

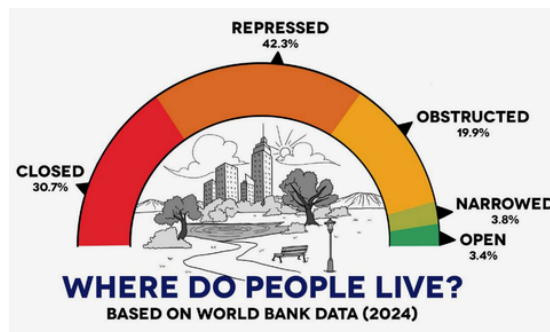


Have you ever thought about running a 200-kilometre race? What if we told you that you kinda already are?

The fight for justice is not completable in a single lifetime. It is an intergenerational ultramarathon – and the movements that make it to the finish line are the ones that have learned to truly care for themselves and each other, making wellbeing a political practice in itself, woven into how they organise. In this context, knowing when to stop is what keeps you in the race.

But rest under repression requires choreography – and building that capacity starts with understanding the landscape activists are operating in.

Did you know that only 7.2% of the world's population live in countries with open or narrowed civic space? This means **that activists organise, advocate, and demand accountability in environments designed to silence them** – facing detention, digital repression, transnational harassment, and laws engineered to brand them as criminals. In this landscape, **the oppressor's ultimate goal is exhaustion. Your recovery is a refusal.**



THE TENSION CIVIC ACTORS FACE

Self-care feels like betrayal – When communities are under attack, tending to your own needs can feel morally impossible. But **when suffering is caused by a political system, caring for yourself is already a political act.** 1

Urgency culture pushes people out – Movements built for those with the most stamina push out everyone else first. If disabled defenders in your movement don't feel they belong, the infrastructure isn't there yet – regardless of what the policies say. 2

Care stays individual when it needs to be collective – Kapwa, a Filipino concept of shared identity, makes it clear: you cannot ask your right arm to rest while your left arm is on fire. **Care belongs to the collective. Building it is part of how movements organise.** 3

SO, WHAT CAN MOVEMENTS DO?

- 1) Co-create what wellbeing means in your specific context and language;
- 2) Embed it in governance: constitutions, KPIs, and M&E should measure how the organisation feels, not just what it delivers.
- 3) Build processes for relational repair – movements fracture from the inside when conflict goes unaddressed.
- 4) Address intergenerational trauma collectively: unprocessed pain shapes the next generation's capacity to organise.

WHAT COLLECTIVE CARE LOOKS LIKE

Across movements in Thailand and the Philippines, practitioners shared what care actually looks like on the ground. Small acts rebuild the social fabric between crises; structural changes signal that care is institutional, not occasional. Together, they form the architecture of a movement that can endure.

Ask "how are you today?" – and mean it

Pick someone up from the bus station

Cook and eat together

Friday gratitude circles

Weekly check-ins on how people *arrive*, not what they deliver

Work in the language people feel in

Mental health leave in HR policy

Play together – Chinlone, sport, art

Wellbeing is political infrastructure. The movements that invest in collective care become more effective, more sustainable, and harder to break. The fight is long. Care is what keeps us in it.