

VOLUME 3

D-HUB

GOTV: GET OUT THE VOTE



ANTI-AUTHORITARIAN

TOOLKIT

Greatest hits to defend
and renew democracies

D-HUB

VOLUME 3

GOTV: GET OUT THE VOTE

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D-HUB THANKS THE MEMBERS OF ITS COMMUNITY FOR THEIR FEEDBACK AND COMMENTS, WHICH HELPED IMPROVE THIS VOLUME.

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Twenty-first-century authoritarian leaders follow a clear playbook. It's not a formula or a recipe but a dynamic set of strategies and tactics deployed across different contexts.

In response, we've started to crack open their playbook and crafted something of our own: an ANTI-AUTHORITARIAN TOOLKIT. Developed with insight from hundreds of frontline democracy defenders, scholars, and strategists, this 10-volume series is packed with the most effective plays to counter elected authoritarianism and safeguard our democracies.

This Toolkit is not a silver bullet. It's a catalyst designed to ignite your vision and creativity as you confront the challenges ahead. Its plays are archetypal but open to innovation and adaptation to the local context of those who use them.

We hope you use it and share it. Maybe the next big play, we'll learn from you.

Ricken Patel

CO-CHAIR, D-HUB

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DRAWING INSPIRATION FROM:

You Can Vote (US) - Israeli Civil Society (Israel) - 8th of March
Institute (Slovenia) - Comanditos (Venezuela) - Golos (Belarus)
- French Civil Society campaigners (France)
- Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (US) - My First Vote (Brazil) -
Forum Apulum (Romania) - Take Control (Venezuela)
- Polish Civil Society (Poland)

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INTRODUCTION



WHY GOTV STRATEGIES?

by Nika Kovač

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, D-HUB

In the fight for democracy, elections are often the frontlines where the most critical battles are won or lost. Authoritarian leaders know this well—they use electoral victories to legitimize their power and often suppress turnout to stay in control. That’s why empowering pro-democracy voters can be a game-changer.

This volume of the Anti-Authoritarian Toolkit focuses on Get Out the Vote (GOTV) strategies. These are not just about increasing turnout but about creating a shared purpose that unites people. Voting is more than a civic duty; it’s a way to advocate for change and shape a future that reflects the diversity of our societies.

Here, we have curated a set of proven GOTV strategies, or “plays,” adaptable to different contexts. These plays don’t just get people to the polls; they build a sense of belonging, hope, and collective power. From vote tripling and election monitoring to distributed

organizing and transpartisan coalitions, each play engages voters on a deeper level, showing them that their vote is not just a single act but a step in a collective journey.

This volume emphasizes that modern GOTV campaigns must go beyond neutral, traditional civic engagement. In the fight for democracy, an effective GOTV campaign must be political. So don’t shy away from presenting your views and offering real solutions on the issues people care about most. Voters are motivated by values, and those values must be at the heart of mobilization efforts.

Our goal is simple yet powerful: to give you the tools to engage, inspire, and turn people into agents of democracy.

These plays have been tested in some of the most challenging environments. Please, use them, adapt them, and share them with your networks.

With love,
Nika.

HOW THIS PUBLICATION WORKS

Democracy defenders are busy and practical people. That is why we designed this publication to be concise and engaging.

This volume includes **ONE GRAND STRATEGY** and **FIVE PLAYS**.

GRAND STRATEGY

A guiding framework that aligns all actions and tactics with the long-term goal of safeguarding democracy. The foundation of the grand strategy provides coherence and effectiveness to individual plays.

PLAY

An action that can be adapted to different moments and contexts. It may be a strategy, tactic, or tool. The key criteria for its inclusion are its deployment, effectiveness, and relevance in the fight for democracy.

FOR EACH, YOU WILL FIND THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION →

THE PLAY

Describes the strategy, tactic or move



WHY IT WORKS

Explains the core reasons the tactic is effective and impactful



HOW IT WORKS

A more detailed depiction of the play, with the basic steps of implementation



TIPS

Recommendations and aspects to avoid



WHO'S DONE IT WELL

Examples of how the play has been deployed in real life



LEARN MORE

Curated resources to deepen understanding or support implementation

The concluding section, **"WE CAN HELP YOU,"** provides contact details for those needing help confronting elected authoritarian politics.

FEATURED GRAND STRATEGY

MAKING VOTING INEVITABLE

**TURN A CHOICE INTO
AN EXPECTATION**

Voting isn't just a personal decision—it's a collective force. When it's treated as a private act, it stays vulnerable to apathy, distrust, and disengagement. But when it becomes a shared, social expectation, it's harder to ignore—and harder to skip.

A strong GOTV campaign must create this perception: voting is indispensable.

It's not enough to inform or persuade. The key is to embed voting into existing social dynamics—making it a shared experience, not an isolated act.

That starts with the right messengers. People may distrust politicians or institutions, but they trust their friends, coworkers, family members—even the influencers they follow. Peer-to-peer influence is the cornerstone of a powerful GOTV campaign. One person who votes and encourages others can trigger a ripple effect that reaches far beyond.

But even the right messengers need the right message. Many people are driven by values, not parties. They vote because they want stability, dignity, and a better future. A good GOTV campaign connects voting to what people already care about—not abstract slogans or party loyalty, but shared hopes and everyday concerns.

Trust is also essential. If people don't believe their vote will count, they're unlikely to show up. When necessary, a GOTV campaign must reinforce trust in the system or build mechanisms that protect the vote, addressing skepticism and ensuring that people feel their participation makes a difference.

In the end, people vote because they want to belong. When voting is framed as an act of connection—something that ties people to each other and to a shared future—it becomes more than a duty. It becomes meaningful—something that ties people to a larger purpose.

In short, a successful GOTV campaign should transform voting from an individual decision into a profoundly personal act with social meaning, shaped by relationships and values. When this happens, voting is no longer only an individual choice—it is an expectation, a shared act of shaping the future.

1

VOTE TRIPLING

**Engage more and more voters
and amplify the base**

THE PLAY

Vote Tripling is a grassroots mobilization tactic that turns a supporter into a “tripler”—a mini-mobilizer. The idea is simple: ask each person to get three friends to vote, and encourage them to do the same. The magic lies in the number. Asking for three commitments is simple, achievable, and powerful.

There are different types of triplers. Some are highly engaged and ready to organize others. Some may only take a single action. Yet they all share a common goal: leveraging personal connections to make voter outreach spread like wildfire and boost voter turnout effectively.

This tactic is especially powerful in key moments—when trying to reach a quorum, during early voting periods, or in swing regions where every vote matters. Like a chain reaction, it spreads fast and scales quickly, multiplying impact with minimal cost.

But vote tripling is about more than numbers. It creates energy, sparks conversations, and builds momentum. Vote tripling is about making GOTV contagious. And when done right, it turns GOTV from a tactic into a movement, a call to action, a stand against apathy.



WHY IT WORKS

BUILT ON TRUST. People are more likely to vote when asked by someone they know. Personal appeals are more persuasive than generic outreach.

EASY TO COMMIT. Asking supporters to contact just three people feels doable, increasing follow-through and participation.

SPREADS FAST. Each tripler can spark more triplers, creating a chain reaction that quickly expands reach.

COST-EFFECTIVE. It relies on social networks, not big budgets, making it ideal for low-resource campaigns.



HOW IT WORKS

1 ID YOUR TRIPLERS

Start by identifying people who are already committed to voting. These are your triplers—the ones who can help bring others along. Find them online, at events, in public spaces, or outside polling stations.

Not all triplers are the same. There are two main types:

TRIPLER-ORGANIZERS: Highly engaged supporters who can do more. With some training, they can persuade voters, recruit new triplers, and even lead their own mini-GOTV efforts. They're your campaign's backbone.



DIRECT TRIPLERS: Everyday supporters you meet on the street, online, or at the polls. Their contribution won't be as extensive as that of Tripler-Organizers, but their impact can be significant because they are more numerous, each committing to get three others to vote.



2 IDENTIFY THEIR TARGETS (AND HOW TO PERSUADE THEM)

Not everyone is equally easy to persuade—and not everyone responds to the same message. That’s why triplers should focus on the people in their networks who are most likely to be convinced. By targeting the most persuadable profiles, you maximize impact. Equip triplers with clear guidance: whom to focus on, what messages to use, and how to approach them. This helps them spot low-turnout but reachable contacts—and gives them the confidence to engage.

3 TRAIN THE TRIPLERS

TRIPLER-ORGANIZERS are key to getting more voters to the polls—but they need support to do it well. Train them in core skills like empathy, active listening, and persuasive communication. These tools help them connect with undecided or disengaged voters on a personal level. Use scalable formats—like online modules and pre-recorded videos—to make training widely accessible. Create self-guided materials with practical examples, honest messaging, and ways to handle pushback. Keep communication flowing and build a sense of mission and belonging among these highly engaged volunteers.

DIRECT TRIPLERS don’t need formal training, but they still need a clear mission. Share tools they can use quickly and easily: social media posts, short videos, direct messages, or physical materials like stickers and leaflets. The ask is simple: encourage three people they know, especially those less likely to vote, to show up.

4 CREATE A COMMUNITY

Sustaining this tactic over time requires connection. Set up a support network—using WhatsApp or another messaging app—where Tripler-Organizers can share successes, challenges, and best practices. Keep communication active. Daily check-ins, updates, and encouragement help maintain momentum and build a real sense of community and shared purpose.

5 TEST AND REFINE

Don't confuse feedback with anecdotes. Real power lies in tracking hard data: how many people were reached, how many committed to vote, and which messages worked best. This kind of ongoing testing of different approaches can massively improve results, allowing you to refine strategies in real-time for maximum impact. The key to making the most of this play is to stay flexible, using real-time feedback to fine-tune your approach and adapt to local conditions.

6 FOLLOW UP WITH YOUR TRIPLERS

Even highly motivated triplers can lose momentum. Gentle follow-ups—via WhatsApp, or email—can double follow-through rates. Keep it personal and encouraging. A quick nudge reminding triplers of their commitment (“Have you checked in with your three friends yet?”) can make the difference between good intentions and real turnout. Set up lightweight systems to send these reminders at key moments, like early voting or right before Election Day.



TIPS

A **BASE PERSUASION ON PUBLIC OPINION DATA ... AND HONESTY**

Don't rely on intuition alone. Use data—polls, focus groups, and social listening—to identify the right targets and shape messages that will land. Equip triplers with insights they can actually use.

But data means little without trust. Honesty is essential. Ensure that triplers are straightforward and sincere in their outreach. Triplers should speak from a place of sincerity, not manipulation. The goal is to connect authentically—even when naming real risks like threats to rights, social programs, or democracy itself. Don't spread fear. Share what's at stake.

B PROVIDE TOOLS FOR DIVERSE AUDIENCES

Give triplers a rich toolkit. Create digital content—texts, videos, memes—and also physical materials like stickers, posters, or badges for street-level outreach.

Make sure materials are tailored to different groups. Blend facts with emotional cues that invite real conversations. And back it all with a strong central hub, ready to support triplers and help them scale what works.

C GAMIFY PARTICIPATION WITH SMALL REWARDS

Energy fades if there's no sense of momentum. Friendly competitions and small incentives can keep triplers engaged and motivated. Create challenges (“Help three friends vote and post a selfie”), offer digital badges, or organize public shoutouts. Gamifying participation makes the process more fun and adds social proof—showing others that everyday people are making a difference.



WHO'S DONE IT WELL



ISRAELI CIVIL SOCIETY

Vote Tripling with Precision

ISRAEL

During Israel's 2021 elections, several civil society groups coordinated a national Vote Tripling campaign to boost turnout for the non-Arab, anti-Netanyahu opposition bloc. The campaign built on the infrastructure of the Black Flags protest movement, which had mobilized thousands the previous year against corruption scandals in Netanyahu's government. Under the slogan "Go! And get three more," they transformed protest energy into electoral action.

Organizers focused on relational persuasion and resource optimization. Recognizing that Israel's electorate was sharply

polarized, they concentrated not on undecided voters, but on maximizing turnout among known opposition supporters. Using data from the previous three election cycles, they mapped Green Zones — areas where opposition parties consistently held over 70% support — and avoided Red Zones dominated by pro-government voters.

Volunteers, recruited from activist networks, were trained in persuasion tactics, equipped with short, duty-focused scripts, and participated in simulations to prepare for election day. Some triplers received payment, but those motivated by a sense of civic duty proved to be more effective at mobilizing voters.

The campaign also stood out for its strong visual identity. Volunteers wore branded T-shirts and used slogans, a dedicated website, and photo frames outside polling stations to build visibility and spark engagement without overt partisanship.

“Given limited resources and time, the campaign chose not to spread itself further by engaging with the other side and focused instead on existing support banks. So, we consciously decided not to waste time and resources and focused the campaign on specific areas where we knew we had good support, but with turnout rates below average.”



YOU CAN VOTE

Turning Voters into Messengers

UNITED STATES

In 2020, You Can Vote launched a Vote Tripling campaign in North Carolina to boost turnout by leveraging personal connections.

They chose Vote Tripling for a simple reason: people are more likely to listen to friends already in their contact lists. During the 17-day early voting period, You Can Vote set up tables outside polling stations—taking advantage of North

Carolina’s law allowing presence within buffer zones. They used visible signage, stickers, and QR codes linked to pre-written messages to make participation quick and easy.

Voters who had just cast their ballots were invited to become direct triplers—contacting three to five friends by text or phone to encourage them to vote. The campaign prioritized first- and second-time young voters, who were more likely to respond well to peer encouragement and to share their voting experiences online.

The organization deployed 560 volunteers—trained as Tripler-Organizers—using five tailored starter scripts designed to fit different personalities and situations. Volunteers reported a “social proof” effect: when one person in a group agreed to participate, others often followed. To keep energy high, You Can Vote hosted nightly Zoom sessions for volunteers to share experiences, troubleshoot, and build community.

“On Election Day, we set up outside polling sites, this method proved to be cost-efficient for getting people to talk to their friends about voting.”

While turnout increases couldn’t be definitively attributed to the campaign, polling sites with historically low participation saw noticeable up-ticks during the early voting period.



LEARN MORE

D-HUB RESOURCES



D-Hub. 2024. "Defusing the far-right bomb."
The Fight For Democracy Chronicles, Volume 8.



OTHER RESOURCES



Impactive. 2022. "Vote tripling: everything
you need to know."



You Can Vote. 2023. "Training Program Kit."



Vote Rev. 2024. "Invite Every Voter." *YouTube*



– 2024. "Polling-Place Vote Tripling (PPVT)
explained." *YouTube*



– 2024. "Site-Based Vote Tripling: Reach the voters
you need to win." *YouTube*

2

ELECTION MONITORING

Utilizing vigilant observation
as a driver for mobilization

THE PLAY

Election Monitoring is about more than just observing—it's about empowering citizens to protect democracy and encourage participation. At its core, this play mobilizes a wide network of everyday people to monitor elections using specialized tools.

When citizens serve as the vigilant eyes on election procedures, they can help detect and deter fraud—exposing attempts at manipulation and abuse. But monitoring also does something just as important: it reassures voters. When people see that civil society is watching, they're more likely to believe their vote will count—and to show up.

Organizing such a network isn't just about ensuring accuracy. It's a powerful antidote to distrust and apathy, strengthening GOTV directly. When done well, election monitoring builds confidence, renews civic commitment, and turns skepticism into engagement.

In this way, a clear commitment to transparency doesn't just defend the vote—it drives it. Oversight becomes a catalyst for participation, trust, and action.



WHY IT WORKS

RESTORES TRUST IN THE ELECTION. Visible, citizen-led monitoring reassures voters that the process is being watched, making them more likely to believe their vote will count.

COUNTERS APATHY WITH AGENCY. Turning observers into active participants in democracy shifts people from passive skepticism to engaged civic action.

BUILDS MOMENTUM AND VISIBILITY. A monitoring campaign sends a clear message: people care, they're watching, and they're ready to act, energizing broader voter participation.

CREATES A BACKBONE FOR RESISTANCE. Even after election day, monitoring efforts can serve as a rallying point to challenge fraud, escalate pressure, and defend democratic outcomes.



HOW IT WORKS

1 ANNOUNCE AND PROMOTE THE ELECTION MONITORING INITIATIVE

Launch a public campaign to announce your commitment to election monitoring, emphasizing that citizen involvement will safeguard electoral results. Create channels on social media, and organize press releases and community forums to reach a broad audience. Engage local leaders and public figures to endorse the campaign to build credibility.

2 PREPARE A PROTOCOL FOR PARALLEL VOTE COUNTING (IF NEEDED)

If there's a serious risk of fraud, be ready with a parallel vote-counting system. This doesn't need to be complex—just clear, fast, and easy for citizens to use. Rely on tools people already know, like WhatsApp, Telegram, or Google Forms, to collect and submit data. Avoid complicated apps or installations that might create barriers.

Test the system ahead of time to ensure it works in real-time alongside the official count. Design clear protocols for spotting and reporting irregularities immediately. Focusing on a representative sample of strategic polling stations will help flag suspicious trends early and credibly.

3 RECRUIT OBSERVERS

Promote the sign-up form for election observers through all available channels. To strengthen and amplify recruitment efforts, foster partnerships with other stakeholders, including media outlets, political parties, and civil society organizations. Provide daily updates on recruitment progress to encourage broader participation. Use emotional messaging to build a sense of shared purpose and momentum, creating the feeling that everyone is needed and no one should be left out.

4 TRAINING OF OBSERVERS

Provide comprehensive training sessions covering observation procedures, communication protocols, and documentation requirements. Consider developing an online training module, which can be especially effective for large-scale mobilization. Remember that you are working with everyday citizens from diverse backgrounds, so the mission assigned for Election Day must be simple, with straightforward procedures and tools that are super easy to follow and use.

5 DEPLOYMENT, LOGISTICS, AND SUPPORT

Organize logistics for deploying observers to the polling stations, ensuring adequate coverage across key electoral districts. Provide them with the necessary resources, such as observation kits and identification badges. Additionally, transportation and supplies should be arranged to support their needs throughout election day. Establish clear communication channels and support the observers. During the day of the election, maintain contact with them throughout the electoral process and make their good work public.

6

MONITORING, REPORTING, AND PARALLEL VOTE COUNTING

On Election Day, provide observers with standardized reporting forms to document any irregularities and submit them in real time to a central coordination team. Ensure that observers compile reports with accurate and time-stamped observations, including photographic or video evidence if possible. During the recount, set the parallel vote tabulation protocol in motion to provide an independent assessment of election results to identify discrepancies or anomalies in the recount process.

7

BE READY FOR POST-ELECTION MANIPULATION

Even if election monitoring runs smoothly, authoritarian regimes may still attempt to manipulate the outcome during the final certification phase—often through politically controlled electoral commissions or courts. Anticipate this risk by developing a robust post-election contingency plan.

This strategy should include pre-drafted public statements, rapid-response media toolkits, coordinated messaging with trusted local and international voices, and pre-established relationships with global electoral watchdogs, academic institutions, and foreign diplomatic missions. These connections will lend credibility to your response and help draw attention when it matters most.

Your ability to defend the results—and democracy—will depend on the transparency, rigor, and preparedness of your monitoring effort. Be ready to present clear, verifiable evidence and escalate pressure if manipulation occurs. This phase is often neglected, but it's precisely here that many democratic struggles are won—or lost.



TIPS

A COMMUNITY BUILDING AND ENGAGEMENT

Organize outreach events, workshops, and public forums to empower the observers. Assign them specific roles and responsibilities based on their skills and preferences. Participants should be especially familiar with the procedures they must follow on election day to record incidents in formal legal documents and complaints.

Beyond the content, aim to make the training sessions and gatherings enjoyable and create opportunities for participants to interact and get to know each other before and after the sessions. People want to feel a sense of belonging, and cultivating it will help them not only be effective observers but also become messengers to raise awareness and encourage participation.

B LEVERAGE EXISTING TECHNOLOGY

Establish a centralized communication hub for observers to report incidents, seek guidance, and receive real-time updates. Make use of multiple channels to ensure accessibility. Develop a clear and simple protocol to streamline the reporting process and the parallel vote counting, allowing observers to easily record and submit information in real-time, including text descriptions, photos, and videos. There is no need to develop a technically complicated customized digital platform; observers should use applications they commonly use to make sure they feel secure in maintaining confidentiality. The key is not the data entry tool itself, but knowing how to manage and use the data effectively.

In high-risk contexts, plan for possible internet blackouts, electricity cuts, or mobile network disruptions. Equip observers with offline tools (e.g., printed checklists, USB drives, power banks) and establish backup communication plans, like SMS relays or analog hotlines, to ensure continuity even under pressure.



WHO'S DONE IT WELL



COMANDITOS

A Citizen-Led Battle for Electoral Integrity

VENEZUELA

The 2024 Venezuelan presidential elections took place amid promises of widespread repression and possible fraud. In response, the opposition organized a vast network of 60,000 citizens known as *comanditos* (“little commandos”) to monitor polling stations and safeguard the integrity of the electoral process.

These groups were formed through local outreach, community meetings, and WhatsApp groups, relying on community engagement and digital communication. Small cells, of around ten members each, were established in neighborhoods all across the country, and each *comandito* received training on spotting irregularities, documenting incidents, and maintaining calm under pressure.

Organized in a decentralized structure, each comandito had its own coordinator who reported to a broader network, creating a resilient yet discreet system. Members were equipped with toolkits covering legal guidelines, checklists, and emergency contacts and were encouraged to remain safe and cautious, given the risks of government scrutiny.

On election day, the comanditos focused on ensuring that polling stations printed and delivered the legally required voting records. Once the records were secured, each comandito was tasked with photographing and sending them via WhatsApp to a central command of volunteers, who then uploaded them into an app for a parallel vote-counting system. This same system allowed for the detailed publication of results, enabling citizens to verify them on a publicly accessible website and, thus, widespread transparency.

Thanks to the efforts of the comanditos, the political opposition collected 25,000 records, representing 86% of the votes, and exposed significant discrepancies, exhibiting electoral fraud on a large scale.

“When we published those results online, it wasn’t just a challenge to the government –it was a moment of truth for all of us. For the first time, we weren’t just speaking about fraud, we were proving it, showing the world and Venezuelans the real numbers.”



GOLOS

Voice of Truth

BELARUS

In the 2020 Belarus presidential election, the lack of transparency fueled widespread distrust in the official voting process. In response, a group of IT engineers developed *Golos* (“Voice”). They used chatbots on Telegram and Viber to collect and verify vote data anonymously.

A civil society organization led a campaign to encourage citizens to photograph their ballots after voting (which was legal then) and send these images to the Golos chatbots. Using AI and volunteer efforts, the photos were authenticated by checking for the official signatures required by law on each ballot.

Approximately 550,000 voters—around 10% of the total turnout—submitted photos of their ballots. This data enabled Golos to conduct a parallel count, which starkly contrasted with the official results. While the government claimed that Lukashenko won with 80% of the vote, Golos’ data proved that opposition candidate Tsikhanouskaya had actually received at least 56%, with Lukashenko’s support really ranging only between 28% and 34%.

“Our top priority when building it was protecting voters’ anonymity. In a country where speaking out could be dangerous, we had to ensure people felt safe. In using secure chatbots, we gave Belarusians a way to report their votes without fear. Anonymity was everything; it was the only way to ensure people could participate and make their voices heard.”



LEARN MORE



AltaVista. 2024. "Parallel Vote Tabulation Initiative Venezuela."



Brothers, Julia et al. 2023. "Process and Results Verification for Transparency."



Golos. 2020. "Final Report on the 2020 Presidential Elections in Belarus."



NDI. "Parallel Vote Tabulations."



Levitsky, Steven et al. 2024. "Open Letter on Venezuela's Election."



USAID. 2015. "Assessing and verifying election results."

3

DISTRIBUTED ORGANIZING

Igniting mobilization through
collaborative strength

THE PLAY

In many contexts, different groups—NGOs, grassroots movements, student unions, local influencers—want to run their own GOTV campaigns. Distributed Organizing offers a way to bring them together, not by enforcing full alignment, but by creating a shared minimum that allows everyone to contribute on their own terms.

This approach makes mobilization scalable. Instead of building a single, centralized campaign, it provides a common pool of tools—messaging guides, visual assets, calls to action—that others can use, adapt, remix, and expand. What links the efforts isn't uniformity, but a shared purpose: driving voter turnout.

Each group speaks in its own voice, using the language, tactics, and tone that best suit its audience. But all draw from the same public goods, ensuring coherence without conformity. The goal is to empower a wide range of actors to act autonomously, but in sync.

To make this work, a central hub is essential. Not to control—but to enable. Its role is to produce and distribute high-quality resources, support timing and alignment, and hold the center while letting the network lead.



WHY IT WORKS

UNLEASHES COLLECTIVE POWER. By enabling many groups to act in their own ways, it expands reach and creativity far beyond what a single campaign could achieve alone.

BUILDS OWNERSHIP AND AUTHENTICITY. Letting people adapt tools to their own voice makes participation more personal and effective.

SCALES FAST. Distributed organizing removes the need for top-down control, allowing the campaign to grow quickly through decentralized initiative.

INCREASES RESILIENCE AND ADAPTABILITY. When multiple actors lead, the campaign can flex, recover, and respond faster to changing contexts or attacks.



HOW IT WORKS

1 FORM A CENTRAL HUB AND DEFINE MOBILIZATION TARGETS

Start by assembling a small, focused coordination team with expertise in data analysis, communications, and organizing. This team will serve as the central hub, responsible for identifying priority voter targets and determining the best ways to reach them.

Since each mobilization target requires its own language and approach, the hub's mission is to support diverse, independent efforts by providing high-quality, tailored tools. Throughout the campaign, this hub will distribute the campaign's "public goods": ready-to-use resources such as messaging guides, strategy briefs, visual assets, and calls to action.

2 SPREAD RESOURCES WITHIN A NETWORK

Map key networks and communities to identify who should receive your public goods first. These resources are open to anyone—but effective distribution begins with strategic outreach.

Start with your strongest allies: trusted organizers, community leaders, and partner groups already connected to your target voters. Share tools directly, build momentum, and encourage them to adapt the content to their local context. From there, let the materials spread organically. The more people remix and circulate them, the stronger the collective impact.

3 SUPPORT KEY ACTORS IN THE NETWORK

While anyone can use the materials—they are public goods—some groups have a greater ability to spread them and mobilize others, because of their reach, trust, or organizing experience. Identify these key actors early and give them extra support.

That support can be simple: personalized guidance, check-ins, or help adapting the materials to their needs. By investing in the right nodes of the network, you multiply the campaign's reach and impact.

4 ALIGN AROUND KEY MOMENTS

Distributed Organizing thrives when people act both together and on their own terms. Different groups should feel free to lead their own initiatives. Still, while each group operates independently, the central hub should work to align messaging and action around critical moments—like early voting periods or major debates. This isn't about control, but about rhythm: timing the release of public goods so they resonate across different groups, creating greater impact. A simple content calendar can guide this coordination and ensure coherence without sacrificing flexibility.

5

FACILITATE ONGOING DIALOGUE

Distributed organizing only works when people stay connected. Set up simple, consistent channels—like WhatsApp groups, regular Zoom calls, or shared folders—so campaigners can share experiences, refine tactics, and stay aligned. Create spaces for visibility, mutual learning, and support. A living network sustains energy, builds trust, and allows the campaign to adapt in real time.

6

CELEBRATE WINS

In a distributed campaign, people might never meet—or even get along. But recognizing successes can boost morale across the network. Celebrate anything that pushes the shared GOTV purpose forward: a community post that got attention, a volunteer who convinced three friends to vote, a local action that sparked discussion. Every small win reinforces motivation and reminds people that their effort matters to drive broader participation.



TIPS

A HOLD THE CENTER, ENABLE THE NETWORK

A strong central hub doesn't impose, it enables. Its job is to make distributed action possible: connecting parallel campaigns and creating messaging toolkits, templates, and timely calls to action that others can use, adapt, and expand.

In a decentralized model, overlap and messiness are part of the deal. The goal of the central hub isn't to eliminate them, but to orchestrate them. That requires a low-ego, high-trust mindset—trusting that different actors can lead in their own contexts.

If this hub holds the center, it ensures the campaign is scalable, adaptable, and resilient—not by controlling what happens, but by making it easier for others to act.

B TIMING IS EVERYTHING

In distributed campaigns, well-timed action beats perfect plans. Even the best-designed efforts can fall flat if launched at the wrong moment. That's why the central hub must keep an eye on the context, spot key opportunities, and issue clear calls to action when they matter most.

Timing isn't just about speed; it's about being strategic, synchronized, and relevant. Success depends on activating and amplifying the right messages at the right time, while still allowing space for local adaptations.



WHO'S DONE IT WELL



FRENCH CIVIL SOCIETY CAMPAIGNERS

Record Turnout Through Decentralized Action

FRANCE

Minutes after a resounding defeat by the far right, France's President Macron announced the dissolution of the National Assembly and called for snap elections in three weeks. In response, civil society organizers swiftly created a WhatsApp community that brought together over 130 campaigners from various organizations and grassroots groups across France.

"Ironically, not having time for sophisticated planning or ironing out differences became our strength. It allowed us to laser-focus on what we already agreed on. All energy was directed at our shared goals, not wasted on debates over the small stuff. Urgency became a driver of mobilization, an instinct that quickly aligned organizers across the board."

Their key strategy (and only hope) was decentralization.

So, after aligning on primary goals, each organization and platform was set free to act independently. Still, they kept constant communication to share ideas and coordinate specific actions within the group. This WhatsApp community became a driving force behind civil society-led campaigns, working in parallel—and sometimes coordinating with—political parties.

Moreover, the campaigners produced a messaging guide to help more people communicate effectively. This guide outlined core messages specific to each audience and offered content ideas that anyone could produce and share online. Decentralization fueled a wave of creativity: activists, influencers, and everyday citizens adapted these resources to create unique, authentic content in their own voices, resonating deeply with their audiences.

These collective efforts led to historic mobilization, and voter turnout soared to a record high of 66%, helping to push the far right into a third-place finish.



ALEXANDRIA OCASIO-CORTEZ

A Decentralized Model to Win the Bronx Primary

UNITED STATES

Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez's (AOC) 2018 Democratic primary campaign adopted a decentralized model, using simple digital infrastructure to support distributed action across the district.

The campaign empowered local leaders to organize activities, coordinated through a central hub. This approach broadened participation and allowed messages to adapt to local needs, building genuine community connections that reflected life in the Bronx.

To map these decentralized efforts, they developed a mobile app called Reach, enabling volunteers to mobilize in busy places like bars, churches, and subway stations, and collect voter contact information. After 14 months, volunteers had gathered data on 12% of registered voters.

By synchronizing offline efforts with online engagement, the campaign built momentum from the ground up. AOC's unexpected victory over a veteran Democrat showed how clear principles, local empowerment, and on-line-offline coordination can deliver success.

“Decentralization was key. Transparent, open communication wasn't just for ‘giving orders’—it was for sharing progress, celebrating wins, and gathering feedback. This kept the team motivated and the message strong, making every person feel heard, valued, and connected to the bigger picture.”



LEARN MORE

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4

**YOUNG
VOTERS
MOBILIZATION**

Empowering youth engagement
with fresh strategies

THE PLAY

Young people often make up a large share of the electorate, but they consistently vote at lower rates than older generations. This isn't due to apathy alone. Many are skeptical of political institutions, frustrated by broken promises, and unsure whether voting can truly lead to change.

At this stage in their lives, they are looking toward the future. Messages based only on fear or loss may fall flat unless paired with a compelling, positive vision. To move them, campaigns must earn trust, reflect their realities, and offer a meaningful stake in shaping the future.

Tone matters. Fear may spark urgency, but purpose sustains engagement. Young voters respond best when threats are named but hope is offered. They don't just want warnings about what's at risk—they want to see what's possible.

Message alone isn't enough. Young people shouldn't just be "targeted"—they should lead. The best GOTV campaigns give them tools, trust, and space to co-create messages that feel real, relevant, and worth sharing. Don't ask youth to follow your campaign. Invite them to own it.



WHY IT WORKS

IT CENTERS YOUTH AS CREATORS, NOT JUST TARGETS. When young people shape the message, it feels authentic, boosting trust, relevance, and participation.

USES TRUSTED MESSENGERS. Youth influencers and peer mobilizers break through the noise, reaching audiences that traditional campaigns often miss.

LEVERAGES SOCIAL DYNAMICS. Public commitments, viral trends, and friend-to-friend challenges generate urgency, belonging, and FOMO – all powerful drivers of youth turnout.

MAKES VOTING MORE FUN. By using gamification, challenges, and creative formats, campaigns can make voting feel exciting, personal, and worth talking about.



HOW IT WORKS

1 UNDERSTAND AND INVOLVE YOUNG VOTERS FROM THE START

Begin by listening. Understand how young people relate to elections—not just through data, but through dialogue. Identify what drives them and what holds them back: distrust, disinformation, disillusionment—or simply a lack of relatable information. Learn what issues matter, what tones resonate, and what language feels authentic.

Then go further. Involve young people in shaping the campaign's tone, style, and strategy from day one. When youth help define the message, they don't just hear it—they carry it. That turns them from passive targets into active co-owners of the campaign.

2 DESIGN SPECIFIC MESSAGES

Classify young voters into subgroups based on age, gender, interests, and location. Avoid limiting outreach to 'youth topics'—they engage with a wide range of issues. Create targeted, emotional messages that show how elections impact their lives, as emotion makes space for rational arguments. Most importantly, young people should help shape these messages to ensure authenticity and relevance.

3 INNOVATE WITH ENGAGING AND INTERACTIVE FORMATS

Young voters are drawn to creative, dynamic formats, not traditional political messaging. Use gamification, music, interactive news on TikTok, and viral challenges to make voting exciting. Turn electoral participation into a mission with deadlines, competitions, and rewards—points, badges, or even real-world perks. Whether through games, songs, or digital challenges, make voting fun, social, and personally relevant to maximize engagement.

4 BUILD STRATEGIC ALLIANCES

To maximize reach and legitimacy, map and contact NGOs, student unions, youth organizations, and community groups. These allies will help expand the campaign's visibility and strengthen connections with young people through established trust-based relationships. By working with these organizations, the campaign can leverage their networks to distribute information on voter registration and participation while reinforcing engagement in familiar spaces.

5

LEVERAGE YOUTH INFLUENCERS FOR DISTRIBUTION

Integrate youth influencers into the distribution strategy to authentically amplify messages and shape opinions. Influencer organizing is central, as it is a trusted reference point for young audiences. Beyond mainstream platforms, they can also help establish a strong presence on Discord, Twitch, and Reddit, where authoritarian narratives often dominate, ensuring the campaign reaches and engages these communities effectively.

6

CREATE SOCIAL PRESSURE AND FOMO AROUND VOTING

Harness the power of social proof and peer influence to drive youth engagement. Encourage young people to publicly commit to voting by sharing their decision on social media using hashtags, challenges, and visibility campaigns. Seeing peers take action creates positive social pressure and a sense of belonging, while FOMO (Fear Of Missing Out) makes voting feel like an event they don't want to be left out of.



TIPS

A YOUNG PEOPLE LEADING THE WAY

Youth engagement works when young people lead. Avoid top-down, paternalistic approaches—instead, involve them in every campaign stage, from designing messages to being the movement's public face. Use relatable 'mirror figures' who reflect their experiences and concerns. Authenticity is key: highlight authentic voices, real stories, and real impact to inspire action and make participation feel personal and relevant.

B USE VOTE TRIPLING

Young voters are the best messengers for their peers. Use the Vote Tripling tactic (described in Play #1 in this volume) to turn them into mobilizers. Encourage each committed voter to personally engage three friends to register and vote. Equip them with simple scripts, digital tools, and social incentives to make participation easy and organic. This peer-to-peer model amplifies impact, making voting a collective action rather than an individual task.



WHO'S DONE IT WELL



MY FIRST VOTE

From Apathy to Action

BRAZIL

In the lead-up to Brazil's 2022 elections, voter registration among young people aged 16 to 18 had reached historic lows. One major obstacle was that this age group required a special ID to vote, making the process more complex. Additionally, public opinion studies revealed widespread apathy, particularly among boys. However, girls showed greater potential for engagement, presenting a key opportunity for mobilization.

In response, civil society organizations launched *Meu Primeiro Voto* ("My First Vote"), a campaign designed to reverse this trend. The initiative combined targeted paid advertising with precise message segmentation, framing voting as a chance to shape the country's future. Strategic alliances with student unions helped mobilize students through on-campus events and voter registration drives.

At the same time, social media influencers played a crucial role in amplifying the campaign's reach. Among them was Anitta, Brazil's most internationally recognized pop star, known for her influence on young audiences and outspoken political activism. Other figures, such as actor Lázaro Ramos and even Hollywood star Mark Ruffalo, also joined the effort, increasing visibility and credibility.

The impact was remarkable: 2 million young people registered to vote in just two months. This surge in youth participation proved decisive in the election, with even Bolsonaro attributing part of his defeat to the increased youth turnout.

“When we saw the data, we realized there was a huge opportunity to mobilize young girls. Faced with this challenge, we put together a combination of strategic resources to ensure our message resonated. We had to produce messages that could connect with the specific interests and concerns of young people, showing them that voting wasn't just a civic duty but a chance to shape the future of our country and their place in it.”



FORUM APULUM

One Million for Democracy

ROMANIA

Forum Apulum launched a campaign to mobilize young voters ahead of the 2024 elections under the slogan “One Million Young People for Democracy.” Recognizing that young voters were tired of negative campaigns, the strategy focused on positive messaging. It was built on three pillars: online engagement, a nationwide caravan, and a network of young leaders trained to act within their communities.

For online engagement, the organization focused on meeting the informational needs of young citizens through content created by young people. Under the banner *Gen, știri* (“Gen-news”), a youth-led digital news initiative, they produced daily TikTok and Instagram news segments covering national and international topics.

The platform was created in response to young people’s distrust of traditional media. Its content included explanatory videos, live event coverage, and interactive Q&A sessions, which fostered debates and allowed direct interaction with followers. Like holding up a mirror, this peer-to-peer news format ensured high engagement, demonstrating that content created by youth, for youth, is far more effective.

“By blending civic education, media presence, and fun, we kept the campaign vibrant and engaging. Young Romanians, tired of fear-based narratives, found a hopeful message in the campaign. It was about empowering them to vote and make a real impact, united by values like education, diversity, and democracy.”

Similarly, offline, young leaders played a central role in organizing local activities, spreading the campaign’s message, and fostering a sense of ownership. As part of their caravan through 20 cities, many of these young leaders promoted civic projects without pushing any political agenda, while the online efforts conveyed a hopeful narrative about voting.

By election day, the efforts paid off: Around 750,000 of the estimated one million first-time voters turned out, reaching a participation rate that matched that of the 65+ age group. This unprecedented youth engagement demonstrated the impact of sustained, positive outreach and the importance of empowering young people to shape democracy.



TAKE CONTROL

Reviving Hope Among Venezuela’s Disillusioned Youth

VENEZUELA

After years of electoral fraud and disillusionment, organizers ahead of Venezuela’s 2024 election faced a critical challenge: widespread apathy and low voter registration among young people.

The *Toma el Control* (TC, “Take control”) platform tackled this by gamifying the voter mobilization process and combining technology, grassroots mobilization, and strategic communication. TC designed a four-level game, where participants advanced by completing key electoral actions:

REGISTER: Guided young people through voter registration.

PROMOTE: Encouraged them to mobilize friends.

VOTE: Ensured they showed up on Election Day.

DEFEND YOUR VOTE: Trained them to protect election integrity.

Each level included missions, challenges, and rewards, making participation interactive and goal-driven. TC also created 390+ WhatsApp groups to mobilize voters and trained leaders in 13 states to deepen engagement.

By turning voting into an engaging experience, TC overcame barriers, educated voters, and empowered youth to see democracy as something they could reclaim.

“Using innovation and bold communication, we successfully informed and mobilized 42,551 young people nationwide. The digital campaign reached 115,234 views, engaging 72,901 individuals, and creating lasting connections with voters. Additionally, TC registered 2,300 people via our website, organized 47 mobilizations, and held 39 informational events, directly facilitating more than 2,700 voter registrations.”



LEARN MORE

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5

TRANSPAR- TISAN ISSUE COALITION

Bridge ideological gaps
for unified action

THE PLAY

In today's polarized political landscape, finding common ground to mobilize voters can be challenging. However, certain issues resonate across ideologies, uniting people around shared concerns that impact daily life.

Promoting a civil society Transpartisan Issue Coalition is a strategy that brings together diverse groups to advance a cause that transcends party lines. It provides a powerful platform for GOTV efforts. By focusing on widely supported issues, these coalitions attract participants from across the political spectrum, fostering collective action.

Shifting the focus from partisan battles to shared priorities creates new engagement opportunities, allowing outreach to voters who may otherwise feel disconnected. Such a coalition can energize participation beyond traditional bases, reaching also independents and those disillusioned with politics.

Moreover, this alliance can endure beyond Election Day, pushing for change and civic engagement, reinforcing a culture of democratic participation even after the votes are counted.



WHY IT WORKS

REACHES BEYOND THE BASE. By focusing on shared concerns, coalitions can engage independents, swing voters, and the disillusioned—often missed by partisan campaigns.

SHIFTS THE FOCUS FROM PARTIES TO PRINCIPLES. Centering the campaign on values and real-life issues makes voting feel meaningful for those turned off by political polarization.

IT BUILDS TRUST AND LEGITIMACY. When voters see unlikely allies united, it signals authenticity and broad support, strengthening the message and inspiring action.

CREATES LASTING CIVIC INFRASTRUCTURE. After Election Day—the coalition can evolve into a force for accountability, advocacy, and democratic engagement.



HOW IT WORKS

1

IDENTIFY SHARED CONCERNS

Start by analyzing which issues resonate across ideological divides and have a tangible impact on people's daily lives. Use research, polling data, or community engagement to identify topics that can unite diverse groups. Prioritize issues with broad support and emotional appeal, as they are powerful drivers for voter mobilization.

2

CONVENE STAKEHOLDERS

A shared concern is the foundation of a strong coalition. It gives people a reason to come together and take action. Once you have identified the key issue(s), reach out to grassroots organizations, community leaders, activists, and advocacy groups that may hold different political ideologies but share an interest in addressing them. These are the people who will form the backbone of the coalition.

3

SHARED GOALS, SMART RULES

A successful coalition aligns diverse organizations around a shared goal without requiring daily coordination. Define clear consensus points and basic operational rules to set boundaries of joint actions: "The coalition will focus only on these priorities and not on others". Set agreements on decision-making (if necessary), communication, and engagement levels. These principles should be documented in writing and ideally signed.

4 DEVELOP A UNIFIED STRATEGY

Once there is a written document with the shared goals and rules, it's time to create a flexible, action-driven strategy that avoids bureaucracy and excessive coordination. Think of the coalition as a fleet of vessels: each moves independently but follows the same course. Rather than over-defining roles or wasting time in endless meetings, focus on alignment, allowing each group to contribute at its own pace without turning participation into a burden.

5 TAKE ACTION

A coalition's strength lies in its diverse voices. Each organization should activate its own networks to amplify the message through trusted channels—community groups, social media, and direct outreach. Different voices reach different audiences, ensuring the coalition connects with voters where they are. The key is coordination without centralization, allowing each group to engage its base most effectively.

6 MAKE POLITICAL PARTIES TAKE A STAND

Every action should pressure political parties to take a clear stance on the coalition's issue. Use petitions, media campaigns, and public forums to force candidates to respond. Make parties' positions visible and unavoidable, turning the coalition's cause into a key factor in the electoral process. When voters see that an issue directly affects them, they are far more likely to vote. That is our goal ;)

7 ITERATE AND IMPROVE

Track impact, and adapt base on feedback. Use data and real-time insights to refine strategies and learn from failures, ensuring the coalition remains dynamic and effective.



TIPS

A BUILD A LOW-EGO, MISSION-DRIVEN CULTURE

A coalition's success depends as much on human relationships as on strategy. A healthy, constructive, and results-oriented culture, with low-ego leadership that stays focused on impact, makes the difference. Coalitions fail when they get stuck in bureaucracy or when someone tries to patronize them. So, start with the mission, not the process—ignite purpose and possibility. Not everyone will see eye to eye along the way, and that's fine. You need to build a space where people connect—not to agree, but to act.

B DON'T BE AFRAID TO BE POLITICAL

Many GOTV campaigns try to distance themselves from politics, but politics is a tool for change, not something to avoid. When guided by principles, politics can be honorable—even beautiful. Your coalition must engage politically, focusing on shared values rather than partisan divides. Electoral campaigns are moments to push key issues and make candidates take a stand. Civil society and politics are not separate worlds—a GOTV campaign thrives when these two worlds interact, not when they stay apart.



WHO'S DONE IT WELL



8TH OF MARCH INSTITUTE

Campaigning for Values

SLOVENIA

In Slovenia's 2022 elections, the 8th of March Institute (8MI) recognized that a traditional Get Out the Vote approach would not resonate in a deeply polarized climate. Instead of focusing on a standard campaign with catchy slogans and flashy graphics, they shifted to a campaign centered on content-driven messaging and democratic values.

Their campaign was unique in emphasizing policies over personalities and promoting collective action without direct partisan endorsement, making it all about the country's future rather than any single party or politician.

The 8MI began by surveying its network of civil society organizations to identify the most damaging policies enacted under Janez Janša's government, ultimately spotlighting the 11 most problematic laws. From these findings, they crafted a 'reset' legislative proposal (an "omnibus law") to roll back harmful policies and restore the country's democratic norms.

They presented this proposal to political parties across the spectrum, seeking their commitment to support passing this law as a first step toward restoring Slovenia's democratic political landscape if elected. This allowed 8MI to campaign for both the law and the parties that pledged their support, creating an unprecedented coalition around a shared democratic agenda.

This model transformed the entire political campaign. Instead of voting for politicians, Slovenian citizens were encouraged to vote for policies that aligned with their values. By framing the election as a choice centered on content and democratic values rather than on individual politicians, the 8th of March Institute succeeded in uniting voters and political parties around a shared purpose.

The campaign achieved a record voter turnout (71%), underscoring the effectiveness of a value-driven, coalition-based organization in countering authoritarianism.

“We listen to the voices of society, analyze structural issues, find systemic solutions, and build campaigns around these insights. Most importantly, we embrace universal positions and welcome everyone to join us, regardless of political affiliation. We believe that the causes we champion are universal. And this isn't a calculated position; it's our genuine belief.”



POLISH CIVIL SOCIETY

United by Values, Not Parties

POLAND

For the 2023 parliamentary elections in Poland, after nearly a decade of resisting the ruling Prawo i Sprawiedliwość (PiS, Law and Justice Party) and its systematic attacks on democratic institutions, civil society had become more resilient ...and more strategic. Organizations moved away from a logic of grant competition and isolated silos, and instead embraced trust-based cooperation and agile, self-organized action. This culture of solidarity laid the foundation for a nationwide GOTV effort.

The strategy was simple but powerful: Don't campaign for parties—campaign for values. Over two dozen CSOs—including feminist groups, LGBTQ+ rights advocates, migration and climate organizations, legal watchdogs, and grassroots initiatives—launched a coordinated campaign to mobilize voters around shared principles.

Each group spoke in its own voice, but the message was unified: a third PiS term would mean irreversible damage. Campaigns were tailored to reach different segments of the population. Some targeted young and first-time voters using humor, music, and social media. Others appealed to older voters by emphasizing the rule of law, corruption, and economic fatigue.

Voters were presented with value-driven choices: “Right to abortion or pregnancy registry?”

“A dignified life or just getting by?,” “Two billion for cancer treatment or for state TV?”

Crucially, this civic coalition remained nonpartisan. It did not endorse any political party but strategically applied public pressure to help opposition parties align around core democratic principles, even while competing in the elections.

The result was that turnout reached 74.3% –the highest level since 1989– with every major age group mobilized. Youth participation (ages 18–29) jumped from 46.2% in 2019 to 70.9% in 2023. Voter turnout among those aged 50–59 also surged, from 59.6% to 84.4%.

By choosing not to act as isolated organizations but as a coordinated front, civil society helped drive a historic mobilization and brought an end to PiS’s rule.

"We learned that building this coalition wasn't about ownership but trust and shared values. By sharing knowledge, resources, and visibility, we built a network where success was collective. We found strength in aligning actions and ensuring that no one had to carry the burden alone. From isolated efforts to cooperation, this shift made all the difference."



LEARN MORE

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WE CAN HELP YOU.

At the Democracy Hub, we understand the emotional and strategic challenges of confronting modern authoritarianism—uncertainty, confusion, pressure, and relentless attacks on democratic values.

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D-Hub is a vibrant community dedicated to defending and renewing democracy. We have the knowledge, tools, and experience to help you fight back effectively.

Our mission is to increase the effectiveness of those fighting authoritarianism. We emphasize collaborative peer-to-peer learning, comprehensive training, coaching, strategic support, and fostering networks of solidarity and exchange. We aim to ensure that democracy advocates worldwide are equipped with the vital relationships, deep knowledge, and essential skills they need to fulfill their mission.

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Our mission is to improve the effectiveness of those who fight against authoritarianism. We emphasize collaborative learning among peers, comprehensive training, coaching, strategic support and the promotion of networks of solidarity and exchange.

Our goal is to ensure that democracy advocates around the world are equipped with the vital relationships, deep knowledge, and essential skills they need to fulfil their mission.

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