

3rd AFRICAN SOCIAL MOVEMENTS 2025

# BARAZA



## African Social Movements Baraza 2025

### **Theme:** The Power of Movements

Sharing movement organizing strategies and lessons learnt, stories of impact, movement funding approaches, and building solidarity to address the pressing issues of our time.

### Introduction and Context

From grassroots organizations to large-scale movements, the voices of African activists and advocates have been instrumental in shaping the continent's social, political, and economic landscape. The African Social Movements Baraza 2025 aims to bring together social movements from all 54 African countries to provide a platform for conversation, networking, solidarity building, collaboration, and knowledge-sharing. ASM Baraza 2025 will serve as a space for activists, advocates, and change-makers to come together, exchange ideas, and strategize on addressing the pressing social issues facing the continent.

The global political moment is characterized by a deepening Polycrisis - "a time of great disagreement, confusion and suffering, that is caused by many problems all happening simultaneously so that they together have a huge effect". Some pressing challenges today and over the next decade include – poverty, erosion of social cohesion and societal polarization, natural disasters and extreme weather, large-scale involuntary migration, environmental degradation and climate change, biodiversity loss, and ecosystem collapse. On top of this is the increasingly dangerous geopolitical confrontation among major powers.

The stress from the current multiple crises is simultaneously driving and feeding off a trend in the breakdown of elite consensus among major global powers. This, in turn, is driving fragmentation and thus rendering dysfunctional platforms for multi-lateral global governance created over the last 7 decades to manage global social, economic and political affairs, including institutions such as the United Nations, World Bank, IMF and the World Trade Organization. This trend is most visible in the paralysis of the UN, in particular in the face of major challenges such as the current horrendous conflicts in Palestine/Israel, Ukraine, DRC, Sudan, etc. Equally, global platforms such as the International Court of Justice and the International Criminal Court and other instruments to protect human rights and uphold international justice have been rendered dysfunctional. This breakdown in global governance extends to climate and arms control treaties where big powers have pulled out of key agreements.

The context of the continent is marked by even more concerning trends as global poly-crisis layers on top of it and, therefore, amplifies existing historical crises and vulnerabilities particular to the continent. This includes conflict, acute levels of poverty, lack of jobs and livelihood opportunities, especially for young people and the poor, and non-existent social protection. The continent's vulnerability to external shocks has been seen in the severe impacts on food and energy security in the wake of the Ukraine war, which resulted in serious risks of social instability. The socio-economic crises (and development crisis in general) on the continent are compounded by historically unjust economic relations between the continent and the global north, which result in a net outflow of wealth from the continent. Under these circumstances, the continent cannot deal with the growing climate crisis, recurring natural disasters and other pressing challenges. Equally, the continent is experiencing dire peace and security crises, with 7 coups experienced in the last 3 years, disputed elections and a general trend of closing civic space and rising authoritarianism.

Moments of deep crisis as acute as the current global political moment are also moments when the existing global order is seriously challenged and long-held norms contested, thus opening up a contestation over the future of society – and paving the way for new thinking. Amidst great uncertainty and deep crisis of global governance across the whole socio-economic and political order, hope lies in the undying fighting spirit of progressive constituencies and activists who have continued to insist that alternative futures are possible and relentlessly work to steer humanity towards a more just and sustainable society.

Progressive organizing, however, is increasingly confronted by authoritarian reaction and a securitized response to crises. The current geopolitical reconfiguration has unleashed a new scramble for Africa. It is recasting the world into Cold War-like camps where corrupt governments and dictators get uncritical support from allied big powers. This dynamic does not bode well for accountable governance. It is already contributing to a rise in authoritarianism with real manifestations in a worrying trend towards closure of civic space and violent repression. Equally, restrictive legislation and difficult operating conditions imposed in African countries effectively criminalize civil society organizing.

The present moment calls for a re-imagining of the future and vigorous organizing from below to build real people's power to address the pressing challenges of our time and drive the transformation towards a more just society. For this, we need to invest in strengthening the space for the voice and agency of social movements and their ability to act decisively in pushing back against authoritarianism and climate catastrophes and advancing racial, gender and socio-economic justice.

Social movements are significant because of their proximity to the issues and potential to mobilize important constituencies to build a real social base for transformation. Indeed, social movements also provide a unique space to connect with and mobilize a wider base of society and constituencies beyond the limitations of professional NGOs. Examples such as Black Lives Matter, Occupy Wall Street, Y'en a Marre and #FeesMustFall demonstrate the opportunity for an approach to mass mobilizing and organizing anchored in decentralized and rooted strategies that enable citizens and activists to engage organically in pushing for social change. Furthermore, within the context of closing civic space, social movements offer an alternative opportunity for organizing as they are not as susceptible to governmental restrictions in the same way that traditional civil society finds itself targeted. Furthermore, at their best, social movements have demonstrated agility in acting across priority issues in a more dynamic, organic, and responsive manner.

## GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

- Foster conversations among African social movement leaders on the current global political moment and create Common African Movement Positions on priority intersecting issues.
- Provide a platform to foster solidarity, collaboration, and joint actions and strengthen the African social movements network.
- Create a space to showcase emblematic organizing experience and share lessons learnt among movement leaders.
- Promote dialogue between movement leaders and funders to help build trust and foster improved funding for African social movements.
- Amplify the voices of movements and communities working to address social justice and equality issues.
- Identify common challenges and explore collective solutions to advance social movements in Africa.

## WHO

The target audience for the ASM Baraza 2025 includes Social movements, grassroots activists, CSOs, activist collectives, artists, academics, policymakers, and individuals passionate about activism and social transformation in Africa. The intention is to convene participants from all 54 African countries with a bias towards young organizers.

## HOW

The Baraza program will feature community visits/immersions, keynote presentations, academic papers, plenary discussions, breakout sessions, workshops, networking sessions and limited virtual forums. Participants can showcase their work, engage in lively debates, and participate in skill-building activities. A cultural program will also be included to celebrate creativity and the rich diversity of African cultures and inspire change. Movements will be invited to propose specific topics and sessions along these thematic areas.

## WHERE

Accra, Ghana

## WHEN

April 14 -16, 2025

## CONTACT

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