Co/Act: Human Centered Design for Activists

What is human-centered design? How can it help activists be more effective?

Today, technology products and services surround us-in our pockets, homes, kitchens, workplaces and public spaces. Human-centered design is the approach that ensures these products and services are accessible, intuitive, and easy to use. Human-centered design is responsible for a smartphone having only one button or a car having cup holders. Activists who are trying to affect social change will benefit from adopting a human-centered design framework: how can your message reach the right group of people in the modern marketplace using the tools they interact with every day?

Human-centered design starts with a few key questions: who is this meant for, what do they want, and how can you reach them? This framework helps teams create products, services, and campaigns that meet people where they are and speak to them in words they can understand. Human-centered products are more accessible and usable, and as a result more likely to have a greater impact in the world. Whether you're studying the role of social media and hate speech in India, fighting internet shutdowns in Cameroon, or building advocacy campaigns for marginalized groups in Colombia, understanding what makes products and services successful can be transformative.

So even if you are not a designer by trade, you can use the lessons of human-centered design in your writing, research and advocacy work. The activities outlined in this Co/Act toolkit blend human-centered design with principles of inclusion, activism, and community organizing. Co/Act will help you design more powerful products, services, and campaigns by centering them on your community, stakeholders, and colleagues - ensuring that the end result is more inclusive and therefore democratic.

Ready to get started?