its impact, and further support local sustainability, this strategy aims to bring new focus by narrowing down the scope of engagement. This will allow the foundation to go deeper and provide a richer understanding and programmatic impact in the areas of our work. Similarly, our geographical area will also be streamlined to allow for a more consistent presence and long-term impact.

For the next 4 years, The Oslo Center will implement the strategy presented in this document in East Africa (Kenya, Somalia, Tanzania, and Uganda), and Eastern Europe (Ukraine, Georgia, and North Macedonia). This document outlines the vision, approach, and work areas of The Oslo Center to clearly present who we are as a foundation and our direction until 2025.

VISION

Democratic systems that are responsive to citizen needs and respect their meaningful participation, human rights and human dignity.

MISSION

To promote and enhance democratic practices by strengthening governance, political and government institutions, and civic spaces.



CORE VALUES

Integrity – The Oslo Center is committed to be accountable, transparent and uphold ethical principles and values in our organizational culture and work.

Impartiality – We work as an impartial and independent organization that engages with all, regardless of background, race, religion, sexual orientation, gender, or political affiliation.

Inclusivity – The Oslo Center commits to equal opportunity to all, both in its work and staff, regardless of gender, age, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and race.

Reliability – TOC work aims to be solid, trustworthy, consistent, and accurate in its work and performance.

APPROACH



Throughout the years, The Oslo Center has excelled in its bottom-up participative coaching approach that focuses on aiding our partners in their democratic journey. It is important that democracy is not imposed ideologically but is organically developed to meet the needs and vision of a given nation. It is ultimately a reflection of a socio-political structure that influences citizens' behavior and well-being. The Oslo Center's approach focuses therefore on the *facilitation* and *enactment* of a local democratic vision defined by local needs, context, and democratic aspirations. This not only supports local ownership, but it also creates a supportive structure for local agents to be the drivers of change, strengthening the sustainability of our programmatic engagements. Our partners are at the center of our work, and we assist them in strengthening their democratic practices and processes by empowering their democratic role. They are the implementors of their own democratization. Using technical expertise, practical knowledge and experience, adjustability, best practices, and lessons learned, we tailor our programs to fit each of our partners' needs, context, and historical timing.



The Oslo Center will work towards the below goals between 2022 and 2025 to achieve its mission in supporting democratic practices:

Strategic Goals:

1. Support strong legal frameworks that secures democratic spaces respecting equal representation of all citizens.
2. Support accountable democratic institutions that represent and advocate for inclusive participation and meaningful citizen engagement.
3. Support empowered and knowledgeable citizenry that take an active part in democratic governance.

Goal 2 aims to target the supply side of democracy, whilst Goal 3 the demand. Goal 1 targets the very foundation and framework of democracy to jointly support Goal 1 and 2.

Objectives:

The following objectives are designed to guide the organization's work in accomplishing the strategic goals:

L1.1 To strengthen the legal framework by supporting the operationalization and implementation of laws and regulations to enhance democratic compliance

S2.1 To strengthen intra and inter-institution mechanisms for consultation, dialogue, and cooperation

S2.2 To strengthen institutional accountability and reinforce transparent, responsive, and legal democratic processes

D3.1 To promote/assist electoral and political awareness and participation amongst citizens

D3.2 To promote and strengthen meaningful citizen engagement in governance processes at national and subnational level to effectively demand accountability and transparency

THEMATIC AREAS



Democratic assistance is a large field that encompasses everything from structural to behavioral components that allow citizen representation in a government system. To ensure The Oslo Center streamlines its work to meet the defined objectives, three thematic areas have been identified to channel the Center's programmatic efforts. These are Political Representation, Democratic Governance, and Inclusion. In this section, each area will be unpacked to present the Center's strategic approach to each component and define the direction and boundaries of our work.

Thematic Area: Political Representation

Political representation is important to ensure that citizen needs, and voices are represented at policy development and legislative promulgation. Moreover, it gives citizens a process to hold the government to account for its decisions, performance, and behavior. Traditionally this representation has been carried out by political parties to offer ideological outlets to voters to exercise political control. This is particularly important when citizens are spread over geographical distances without easy access, physical and/or digital, to power holders and decision-makers. Political representation is therefore not only important to ensure that population priorities are reflected in the political direction of a given nation, but it is also a powerful accountability tool that defines the boundaries of political action. Emphasizing The Oslo Center's expertise, TOC will focus its work in the following manner:

Sub-Theme: Legal Frameworks

Recognizing the critical role that election related laws play in establishing and maintaining a healthy democratic environment, The Oslo Center will focus its efforts on election preparation, political parties, and campaign financing laws. Election related laws provide a governance framework and are therefore the backbone to a sustainable democracy. These laws provide a basis for political equality, transparency, and accountability. Competent election management bodies, multi-party competition, division of power, universal and equal political participation, are all milestones to achieve long-term peace and political stability. These laws regulate the political sector and determine the boundaries of power, influence, and mobilization. Depending on a given country, these laws might not be present, or ill defined, allowing for loopholes and abuse of resources and power. To support nations in their democratic processes, The Oslo Center will assist, when requested, in legislative revision, capacity building, policy dialogue and institutional strengthening of regulatory bodies by sharing practical comparative experience to provide the law a solid basis for fair democratic elections.

Target Group

To best meet objective 1.1, our efforts will target the following target groups to support them in the changes needed to strengthen legal frameworks and democratic compliance. In this work, The Oslo Center will above all prioritize **regulatory bodies**, such as Election Management Bodies and Registrar of Political Parties, and **political parties**. Our engagement will primarily assist them fulfill their mandate and role in the promotion, implementation, and enforcement of democratic policies and election related laws. In order to contribute to the peaceful establishment of democratic environments that sustain election and multiparty dialogue, The Oslo Center will work with these target groups to strengthen their internal democratic governance processes and external action towards electoral processes.

Program Areas

To work towards objective 1.1. and support the operationalization and implementation of laws and regulation to enhance democratic compliance with the above-mentioned target groups, the following program areas will center TOC's work:

Electoral Preparation

Electoral reform requires collaboration and consultation to avoid suspicion and mistrust. Dialogue between political parties is therefore critical to build tolerance, trust, collaboration, and inclusive participation. It is important that impacted actors have a say in structuring their own democracy to create a system of ownership, accountability and agreed set of expectations and standards. To this notion, The Oslo Center will work with political parties through consultative mechanisms to encourage openness and tolerance and determine the path for electoral reforms. Leadership-to-leadership engagement and high political discourse can also be adopted to strengthen democratic cooperation, political liaison, and joint representation.

Political Parties Legal Compliance

Political parties' operations are governed by political parties' laws that regulate their registrations, operations, and internal democracy. Their structures are guided by legal and administrative processes enshrined in their operational documents. The election laws equally guide political parties participating in elections. To further facilitate political parties' operations and functionality, The Oslo Center will work with political parties to develop strategies that assist them to be legally compliant. This entails assistance in party structures, party lists, party primaries regulations, and party campaign financing. The work with political parties aims to strengthen their transparency and accountability processes and work efficiency, which in turn strengthens their ability to be strong democratic representative bodies.

Capacity Building of Regulatory Bodies

Passing policies and legislation does not ensure the implementation of said ordinance. There is a need to build the capacity of regulatory bodies to implement and enforce laws. Laws should not only define democratic rights and obligations but also entail enough flexibility to last. Their implementation relies on multiple variables, amongst other political will, capacity, integration, and institutional support. To have a strong democratic environment, regulatory bodies have a responsibility to educate stakeholders on relevant laws. The Oslo Center will assist regulatory bodies, when invited, to assist them in the development of manuals (for the operationalization of their roles) and mechanisms for sanctions and enforcement of the laws. TOC will also assist in reviewing or revising parent laws that guide political parties and the public at large on election related legislation.

Gender Mainstreaming

To promote gender equality and inclusion in democracy, The Oslo Center will provide technical advisory assistance to regulatory bodies and political parties on gender inclusion in democracy and governance; and strongly advocate for inclusive legislation. It will be done by ensuring that all genders are represented when working on electoral laws. TOC will also contribute to global comparative knowledge resources on gender equality and inclusion in democratic processes and institutions by analyzing the challenges presented. We will also explore strategic initiatives that address gender inequalities, marginalization, and exclusion to integrate them in our programming.

Sub-Theme: Political Institutions

Political institutions provide avenues for the representation of citizens, legislation, and implementation of laws and policy. They also conduct elections and contribute to the creation and protection of democratic spaces to provide room for citizens' participation in governance. In the case where political institutions are not fully functional, abuse of power, lack of representation, patronage, and corruption are more likely to occur, leading to bigger social and economic inequalities. In emerging democracies, The Oslo Center supports political institutions to strengthen democratic practices and processes. The enhancement of their professionalism and accountability is essential to strengthen citizen representation and participation.

Target Group

More specifically, The Oslo Center will work with **political parties** (in government and opposition), **youth and women wings**, and **regulatory bodies** to strengthen political institutions' democratic practices. Our engagement in this area will reinforce accountable and representative processes in political institutions as represented by objective 2.1 and 2.2 of this strategy. Political parties in government are custodians of programs and policies that reflect election outcomes and are crucial actors in developing a given nation's political and democratic identity. Together with opposition parties, who act more like checks and balances to provide democratic oversight, they both create democratic space for dialogue and collaboration that represent citizen needs and priorities. Multiparty systems can generate a more tolerant and collaborative political environment. Additionally, women and youth wings provide avenues for meaningful representation and a structural process to nurture the next generation of conscious democratic leadership. Moreover, by working with elections management and political regulatory bodies, TOC also assists critical actors increase the oversight of political institutions and ensure the compliance of democratic regulation.

Program Areas

Taking into consideration our target groups, The Oslo Center will focus on the following type of program activities to work towards our second goal that focuses on accountable democratic institutions:

Strengthen political parties

Political parties play a vital role in strengthening democracies. They offer an opportunity for citizens to participate in democratic processes and are essential for political representation as they are the first line of engagement between the electoral and representative institutions. The Oslo Center will help to create linkages between political parties and the public through policy dialogue, policy review, and feedback to strengthen political parties' transparency and accountability abilities.

Strengthen meaningful membership participation

Active party membership is essential for the democratic running of political parties. They contribute to the tone of the political culture and influence the policy direction of political parties and youth/women wings. Their representation and inclusion mirror the social composition and democratic nature of the

civic space. Where needed, The Oslo Center will assist political parties in this area by revamping party membership infrastructures through the revitalization of membership recruitment drives. Technological tools, technical support, and clear identification of roles and responsibilities make part of our work. Moreover, trainings that target membership dialogue and consultation in intraparty and institutional integration can be offered to ensure inclusive participation and meaningful membership engagement in policy design, implementation, and oversight. The Oslo Center will also collaborate with political parties and youth/women wings in developing communication mechanisms to advance institutional direction and accountability that is responsive to the needs of the membership and general citizenry.

Multiparty engagement with political leadership

Dialogue between political parties is critical to build tolerance, trust, collaboration, and inclusive participation. Governance, institutional and public policy reform require collaboration and integration for successful implementation. Multiparty engagement is therefore essential to democracy as it promotes institutional growth and democratic expansion. When applicable, The Oslo Center will bring political parties together through consultative mechanisms to encourage openness and tolerance towards one another, as well as determine the rules of the political game. When needed, policy coordination mechanisms, leadership-to-leadership engagement, and high political discourse will also be adopted to strengthen democratic cooperation, political liaison, and joint representation.

Strengthening political Institutions

To strengthen the democratic role of political institutions, The Oslo Center will work with political parties, at national and subnational levels, and regulatory bodies, by strengthening their internal structures and processes to enhance inclusivity, decision-making processes, and responsiveness.

Operationalization of policy framework

Operationalization of existing policy and regulations is essential since they emphasize on the implementation and practical steps political representatives, staff or civil servants need to take to anchor policy in concrete outputs. To support the institutional efficiency, effectiveness, and stability of political institutions, it is important to support their operational framework to guide their work and role in the democratic system. The Oslo Center will assist political institutions in mandate/constitutional making, reviews, and amendments to streamline internal processes such as oversight roles, accountability structures, party elections, nomination processes, candidate selection, emergence, and identification. This can be done at a technical, coordinated, or practical manner. In the specific case of political parties, a robust constitution ensures that internal party democracy is strengthened. This in turn enhances their transparency, responsiveness, and legal democratic practice.

Capacity building

Political institutions, particularly in emerging democracies, consist of people. Reform and change include therefore their active participation and engagement to ensure meaningful implementation and democratic contribution. Capitalizing on our expertise, The Oslo Center will work with leadership, officials, civil servants, and staff to build their capacity in leadership skills, professional running of institutions, operationalization of processes, communication, and advocacy, and development, implementation, and dissemination of policies. The Oslo Center extends trainings to women and youth in political literacy, confidence-building and legal and political process orientation. The trainings are designed to build the capacity of more vulnerable groups to enhance their role in the decision-making process in political institutions.

Gender Mainstreaming

The Oslo Center sees the meaningful participation of women in political institutions to create gender equality, essential to democratic practice. To advocate for equity and advance women's representation, The Oslo Center will promote women's needs in the system, legislative and policy reform. Additionally, it will develop specific training components for women to strengthen their confidence, role, and technical capacity in political institutions, decision making, and policy development. It will also work with political institutions to institutionalize women's participation and meaningful engagement by providing peer-to-peer support and knowledge sharing. The Oslo Center will also encourage multiparty and inter-institutional collaboration to strengthen women's consultation, cooperation, and dialogue processes at national and sub-national levels.



Thematic Area: Democratic Governance

Institutions provide the structure for democracy, politics the direction of power, whilst governance is the continuous dynamics that influence civil servant behavior and in turn citizen interaction. Institutions, policies, and laws can appear democratic in nature but unless these structures are applied and implemented through a responsive and democratic system, citizens will often lose trust and dissociate from the very institutions and political systems that are supposed to defend their rights. It is important that government actors are professional and performs with the highest level of integrity, responsibility, responsiveness, accountability, and transparency to cultivate democratic practices within governmental and political institutions, as well as amidst the population. To contribute to goal 2 and the supply side of democracy, the following areas will be the focus for TOC between 2022 and 2025.

Sub-Theme: Intra-institutional strengthening

Supporting the alignment of each institution, body, and governmental organ to accomplish their mandate and perform to the highest level of democratic professionalism, institutional strengthening is often required in young and emerging democracies. To support their democratic performance, The Oslo Center will assist institutions to enhance their efficiency, accountability, and transparency to cultivate citizen responsiveness, trust, and citizen-government relationships.

Target Groups

The Oslo Center will work in particular with **sub-national governments, civil servant commissions, regulatory bodies, and political parties** to strengthen their democratic practices and accountability processes as represented by objectives 2.1 and 2.2 of this strategy. Sub-national government tends to be the first line of contact for citizens and their trust in the state is frequently cultivated through their experience and level of engagement. These institutions have the capacity to include citizen needs in their planning and strategies to ensure joint ownership and democratic governance. The performance of civil servants can set the tone for an accountable form of engagement that supports local responsiveness and agency and reduces abuse of power. They can also enforce compliance with democratic obligations and regulations.

Program areas

Taking into consideration our target groups, The Oslo Center will focus on the following type of program engagement:

Institutional organizational audit and reviews

Political and governance actors play an important role in the promotion of democracy. It is therefore important that these institutions work as smoothly as possible to include and represent citizen needs effectively. Systems that interconnect legislation, structures, processes, and policy effectively are better capable of restricting abuse of power and maximize the usage of resources to better address citizen needs. The Oslo Center will work with governance and political institutions in undertaking internal assessments of their structures and systems to identify the drivers and barriers that promote or inhibit internal democratic governance to develop reform strategies and assist institutions in addressing the internal gaps/needs in question.

Policy Development and Operationalization

Whilst legislation outlines the principle and procedures that need to be in place, policy often guides institutional practices and performance. In some nations, policies can at times be developed without being integrated or fully implemented. For an institution to work effectively there needs to be harmony and cohesion between laws, policies, and implementation. To support strengthening an institution's democratic governance, TOC will create, where invited, space for internal dialogue and dispute resolution opportunities to support a clear and unified vision in policy objectives and development. We will also help institutions to identify the steps needed to obtain optimal operationalization and assist them in their reform/adjustment processes. This work seeks to strengthen the internal democratic practices of institutions to assist them to perform their democratic role in the wider political and government system.

Administrative and Procedural Reforms

In as much value as there is in an institution's mandate and the work it carries out, it is equally important to address how an institution functions. Within an institution there are often different bodies, organs, sections and departments that are in charge of different roles and responsibilities. To perform to the best of their abilities, it is important that internal procedures and mechanisms support coordination, communication, clear lines of responsibility, and procedural sequence. To assist institutions strengthen their internal mechanisms and procedures, The Oslo Center can assist with procedural consultation, review, coordination and reform. Based on internal needs, TOC will provide technical support, capacity building and reform guidance.

Gender Mainstreaming

To secure gender mainstreaming within institutions, legal provisions are crucial. Laws, rules, regulations, and procedures must secure gender inclusion to allow for diversified perspectives and approaches to their work. We will include gender audits in our work to identify gaps and areas that need strengthening, whether through legal and/or the operational framework. Moreover, it is also important that policy positions from political and governance institutions are gender-sensitive to include the needs of a large demographic in society. The Oslo Center will work with institutions to strengthen their gender strategies, inclusion procedures, and policy development to assist this process further.

Sub-Theme: Public Participation

Public participation gives an opportunity for the public to contribute to policy decision-making in governance. It is therefore a critical component of democratic governance. Public participation promotes transparency, accountability and creates an open government. When the public is engaged in policy decision-making, it creates public ownership of policies, projects, and programs of their government. While the public benefits from influencing decision making in governance, the government understands citizens' policy needs and responds to them appropriately. The government allocates resources from an informed point of view. Public participation is also a fundamental principle of democratic growth as it is an instrument for citizen empowerment, inclusion, and vigilance. The Oslo Center will work with political and governance institutions to develop responsive and efficient public participation policies, mechanisms, and processes. The Oslo Center will also work with institutions in the dissemination of critical information on decision-making to the public.

Target groups

The Oslo Center will work with **sub-national governments, executive and legislature**, to strengthen their democratic practices and reinforce their accountable and representative processes as represented

by objectives 2.1 and 2.2 in this strategy. The executive is the key implementor of democratic policies and legislative changes at a subnational level and can create an open and accountable form of government that encourages citizen engagement. The legislative on the other hand can take remedial actions in public resources allocation to reflect citizens' needs and priorities at a subnational level. It can also act as an oversight actor to ensure that policies and resources are used responsibly and within the agreed policy framework.

Program areas

The Oslo Center will engage the above-mentioned target groups in the following program activities to contribute to our second goal that focuses on accountable democratic institutions.

Strengthen open governments at subnational level

Open governments are vital to increase accountability, transparency, and greater citizen participation in democratic governance. The Oslo Center will work with sub-national institutions to develop technological tools and platforms, and other physical mechanisms, to include citizens in decision making through meaningful and effective public participation. The Oslo Center will in this engagement also engage minorities and marginalized groups in society and promote an all-inclusive form of participation. When requested, The Oslo Center can also assist sub-national structures to create mechanisms that interlink sub-national leaders, legislature, and executive in hybrid systems to increase participation to strengthen policy dialogue, legal frameworks, and citizen-government interaction.

Strengthen legislative work at subnational level

The subnational legislatures are key in enacting legal frameworks, rules, and guidelines for effective public participation. Through their oversight role, subnational legislatures are the eyes of citizens in the implementation of policies, projects, and programs by the subnational executive. The Oslo Center will work with subnational legislatures to develop legal frameworks and processes that guide public participation, as well as monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to feedback to strategic engagement.

Strengthen public participation in governance

Governance without the participation of the public is devoid of inclusivity and democratic development. The involvement of the public in decision-making enriches the policy work of subnational governments. Through the input of the public, subnational governments can implement policies, projects, and programs that are in tandem with public needs. We will assist subnational governments to reach out to the public for policy views, documentation of public opinion and incorporate these in policy implementation.

Gender Mainstreaming

The Oslo Center recognizes the meaningful participation of women in governance as essential to democratic practice. To advocate for equity and advance women's representation, The Oslo Center will promote women's needs in system, legislative and policy reform. Additionally, we will develop specific training components for women to strengthen their confidence, role, and technical capacity to participate in democratic governance. We will also work with sub-national governments to institutionalize women's participation and meaningful engagement by providing peer-to-peer support and knowledge sharing.

Sub-Theme: Transparency

Transparency is a cornerstone and a critical pillar in open democratic governance. Transparency gives citizens the opportunity to demand for accountability and knowledge of the decisions made by government executive and elected leaders. It is imperative to also consider transparency as an

ingredient for building confidence, and accountability in governance institutions, enhance mutual trust between citizens, leaders, and institutions. Transparency is therefore a necessary principle to promote government accountability, mitigate corruption, empower citizens, and maximize the potential of institutional reforms to strengthen democracy and foster openness in public affairs.

Target Group

The Oslo center aims to work with **sub-national governments, and regulatory and oversight bodies** implementation of objective 2.2 of this strategy. Enhanced transparency by these actors can increase the understanding and input of democratic processes that enable citizens to engage and develop trust. It also provides an oversight mechanism to hold the government and political parties accountable to policy commitments, resource allocation, and decision-making. It also allows for an inclusive form of governance where democratic ownership is co-shared and created between the public and the state.

Program areas

To enable an interactive governance environment, The Oslo Center will work in the following areas:

Institutional Reform

Transparency requires a supporting legal framework, access, processes, and understandable information that can be easily processed by citizens. In order to contribute to the democratic role of sub-national governments and oversight bodies, The Oslo Center can help with institutional reforms to develop and strengthen systems of transparency, particularly in the areas of finance and policy, through institutional assessments, legal/policy drafting, procedural reforms, and systems reviews.

Capacity Building

Whilst structures and systems can assist to bring information closer to citizens, it is the democratic understanding of civil servants that will help create democratic standards and values that support citizen engagement in government planning. It is therefore important to train civil servants in their technical capacities to enhance transparency and in their attitudes and values around oversight and participation functions that require transparency for optimal democratic performance. In emerging democracies, where systems might still be weaker than human influence, this is of particular paramount.

Support Civic Engagement

Information is only valuable if understood and used. Citizens and sub-national governments can miss opportunities to collaborate based on misunderstandings of each other's mandates and roles. We will therefore work with our target groups to bridge the gap between citizens, civil society, and institutions by strengthening their communication, dialogue, engagement, accountability, and evaluation. This cannot only help mitigate expectations but create alliances and trust where community solutions require joint citizen-government collaboration.

Gender Mainstreaming

Information can be empowering, and The Oslo Center will work with sub-national institutions to strengthen women's access and understanding of information to support their meaningful participation and integration into democratic governance. We will support our institutional partners in developing

gender lens policies for data identification and collection to ensure that data that is reflective of women's needs is also incorporated in data design, decision-making, program planning, implementation, and monitoring. We will also support the training of women civil servants and gender analysis on service provision.



Thematic Area: Inclusion

Citizens are at the center of governance. They are not only the target of policymakers and decisions, but they are also essential in decision-making processes. To achieve the ultimate democratic goal, policies and services need to be of relevance and correspond to citizen needs. Citizen engagement is not a single process or set of activities, it is an ongoing process or conversation that builds trust and relationships. By encouraging people, including some vulnerable and marginalized groups, The Oslo Center is committed to establish leveled platforms for dialogue between state, non-state actors and citizens to support an integrated governance approach that works towards the overall good of the country's political and socio-economic development.

Sub-Theme: Youth

Globally there is 1.8 billion youth¹, out of which 90 percent live in developing countries. Youth can be a source of innovation, as well as change if engaged in a meaningful way in governance, public policy, and decision-making. Historically, youth have actively participated, contributed, and even brought significant political changes. The youth's contribution to the struggles against undemocratic regimes has demonstrated their potential in bringing and sustaining democratic changes. However, youth often find themselves excluded from democratic processes where issues that affect them are being discussed. Consequently, youth often become politically apathetic and indifferent towards politics and democracy. The youth lack increasingly confidence and trust in the system, governance institutions, and democratic processes creating a generation disconnected from democratic governance. This not only leads to potential disaffection, violence, and radicalization, but also to the erosion of democracy.

For the next four years, The Oslo Center aims to support youth by facilitating their participation in political processes and decision-making by building bridges and spaces for dialogue between them and decision-makers. The Center's approach to this work is presented below.

Target Group

The Oslo Center will work with **youth civic actors, political aspirants, and decision-makers in political and governance institutions** to promote and strengthen meaningful youth engagement, as well as promote civic and political awareness among this group, as represented by objectives 3.1 and 3.2 of this strategy. Youth actors can advance and represent their generation's needs and views by influencing socio-political discourse in their communities. They not only have the potential to influence the leadership style of tomorrow but also demand accountability from today's decision-makers. A voice unheard leads however often to disgruntlement, dissatisfaction, conflict, and at times violence. The Oslo Center will therefore also work with decision-makers to create bridges and platforms of dialogue, understanding, and negotiation with youth.

Program Areas

Taking into consideration the target groups, TOC will focus on the following type of program areas to work towards achieving objectives 3.1 and 3.2.

¹ This is based on a definition of youth between 18-24 years. However, in many countries youth are defined as citizens from 18-35 years old.

Capacity Building

Capacity building of youth is important as it purposefully minimizes an over-reliance on outside experts as sources of knowledge, resources, and solutions to community issues. Building their skills enhances not only the quality of their contribution, and know-how, but also their confidence, sense of belonging, and integration in the political landscape. This particularly helps youth to become politically active and equips them with practical knowledge on democratic participation to enhance inclusion and strengthen government performance. The Oslo Center will engage youth civic actors and political aspirants to build their capacity on policy development, preparation for multi-stakeholder engagement and dialogue, communication, advocacy, lobby, networking, and public speaking. They will also be supported in understanding governance systems, national and sub-nation decision-making processes, and coalition building. This type of activity aims to strengthen their abilities to engage and partake in political and governance processes, as well as concretize their role, vision, and democratic purpose in demanding accountability and transparency.

Strengthen meaningful engagement of youth in governance processes

To influence governance processes requires active participation of young civic actors. Joint youth action is more effective in advancing youth issues on the political agenda and ensure that information related to youth issues is included in the decision-making processes. Through advocacy and lobby, youth can have their views and wishes genuinely considered when decisions are being made about their lives. The Oslo Center will support young civic organizations/associations/councils to strengthen their networks by facilitating venues where young civic actors can meet. The assistance will focus on helping youth design and develop youth networks that are locally community based to enhance youth-to-youth dialogue, develop solutions, lobby, and advocacy (policy cycle). To further assist effective participation, The Oslo Center will support and facilitate processes where coalitions between young civic actors, youth civic society organizations, community organizations, youth clubs, etc. and decision-makers can be formed or strengthened.

Venues for dialogue between youth and decision-makers

To secure meaningful participation, safe engagement between youth civic actors and decision-makers is needed. Venues can therefore be provided, whether formal or informal settings, where youth civic actors can engage directly with decision-makers for constructive discussions on youth issues. These forums are instrumental in order to hold decision-makers accountable. By creating venues for exchange of ideas, meaningful participation, and integration of youth in governance processes can be cultivated.

Gender Mainstreaming

The Oslo Center recognizes that the equal and meaningful participation of youth in governance processes is an essential prerequisite to democratic practice. TOC also understands that in some societies young women find themselves even further isolated from formal and informal governance structures and processes. To enhance their inclusion, The Oslo Center would work to incorporate gender quotas in all activities to encourage young women to join as much as possible, especially young women with disabilities and/or with ethnic, religious, or sexual minority backgrounds. Program design will also provide space to understand and incorporate the diverse needs and implications of young women to enhance their platform amongst and amidst youth groups. TOC will also encourage male champions to advocate for gender equality in political processes.

Sub-Theme: Women

Women's political participation is a fundamental prerequisite for gender equality and genuine democracy. It facilitates women's direct engagement in public decision-making and is a means of

ensuring better transparency and accountability towards women. More than half of the world's population are women, but their representation and meaningful inclusion in decision-making processes are not reflected. Women are still a minority in parliaments (national and regional), cabinets, and as heads of state. They have limited access and opportunity to meaningfully contribute to governance processes at national and subnational levels.

Women inclusion in decision-making is more than numbers. The consequence of women and girls' under-representation in decision-making is that women and girls' issues are not reflected in the political agenda. Without a joint effort by men and women to better address barriers, and identify and strengthen opportunities for meaningful participation, the rights and lives of women and girls will still be underdeveloped.

Target group

The Oslo Center will work with **women civic actors and decision-makers** to promote and strengthen meaningful women engagement, as well as to promote electoral and political awareness within these groups, as represented by objectives 3.1 and 3.2 of this strategy. Women are not a homogenous group and the presence of one woman cannot represent the needs of all. Different groups of women experience different degrees of exclusion in democratic processes. In working with women civic actors, TOC will adopt an intersectional approach to support the richness of the female diversity and link this with democratic participation. Decision-makers will also be included to strengthen the bridge between the demand and supply of democratic action and standards.

Program Areas

Taking into consideration the target groups, The Oslo Center will focus on the following type of program areas to work towards achieving objectives 3.1 and 3.2 of this strategy.

Capacity building of women civic actors

Capacity building is important since it enhances skills, knowledge, tools, and confidence that enable women to take action on local issues. Specifically for women civic actors who aspire for political participation. It is important to prepare women to become politically active and build their capacity on policy development, multi-stakeholder engagement, dialogue, advocacy and lobby skills, public speaking, governance, national and sub-nation decision-making processes, social media and communication, networking, coalition building, and mentoring. The empowerment and independence of women often contribute to socio-political development.

Strengthen meaningful engagement of women in governance processes

To influence governance processes, active participation of women civic actors is needed. The meaningful participation of women contributes to the inclusion of women issues in the decision-making process. It further advances gender equality and demands higher levels of accountability and transparency on women issues. The Oslo Center will support women civic actors to build networks where women civic actors can meet, agree, and develop joint plans and strategies. To further assist effective participation, The Oslo Center will support and facilitate processes that can see coalitions between women civic actors, women rights organizations, and decision-makers to strengthen local democratic governance practices.

Venues for dialogue between women civic actors and decision-makers

Safe venues for civic engagement between women civic actors and decision-makers are needed to have constructive discussions on women issues. The hurdles to women's participation are not only

structural and systematic but also cultural and normative. To address sociocultural norms in governance processes, male participation in these dialogue forums is essential. The Oslo Center will bring women civic actors and decision-makers from governance institutions together through consultative mechanisms to encourage dialogue and discussions on issues important for women to incorporate these in governance processes. These discussions will also allow women civic actors to demand for accountability and strengthen inclusion and representation of women in governance processes.

Gender mainstreaming

Gender equality can only be realized in a constructive and equal engagement between men and women. It is therefore important to create a mutual understanding of each other's perspectives and needs by creating further dialogue and mediation. The Oslo Center will therefore incorporate male dialogue and male champion activities as much as possible to further advance our women programming. Furthermore, a critical element of gender mainstreaming is intersectionality. Our programs will consider the different needs and perspectives diverse groups of women have to facilitate the participation of all women. This can include sexual minorities, women with disabilities, single moms, etc.



Across The Oslo Center's work, we seek to apply a consistent approach to our work. In order to do so, four particular components are applied to ensure our methodology is as strong as possible. These are outlined below:

Intra-Institutional Approach

The vast majority of The Oslo Center's work is tailored made to an institution's needs. However, actors and institutions do not work in silos and alone. In order to best support our partners, we initially conduct structural assessments to understand the inner workings of an institution. This is followed by an extensive dialogue where democratic objectives, goals, and standards are discussed to determine the potential area of meaningful collaboration. Based on the outcome of the process, The Oslo Center will assist our potential partners to identify democratic gaps and supportive action to strengthen internal capacities and capabilities. Adopting a coaching approach, we assist them in their own democratic development by providing technical support, know-how and facilitating peer-to-peer knowledge sharing. Our approach is very pragmatic in nature that recognizes the reality of everyday operations and local political dynamics.

South-to-South Exchange

The Oslo Center supports knowledge sharing among partners and establishes when needed, networks to support intra and inter-regional exchange on best practices, political operationalization processes, technological advancements, and expertise that supports the strengthening of democratic institutions and societies. Acknowledging that not all countries go through the same democratic development process, whether in sequence, timing, or stages, The Oslo Center particularly focuses on facilitating South-to-South exchange where similar experiences can be seen and experienced as most useful. At times, shared social norms and cultural values create a greater understanding and learning opportunities than peer exchange with countries far away.

Partnership

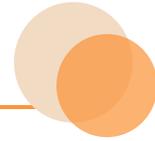
Democracy development and strengthening require joint effort. The Oslo Center will incorporate a stronger partnership approach to collaborate and work with like-minded organizations in the democracy and governance space. We believe we can achieve more by enhancing cooperation, dialogue and responsible leadership through long-term cooperation and partnerships. The Oslo Center will commit to enhance knowledge sharing, dialogue, and active engagement that helps strengthen and promote global democratic standards.

Gender Sensitivity

Running across The Oslo Center's new strategy is Sustainable Goal number 5: "Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls". The Oslo Center recognizes that achieving gender equality requires gender sensitivity and mainstreaming across all our activities and programs outlined in this strategic plan. To secure gender-sensitivity, The Oslo Center will develop and adopt a new gender sensitive

policy in 2022 that addresses the individual and institutional barriers that prevent gender equality. The new policy also acknowledges that cultural stereotypes and gender roles affect women inclusion in political and governance processes. Furthermore, TOC acknowledges that women are not a homogenous group, and intersectionality will be integrated in all program designing. For us, gender sensitivity is not only generated through the inclusion of women, but also the acknowledgment and participation of men, to encompass for a mutual dialogue that addresses individual, institutional, and cultural barriers with the aim to work together to identify strategies to overcome gender inequality.

ORGANIZATIONAL LEVERAGE



In developing this strategy, The Oslo Center assessed our strengths and weaknesses in implementing this strategy and will draw on the following to implement this strategy to the best of our abilities.

Networks

The Oslo Center has in the past worked with several organizations and research institutes at various levels with the purpose of creating synergies. We have strategic and operational relationships with other relevant centers, institutions, and networks in Norway and internationally that help strengthen the quality of our work. This includes a pool of former politicians and diplomats with international experience who can provide resources for our work and engage depending on demand and availability. TOC can also interconnect grassroots needs with the highest levels of government.

Diversity

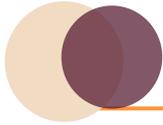
The Oslo Center has diverse staff and experts with political and government experience who know the 'nuts and bolts' of political cooperation and democratic development. The Oslo Center is practically oriented and emphasizes on the practical aspect of democracy building. The so-called 'best practice' and 'lessons learned' are both included in the dialogue with partners, as the process is equally as important as the outcome.

Flexible and Relevant

As an organization, we are responsive to local needs and therefore able to develop integrated, as well as sectoral projects. Our team is small but flexible which makes us more adjustable and relevant in the face of rapid socio-political change.

Independent

Though The Oslo Center works in a political environment, we are a non-partisan actor and can play a democratic role where political actors cannot enter. In this strategy, we seek to work in partnership and seek to complement the efforts of, governments, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), the United Nations (UN), and research institutions.



SUPPORTING ENGAGEMENT

To support the implementation of this strategy and ensure successful implementation, the following elements will be incorporated:

Communication

To support this strategy, The Oslo Center will develop a new communication strategy in 2022 to create awareness on our democracy work, the importance of democracy support, and the challenges that modern-day democracies face. The Oslo Center will also seek to increase awareness on the importance of democratic values by engaging relevant stakeholders to widen our understanding and knowledge of democracy development. Engaging experts, donors, peer organizations, researchers, policymakers, and the international community, our communication will seek to enhance dialogue on the current and future state of democracy. Particularly around the areas of political representation, democratic governance, and inclusion.

Fundraising

Due to the nature of The Oslo Center, it is important for the organization to remain independent and be able to carry out its work without being compromised. When democratic standards are challenged, the Center maintains its right to speak up. It is important that donors, sponsors, and private contributions understand our nature and help contribute to the protection of democracy.

The Oslo Center has traditionally received donor funding assigned to our programs, and sponsors and private contributions to support our organizational activities. Looking at the next four years, the Center is taking a new approach to our funding mechanisms and is adopting a new strategy to prioritize program, research, and communications. The new fundraising strategy will be developed in 2022 and will seek to diversify our funding portfolio to lower financial risks and allow for a more sustainable operational budget. The new strategy will also increase communication and understanding between our donors and work to enable more data-rich and inclusive partnerships.

Research

In the last 15 years, TOC had access to considerable field data through our work. This strategy will capitalize on the programmatic efforts to have a better understanding of the status of democracy, both at national and international level. Between 2022 and 2025 TOC will restructure its knowledge infrastructure to enhance internal learning, program design and external contributions to policy development and international decision-making. During the first two years, internal processes will be prioritized to strengthen the foundation's ability to collect, gather, analyze, and utilize data for our own learning and improvement. This will also be utilized to create an innovative and creative environment for employees to constantly evolve and keep up with the latest developments in democratic practices and challenges. This will be reflected in the foundation's new Monitoring, Evaluation, Learning and Research Strategy that will come out in 2022. In the latter part of this strategic period, an external research strategy will also be developed to connect the foundation's work with broader topics and policy processes. Areas of focus will be participation, political party work, and the frontiers of democracy, such as digital and environmental democratization.

Advocacy

The Oslo Center is traditionally not an advocacy center. We retain the right to speak up to defend democratic practices and will continue to do so in this next strategic period. Particularly around areas of representation, participation, civic rights, and transparency. These will be particularly incorporated in our communication and partnership initiatives to support the democratic development in countries where we are present, Norway and the international arena. Democracy is not a finished product but constantly evolves. It is important that it is not taken for granted. We strongly believe that constructive dialogue, critical thinking and out-of-the-box perspectives and experiences are important to our sector, partners, and own professional growth.