

UNIVERSAL PERIODIC REVIEW (UPR)

A Practical Guide for
Civil Society to Build
National Coalitions



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WITH SUPPORT OF THE:



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LIST OF ACRONYMS



OHCHR - Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights

CBDHPE - Brazilian Committee on Human Rights and Foreign Policy

HRC - Human Rights Council

ECOSOC - UN Economic and Social Council

NHRC - National Human Rights Council

NMRF - National Mechanisms for Reporting and Follow-up

SuR - State under Review

UPR WG - UPR Working Group

WGs - Working Groups

NHRI - National Human Rights Institutions

PM - Permanent Missions

CSOs - Civil Society Organisations

UN - United Nations

UDHR - Universal Declaration of Human Rights

UPR - Universal Periodic Review

UHRI - Universal Human Rights Index

FOREWORD



The Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES) Geneva Office would like to thank the Institute for Development and Human Rights (IDDH) for authoring this important publication on how to build a national UPR coalition. We acknowledge the thorough work of the research team in synthesizing the enormous amount of data, based largely on their experience of coordinating the UPR Brazil Coalition since 2017. A coalition created with the support of FES Brazil. It is the hope of FES that this practical guide will inform and support civil society organisations around the world to create their own national coalitions to use the UPR process effectively and thus contribute to the advancement of human rights globally.


Message from Fernanda Lapa, Executive Director of IDDH



The undeniable significance of civil society in advancing human rights globally is widely recognized. This acknowledgment is formalized through various mechanisms for social participation established by UN bodies. Despite the recent expansion of spaces and procedures facilitating this engagement, persistent challenges hinder the meaningful involvement of civil society. These challenges include difficulties related to official languages, physical distance from operational bodies with limited virtual access, and a recognized formality in their protocols.

To address these challenges, cooperation among civil society organisations, working collaboratively in networks and coalitions, emerges as one of the most powerful and effective strategies. By pooling resources and expertise, these organisations can collectively navigate challenges, sharing experiences to overcome individual limitations. **The strength of a coalition lies in its ability to exchange insights among participating organisations, concurrently addressing specific challenges and limitations. This collaborative approach enhances the coalition's standing within the thematic area it operates.**

Turning to the Universal Periodic Review (UPR), coordinated action within a **national coalition** offers **several benefits**:



Enhanced legitimacy and representation, amplifying impacts on the national and international community;

Greater opportunities to share material and human resources;

Increased attention to and inclusion of organisations with limited international visibility;

Broader coverage of social and human rights issues often overshadowed by political selectivity;

Extensive exchange of knowledge, good practice, and technical skills among civil society bodies;

Improved communication channels with strategic actors at both national and international levels.



The **methodology** employed in crafting this Practical Guide comprised two main components. First, we conducted **documentary research** on the processes of establishing civil society coalitions at the international level, with a focus on the **UPR Brazil Coalition**, coordinated by IDDH during the 3rd cycle of the UPR (2017-2022). The second part involved **individual interviews and a focus group** with active participants in the creation of the Brazilian coalition.

We trust that this Practical Guide will provide valuable tools, enabling civil society organisations worldwide to join forces in national coalitions dedicated to the UPR. Through such collaboration, the aim is to strengthen the advocacy for human rights in their respective territories, thereby advancing the democratic agenda on a global scale.

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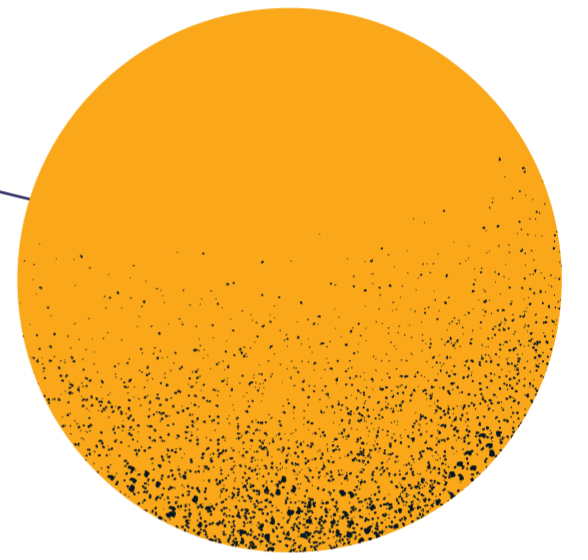
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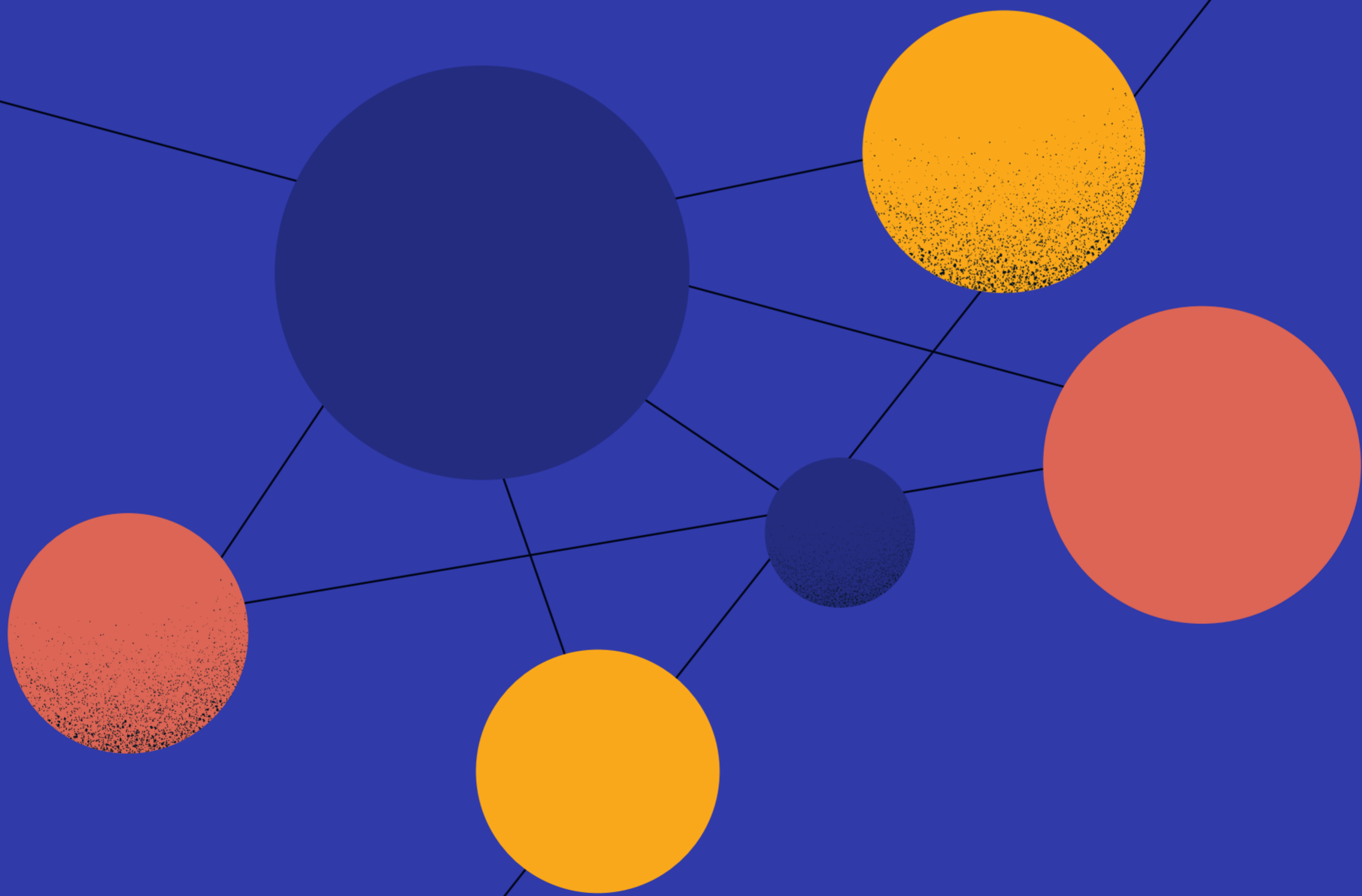
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01

INTRODUCTION: ABOUT THIS PRACTICAL GUIDE



In democratic States, an active civil society plays a crucial role in exercising social control, ensuring the implementation of human rights policies, and ultimately enhancing the quality of life for citizens. Therefore, it is imperative for the international community to remain vigilant and attentive to any shrinking of civic spaces, even in democratic societies.

One measuring indicator of a state's appreciation for the work of civil society is the level of support and recognition afforded to coalitions and networks of human rights defenders in their activities. This assessment becomes particularly pertinent in the international arena, where the coordination and engagement of civil society organisations can be observed through their active participation in global human rights systems, such as Treaty Bodies, Special Procedures, and the Universal Periodic Review (UPR).


The UPR mechanism proves to be strategically significant in uniting diverse civil society organisations aiming to strengthen their impact through national coalitions. Enhancing the collective influence of civil society in international human rights mechanisms is essential to bolster the advocacy efforts of human rights defenders in shaping public policies. These policies, in turn, directly impact the lives of individuals, especially those belonging to social and economic groups that face greater challenges in accessing their rights.

The primary aim of this Practical Guide is to offer assistance to civil society organisations worldwide, guiding them in the formation of a national coalition dedicated to collectively promote and protect human rights through active participation in the United Nations human rights mechanism known as the

Universal Periodic Review (UPR). This Guide proves valuable for organisations already involved in a UPR cycle or any other United Nations (UN) human rights mechanism - conventional or extra-conventional¹. It is equally beneficial for those organisations that, while harboring an interest in collaboration, have yet to participate in such mechanisms.

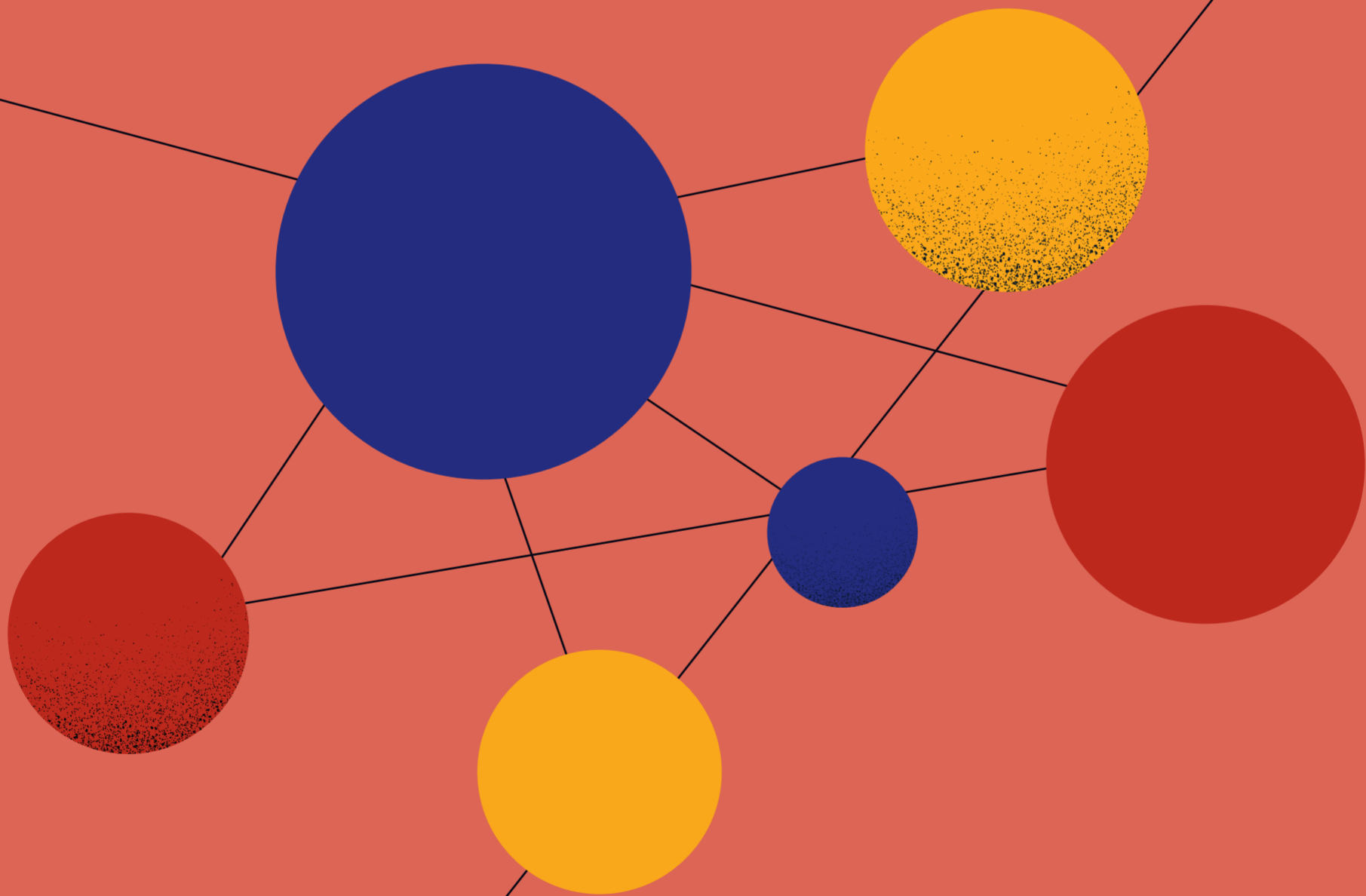
It is crucial to underscore that, given the multiplicity and diversity of global civil society societies, there is no singular model or approach in creating and coordinating a civil society coalition. This holds particularly true when considering the various social, political, economic, and cultural challenges unique to each country. Nevertheless, we recognize that certain steps and reflections are commonly shared and can be considered both before and during the coalition-building journey.

Therefore, if you belong to civil society and are contemplating the organisations of a national coalition to engage with the UPR - whether to strengthen an existing coalition or build a new one - this Practical Guide proves to be a valuable resource. It presents a method that can be followed, adapted, and adjusted to suit your specific reality, as is customary in the collective social construction process.

¹ **Conventional** Mechanisms or Treaty Bodies, are those provided for in human rights treaties and conventions. **Extra-conventional**, which comprises the Special Procedures, the UPR and the Human Rights Council itself, are those created based on resolutions of the United Nations bodies. Learn more at: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-and-mechanisms> 

02

**WHAT IS THE UPR;
WHY AND HOW TO
PARTICIPATE?**

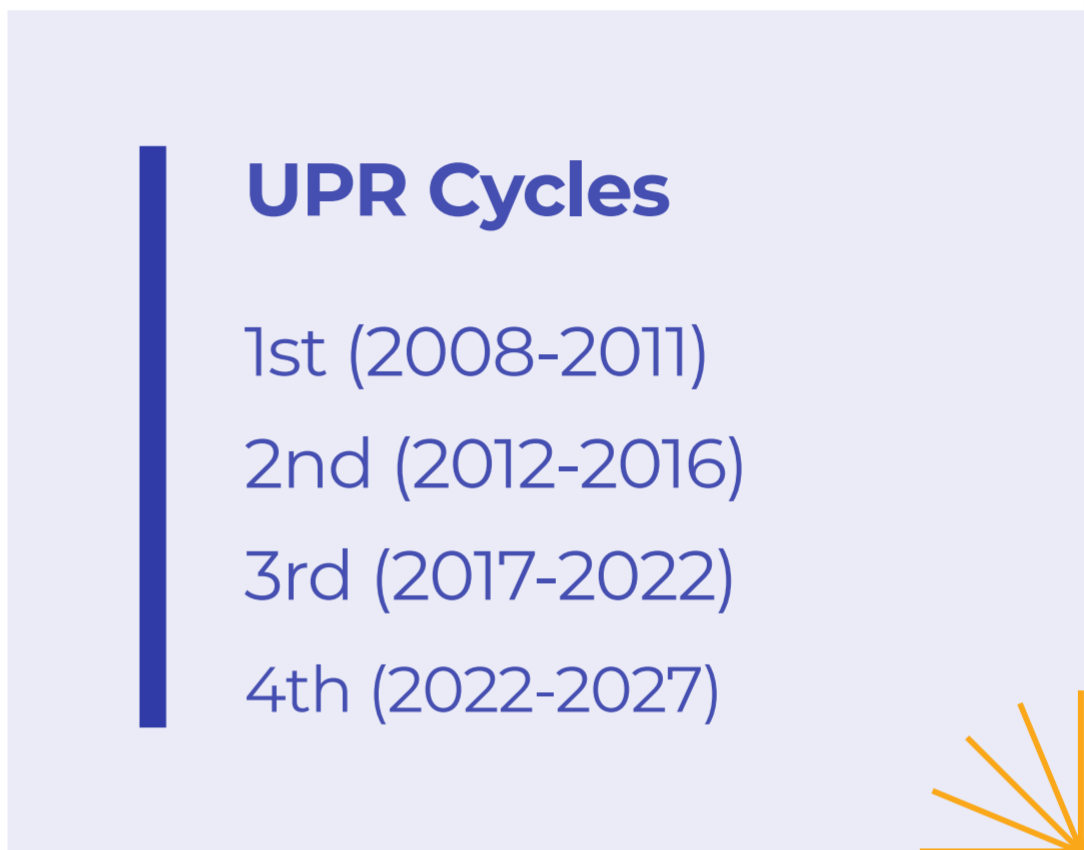


The Universal Periodic Review (UPR) stands as one of the primary human rights mechanisms within the United Nations. Instituted in March 2006 by the General Assembly Resolution 60/251 (A/RES/60/251) of the Human Rights Council (HRC), this periodic evaluation assesses all 193 UN Member States in cycles spanning approximately five years.

The **first UPR cycle** began in 2008, following the definition of the working methods defined by the states (A/HRC/RES/5/1). Subsequently, the UPR has completed three cycles, conducting comprehensive reviews of all states at least three

times and issuing more over 90,000 recommendations. The **fourth cycle**, initiated for certain countries in 2022, is slated for completion in 2027.

The recommendations emanating from the UPR are rooted in the UN Charter, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and international commitments undertaken by states through treaties and voluntary commitments. States and other relevant stakeholders are invited to submit information before the Review to inform the international community about human rights in the State under Review (SuR). **Three reports** are prepared in the initial phase: a **national report** by the SuR, one compiled by the OHCHR based on inputs from **civil society and other stakeholders**; and, another consolidating information from different **UN mechanisms**².




UPR Cycles

- 1st (2008-2011)
- 2nd (2012-2016)
- 3rd (2017-2022)
- 4th (2022-2027)

The graphic consists of a light blue rectangular box with a vertical blue bar on the left side. To the right of the bar, the text 'UPR Cycles' is written in bold blue font. Below it, four lines of text list the cycles: '1st (2008-2011)', '2nd (2012-2016)', '3rd (2017-2022)', and '4th (2022-2027)'. To the right of the box, there is a yellow sunburst icon.

² This documentation, as well as deadlines and guidance on how to participate in the UPR, can be found on the official website of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR).

Documentation by State: [Documentation by country](#) 

Deadlines to send information: [4th UPR cycle: contributions and participation of "other stakeholders" in the UPR](#) 

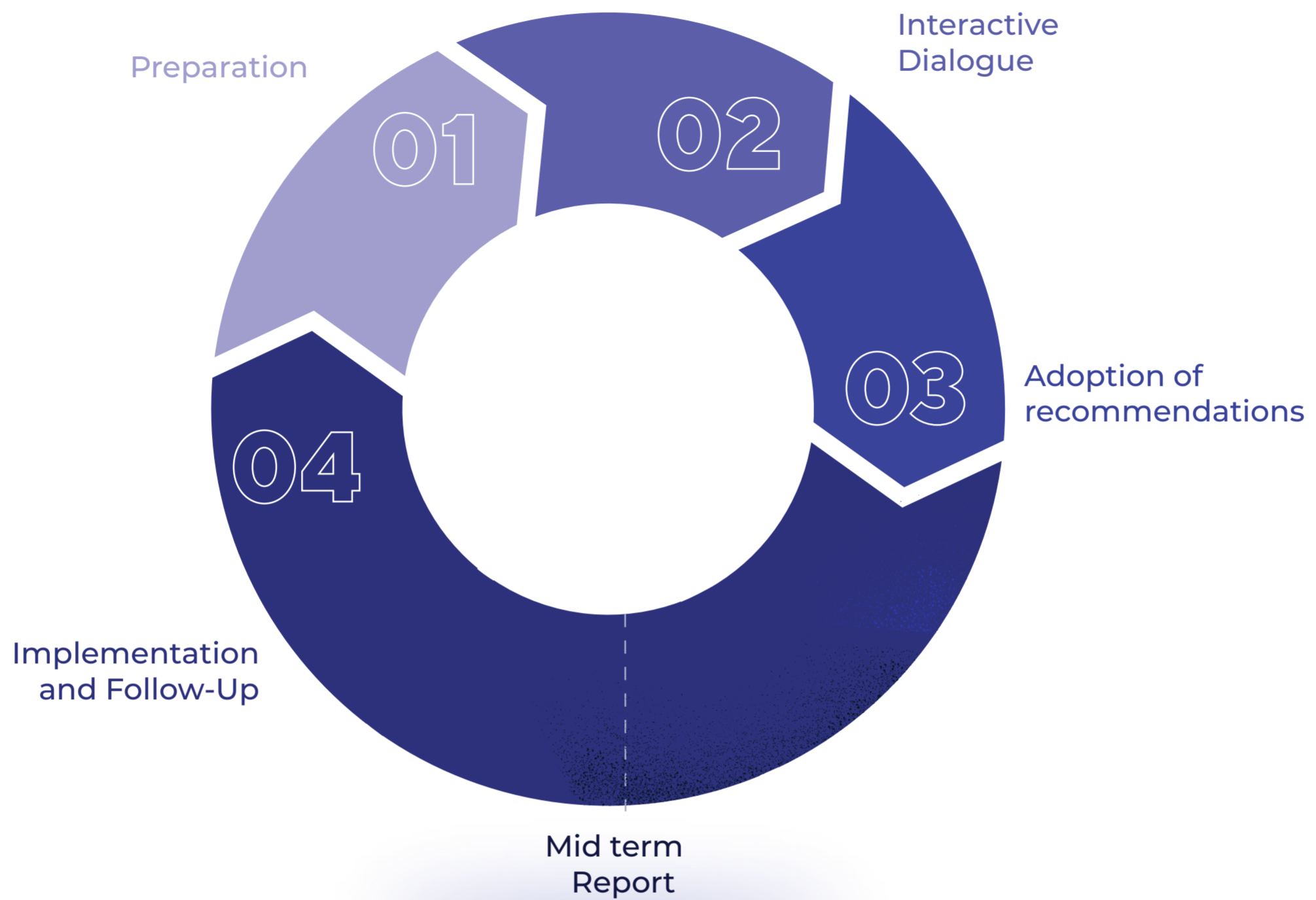
The UPR complements the Special Procedures and Treaty Bodies, forming the core pillars of the UN human rights system. Its distinct feature lies in being a **periodic and universal peer review** mechanism, making it the first where states issue mutual recommendations. This continuous review cycles covers all countries and human rights issues, irrespective of the ratification of specific treaties. These characteristics contribute to the unique nature of the UPR, fostering increased global engagement evidenced by the surge in recommendations, stakeholder reports, and media attention.

Annually, the UPR reviews about 42 states in sessions lasting three and a half hours, conducted by the UPR Working Group (WG) in Geneva, Switzerland. This process unfolds in four phases: **1. Preparation of Reports; 2. Interactive Dialogue; 3. Adoption of recommendations; and, 4. Implementation and Follow-Up.**

Following the **Interactive Dialogue**, States under Review (SuRs) have approximately four months to respond to the recommendations received, typically during the subsequent Human Rights Council (HRC) Session. States may take note or express full support for the recommendations. The formal **adoption of recommendations** takes place during regular HRC sessions under Item 6 (UPR Outcomes) on its permanent discussion agenda.

Once recommendations are adopted, SuRs are expected to **implement and monitor** the commitments made in the UPR until the next review, approximately five years later. During this period, States, civil society organisations, and National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs) are invited to submit information in the format of a **Mid-term Report**, assessing progress and setbacks in the implementation of the recommendations.

Universal Periodic Review Cycle



While civil society doesn't directly make recommendations in the UPR process, there are various forms of engagement throughout the cycle that can influence outcomes. In addition to commonly known practices, such as submitting parallel reports at the beginning and middle of a UPR cycle, civil society can monitor and actively participate in each phase of the review cycle. The graph below illustrates these engagement opportunities.

How can Civil Society Organisations engage with each UPR phase?

01 Preparation

- * Submit **reports** to the OHCHR;
- * Participate in **public consultations** on the official State report;
- * **Advocate/lobby** for recommendations;
- * Create impact by **following recommendations**.

02 Interactive dialogue


- * Attend or participate in the **pre-sessions** organized by UPR-Info;
- * Attend or organize **side events** during the Human Rights Council (HRC) session;
- * **Disseminate recommendations** nationally.

03 Adoption of recommendations

- * **Influence the State under Review** on the adoption or rejection of recommendations;
- * Present written, video, or oral statements at the **HRC session**.

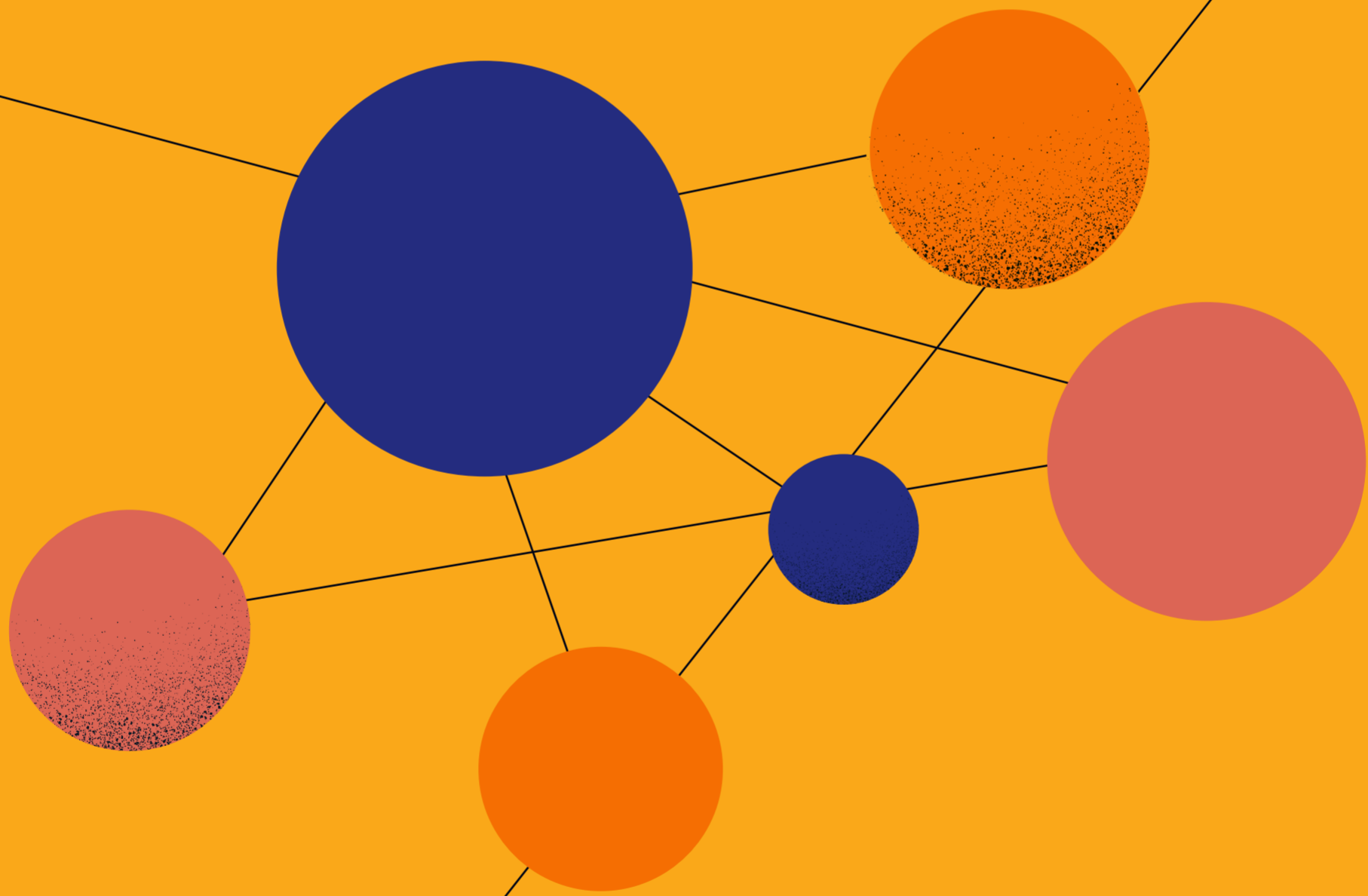
04 Implementation and Follow-Up

- * **Monitor the implementation** of recommendations by the State;
- * Submit the **mid-period report**;
- * Promote **side events** on the implementation of recommendations.

Engaging in these activities during different UPR phases is essential for effective civil society participation. Collaboration in collectives and national coalitions brings [several benefits](#) . In the next section, you will find steps indicating ways to strengthen the creation of national networks or coalitions and empower social participation in the UPR mechanism in your country. Don't forget to check our tips for collective advocacy impacts at the end of the Guide.

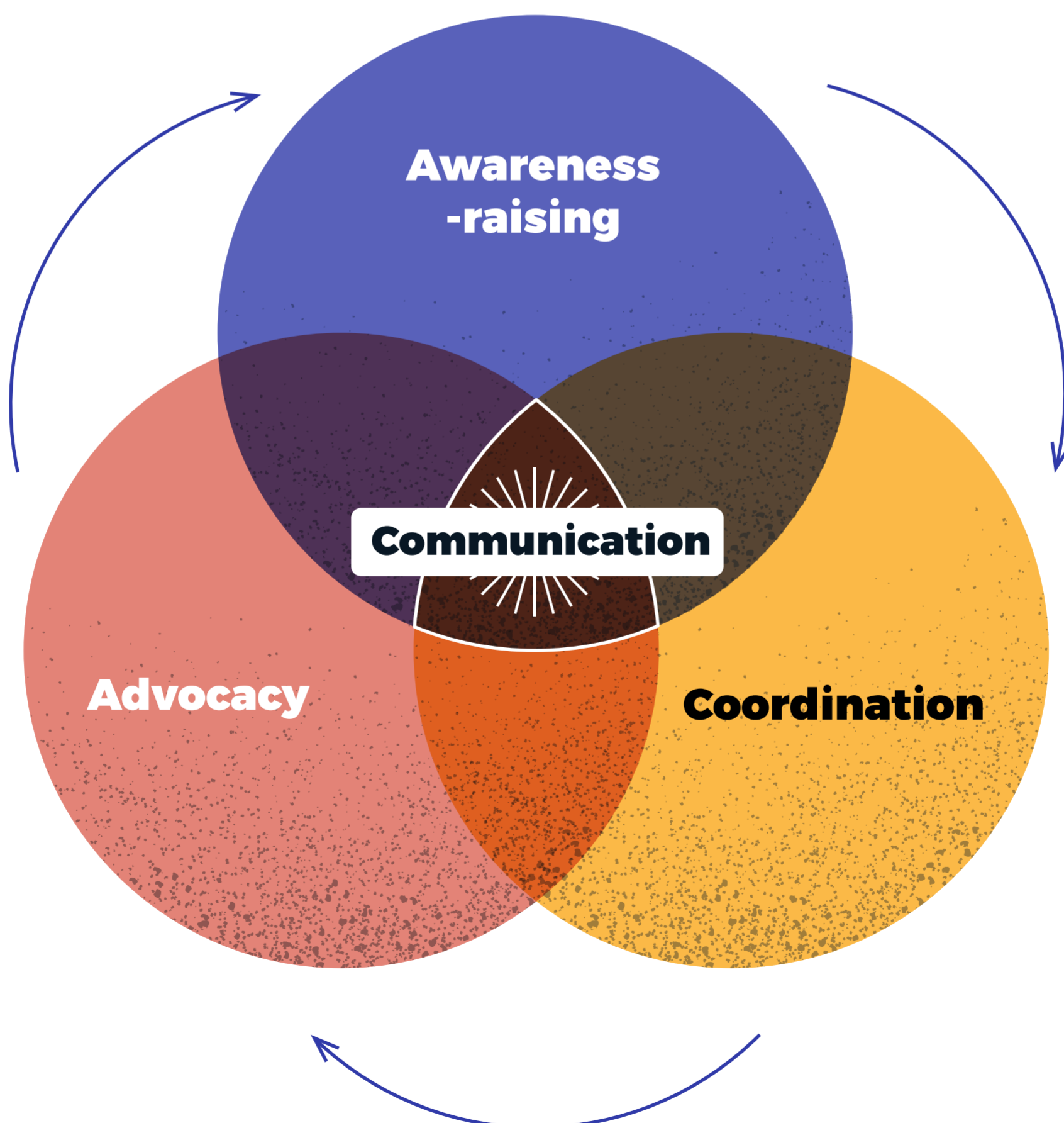
03

STEPS TO BUILD A NATIONAL COALITION



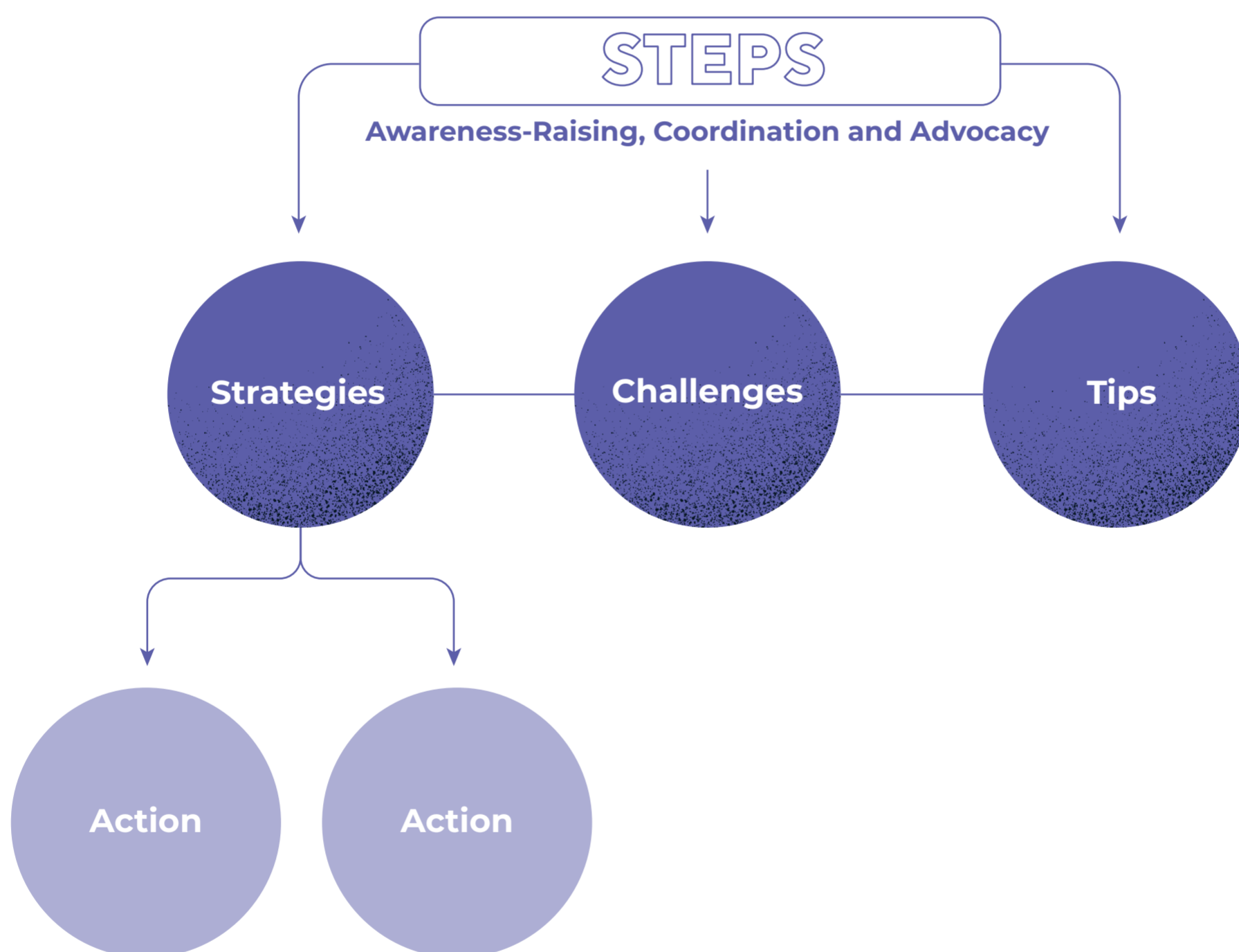
In this chapter, we present **steps for creating a national civil society coalition** dedicated to monitoring the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) of your country. We propose a **three-step approach**, recognizing that these steps are interconnected and may overlap.

It is crucial to emphasize that while dividing this guide into steps helps organize ideas and suggest a possible path, the process need not be strictly linear or identical everywhere. The creation of national coalitions is a unique experience, influenced by the distinct characteristics of each civil society group, and should be respected accordingly. Additionally, due to the cyclical nature of the UPR, the suggested steps may be reversed or occur simultaneously based on the phase of the UPR cycle in your country.



Each step begins with a stated **objective** to enhance understanding of the purpose in the national coalition creation process. To achieve these objectives, specific **actions** are proposed to design broader **strategies** that, if implemented, could strengthen civil society coalitions engaging with any international human rights mechanism. Possible **challenges** are highlighted, alerting to obstacles faced in creating national coalitions, followed by **tips** to assist in overcoming these challenges.

The image below illustrates the division of the steps and their subdivisions to better follow the methodological structure.



1st Step: Awareness-raising

OBJECTIVE:

To promote awareness among civil society organisations (CSOs) about the strategic role of the UPR in promoting and protecting human rights in the country.

STRATEGIES:

1st Map organisations

2nd Capacity-building

3rd Develop information channels



1st STRATEGY:

Map organisations with international involvement



Action:

1. Contact **organisations involved in foreign policy and / or human rights follow-up and monitoring** in your country.

How?

- a) Search the **UPR documentation of your country** for organisations that have submitted reports or participated in pre-sessions³;
- b) Investigate the existence of CSOs or coalitions that have engaged in **other international human rights mechanisms** (e.g., Treaty Bodies, Special Procedures, regional mechanisms).

³ Pre-sessions are events held by UPR-Info since 2012, from the 2nd cycle of the UPR onwards. Pre-sessions usually take place about a month before a national review and bring together representatives of the civil society and permanent missions interested in the human rights situation of the State under Review (SuR).

The objectives of these events are: 1.To provide NHRIs and CSOs with an international platform through which they can inform state representatives prior to the UPR WG Session; 2. To provide an opportunity for permanent missions to collect first-hand information on the human rights situation in the countries under review.

To learn more about the Pre-Sessions and how to participate, access the e-book prepared by UPR Info: "[UPR Info Pre-sessions empowering human rights voices from the ground 7](#)".



Action:

2. Promote **public events** on human rights monitoring and UN follow-up to attract interested organisations.

How?

- a) Schedule **meetings** between key stakeholders of the UN system, civil society, and public authorities.
- b) Organize **seminars** in collaboration with university courses related to these themes.
- c) Request **public hearings in parliament** during the preparation process of the country's reports on any UN human rights mechanisms.

2nd STRATEGY:

Capacity building to society to increase engagement in the UPR



Action:

1. Select or elaborate **accessible teaching materials** on how the UPR functions.

How?

- a) Look for existing material, such as **booklets and e-books**, on civil society activities in the UPR prepared by OHCHR or other entities;
- b) Establish **partnerships** with other civil society organisations or UN bodies for potential collaborations in material preparation;
- c) Disseminate webinars, courses, workshops, and events organized by CSOs that exemplify **good practices** in UPR advocacy.



Action:

- 2. Promote **UPR training** for CSOs, especially those not yet engaged with the mechanism.

How?

- a) Prepare **training or workshops** (online, hybrid, or face-to-face) and invite mapped CSOs interested in international affairs to organize the preparation of collective reports at various phases of the cycle;
- b) Seek strategic partnerships for capacity building, including both for institutional and financial support, such as **inviting** national / regional representatives from **OHCHR offices, embassies, or UN experts**.

3rd STRATEGY:

Develop *information channels* to create CSO awareness in the country about the UPR



Action:

1. Create an **accessible online space** on the topic of UPR.

How?

- a) Develop a **digital platform** with information on UPR cycles in the country presented in simple language and the official language(s) of the country;
- b) Systemize and **organize the recommendations received by your country** and the national and parallel reports making them available on the platform.



Action:

2. Build relationships with **local and international press** interested in the topic of international politics and human rights to publish news on human rights related to the recommendations received by the country.



How?

- a) Prepare **“cards / factsheets”** or press releases, with accessible language, linking human rights issues to UPR recommendations;
- b) Distribute communication materials to **newspapers and local media**, especially during the state's review, to discuss thematic cards prepared for other advocacy activities.

POSSIBLE CHALLENGES FOR AWARENESS-RAISING:

- * **Lack of accessible data** to map CSOs engaged in international advocacy;
- * **CSO's lack of interest** due to a perceived disconnect between international action and tangible domestic human rights protection;
- * **Insufficient CSOs with the capacity** to translate and share experiences, inclusively on how international advocacy can impact human rights defense in various territories;
- * **Scarcity of accessible information and adequate materials** about the UPR;
- * Media's **lack of knowledge** regarding UN human rights mechanisms, especially the UPR.



TIPS:

* Repositories containing **documents** and information on CSOs participation in official UN human rights websites:

- Civil society reports sent to your country's UPR: [Documentation by country | OHCHR](#) and [UPR info \(upr-info.org\)](#) ↗
- Organisations with consultative status with [ECOSOC/UN](#) ↗
- Information submitted by civil society to [Treaty Bodies](#) ↗
- Statements on [HRC \(HRC Extranet\)](#) ↗

* **Materials and practical guides** on UPR for civil society:

- OHCHR [Practical guides for civil society and other relevant actors](#) ↗, in particular "[UPR - Tips for engagement at country level for NHRIs and NGOs](#) ↗"
- UPR Info: "[The Civil Society Compendium A comprehensive guide for Civil Society Organisations engaging in the Universal Periodic Review](#) ↗"
- UPR Info: "[UPR Info Pre-sessions Empowering human rights voices from the ground](#) ↗".

* **Digital platforms** for UPR recommendations and other UN human rights mechanisms:

- OHCHR: [Universal Human Rights Index \(UHRI\)](#) ↗
- UPR Info: [UPR Info's Database](#) ↗
- Danish Institute for Human Rights: [SDG - Human Rights Data Explorer](#) ↗

2nd Step: Coordination

OBJECTIVE:

To strengthen a recognized and valued coalition that monitors the implementation of human rights through UPR recommendations in the country.

STRATEGIES:

1st Structure a coordination

2nd Strategic Planning

3rd Fund-Raising



1st STRATEGY:

Structure the **coordination** and its working methodology to implement activities. Create a minimal structure to facilitate work and communication between participating organisations, avoiding the need for institutional formalization



Action:

1. Appoint a **coordination** / steering committee / facilitating group.

How?

- a) Identify among the mapped organisations one with greater experience at this stage, the **trust** of the group, and a commitment to **transparent** and **inclusive** work;
- b) If possible, select an organisation for coordination that has the capacity to **bridge and connect** actions between different sections of the UN and national institutions in foreign policy and human rights;



Action:

2. Split activities into **thematic working groups (WGs)** with **designated representatives** and define the best **communication method** within the group.

How?

- a) Systematise UPR recommendations received by the State into **human rights issues or affected groups**, suggesting that CSO members of the coalition nominate themselves based on topics of interest;
- b) Have each WG **choose a coordinator and focal point** for contact with the general coordination or management committee;
- c) Establish an **e-mail group** for communication between coordinators and participants; or between coordinators and focal points of the WGs;
- d) Create a **social media group** (using instant messaging applications) for sharing updated information about international advocacy with the authorization of the participants.



Action:

3. Promote **continuous training** for current and new members.

How?

- a) Make previous **materials and reports** available on an **accessible platform** for current and new members;

b) Organize **training workshops during annual planning meetings** to recycle and update information and knowledge.

2nd STRATEGY:

Plan **concrete coalition activities** collectively, systematically, transparently, and inclusively



Action:

1. Discuss and create an **annual plan** for the group's actions.

How?

a) Schedule **periodic meetings** for the group in various formats, either online or face-to-face (initially, every 2 or 3 months);

b) Propose **agendas within the UPR cycle** indicating potential collective activities for civil society, ensuring a reasonable schedule that guarantees the participation and engagement of all stakeholders (with or without prior experience);

c) Ensure, if possible, **at least one face-to-face meeting per year**, ideally in the country's capital, to conduct political advocacy activities with strategic actors during the meeting.



Action:

2. Value **previous actions and strategies** implemented by the country's civil society throughout the UPR cycles.

How?

- a) Map the existence (or lack thereof) of **experiences carried out by civil society** in previous UPR cycles;
- b) Acknowledge **good practices** in group meetings, allowing participating organisations to share their advocacy activities at the UN in general and, if applicable, at the UPR.



Action:

3. Seek strategic partnerships and schedule **meetings and dialogues on behalf of the coalition** with relevant stakeholders to human rights.

How?

- a) Prepare simple and objective **presentation materials** about the coalition (e.g. letters of principles and objectives);
- b) Schedule **meetings with strategic partners** to introduce the UPR and the coalition itself to the government, academia, civil society, NHRI, embassies and UN representation in the country.

3rd STRATEGY:

Seek **funding sources** to ensure the coalition's communication, coordination, and impact activities.

Action:

1. Seek **strategic partnerships for funding** or plan resources from the coalition's organisations to enable meetings.

How?




- a) Submit projects to **funding notices from embassies or international cooperation agencies**;
- b) Seek support from **non-governmental organisations or funding organisations** that focus on strengthening coalitions and networks.

POTENTIAL COORDINATION CHALLENGES:

- * Lack of interest in an organisation becoming the main **coordinator** of the coalition;
- * **Lack of resources** preventing the execution of planned coalition activities;
- * **Lack of continuity** due to a high turnover of CSO representatives in the coalition;
- * Difficulties in selecting UPR recommendations for **human rights themes and thematic groups** to divide the coalition into WGs with focal points in CSOs.



TIPS:

- * If no individual organisation is initially interested or has the capacity to take on the coordination role, consider establishing a steering committee/facilitating group with multiple organisations (usually three);
- * To **secure resources**, identify active states that have made recommendations to your country in the UPR and check if their embassies have funding lines for human rights support;
- * For **continuous training** and better continuity of coalition activities, develop an asynchronous basic digital course on the UPR, available on a digital platform, which could be a requirement for the acceptance of new organisations or representatives;
- * Use human rights groups and themes from recommendation **indexing platforms**, such as the [Universal Human Rights Index - UHRI](#)  and [UPR Info Database](#) , or align with the goals of the [Sustainable Development Goals](#) .

3rd Step: Advocacy

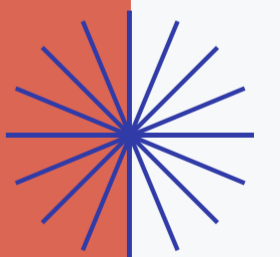
OBJECTIVE:

To systematically and collectively act in all phases of the UPR, monitoring the degree of compliance with recommendations and advocating for the implementation of human rights policies by the state.

STRATEGIES:

1st Develop a national advocacy plan

2nd Develop an international advocacy plan



1st STRATEGY:

Develop a *national advocacy plan* indicating actions at the local level for all phases of the UPR cycle.



Action:

1. Collectively prepare **reports** before the review and mid-term.

How?

- a) Map previous experiences in the country and align a **proper method for data collection and systematization** within the coalition for use by CSOs in the reports;
- b) Approve an evaluation methodology with **indicators on the implementation** (or not) of recommendations from the previous cycle within the coalition, categorizing them into relevant themes;
- c) Discuss within the coalition and **suggest new recommendations** to states using the SMART methodology: Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Results-oriented, and Time-bound;
- d) Prepare **factsheets and summaries of reports** for actions within the country.



Action:

2. Periodically propose **rounds of dialogue with embassies** in the country's capital.

How?

- a) **Map embassies in the country** interested in the agendas and themes with which coalition organisations engage;
- b) Establish dynamics, including **annual meetings with embassies** interested in human rights and UPR themes, to discuss the degree of compliance (progress or setback) with the recommendations received by the country;
- c) Invite embassies on behalf of the coalition to participate in **events and courses on UPR themes** to build and strengthen dialogue and relationships during all phases of the cycle;
- d) During the UPR phase for the elaboration of new recommendations by states, organize a **national pre-session** with embassies and deliver advocacy material with the proposals for SMART recommendations prepared by the coalition.



Action:

3. Provoke **debate with strategic partners at a national level** to disseminate the UPR, analyze the degree of compliance by the country and push for the development of implementation plans for recommendations through measures and public policies incorporated by state agencies.

How?

- a) Engage in dialogue with the **National Human Rights Institution (NHRI)** of your country⁴, or advocate for its creation;
- b) Promote public hearings to discuss the UPR with **legislative representatives and commissions** interested in human rights and foreign policy agendas⁵;
- c) Present reports and prepare informative materials relating UPR recommendations to the human rights situation in the country, presenting them to relevant bodies of the **executive and judiciary systems**, demanding plans for the implementation of UPR recommendations, among other issues;
- d) Participate and engage in the **National Mechanism for Reporting and Follow-up of International Human Rights Recommendations (NMRF)** in your country, or advocate for its creation, with effective social participation.

⁴ For more information on NHRIs, please visit [UN Human Rights and NHRIs | OHCHR](#) or consult the list of NHRIs provided by the [Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions | GANHRI](#).⁷

⁵ In Brazil, in 2020 the Parliamentary Observatory of the Periodic Review of Human Rights of the UN was created, this was a result of a partnership between the pParliament and the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, a pioneering project in the world for having the parliament as the protagonist of this process, monitoring the implementation of the UPR recommendations. Learn more at: <https://www2.camara.leg.br/atividade-legislativa/comissoes/comissoes-permanentes/cdhm/observatorio-parlamentar-da-revisao-periodica-universal-da-onu>⁷

2nd STRATEGY:

Develop an *international advocacy plan* for key moments during the UPR cycle.



Action:


1. Strategically focus on the UPR theme in the regular **sessions of the Human Rights Council (HRC) or in your national reviews of other UN mechanisms**, such as in **Special Procedures or Treaty Bodies**, to give visibility to the coalition's work and pressure the State to comply with its international human rights obligations.

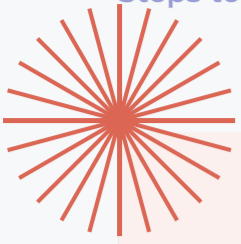
How?

a) Present **oral statements** on the human rights situation, associating them with UPR recommendations, in strategic items of the HRC agenda, like the General Debate under Item 6 (UPR) or the General Debate under Item 3 (Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights, including the right to development)⁶;

b) Host **side events** on the human rights situation in the country or strategically cover current and relevant topics to disseminate data on compliance (or lack thereof) with UPR recommendations;

c) Send information on the human rights situation on behalf of the coalition to **other UN human rights mechanisms**, citing data from UPR reports, and participate when the State is under review in committees or receiving visits from special rapporteurs.

⁶ See information on the Agenda of Sessions and opportunities for engagement on the page of the [Human Rights Council](#) 



Action:

2. Attend the **pre-sessions organised by UPR Info** in Geneva, in order to maintain a dialogue with permanent missions of other states and propose new recommendations.

How?

- a) Register the coalition's coordination or several organisations in the **selection process of UPR Info**;
- b) Prepare **cards/factsheets** on human rights topics with data from the coalition's monitoring work;
- c) If any organisation in the coalition is selected, prepare a **joint speech**, and approve its focus and content with the group.



Action:

3. Schedule **meetings** on behalf of the coalition to discuss relevant topics with **OHCHR** experts and representatives of the **permanent missions of states**, especially those already in contact with the coalition in the country.

How?

- a) Contact **OHCHR teams** on the UPR or specific human rights issues, requesting to present the country coalition and asking questions about how civil society can best engage with UN mechanisms;
- b) Map the most **active permanent missions (PM)** working on topics of interest to the coalition, requesting meetings to present concrete data on the country's situation and suggesting recommendations;



c) Before meetings, prepare a **speech with clear and objective materials**, presented in a language that can be easily understood, introducing the coalition and providing the most relevant data for each state or OHCHR area, with an agenda.

POTENTIAL ADVOCACY CHALLENGES:

- * Difficulties in **engaging multiple organisations** from the coalition in advocacy activities, such as preparing a single common report instead of individual ones and understanding the advantages of networked advocacy work, even for those without ECOSOC consultative status;
- * **Lack of information provided by official state agencies** on the recommendations and their participation in the reviews;
- * **Limited resources** for mainly **face-to-face activities** (e.g., tickets and lodging) due to distances between the countries' regions and the capital and between the country and Geneva;
- * Difficulties in **translating** reports, materials, and documents of international impact;
- * **Lack of understanding about the procedures** in terms of international impact of the coalition, such as the sending of many parallel reports by the same group of CSOs;
- * To focus on a **pre-session** when no organisation from the coalition has been selected for the main speech or for an oral statement at the HRC;
- * The challenge of **finding contacts of partners** at the OHCHR, embassies, and permanent missions in Geneva.



TIPS:

* The OHCHR website provides all existing documentation on national reviews, including a **recommendation matrix**: [Documentation by country | OHCHR](#) ↗;

* The OHCHR prepared a **guide for reporting** purposes: [Stakeholders' Technical Guidelines for the 4th UPR cycle \(OHCHR\)](#) ↗. Note that coalition reports may be longer than individual ones. (*Individual Reports*) (**Individual Reports**) - up to **2815 words** and *Collective Coalition Reports* (**Joint Submissions**) - up to **5630 words**. It is important to note that the organisation can contribute to several simultaneous reports, meaning that they can send an individual report and participate in several collective reports);

* It is possible to request **direct contacts of experts or UN representatives** in Geneva from your country's OHCHR representatives, if any. Contact details of OHCHR teams can be found on the OHCHR website https://www.ohchr.org/en/ohchr_homepage ↗, by clicking on “countries” and entering your country. The contact details of the permanent missions can be found in the UN Geneva Blue Book. It is an updated list and available on this link: <https://www.ungeneva.org/en/blue-book> ↗;

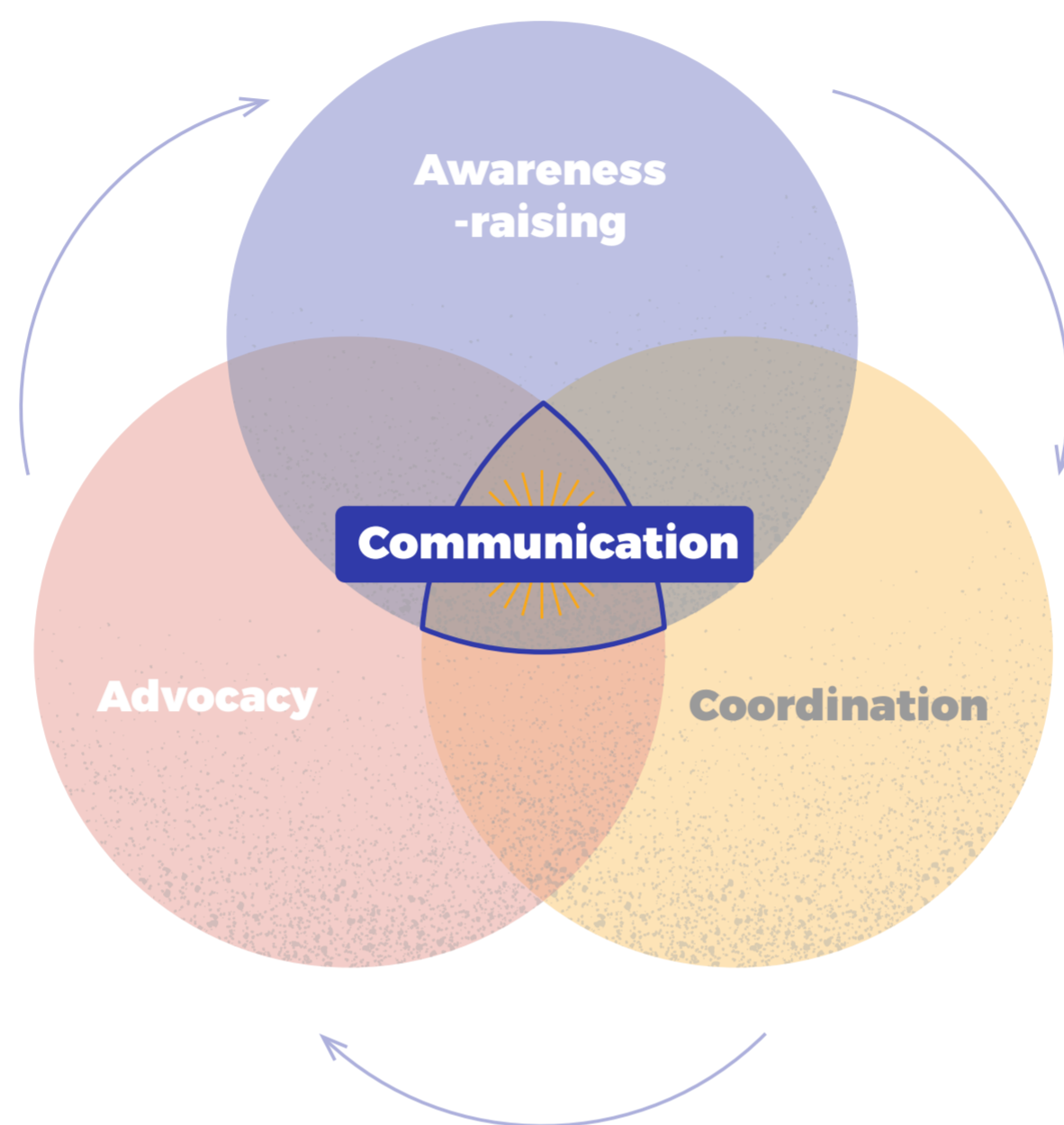
* The Organisations of the coalition, even those without ECOSOC consultative status, should register in the **pre-session** organized by UPR Info. UPR Info offers scholarships for representatives of some countries to participate in the pre-sessions in Geneva;

* For **oral participation in HRC sessions, organisations** with consultative status register individually but can all speak on behalf of the coalition if selected. This enhances coalition coordination;

* **For resource limitations**, organisations wishing to go to Geneva for advocacy can contact [CAGI \(International Geneva Welcome Centre\)](#)  to request assistance. Founded by the Swiss Confederation and the Republic and Canton of Geneva, CAGI offers some formats of support in Geneva for NGOs and visiting delegates. Check out the possibilities, criteria and form of request on the website: <https://www.cagi.ch/en/> .

* **Side events** can be proposed outside of your country's UPR agenda, in a regular session of the HRC one year after the acceptance of recommendations, creating a new time and space for the debate on the human rights situation in your country beyond the UPR calendar.

COMMUNICATION PLAN:



The development of a **communication plan** is a **strategic component for all stages of the creation and activities of a national coalition to monitor the UPR.**

The preceding steps — *Awareness-raising*, *Coordination*, and *Advocacy* — function as a **spiral**, evolving systematically and dialectically, continuously returning without starting from the same point. The communication strategy is at the center of this spiral, interacting and connecting with all steps, conceived as both a structure and an integral part of the creative process guiding the ongoing work of a national coalition.

WHY DO YOU NEED A COMMUNICATION PLAN?

- * To **disseminate the relevance of collective civil society actions** in the UPR;
- * To **capture the attention of other civil society organisations**, making them aware and encouraging engagement in the mechanism and the coalition;
- * To **broaden the dissemination of information** to society at large about international human rights mechanisms;
- * To **publicize the impacts on human rights progress** resulting from the influence of civil society in the UPR;
- * To **give visibility to the role of the coalition in the country**, consolidating the acknowledgment of its expertise in the subject to increase credibility and influence;
- * To increase **pressure for the creation of plans for the implementation of recommendations** by responsible bodies and promote the development of human rights in the country.



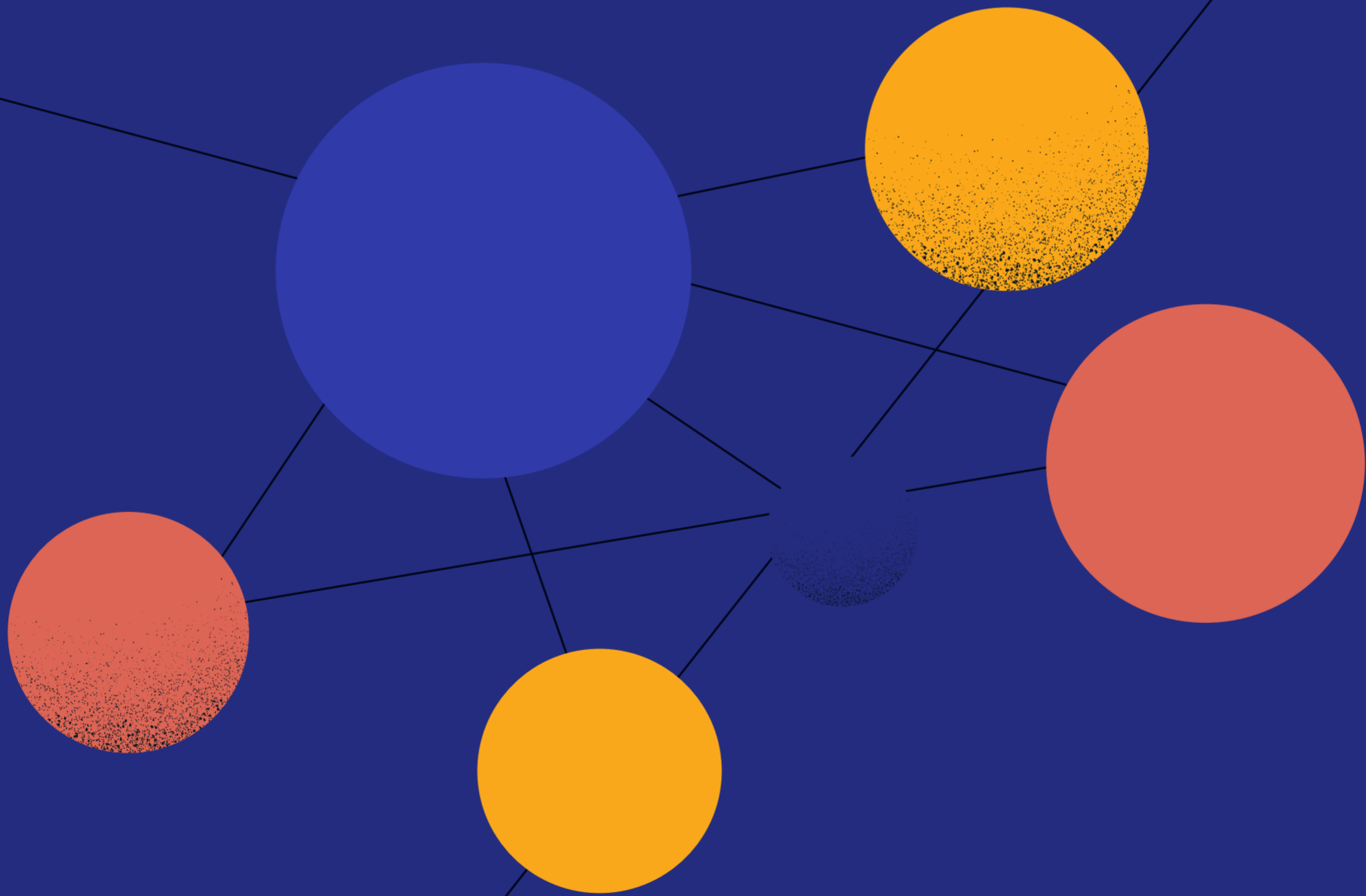
HOW CAN YOU DO IT?

- * Produce **knowledge about UPR recommendations** and the current human rights situation in the country;
- * Prepare **press release** materials (for print or social media) on advocacy activities conducted by the coalition;
- * Present the **results of impacts during political meetings** in the country and for National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs);
- * Engage with or advocate for the creation of a **National Mechanism for Reporting and Follow-up (NMRF)**⁷ in your country;
- * Occupy, as a coalition, **political spaces**, including governmental and non-governmental councils discussing foreign policy on human rights, especially UN human rights mechanisms;
- * Encourage **communication campaigns** during the presentation of UPR monitoring reports prepared by the coalition to demand involvement from legislative, executive, judicial, and justice system bodies;
- * Organize the dissemination of **UPR information and the coalition's advocacy actions** nationally and internationally, collaboratively and coordinated across all **social media and communication channels, and video transmission platforms** from CSOs within the coalition to expand information dissemination.

⁷ For more information, visit the OHCHR Practical Guide: [National Mechanisms for Reporting and Follow-up \(NMRF\): Implementation of recommendations](#)

04

FUTURE AND FINAL REMARKS





The development of a national coalition represents a significant achievement in engaging civil society organisations and empowering them to participate actively in the UPR process. As the coalition matures, it should not only focus on monitoring compliance with past recommendations but also take proactive steps to influence and shape future policies. This forward-looking approach involves closely monitoring and advocating for the follow-up and implementation plans of recommendations proposed by responsible state bodies.



Look Back (Monitor):

Continue monitoring the compliance of the state with past recommendations, ensuring accountability and transparency in the implementation process.

Look Ahead (Implement):

Transition towards proposing and advocating for concrete public policies that, if adopted by the state, can contribute to tangible advancements in the rights of individuals directly affected in various territories.



Key Steps for a Mature Coalition:

* **Know** the UN Structure and UPR Mechanism: Ensure that coalition members are well-versed in the workings of the United Nations and the UPR process.

* **Organize** as a Coordinated Coalition: Maintain a well-organized and coordinated structure within the coalition to facilitate effective collaboration among member organisations.

* **Participate** Collectively in UPR Activities: Encourage active participation of coalition members in all phases of the UPR cycle, fostering a collaborative and inclusive approach.

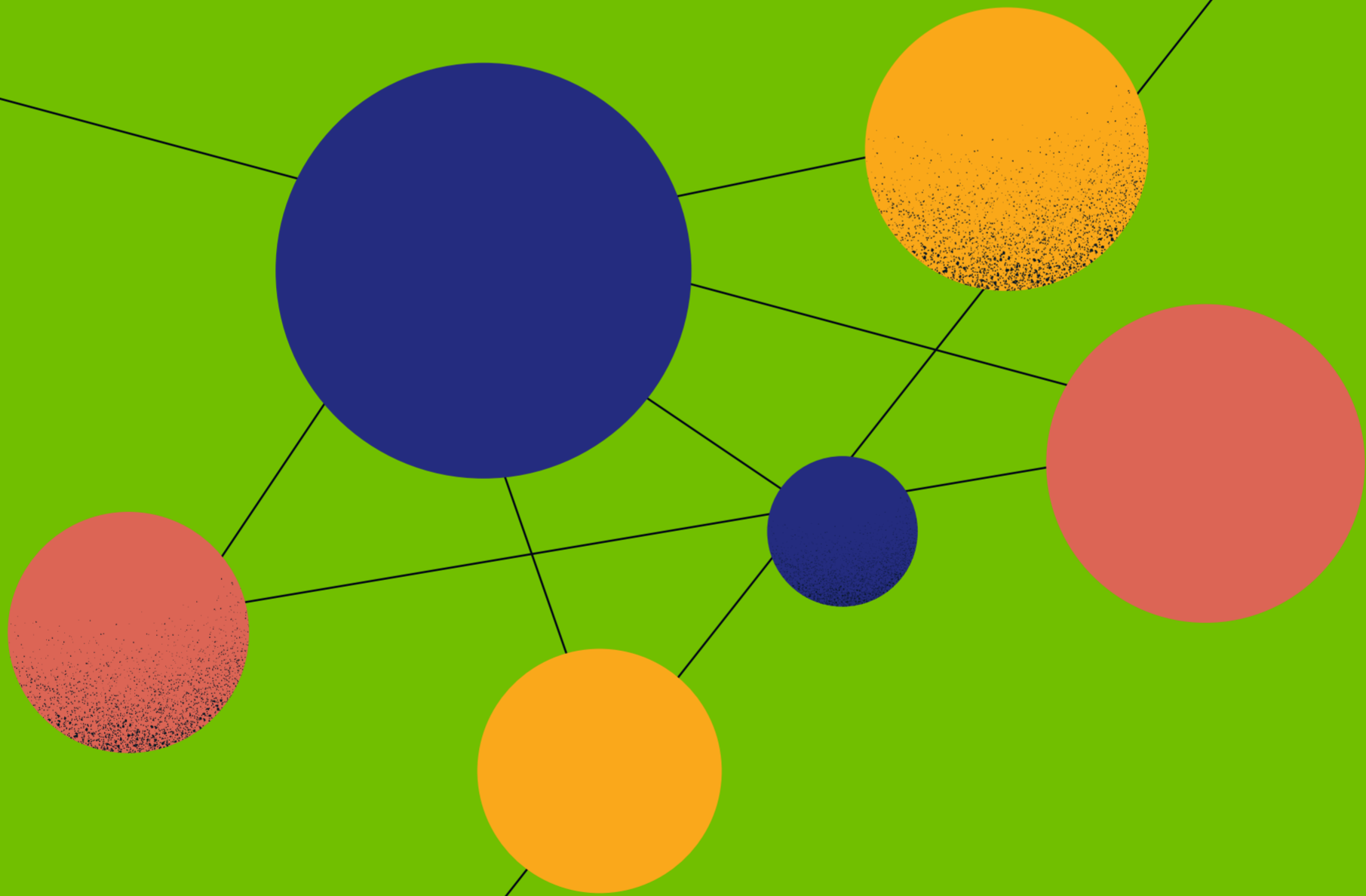
* **Design** Advocacy Plans Nationally and Internationally: Develop comprehensive advocacy plans that encompass both national and international dimensions, leveraging the coalition's collective strength.

* **Execute** an Efficient Communication Plan: Implement a robust communication strategy to disseminate information, raise awareness, and highlight the coalition's impact on human rights issues.




05



TOOLS AND RESOURCES




Practical Guides and E-books




A [Practical Guide for Civil Society: Universal Periodic Review](#)  (OHCHR): Practical tips for civil society participation in UPR


[Factsheet on SMART recommendations for civil society organisations](#)  (Amnesty International and UNESCO): factsheet / *hoja informativa* on how to propose recommendations for UPR using the SMART methodology. The material includes a series of resources on the participation of civil society in the UPR, especially on the subject of freedom of expression. Also access the [six introductory videos](#) on the UPR, available in all official UN languages and the practical guide “[El Examen Periódico Universal \(EPU\) y su potencial para fomentar la libertad de expresión, el acceso a la información y la seguridad de periodistas: Directives for civil society organisations](#) ”.

[Practical Guide for Civil Society: Seguimiento de las Recomendaciones de las Naciones Unidas sobre los Derechos Humanos](#)  (OHCHR): e-book published by the OHCHR to guide civil society on how to follow up on the recommendations of United Nations human rights mechanisms, mandates, and bodies.


[National Mechanisms for Reporting and Follow-up \(NMRF\): Implementation of recommendations \(OHCHR\)](#) : practical guide and study on the collaboration of states with international human rights mechanisms that define key skills for the proper functioning of national mechanisms in accordance with human rights recommendations.





[The Civil Society Compendium - A comprehensive guide for Civil Society Organisations engaging in the Universal Periodic Review](#)  (UPR-INFO): guide for civil society participants involved in the third cycle of the UPR and presented in four parts. Part 1 provides a concise introduction to the UPR. Part 2 provides an updated guide for civil society on how to best engage with the UPR. Part 3 offers advice and examples of best practice to strengthen national CSO coalitions, specifically related to the UPR. Finally, Part 4 provides non-state actors in the UPR with a set of tools for engagement

[UPR Info Pre-sessions Empowering human rights voices from the ground](#)  (UPR-Info): e-book that brings together evaluations of the pre-sessions held throughout their first years of operation (2012-2016), as well as guidance for civil society participation in pre-sessions and good practices.


Websites and Platforms


[Documentation by country](#)  (OHCHR): UPR documentation per State


[4th UPR cycle: contributions and participation of "other stakeholders" in the UPR](#)  (ACNUDH): OHCHR Guidelines for sending information to the UPR

[Platform UPR Brazil](#)  (UPR Brazil Coalition): the platform that gathers the UPR recommendations received by the Brazil, in Portuguese, as well as the evaluations of the Brazilian UPR Coalition on the implementation of the recommendations. The platform allows user to make personalised searches by selecting human rights issues, affected groups or Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and access all publications of the coalition



[SDG - Human Rights Data Explorer](#)  (Danish Institute for Human Rights): searchable database that links monitoring information from the international human rights system to the Goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. This database allows users to explore the recommendations and observations of international human rights monitoring bodies regarding the implementation of the SDGs and their 169 targets in specific countries

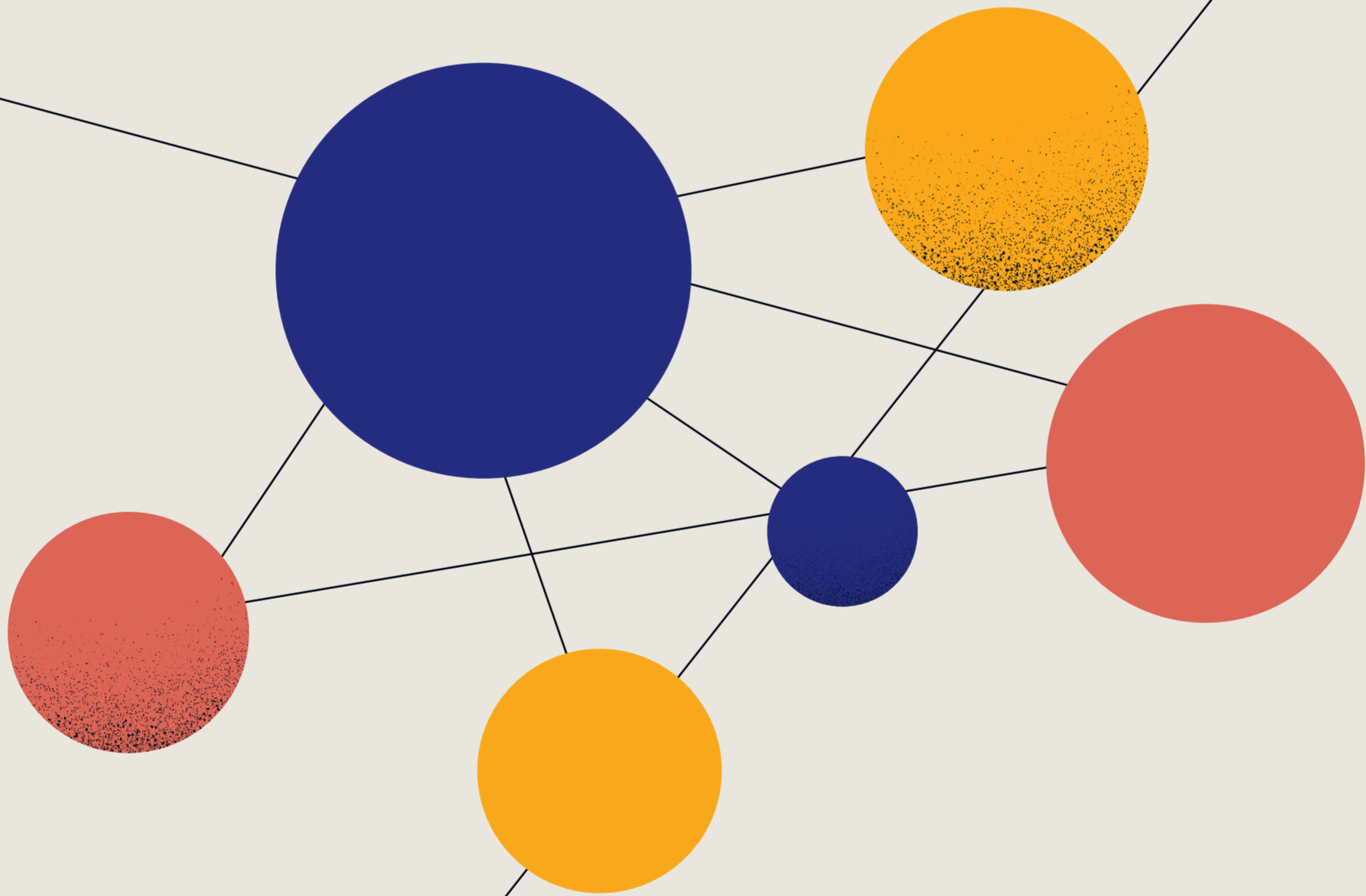
[Universal Human Rights Index - UHRI](#)  (OHCHR): this is a central repository of human rights information and aims to assist states in implementing these recommendations and facilitate the work of national stakeholders such as National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs), non-governmental organisations, civil society and academia, as well as the United Nations in supporting these implementation efforts and human rights analysis, which include identifying who may be at risk of being left behind and mapping systematic, recurring and unresolved human rights issues

[UPR Info's Database \(UPR-Info\)](#) : recommendations and voluntary commitments database made under the UPR. It has a search system that includes several categories, such as State under Review (SuR), Recommending State, Regional Group, Organisation, Cycle, SuR answers on recommendations received, Thematic Issues and Type of Action, some of which are exclusive to this exclusive database developed by UPR-Info



06

ANNEX: HISTORY OF THE UPR BRAZIL COALITION





The history of the UPR Brazil Coalition has laid the groundwork for the creation of this Practical Guide. In this annex, we present a concise overview of the group, which stands as the primary coalition of civil society organisations dedicated to the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) in Brazil.

The inception of the UPR Brazil Coalition traces back to **2017**, emerging during a **training course** on social participation in the UPR conducted by the IDDH at the commencement of Brazil's **3rd UPR cycle (2017-2022)**.

Initially composed of **25 civil society organisations and networks**, many of which were already actively involved in foreign policy and human rights through the **Brazilian Committee on Human Rights and Foreign Policy (CBDHPE)**, the coalition became **aware** the strategic importance of the UPR in advancing human rights in the country.

Over time, the UPR Brazil Coalition evolved, establishing **working groups (WGs)** and formulating a methodology to **coordinate** and **communicate** the planning of the coalition's **concrete actions**.

Throughout the **3rd UPR cycle** of Brazil, the coalition diligently prepared **monitoring reports** on human rights in Brazil, assessing all 242 recommendations received during the UPR process. This extensive work informed both **national and international advocacy** actions and is accessible through the coalition's primary **communication channel**.

The continuous and coordinated efforts in the UPR have solidified the UPR Brazil Coalition's legitimacy as a significant participant in monitoring human rights in Brazil. Currently, the coalition comprises approximately **40** member organisations, movements, and networks representing diverse human rights issues across the country.

As the coalition enters the **4th UPR cycle (2022-2027)**, it leverages its experience and strengthened position to develop a new methodological matrix for monitoring the implementation of recommendations received by the Brazilian State.

The objective is to ensure that these recommendations guide tangible public policies on human rights within the country. The UPR Brazil Coalition aspires that its experiences will inspire other groups to use the UPR mechanism, advancing their agendas and strengthening local struggles through participatory, inclusive, and collective approaches.



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