



1. Introduction

What is a Theory of Change?

Theory of Change (ToC) is a comprehensive description and illustration of how and why a desired change is expected to happen in a particular context. It is focused on “filling in” what has been described as the “missing middle” between what a programme or change initiative does (its activities or interventions) and how these lead to desired goals being achieved. It also documents an understanding of the assumptions and context in which these goals can be achieved.

Why a ToC for Resourcing a Diverse & Resilient Civil Society in particular?

This approach leads to better planning, in that activities are linked to a detailed understanding of how change happens. It also leads to better evaluation, as it is possible to measure progress towards the achievement of longer-term goals that go beyond the identification of programme outputs. This is particularly important for newer areas of CIVICUS’ work, such as Resourcing a Diverse & Resilient Civil Society, where we’re still defining our added value to the sector.

How was this ToC developed?

We developed this ToC using a participatory approach, involving key project stakeholders in the initial design. This was followed by an internal CIVICUS consultation process, where we shared the ToC for input on our internal communications channels and hosted a focus group webinar to gain further input. Finally, we shared this ToC with the external stakeholders of the Norad project, as well as with stakeholders engaged in our broader civil society resourcing work stream, such as the governance structure of our Membership Solidarity Fund.

This ToC will be used as a programme design tool to inform further project planning. The ToC will also be referenced during bi-annual reflection processes at project level, to inform adaption and course-correction, throughout the project lifecycle.

Note: The ToC methodology requires articulating the outcomes in ‘results language’ such as use of terms: increase, decrease, more, etc. This is not to say that quantitative gains/changes (i.e. more documentation shared) will immediately or directly result in change in behaviour, resilience, sustainability. Changes, results and outcomes such as these are systemic and will be iterative with many more contributing factors. This will be taken into account during project evaluation.

Increased resilience and sustainability of a diverse civil society

Desired Impact

Increased effectiveness of resourcing (funding & support) to civil society *through the adoption, improvement and scaling of policies, practices, laws*

Increased diversity and range of civil society actors with the agency and capacity to organise (and resource) in more autonomous, sustainable and resilient

Pre-conditions/ Assumptions

Laws, regulations, practices, behaviors enable diverse civil society groups to mobilise meaningful resources and support to sustain their causes



Sphere of influence

Long-term Outcomes
5 years +

More and better resources are available for civil society actors to sustain their causes, especially informal change-seeking actors in the global south from historically marginalised communities

Improved transformative funding models are adopted and promoted by CS and donors, contributing to change in donor/CS culture and partnerships

**Donors include a broad range of supporters besides the traditional aid agencies, fundermediaries etc.*

International donors, INGOs, governments, private sector and citizens are **capable and willing** to provide meaningful resourcing and support of CS groups/movements, especially smaller, informal change-seeking groups

Medium-term Outcomes
3-5 years

Enhanced relational approaches between grantees and funders promote meaningful partnership, moving power closer to the ground/grassroots and two-way dynamic accountability

More inclusive collaboration, resource-sharing and solidarity among civil society members and stakeholders

Increase in learnings from pilots/target CS actors, best practice, etc. used to influence and advocate for wider sectoral change

Increase in documentation and testing of Innovative models, best practices, and initiatives by relevant groups and disseminated, building an evidence base for innovative and inclusive CS resourcing practices

Civil society groups **address disabling resourcing conditions** both at domestic and international levels and are supported in doing so by CIVICUS and relevant partners.

Short-term outcomes
1-3 years

Target* civil society actors have increased access to better resources & support (enabling their sustainability)

Target civil society actors increase engagement amongst themselves & directly with funders/other relevant actors (voice, trust, accountability) on resourcing issues

Increased number of pilot innovations that address resourcing challenges of target civil society actors and are shared with partners

Improved documentation and dissemination of resourcing conditions for target civil society groups

**Target actors include: individual activists, new generation change makers, and smaller, informal change-seeking groups in the global south, especially those from historically marginalized communities*

Outputs/activities

Working w/ internal CIVICUS practices (grant-making & resource mobilisation) e.g. Member Solidarity Fund, Crisis Response Fund, SPEAK!

Experiments & pilot projects with target groups, regions, etc.

Platforms/ spaces to co-create, collaborate, share, Skills and capacity development

Stories/good practices, research, thought leadership trends & data

Cross-cutting: promoting **Enabling Environment** for CS resourcing

Programme Principles

Diversity & Inclusion

Co-creation

Innovation

Risk-taking

Solidarity

Data-driven

Constituency-led

2. Accompanying ToC narrative:

This theory of change brings together CIVICUS' different streams of work around resourcing a diverse and resilient civil society, including internal resourcing practices, advocacy for better civil society resourcing and pilots and projects that support alternative resourcing approaches that **contribute to the resilience and sustainability of a diverse civil society**. This theory of change primarily contributes to CIVICUS¹' second strategic goal to strengthen the power of people to organise, mobilise and take action, whilst also contributing to our first and third goals around defending civic freedoms and empowering a more innovative and effective civil society.

Activities and outputs:

In the lower end of the diagram, in the yellow boxes, we have clustered the kinds of activities and outputs supported by CIVICUS that contribute to this theory of change. These include:

1. Internal practices and **how we, as CIVICUS deliver grants and provide resources in the sector** - are we doing this in an accessible, inclusive, constituency-led and flexible way.
2. **Experimenting and piloting projects/models** that support our target stakeholders, including individual activists, new generation change makers and smaller, informal change-seeking groups in the global south, especially those from historically marginalized communities.
3. **Creating platforms and spaces** to create, collaborate, share and learn. These are either physical spaces like events workshops, creation sessions and retreats, or online groups and webinars.
4. **Skills development and capacity development** and trainings delivered through various mediums.
5. **Capturing and sharing stories, good practices**, pieces of research and trends analysis, and thought leadership that surface the challenges around resourcing, and provide supporting evidence and data to emphasise the conditions that enable the resourcing of a diverse and resilient civil society.

In parallel, we acknowledge that the **enabling environment for civil society** is a precondition for us to work on these activities. It is also an ambition for CIVICUS to influence this environment through these activities as well as our other areas of work. For example, CIVICUS supports national-level dialogues and analyses on conditions that provide a more enabling environment for domestic resource mobilisation. We advise international donors, philanthropic organisations and INGOs on strategies, principles and best practice. We also work broadly on enabling environment through the [EENAs](#) and document civic space and civic freedoms situation around the world through our [CS Monitor](#), civic space research, and [civic space initiatives](#).

Short-term outcomes:

In the short-term, we would like to see that some **target groups (as defined above in point 2 under activities and outputs) in civil society will have access to better resources and support** because of our support mechanisms, co-creation work, power brokering with stakeholders, funders and other supporters. We would also like to see **target civil society groups engaging directly** amongst themselves or directly with funders and other supporters around resourcing issues as a result of our brokering, spaces, visibility etc. Finally, we would like to see these and other cases **better documented and disseminated**, to encourage collective learning and sharing.

¹ https://www.civicus.org/documents/strategic-plan/civicus-strategic-plan-2017-2022_en.pdf

Medium term outcomes:

In the medium-term, we would hope to see our programmes and initiatives **influence behaviour in relation to resourcing practices in the sector**. We would like to see that relationships between target civil society groups and potential funders/supporters have changed and are **promoting more meaningful partnerships and devolved decision making** that supports dynamic accountability amongst these groups. In addition, we hope to see more examples of **inclusivity and solidarity** efforts in the sector. The learnings from the pilots and innovations that we are supporting will also be used to **influence and advocate for a wider sectoral change**, and we will document and disseminate knowledge for this purpose.

Long term outcomes:

In the longer-term, we would like to see more and better resources, including financial and other assets, that will support the **sustainability, the resilience and the impact of activism**. We would also like to see in the longer-term that resources are available for civil society groups to sustain their causes, especially for the target groups (individual activists, new generation change makers and smaller, informal change-seeking groups in the global south, especially those from historically marginalized communities.). Secondly, we would like to see **improved funding models that are adopted (and adaptable to contexts) and widely promoted** by civil society groups, donors and other supporters, contributing to a broader change across the resourcing landscape in the sector. We acknowledge that our sphere of influence is limited but, ultimately, these outcomes would contribute to the desired impact of **increased effectiveness of resourcing**, which would include the scaling of policies, practices or laws. And that a **diverse range of civil society groups have the agency and capacity to organize and resource in more autonomous sustainable and resilient ways**.

Programme principles:

We believe that inclusive, participatory, constituency-led programming will improve the likelihood of realising the change we want to see, supported by data and evidence that will enhance the influence and advocacy of our constituencies and keep the necessary power in check to realise their sustainability and resilience. These programming principles are inherent in the way that we have designed the various initiatives within this stream of work.

3. High-level assumptions for this Theory of Change:

Supporting evidence, articles and research footnoted below to support:

- Resourcing challenges should be viewed holistically and not only as “aid chain” problems or the result of bad donor behaviours².
- Individual activists, new generation change makers and smaller, grassroots, informal groups - especially from marginalised/vulnerable communities - don’t have access to enough/effective resources and support³.
- INGOs and established, professionalised CSOs based in capital cities crowd out the resourcing space for the above groups⁴.
- New ways of organising (and mobilising resources) are necessary to mitigate donor dependency, balance power dynamics and support sustainability/resilience⁵.

² Podcast with The Great Divide author and academic Jason Hickel, [talking about reforming the World Bank, WTO and the aid system generally](#)

³ [Report](#) from recently commissioned from desktop literature review around current resourcing landscape for smaller, informal CS groups in the Global South

⁴ [Five reasons donors give for not funding local NGOs directly](#) by Danny Sriskandarajah

⁵ [2015 State of Civil Society Report](#), [Report of Rustlers' civil society resourcing retreat](#), [From funding projects to funding struggles: Reimagining the role of donors](#) by Maina Kiai

- The enabling environment for domestic resource mobilisation (laws, regulations, FATF, culture of giving, delegitimization, cross-border funding restrictions) needs to improve in many countries.⁶
- A conducive resourcing environment that supports a diverse and vibrant civil society enhances civic space.⁷
- Having a diverse set of resources and support more grounded in the constituencies served/represented enhances legitimacy and resilience.⁸
- Shifts in organising/resourcing modalities are already happening on the ground and there is an appetite for understanding trends/innovations/stories as well as to support these models to thrive.⁹

End.

⁶ [Letting the Movement Decide; FRIDA Grant Making Report , How Community Philanthropy Shifts Power: What Donors Can Do to Make That Happen, 2018](#)

⁷ [Who Decides: How Participatory Grantmaking Benefits Donors, Communities and Movements by the Lafayette Practice , Power sharing in Philanthropy, "Grassroots Movements Are Rightful Partners in Finding Solutions to Climate Change" by Rajasvini Bhansali, Global Alliance for the Future of Food, June 2017.](#)

⁸ [CIVICUS paper on Southern philanthropy, social justice and human rights, 'Radical' perspective on the misguidedness of traditional funding streams](#) by Nimmi Gowrinathan

⁹ [New Actors, New Money, New Conversations](#), By Julia Miller, Angelika Arutyunova and Cindy Clark, AWID