

# Legitimacy and Financial Sustainability of CSO Network Organisations

Lessons learned and relevance for global and regional CSO networks active in the WASH sector

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# Summary

## Introduction

Networks of civil society organisations (CSOs) play crucial roles in the arena of international and national political decision-making, with members pursuing shared goals in social development or democratic governance. This report looks at the purposes of networks, their structures, membership and membership roles, their core activities, geographic spread and sources of funding. It does this with a view to draw lessons from practice on two issues: legitimacy and financial sustainability. The study was initiated by Watershed.

Watershed initiated the study into the organisational frameworks adopted by the different networks and network organisations so that it could help strengthen WASH/IWRM global and regional CSO networks and their supporting partners. It sought to:

1. gain a better understanding of the experiences of network organisations in building legitimacy and financial sustainability;
2. better understand how network organisations effectively represent the voices of their membership, and communicate activities and results from the global level back to the local levels; and,
3. find relevant non-WASH/ water sector CSO networks for potential collaboration.

## Methodology

In working to identify good practices underpinning network organisations' legitimacy and financial sustainability, and to ultimately draw ideas and lessons from these practices, a Watershed webinar with 13 global and regional CSO networks and their partners was held. Ultimately, five CSO networks were selected for the study. The selection criteria were that network organisations should:

1. include a lobby and advocacy component;
2. represent CSOs, not individuals;
3. clearly function as a network—rather than as an NGO with hubs in several countries; and,
4. preferably be global and regional networks for the purpose of future collaboration.

A note on criterion four is that four global and regional networks and one national network were selected.

Apart from interviews and email exchanges held with these five CSO networks, in-depth desktop research was done drawing on publicly available information contained in annual reports, policies and strategies. Two other discussion fora were later held. These were a follow-up webinar and an optional closed event at Stockholm World Water Week for dissemination and discussion of the results with a wider audience that included donors and governments.

## Watershed's position on the information obtained

The study assesses the different structures adopted by CSO networks vis-à-vis their financial sustainability and legitimacy, and discusses their advantages and disadvantages. It draws lessons learned from the assessment and makes no judgement as to whether one organisational structure is superior to the others.

The information gleaned and the lessons learned in the study will enhance understanding of the issues pertaining to financial sustainability and legitimacy of CSO network organisations and the interdependencies between the two.

## Legitimacy

As a representative body, CSO network organisations must be legitimate first and foremost in the eyes of the organisations they represent and thereafter in the eyes of other stakeholders, donors and the actors they seek to influence. The study looks at the different ways in which the five CSO network organisations have strived to create and retain their legitimacy. The point is made that while legitimacy is a precondition to organisational survival, a wide array of pressures make it very hard to create and retain.

Among the five CSO networks with their diverse contexts and solutions, the one factor they all have in common is the need for absolute clarity and consent on their respective visions, missions and goals. This is extremely important in contexts where there may be power imbalances such as between the organisation's structure and its members, among the members, between the CSO network and its donors, and the North based entities and the South based entities. A clear shared goal is a unifying factor.

The process of getting that absolute clarity is a challenge in itself and is organisation specific. In general, it seems that the larger the CSO network, the more complicated it becomes. Apart from the issue of divergent opinions which need to be brought together, some CSO networks – be it intentional or not – have a hierarchy among their membership with some voices being stronger than others. Large CSO networks run the risk of becoming distanced from their membership, failing to notice the minority voices and sometimes simply have such a diverse membership that they cannot represent everyone. Remaining representational and reflecting the views and the missions of their members in turn bring about greater legitimacy in the eyes of both members and relevant external entities.

Legitimacy also comes with membership involvement and this is a perennial issue for CSO networks. Small member organisations may not have the human or financial resources to play an active role in their CSO networks. Yet, if only the ones that do have the resources play an active role do so, there is a risk that they dominate the agenda, the knock-on effect being that the CSO network loses legitimacy in the eyes of part of its membership base. There will then be a high turnover of members and the CSO network will struggle to gain legitimacy.

Thus, the ability of a CSO network to be in touch with and represent its membership base seems to be key. Another factor is the ability to uphold the mission and methodology under pressure from external sources. In the case of donors, they mostly support particular activities or projects rather than core funding and demand rigorous accountability. While understandable from the donors' perspective – after all, they too are accountable to their revenue sources – it leads to a fine balancing act in the CSO networks. Are the CSO networks able to meet those reporting requirements? What if one of their principles conflicts with a donor's position. Should they accept the donor's position for the sake of the funds? What if one of those funded projects is run by a member whose leader holds an important position in the CSO network organisational structure? Will that be seen as favouritism?

Legitimacy is largely determined by the factors outlined above. CSO networks gain legitimacy in the eyes of their membership, stakeholders, funders and so on if all the members are well represented, heard and are involved. But this is easier said than done, as the report states (p. 17). *'The most striking finding of the whole research was that almost every respondent highlighted organisational identity as the biggest current challenge facing CSO networks. As CSO networks established secretariats, registered and secured project funding from donors, they*

*found themselves working increasingly independently from their members. It has reached the stage where the most important question that network leadership and governance needs to answer is: will we remain as an authentic CSO network or become an advocacy NGO with nominal membership.'*

## **Financial Sustainability**

All five CSO networks in this study long for financial sustainability. They recognise that it would make them viable in the long term, resilient to unforeseen events, and enable them to meet their obligations to their members and other stakeholders. It would also help them represent their membership well and uphold their mission in the face of opposition. Furthermore, it would help them do the lobby and advocacy work that is so important to their mission and legitimacy.

That said, all five CSO networks struggle with financial sustainability in different ways. As mentioned above, many CSO members are simply unable to part with resources, not even in-kind resources so funds have to be sought elsewhere. That elsewhere could be other members and private and public funders. Each of these sources has its upsides and downsides. One downside is the amount of human and financial investment that the CSO networks need to invest to obtain funding. Others are the strings attached to the funds and the reporting and accountability requirements of the donors. This raises the question of what is leading in the CSO networks' mission: the areas that donors fund or the membership's priorities? When asked this question, all five CSO networks stated that they first define their strategies and action plans and only then seek funding. In other words, their own mission is leading and not the potential sources of funds.

One of the points that emerged from the study, and as mentioned above, is the wish of the CSO networks for their core operational costs to be covered by external funding instead of just certain parts of their work separately. Apart from the time and effort that this would save in terms of organisation and monitoring, it would also strengthen their base and make them more viable in the long term. They now find themselves juggling between accessing funding from different donors, and dealing with the question of accessing funds from either donors or members.

Whether or not to charge membership fees is a pertinent question for the CSO networks. Charging fees – preferably on a sliding scale according to the ability to pay of its members – can help the CSO networks leverage ownership among and its members and, hence, participation. It

can also help attract external donors who see the CSO networks as a less risky proposition. However, out of the five CSO networks in the study, only two currently charge membership fees with a third considering it. Most of them receive in kind contributions.

When dependent on external funding, maintaining a degree of financial stability and independence can only be done when the sources of funds are many and diverse. An overreliance on one or two donors puts CSO networks in a very vulnerable position. Not only are they subject to the requirements of donors (as mentioned above), but they are subject to societal trends, funds not being diverted to other pressing needs and the intention of the donors to continue funding in the long term.

One issue that emerged from the desktop research is the strong position held by Northern donors. There appears to be a 'hierarchy in the aid chain' with Northern donors at the top followed by international non-governmental organisations, national CSOs and finally local organisations. The need for Northern donors, and in particular governments, to be accountable to their constituents, in turn puts pressure on the CSO networks given these donors' managerial approach that requires reporting and measurable results. This can put CSO networks in the vulnerable position of being stuck in the middle with donors' demands on one side and members' needs on the other. Avoiding conflicts of interest, being seen as favouring certain members, and adhering to the mission all become areas of tension.

The CSO networks are aware of potential tensions among their members and are trying hard to avoid them. One has explicitly stated in its charter that it does not compete with its members for funding or give some of its members an advantage over other members. This CSO network (CIVICUS) can only do this because it is in a relatively strong financial position. Its financial position also enables it to invest in building strong relationships with its current, past and potential donors and with strategic partners. This not only builds legitimacy, but is an indirect means of lobby and advocacy and may enable it to leverage funds in the long term and hence make it more viable in the long term.

Whatever route CSO networks take to obtain financial sustainability, it must be done with the input, knowledge and consent of its members. As a representative body, the members must have a voice in defining and implementing the strategies, checks need to be built into budgets, and the financial side of the CSO networks must be monitored by members.

### **Summarised conclusions**

In terms of legitimacy, what emerges from the study is that a CSO network will be viewed as legitimate if it does what it set out to do and what it says it does. This is highly simplistic of course, but it encompasses the very factors that make up the bedrock of a CSO network such as: authentic representation of all in different platforms; a strong shared identity; compliance with its mission; clarity of strategy; active participation of the members; equality among members; input mechanisms and checks and balances in place and so on.

The study shows that the issue of financial sustainability is more complicated if we look at the sources and types of funding and whether in-kind contributions are counted or not. These are described in detail in the report so the main conclusion to be drawn here are that members' contributions, in money or in kind, are highly valuable because the members are the CSO networks' most important asset, constituents and stakeholders. In terms of external monetary funds, CSO networks need to exercise caution to not let the prospect of funds unintentionally drive a wedge between them and their constituents.

# 1. Introduction

Networks of civil society organisations (CSOs) play crucial roles in the arena of international and national political decision-making, with members pursuing shared goals in social development or democratic governance. Legitimacy is central to CSO network organisations: their credibility and authority is for a large part grounded in their ability to speak on behalf of so many organisations and underlying constituencies. They are bound to various accountability relationships with members, donors and other stakeholders. Networks, moreover, find themselves in a position in which they need to defend their legitimacy as governments and other actors that they seek to influence often contest this legitimacy.

Financial sustainability is central to CSO network organisations' resilience and effectiveness, and it could potentially affect their legitimacy. It affects both the networks' viability and the ability to autonomously implement members' priorities, including lobby and advocacy (L&A) work.

This study, initiated by Watershed, addresses both the legitimacy and financial sustainability of CSO network organisations.

Internationally, Watershed engages with networks of global and regional CSOs including End Water Poverty (EWP), Coalition Eau (CE), Freshwater Action Network (FANSA) and African Civil Society Network on Water and Sanitation (ANEWS) to strengthen their influencing activities at international fora, and to support the lobbying and advocacy capacity development of their nationally based CSO members. This study was initiated to strengthen water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH)/integrated water resources management (IWRM) global and regional CSO networks and their supporting partners to:

1. gain enhanced insights in the experiences of other networks in ensuring improved legitimacy and financial sustainability;
2. be better equipped to effectively represent the voices of their membership, and to communicate activities and results from the global level back to the local levels; and,
3. become aware of relevant non-WASH/water sector CSO networks for potential collaboration.

## Central research questions in this study

1. How do the selected CSO networks guarantee their legitimacy? What are good practices and lessons learned?
2. What is the most successful way for the selected CSO networks to ensure long-term financial sustainability for independent and autonomous L&A work? What are good practices and lessons learned?

The **Conceptual Framework** in Chapter 3 outlines what is meant by 'CSO network organisations', 'legitimacy', and 'financial sustainability'.



## 2. Methodology of the study

This chapter describes the methodology used in the study. It explains the different activities undertaken, how the network organisations were selected—including a brief explanation of the selection criteria—and gives a brief description of the selected organisations. Lastly, it describes the limitations to this study.

### Identification of the research questions and CSO networks

On 8 April 2020 a webinar was held with Watershed’s partners consisting of global and regional CSO networks and their supporting partners. The webinar discussed the concept note and had a first brainstorm on identifying the CSO networks to include in the study. It was also used to discuss and formulate the most relevant research questions for the participating partners. See Annex 1 for an overview of the detailed research questions.

Watershed partners were also asked to suggest CSO networks for inclusion in this study. The partners proposed an initial list of 13 organisations and corresponding information was collected and shared among all partners.

From this list, five network organisations were selected based on the following criteria.

1. Network organisations should include a focus on lobby and advocacy work.
2. Network organisations should represent CSOs, not individuals.<sup>1</sup>
3. Network organisations should clearly function as a network—rather than as an NGO with hubs in several countries.
4. For the purpose of future collaboration, global and regional networks were prioritised and one national network was selected.

Table 1: The five selected CSO networks for this study

Network name	Focus areas	Members
Forus International <a href="http://forus-international.org/">http://forus-international.org/</a>	Forus advocates for better resourcing of civil society and an enabling environment for civil society organisations to influence public policy at the national, regional and international level.	<b>Global</b> network of 69 national NGO Platforms (NPFs) and 7 Regional Coalitions (RC) from 5 continents.
CAN (Climate Action Network) <a href="http://climatenetwork.org/">http://climatenetwork.org/</a>	Promotes government and individual action to limit human-induced climate change to ecologically sustainable levels.	<b>Global</b> network with over 1,300 NGOs in more than 120 countries.
CIVICUS <a href="https://www.civicus.org/">https://www.civicus.org/</a>	CIVICUS is a global alliance of civil society organisations and activists dedicated to strengthening citizen action and civil society around the world.	<b>Global</b> network with more than 9,000 members in 175 countries.
Pan African Climate Justice Alliance (PACJA) <a href="https://www.pacja.org/">https://www.pacja.org/</a>	A network that advances a people-centred, rights-based, just and inclusive approach to address climate and environmental challenges facing humanity and the planet.	<b>Regional</b> consortium of more than 1,000 organisations from 48 African countries
Butterfly Effect Coalition <a href="http://www.butterflyeffectcoalition.com/en">http://www.butterflyeffectcoalition.com/en</a>	A network that advocates for effective local solutions that have a sustainable impact on improving access to water and sanitation and water resource management.	<b>Global</b> network of over 90 CSOs, NGOs, networks and youth and women’s organisations.

## Data and methods used

The purpose of this study is to identify good practices underpinning the network organisations' legitimacy and their efforts at financial sustainability, and to draw inspiration and lessons from these practices. The research in this study is based on the five selected CSO networks listed above and general desktop research. Information on the selected networks used in this study is based on publicly available information such as annual reports, policies and strategies. To gain a sound understanding of the views and experiences with regard to the research questions, interviews were conducted with relevant staff of the network organisations. Note that as no interview was held with Forus International, the information gleaned is solely based on desktop research and email correspondence.

Table 2: Methodology of the study

1. First webinar virtual meeting with the International Work Package (WP), global and regional CSO networks and their supporting partners to discuss the concept note, research questions and for a first brainstorm on identifying relevant CSO networks.
2. Web-based research mapping of 13 CSO networks. The five CSO networks with the most potential for learning lessons and/or collaboration with the WASH/water CSO networks were selected.
3. Production of an information sheet for each CSO network selected.
4. General desktop research and research for further info on the selected CSO networks, complemented by an interview with one representative of the management of each CSO network and with a representative of one member organisation of each network.
5. Draft report writing.
6. Second webinar learning event with CSO networks (Int. WP Watershed partners).
7. Final report writing.
8. Optional organisation of closed event at Stockholm World Water Week for dissemination and discussion of the results with a wider audience (including donors and governments).

## Limitations to the study

This study addresses important issues faced by CSO networks and has revealed both common challenges faced by the various networks as well as valuable techniques and observations to share among network organisations.

There are however constraints to the completeness of the study's findings as only one relevant person at each of the four CSO network organisations was interviewed. While the wide range of CSO network organisations enriched the study, it also limited generalising the findings. The networks varied from more occasional (so active only during particular events, for instance the World Water Forum) and less institutionalised networks (such as the Butterfly Effect Coalition) to very large global networks of more than 9,000 members with annual budgets of millions of dollars (CIVICUS). Surprisingly, although the type of network varied, the problems faced were often of a similar nature.

Lastly, despite the complexity of the research questions addressed in the study, only a relatively short period of time was available to spend on desktop research. Nevertheless, the study was able to produce a set of qualitative findings and an informative overview of the concepts and issues related to the 'legitimacy' and 'financial sustainability' of CSO networks. The scope and time limitations thus do not limit the applicability of the study, but rather solicit further research and the assessment of even more lessons learned on the pivotal task of safeguarding the networks' legitimacy and financial viability.

# 3. Conceptual Framework

## A. The concept of Civil Society Organisation (CSO networks)

Definitions for CSO networks include 'voluntary multi-organisational arrangements for collaboration on collective goals'<sup>2</sup>, and, 'civil society groups, organisations and, sometimes, individuals that come together voluntarily to pursue shared purposes of social development or democratic governance. These purposes may include exchanging resources, addressing common social goals or expressing their identities as a community or social group.'<sup>3</sup> CSO networks are known by many different names including coalition, alliance, association, movement, federation etc.<sup>4</sup>

Scholars have pointed out that it may neither be possible nor necessary to define exactly what a network is. Instead, it is important to understand the contextual environment in which a network operates and the perspective of its constituency.<sup>5</sup>

**Regardless of the network terminology, some general characteristics of networks can vary.**

### 1. Network purposes.

The purposes for the formation and activities of a CSO network include the following.

- Sharing of information/knowledge/experiences to increase capacity; develop strategies for action; and debate needed changes.
- Creating visibility: networks ensure visibility of issues as they have greater capacity to put issues in the spotlight.<sup>6</sup> Furthermore, they can address socio-culturally sensitive issues such as sexual minorities' rights or gender equality more easily and mobilise support for these issues.<sup>7</sup>
- Fundraising as separate entities and/or jointly with members. Some networks fulfil a 'brokering' role in that they mediate available funding at the donor level to national CSOs.
- Protection for those who, when acting individually, are vulnerable to retribution for speaking out.<sup>8</sup>
- Planning and implementing programmes/projects separately and/or jointly.
- Coordinating campaigns and other kinds of joint

action,<sup>9</sup> and advocating for change. The formation and consolidation of thematic CSO networks enable stronger claims through collaboration and consensus. Furthermore, the numbers and social identities of those seeking change in networks create legitimacy with policy makers and other leaders.<sup>10</sup>

- Some networks play a mediation role, creating a permanent link of communication between civil society organisations and governments and international politics.<sup>11</sup>

### 2. Structure and decision-making

Networks can be created by external or internal entities and for practical or value-based reasons. They can be formed either from the top down or from the bottom up.<sup>12</sup> There are different models of networks including a 'lead organisation' model (where a central organisation takes the lead) and a 'representative model' (where, for example, a governing board is elected from a membership group and is supported by a secretariat or staff).<sup>13</sup>

Members of CSO networks remain autonomous and keep their identity and governance structures. The networks they form can be structured in various ways, including informal social relationships or formal bodies that are legally registered and institutionalised.<sup>14</sup> Whether formal or informal in the legal sense, networks can have an agreed decision-making structure that can range from equal decision-making between the members to a centralised decision-making system.

### 3. Type of membership

Some networks consist solely of CSOs, others include individuals, government officials or agencies, academics, or educational or research centres. Further, CSO networks can be distinguished by the degree of cooperation among their members and their members' commitment to the network.<sup>15</sup>

### 4. Topic of interest/theme

CSO networks may focus on one single theme (such as water and sanitation, environmental conservation, climate change, human rights etc.) or a variety of topics.

## 5. Type of activities/instruments

CSO networks commit to various types of work to further their causes, such as:

- awareness-raising, training and research activities;
- service delivery;
- campaigning, lobbying & advocating;
- serving as a platform for communication and learning among members.

## 6. Geographic spread

CSO networks may have a district, national, regional or global membership.

## 7. Sources of funding

Some CSO networks are 'self-financed' through sources like individual small donors or members, network fees, secondments, hosting agreements, contributions 'in-kind', trust funds, legacies, trading or asset management.<sup>16</sup> There are also CSO networks that operate entirely on the basis of grants from public authorities or large donors.<sup>17</sup>

### The use of the term 'network' and 'network organisations'

The term 'network' is often used as a term for describing the network's hub or secretariat. Scholars argue that 'this may be an indication of a not necessarily jointly agreed or justified shift in power and authority away from the collective nodes and towards an administrative centre that then proceeds to position itself, and act, as "the network"'.<sup>18</sup>

This study thus uses the term 'network' to refer to the entire network consisting of all its members and governance bodies, and the term 'network organisation' to refer to the governing bodies of the network and its secretariat.

## B. The concept of 'legitimacy' for CSO networks

Definitions of legitimacy include the 'lawfulness by virtue of being authorised or in accordance with law' and 'undisputed credibility'.<sup>19</sup> Legitimacy is defined as 'able to be defended with logic or justification; valid'.<sup>20</sup> Scholars have explained legitimacy as 'a generalised perception or assumption that the actions of an entity are desirable, proper, or appropriate within some socially constructed system of norms, values, beliefs and definitions'.<sup>21</sup>

The concept of legitimacy refers to perceptions by key stakeholders that the existence, activities and impacts of CSO networks are justifiable and appropriate.<sup>22</sup> Legitimacy is therefore grounded in the perceptions of stakeholders.

The nature of CSO networks contributes to questions about legitimacy in several ways. Their reputation as legitimate and accountable representatives of social values and human rights is vital to their existence, their ability to receive funding, recruit staff and maintain partnerships.<sup>23</sup> This legitimacy is not self-evident as CSO network organisations, like any other institution or association, may act against their own statutes or may be corrupt, for instance. At the same time, actors that are under scrutiny of CSO networks, such as corporations, businesses or governments, may question the legitimacy of those CSO networks in order to protect their own legitimacy.<sup>24</sup> GlobeScan Foundation results indicate that mistrust in CSOs includes associating them with self-interest, corruption, unethical behaviour, no real impact, misuse of financial aid, and lack of transparency.<sup>25</sup>

As one interviewee in a recent study on CSO accountability explained:

*"CSOs are faced with challenges of civic space, where governments keep saying 'you're not legitimate, you don't speak on behalf of anyone' ... so testing out that relationship [between accountability and resilience to civic space threats] is really important".<sup>26</sup>*

CSO network organisations must be legitimate not only towards their members, but to all stakeholders with whom it has established relationships, including donors and governments. Scholars have argued that CSOs often find themselves in a catch-22 situation: a paradox where they need support (financial and otherwise) on the one hand, and legitimacy towards their constituencies on the other.<sup>27</sup> The same could be argued for CSO network organisations' legitimacy responsibilities towards their donors and membership. Since 'legitimacy is in the eye of the beholder',<sup>28</sup> legitimacy must be created among the stakeholders, constituting a difficult balancing act.

### Legitimacy and accountability

The concept of accountability has been defined in many ways, and across different sectors.<sup>29</sup> Accountability has been described as involving the 'justification of an actor's performance vis-à-vis others, the assessment or judgment of that performance against certain standards, and the imposition of consequences'<sup>30</sup> when the actors fail to meet applicable standards.

Legitimacy and accountability are interdependent: improving accountability towards key stakeholders can clarify why certain decisions were taken, thus strengthening the CSO networks' credibility. In other words, defining the accountability of CSO networks and their members is a powerful tool in preserving and enhancing their legitimacy.

For the purposes of this study, the following elements are used to define, or form, this legitimacy.

### **1. The networks' *raison d'être*, mission and added value.**

The core of a network's 'right to exist' can in part be found in its history and origin: why was the network created. The mission and strategies of civil society networks are at the heart of defining their legitimacy and accountability.<sup>31</sup> It is therefore important for a network organisation to track the factors and circumstances that influence the development of various roles adopted by the network organisation, and whether and how to keep control over external factors that influence these roles. Furthermore, when a network organisation performs efficiently, its *added value* in operating as a network organisation must be retained: does it continue to be an asset to its members?

### **2. Membership and participation**

Most network organisations evolve from CSOs that have common ground and clear purposes. The development of a network and decisions taken within it are built on recognition among members that these decisions are in their interest. It is important for networks to consider their ability to represent the interests of their members in their ever-growing membership, and whether they are accordingly able to remain legitimate in the eyes of the actors they aim to influence. In order to define the legitimacy of a network organisation, it may therefore be necessary to track whether the organisation still sufficiently represents the interests and priorities of its membership, and to consider whether and to what extent members are actively involved.

Plans, decision-making and activities, including message creation and delivery, must reflect the views of the constituency. Meaningful participation is therefore crucial. The larger the network, the more challenging this becomes. It is important to consider how to best ensure that members remain in charge of their network. Participation must be guaranteed through formal structures (including voting procedures and annual meetings, for instance) but also through meaningful communication streams, both horizontal and vertical, and from local to international and vice versa.

### **3. The networks' governance and management structure.**

The networks' legitimacy relies heavily on joint communication and governance.<sup>32</sup> The networks' governance and management must therefore enable planning, decision making and activities to be organised according to the priorities and views of its members.

The governance and management structure of networks varies and may include a rotating board, a secretariat, and various committees. It is crucial that mechanisms are in place to ensure that the chosen governance structure does not hinder the 'representation' function of the network organisation.

### **4. Network organisations' accountability mechanisms and practice.**

Accountability is central to preserving network organisations' legitimacy as representatives of their membership and the otherwise unheard voices of their constituencies. Accountability applies not only towards its members and between its members, but to all parties that it has established relationships with, including donors and governments. To guard its legitimacy as a network, the network organisation must ensure that it accounts for its decision and actions. At the same time, it must ensure that it can be held to account for things it has done or has failed to do. Important dimensions of accountability are transparency, participation, and evaluation of decisions, action and impact, and the existence of complaint mechanisms. Individual members also bear these responsibilities so that they do not jeopardise the legitimacy of their network.

This study seeks to find out more about the experiences of CSO networks' efforts to ensure their legitimacy, and in doing so, will explore the elements stated above. The sub-research questions can be found in Annex 1.

## **C. The concept of Financial Sustainability of CSO network organisations**

Financial sustainability is crucial for networks if they are to be resilient and effective, and could potentially affect their legitimacy. Some elements are particularly important in ensuring the financial sustainability of CSO network organisations.

1. Without financial sustainability in terms of 'funding security', networks may find it difficult to plan for the long term and will be less resilient when dealing with unforeseen setbacks.
2. When CSO network organisations struggle financially, they will be more inclined to modify their goals and strategies in order to obtain funding for designated activities. Their modifications may not be in line with the priorities of members and their constituencies.
3. An overreliance on a single donor or a couple of similar donors makes CSO network organisations vulnerable when donors withdraw. They risk having less ownership of the network's activities and direction as their reliance

on the donors' funding makes them more dependent on the donors' requirements.

*'[...] recipients, especially those that have few other funding sources, may not always feel that they are in a position to 'critique' their donor resulting in 'self-censorship'. As a consequence, they may have grievances about the decision-making in the relationship but may decide to keep these to themselves.'*<sup>33</sup>

4. Financial insecurity may lead to the perception of stakeholders, including their own staff, that the network is not viable – thereby compromising the network's legitimacy.
5. The *type of donor* is also an important factor. Funding relationships come with accountability relationships. When contributions come from networks' own members, the organisation needs to financially account to them. Similarly, when contributions come from those that the network aims to influence (governments for instance), an accountability relationship is also established. The latter may pose questions regarding the legitimacy of the network's advocacy work.
6. The *type of funding* is relevant for implementing planned activities, including lobby and advocacy work. Donors are often inclined to prioritise funding for activities that generate more tangible results instead of activities that generate more qualitative than quantitative results such as L&A work which often only becomes visible long after the funding cycle has ended.<sup>34</sup> But it is that core funding (as opposed to funding earmarked for certain activities) that enables greater flexibility in planning and implementing advocacy activities in line with members' priorities and contributes to the viability of the governance and management of the network organisation.

This study seeks to find best practices of CSO network organisations in their efforts to reach financial sustainability (see research question 2 above). It therefore looks into the financial status of the network organisations in this study and their methods to access funding for their advocacy and other activities. The sub-questions formulated for this study can be found in [Annex 1](#).

## 4. The legitimacy of network organisations

CSO networks actively doing L&A work need to create legitimacy with all their stakeholders, including their membership and constituents, their donors and the actors they seek to influence. Being accountable towards their constituents is central to preserving their legitimacy as a voice for otherwise unheard populations, while legitimacy with target actors is crucial to effectively influence them.<sup>35</sup> This study has collected good practices and lessons learned on the different elements of 'legitimacy' for CSO network organisations, respectively on their: 1) *raison d'être*, mission and added value; 2) membership and participation; 3) the networks' governance and decision-making; and 4) the networks' accountability mechanisms and practice.

### A. The networks' *raison d'être*, mission and added value

#### The networks' purpose and organisational identity

With what purpose did members form a network, and to what extent is this important for its legitimacy? Scholars have argued that the fact that some network organisations have emerged out of an effort by Northern NGOs to identify local 'partners' to implement their projects is problematic in terms of legitimacy—if financial resources are the primary motivation for creating or joining a network, members inevitably drop out when funding declines or ends.<sup>36</sup> It is argued that networks that are clear about their visions and goals, that mobilise available resources from members and engage donors to provide needed funding through collaborative relationships, are more likely to succeed and remain legitimate in the eyes of their constituencies.<sup>37</sup>

*"At first networks become very attractive because they have something to offer to your CSO. But these networks shrink eventually because they lose the things that they were originally founded for. When you are in the North you think that these networks are networks. But in reality they are dominated by only a few persons. They more and more lose the character of a network and become like a big NGO run by a few people. The PACJA team deliberately decided that this should never happen to PACJA. And so we have been striking a balance between the character of a network and ensuring that we have the best institutional governance and accountability mechanisms." Mithika Mwenda, co-founder PACJA*

As already outlined in the conceptual framework, there are multiple grounds for the formation and activities of CSO networks. The network organisations in our study stated that they created their networks to: 1) establish a platform to exchange knowledge and experiences in order to create capacity among themselves; and 2) take up a coordinating role for the advocacy work of civil society organisations. Another common purpose which grounds many networks is to amplify voices so as to achieve greater influence and impact. This study found that the strength of speaking with one voice evolves when membership grows. That said, with the growing diversity of their membership, larger networks have come to realise that there is a greater need to support individual voices than trying to create a single voice. More on this can be found in the following chapters.

*'CIVICUS increasingly focuses on peer learning and coalition building; we mainly support advocacy initiatives from our members, to convey what they think is important. We also leverage what we see around our partnership – what plays a role in all these individual countries, to stimulate peer learning. Currently we are collecting practices from all over the world on how governments are supporting civil society in the Covid19 crisis. We map this in one single framework that informs civil society and all actors and can influence their strategies and learn from each other.'*<sup>38</sup>

A networks' shared organisational identity is considered crucial for its legitimacy. It builds a shared sense of what the network stands for, and of how members want to be represented by the network organisation. Over time, networks may lose this sense of shared organisational identity. As one scholar noted, 'The most striking finding of the whole research was that almost every respondent highlighted organisational identity as the biggest current challenge facing CSO networks. As CSO networks established secretariats, registered and secured project funding from donors, they found themselves working increasingly independently from their members. It has reached the stage where the most important question that network leadership and governance needs to answer is: will we remain as an authentic CSO network or become an advocacy NGO with nominal membership?'<sup>39</sup>

At CAN, a shared identity was formed on the basis of its founding mission. This mission reportedly still forms the glue among members and their active participation in the network.<sup>40</sup>

*"We bring together organisations with different opinions, desires, expectations, cultures and orientations. Rules and regulations are necessary to manage these. But the most important thing is the values that bring us together. There is this vision and mission that bonds us."*<sup>41</sup> PACJA

### **Considering the different roles of the network organisation and continuously ensuring the added value of the network**

The multi-stakeholder reality of CSO network organisations often require different roles and approaches, and demands different priorities among stakeholder accountabilities. Some of the different roles develop naturally over time, as the world and its issues change, while some roles are influenced by donor requirements or partnerships.

It is important for a network organisation to track the factors and circumstances that influence the development of the various roles adopted by the network organisation, and to track whether and how it can keep control over external factors that influence these roles. This may be challenging. An evaluation of the Global Environment Facility (GEF) reported that the *'GEF-CSO Network today is operating in an expanding GEF partnership without a shared contemporary vision of the role the Network can play [...].'*<sup>42</sup> CIVICUS shared that one point for improvement is that it failed to sufficiently measure the impact of its work, especially in terms of why it believes that its approach is impactful.<sup>43</sup>

Over the years, CAN also developed its roles and strategies. It started out as a network organisation that solely worked on influencing international policy developments at the UNFCCC (United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and its UN Secretariat). As its regional nodes developed, it became more active at the national and regional levels. CAN's target audience also developed over the years. From a focus on governments, it now responds to the call from within its membership to increasingly focus on movements on the ground in the individual countries. As noted by the interviewee, in recent years CAN has realised that *"we are not the movement—we are part of one"*.<sup>44</sup> It then started to focus more on partnerships with local and regional climate movements and influence governments through bottom up civil society voices.

As CAN notes, shifts in organisational roles and a change in focus happen gradually and can sometimes be considered

as a certain 'trend' that slowly influences the course of the organisation. For CAN, one good practice in this process is the discussion of a 'theory of change' in the organisation. This reportedly sparked a lot of conversations among members and revealed the need to focus on grassroots movements and people. CAN also emphasises the need for governing bodies to actively keep track of discussions among members, topics discussed in mailing lists, what is being published by individual members, and the type of comments they feed back. These trends are picked up by the governing bodies at CAN and are translated into new strategies and a new general direction. It is important that this 'translation' is then fed back to members so they can give feedback and their consent.<sup>45</sup>

Ensuring the legitimacy of the network also necessitates ensuring its added value. Networks are often formed to amplify individual voices and achieve greater influence and impact through unification. However, once the network becomes an effective apparatus with institutionalised governance structures, it may risk becoming yet another, but more powerful, individual voice. A respondent in a national CSO network study in Malawi said that *"The strength of the network has become based on the strength of the secretariat, not the members. This is not what we expected or hoped for. They are contravening their purpose and compromising their vision."*<sup>46</sup> CAN seeks to avoid this by officially stating that its Charter *'does not create a new organization; rather, it establishes rules and guidelines which members will adhere to in formalizing their national, regional and global co-operation'*.<sup>47</sup> By increasingly taking on the same roles as its members and by-passing them, CSO networks even risk becoming their greatest competitors, as donors may decide to shift resources from network members, to the network organisation. This is further outlined in [Chapter 5 on Financial sustainability of network organisations](#).

Other challenges include remaining innovative as a network organisation. Respondents in recent research on CSO network organisations suggested that there is a tendency for network organisations to 'routinise' their activities. This could be repeated joint media statements or joint campaign initiatives while fewer new initiatives are put into practice.<sup>48</sup> PACJA's Director emphasises the importance of the network remaining innovative and creative, and always coming up with new approaches and opportunities. Opportunities—such as the African Climate Legislation Initiative<sup>49</sup> that aim to enhance partnership between Parliamentarians and Civil Society in climate/ environmental policy-making processes in Africa—ensure that members continue to consider their membership valuable.<sup>50</sup>



*'If Forus wishes to become a unique actor being able to develop capacities and stimulate learning for and from the CSOs across the world, Forus itself must transform and become more innovative, proactive and when necessary provocative.'*<sup>51</sup>

CIVICUS states that it is aware of the need to 'define our ever-evolving role as a secretariat'.<sup>52</sup> It considers it key to find out how and where its unique added value should be achieved, especially since it is a growing alliance.<sup>53</sup> It also recognises that 'it is equally important that we identify where the unique combination of skills and capacities the alliance brings can be applied to make a difference, given evolving conditions, and then create structures through which we can do so strategically.'<sup>54</sup>

## **B. Participation and membership**

### **Participation as a key principle to the legitimacy of a network**

Embedded in the term 'network' is the participation of members. Mechanisms to guarantee meaningful participation in planning and decision-making of network organisations are often grounded in governance structures. Assemblies and steering committees consist of elected members and are charged with defining the strategic orientations of the network, strategic decision-making and multi-annual planning of activities. More managerial and executive bodies like secretariats, committees and working groups make decisions based on the general line as provided by the assemblies or steering committees. More information on decision-making procedures linked to participation can be found in the sub-chapter 3 [The networks' governance and decision-making structures](#) below.

Generally, the larger the membership, the more difficult it is to ensure the participation of individual members. Annual meetings may be scheduled to discuss a common agenda, but with larger networks, not every member organisation can be present. It is up to the regional representation to gather the voices of members in the region and meaningfully represent them at these meetings. One example is Forus International whose membership consists of national NGO platforms and regional coalitions. Forus states that its goal is to promote a fair and sustainable world 'where the most vulnerable populations have a voice'.<sup>55</sup> This voice from constituencies on the ground has gone a long way up from the local level to national platforms, and eventually in messages brought forward by Forus International. Most of the network organisations interviewed said that they assume that constituencies are represented through participatory practices of their regional

platforms or network members – but they had no way of monitoring this. PACJA recently changed its governance structure and established National Platforms. As part of this process it developed booklets to guide the newly established National Platforms in ensuring the meaningful participation of member organisations in their countries.<sup>56</sup>

*'National NGO platforms are sometimes seen too much as institutional actors, far from the field and from grassroots actors, often replicating imported models and lacking transformational impact.'*<sup>57</sup>

CIVICUS is currently involved in a new initiative called Resilient Roots that tracks whether organisations that are more accountable and responsive to their roots—namely, their primary constituents—are better equipped to defend their legitimacy. CIVICUS' own secretariat also took part in the pilot study. Resilient Roots helped pilot organisations connect better with and listen to primary constituents. One pilot organisation states that it is now more 'mindful that all the decisions we take need to be rooted in what our constituents are actually saying, not just what we are assuming they want.'<sup>58</sup>

For meaningful participation, it is crucial that members are not only part of decision-making on strategies already developed, but also that they can actively participate in defining the course of the network from the outset. CAN has a very large membership but has nonetheless adopted a range of rules in its Charter to actively involve members in the planning phase.<sup>59</sup> CIVICUS recently put more focus on a 'co-creation process' in which every new programme introduced under its most recent strategy is the result of an extensive co-designed process in which the stakeholder is either involved in rolling it out or directly affected by it.<sup>60</sup>

### **Creating advocacy messages**

Meaningful participation in the drafting of advocacy messages can be complicated in large networks. Often, the network organisation tends to use a few strong statements backed by a large number of members to increase the impact of the messages. The larger the network's regional representation and diversity of sectors, the more difficult it becomes to prioritise just one set of issues.

The CIVICUS network's membership has grown to more than 9,000 members<sup>61</sup> in 175 countries. With its membership expanding, it had to severely reduce the advocacy statements made by the secretariat. Instead, it decided to focus on supporting national level agendas, making sure that 'civil society has a voice rather than to influence that voice'.<sup>62</sup> CIVICUS however still releases

statements based on the alliance's principles and values, including the human rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights that every new member has to sign in support. For instance, when the Government of Uganda adopts restrictive measures against the LGBTI community, CIVICUS would release statements in solidarity with that community, even though some of its members based in Uganda may not agree with it.<sup>63</sup>

The Butterfly Effect Coalition supports its members in their own initiatives and advocacy actions. The Coalition points out that although it is easier to have 'one common voice' or 'one brand' in international fora and discussions, it risks diluting the voices and opinions of civil society in developing countries. The Coalition has instead chosen to push these organisations to bring forward their own initiatives and it seeks to create opportunities for them to take the floor themselves. This direction was born out of one of the lessons learned by the Butterfly Effect Coalition. In the past, one or two individuals acted as 'the face' of the Coalition network, going to all events to represent the network's membership. As a result, motivation declined and valuable voices got lost as members were not able to position themselves directly. *"The Coalition risked becoming an organisation of itself instead of an organisation of its members."*<sup>64</sup> The Butterfly Effect Coalition now creates unified messages that are endorsed by members and it gives the members themselves the opportunity to convey these and their own messages.

*"For the WWF in Dakar, we managed to get the Butterfly Effect Coalition into different action groups and thematic groups. This is the type of work the Secretariat does: it creates these opportunities. What is up next is that we position not ourselves—so not Sarah from the Secretariat representing the Butterfly Effect Coalition—but our members to be in those working groups."*<sup>65</sup>

### **Barriers to meaningful participation**

Vertical hierarchies are sometimes created whereby one-way communication streams become obstacles for the active participation of member organisations. Studies have shown that CSO network organisations tend to develop vertical instead of horizontal relationships and communication, leading to the 'marginalisation of collective interests, competition over resources, and loss of legitimacy.'<sup>66</sup> An interviewee in one study shared that the *"director ends up losing vision about the development of civil society, manages the forum as an NGO, and conflicts of interest emerge as they are beginning to implement projects in competition with member organisations"*.<sup>67</sup>

Recent studies show that network organisation members are often encouraged to freely express their opinions, but that their feedback is not always followed up. Members thus perceived that their opinion was not always taken into consideration when deciding on different pending issues.<sup>68</sup> CIVICUS is currently working to improve the channelling of suggested actions by members through various decision-making processes so that these discussions do not end up as 'talking shops'.<sup>69</sup>

Network organisations can seek innovative mechanisms to establish ways for all member organisations to connect to the network and their fellow members, and to receive feedback. One of CIVICUS' ways to create projects or statements is to use Google Docs in which many people may leave their comments and directions.<sup>70</sup> Webinars and group calls that allow people to dial in from landlines allow everyone to participate, even when Internet connections are interrupted. Further, websites can offer a space for members to connect and share experiences. Forus recently developed a dedicated YouTube channel and a LinkedIn profile to interact with members, partners and other stakeholders.<sup>71</sup> Care must be taken to ensure that the media used fits the target audience. Also for consideration is that practical barriers may stand in the way of members being heard. These barriers may be language barriers, weak communication, slow Internet connections, or capacity issues such as the lack of financial resources or knowledge. This leads to members becoming detached from network activities which puts the network's credibility at risk. In 2018, CIVICUS struggled with communication with their constituencies.

*"The CIVICUS website [www.civicus.org](http://www.civicus.org) is slow, unresponsive, not user friendly or interactive, and only available in English. There is limited engagement with traditional media (newspapers, radio, TV), and CIVICUS has no structured 'media engagement strategy', which could make them proactive allies in the demand for civic space. Consequently, there are limited linkages and relationships at national levels to help reach audiences outside of the "tech bubble". There are few likes and re-tweets currently in spite of a wide network, and there are national CSOs with more Facebook page likes than CIVICUS, even though CIVICUS is a membership based global network. It is important to work with and through members to get voices and messages out through social media: members need appropriate messages to enhance outreach and social media must be chosen to match regional and target group preferences."*<sup>72</sup>

Forus Statutes Art. 7: 'the facilitator of the meeting shall ensure that the points on the agenda are discussed, that the time allotted to discussions on these points is respected and ensure that the telecommunication means chosen do not constitute a technical barrier to the expression of the members.'

#### **Using a Primary Constituency Accountability**

**approach:** 'In the past two years, the CIVICUS Secretariat has tested an approach and methodology called Primary Constituent Accountability (PCA) – that places primary constituents, i.e. CIVICUS' members, at the heart of the alliance's governance and decision-making structures. This means that CIVICUS' members' experiences and needs are central to deciding a course of action or evaluating CIVICUS' performance. In practice, this requires continuous active interaction with primary constituents, often consulting, discussing and communicating all aspects of CIVICUS' work and ensuring that the feedback loop is always closed'.<sup>73</sup>

The Butterfly Effect notes that generally there are a lot of practical barriers to participation, the most important being language. The Butterfly Effect therefore always ensures that all information is published in at least three languages.<sup>74</sup> For the last two years, most of Forus' content, including videos, is available in four languages.<sup>75</sup> CIVICUS also reported lessons learned with regard to language barriers.

*'Ensuring that French and Spanish-speaking members of the alliance were and are consistently engaged was a key challenge identified in 2017/2018. We made progress in 2018/2019 through an overall improvement in Spanish communications outreach and specifically by 1) installing real-time translation software so colleagues can communicate in Spanish with Crisis Response Fund applicants and recipients, which resulted in a doubling of the number of applications and an increase in the number of grant recipients from Spanish-speaking countries; and 2) the launch of Spanish language @CIVICUSalliance Twitter. French language outreach also improved in 2018/2019; however, with it have come higher engagement expectations from French and Spanish-speaking members which we cannot yet consistently meet. In 2019/2020 we will work on continuing to improve French and Spanish language engagement as well as other alliance languages, including Arabic and Portuguese.'*<sup>76</sup>

One of the cited challenges to the effective representation of members and their meaningful contributions is the lack of funds. Organising participatory meetings, particularly those in person, are costly. But running interactive digital platforms or virtual meetings also require resources.

The Butterfly Effect Coalition emphasises the importance of the presence of member organisations at advocacy events. This is the most effective way to ensure that civil society voices from Southern countries are heard in international decision-making, and for them to really be part of the process. The Coalition however states that it is challenging, and time consuming, to find funding to make this happen. It is challenging for the Secretariat to both raise funds for the participation of members and at the same time coordinate the network.<sup>77</sup> CAN also emphasises the importance of relationships that are best established when the network organises meetings where members get to know each other. These meetings stimulate the participation of members in the network and among each other: "An email in your mailbox becomes an email with a face and a person behind it. This spurs more active involvement and follow-up."<sup>78</sup>

#### **Membership and support base**

Every CSO network has a different view of 'membership'. A member to some networks is a supporter to others. Some of the networks interviewed distinguish between different types of members. CAN for instance distinguishes between 'observer, affiliate and advisory' members. Observer members are permitted to observe CAN meetings and have access to CAN materials. They have no rights to influence the determination of sufficient consensus at the point where a decision is being finalised within the decision-making process.<sup>79</sup> CIVICUS' membership consists of NGOs, activists, civil society coalitions and networks, protest and social movements, voluntary bodies, campaigning organisations, charities, faith-based groups, trade unions and philanthropic foundations.<sup>80</sup> There are two types of CIVICUS membership<sup>81</sup>: voting and associate. Voting members (both CSOs and individuals) financially contribute to the organisation and to setting the agenda, and vote and elect directors. Associates can become members for free, align with the positions taken by CIVICUS, and engage on occasions.<sup>82</sup> In terms of legitimacy it may be challenging when a network's membership consists of different types of members. Questions arise on the weighting of votes and influencing power when membership consists of both CSOs (with a constituency of thousands of individuals) and individual persons, or research institutions, for instance.<sup>83</sup>

*'CIVICUS has moved away from being a service-oriented network where members join to enjoy specific benefits and services towards a global platform for solidarity. Members join because they want access to other members and share the voice and power that they represent. The nature of the network has evolved. The nature of the members also changed over the course of the year. Ten years ago it was all registered CSO organisations, now it is a colourful collection of individuals, formal and informal, activists, INGOs, and more.'*<sup>84</sup>

Another consideration regarding the networks' legitimacy is based on the reality that membership organisations' engagement with networks is predicated on particular individuals within that organisation. This is particularly relevant to organisations that operate at different levels. For example, when an NGO with worldwide offices subscribes as a member to the network, does that mean that all its country offices are automatically members? And if so, do those offices know that they are members? These are crucial questions with implications on the networks' legitimacy.<sup>85</sup>

### **Level of members' involvement**

One of the commonly cited challenges in networks is the inactiveness of members.<sup>86</sup> In theory, network secretariats coordinate and enable the members to carry out the work. Research, however, shows that more frequently, secretariats take on increasing responsibility for implementing advocacy initiatives. Even when members do attend network meetings, they fail to implement their commitments.<sup>87</sup> The Secretariat at the Butterfly Effect Coalition admits that it does most of the work itself and that mobilising members is always an issue. *"The truth is that it is challenging to get input. I have often had the impression that the Secretariat was doing most of the work and preparing advocacy messages, and only two or three members contributed anything. It is difficult to get constructive feedback."*<sup>88</sup> According to the interviewee, this is not due to unwillingness, but largely due to the fact that some member organisations have increasing funding issues, which makes active involvement with the network more difficult.

The more time—often unpaid—spent on network activities, the more members' own CSO work suffers. CSO network members may have very limited 'spare' capacity to support the work of networks as their advocacy work is still rarely funded. Their work is often tied to implementing their own pre-determined plans and budgets. 'They are not able to flexibly respond to last-minute requests from networks - yet this is a critical part of advocacy networks.'<sup>89</sup> At the Butterfly

Effect Coalition, member organisations sometimes reserve budgets in donor funding for their roles in the network.<sup>90</sup>

Another underlying reason for members' level of involvement in the network is that the member CSOs' engagement is predicated on particular individuals within that member organisation engaging with and believing in the value of the network. As explained by one of the respondents in this study, *"in a way, organisations have a dual personality within a network – the organisation itself and the individual who operationalises that relationship. And this is something that sometimes gets overlooked when understanding why an organisation has gone from actively engaged to non-responsive or has a change in priorities it advocates for."*<sup>91</sup> On the other hand, a change in staff at the network secretariat can also be a factor in reducing the involvement of members, as coordination of activities and setting up meetings depends on the motivation and expertise of individual staff members.<sup>92</sup>

### **The power of momentum**

The Butterfly Effect learned that members are mobilised once you hand them real opportunities to be active. *"This is one of the main strengths of the Butterfly Effect; it is mobilised around the World Water Forum. This creates a momentum – not only in terms of funding, but also in terms of willingness to be actively involved and to form a close community again."*<sup>93</sup> The Butterfly Effect considers that basing your network organisation on advocacy opportunities brings flexibility (members and the organisation itself only have to put resources in when opportunities come up).<sup>94</sup> CAN also emphasises the need for recurring events to motivate members to be actively involved. The work CAN does at the UNFCCC creates momentum. As this is a yearly event, members work towards it and are highly motivated as they have a collective mission.<sup>95</sup>

### **Activation of membership**

Nevertheless, the Butterfly Coalition emphasises that in general, inactiveness remains a challenge for all network organisations as it is quite easy to have 250 organisations sign up for membership, but at the end of the day they are happy if 20% of them contributes actively.<sup>96</sup> When networks lack clear membership criteria and charge no fees, membership may become very fluid and mobile. Networks can claim to have large numbers of members, of whom only a few are really committed. This undermines the ability of the network to claim it is speaking on behalf of civil society.<sup>97</sup>

*'Given that membership doubled in 2018/2019, one of the challenges for 2019/2020 will be determining what membership engagement means as the alliance continues to grow and how the secretariat will position itself in responding to member needs and aspirations.'*<sup>98</sup>  
**CIVICUS**

This is an important common factor, especially for large and influential network organisations in terms of their legitimacy towards the stakeholders they seek to influence through their membership. When network organisations move into campaigning, they must think of the likely impact that this will have on different categories of members. Likewise, the basis of their legitimacy in the eyes of policymakers is their ability to represent all their members. In reality, their ability to achieve change might depend more on their paid staff and on a small group of active members.<sup>99</sup>

Forus International is the only network organisation in this study to have introduced membership fees (in 2017).<sup>100</sup>

*'In 2018, 80% of the members (60 out of 75) were active in the network activities, and 85% of Forus' members paid their annual fees based on a new system established in late 2017.'*

In its Annual Report, CIVICUS stated that it has always prided itself on the close relationships across the alliance. *'Historically, there was a sub-set of around 250 extremely active alliance members, many of them voting members who were well-known to the secretariat, with the rest of the alliance engaging occasionally and as projects and activities were of interest to them. This meant that the most active members and staff had a close working relationship and members often expected a high level of responsiveness to their requests, such as support for UN advocacy. The doubling of membership in 2018/2019 was a surprise and as a result we are still thinking through the implications for how staff use their time, how we position membership and set expectations, and how we get to know and forge relationships with the 4,000 new members of the alliance.'*<sup>101</sup>

In its attempts to discourage inactive membership, the Butterfly Effect Coalition has developed 'working groups' that are chosen by members through discussion and that consist of members that activate each other around a particular theme. CAN also installed working groups that are coordinated by members, stimulating membership input.<sup>102</sup> Some network organisations sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with members, to ensure active participation.<sup>103</sup>

## Setting membership criteria

A network's ability to represent its ever-growing membership is an important factor in remaining legitimate in the eyes of the actors it aims to influence. This may call for periodic checking whether the network organisation still represents its membership sufficiently and for setting criteria that safeguards meaningful representation in the future. A targeted membership development strategy may guide these actions.

The Butterfly Effect Coalition's website states that 'Any not-for-profit national or international Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) or Community based organisation may join the BE through simple signature of the Butterfly Effect internal rules together with a motivation letter.' Article 4 of its Internal Rules adds a requirement of at least three years experience and a description of the organisation's scope of activities and what it could bring to the network in terms of funds, in-kind work, information and experiences.

CAN has established a Charter in which it adopted that 'All non-government/community based non-profit organisations, that do not represent industry and which have an interest in the promotion of sustainable development and are active in, have a focus on, or interest in climate change issues, are eligible to become members of CAN and may apply to do so.' Application is done through submitting an application form, presenting credentials and filling in a standard questionnaire. Members need to accept the Charter and a Regional node of CAN needs to approve the application with adequate consultation with its steering committee and the national node.<sup>104</sup>

Research on the networks in this study show that few requirements are set on the type of organisation eligible for membership. Some do not require a subject or interest, others, including CAN, require a topic of interest or field of work to join.

## Diversity of members

In general, diverse missions, values and focus areas among members can strengthen a network as they increase the range of ideas and the network's reach. Yet, diversity can also lead to more difficult decision-making and a failure to represent all the different members if this diversity is not apparent or if there is little trust among members.<sup>105</sup>

As stated by a former CAN Europe employee, 'A *threat and opportunity to CAN is for sure the richness of its membership, covering so many issues. Because climate change is so broad, touching upon development, human rights, the economy. But the threat is that these concepts mean different things to different people and can dilute the issue of climate, making it hard to find positions that really push governments forward.*'<sup>106</sup> As previously mentioned, the greater the diversity and number of members, the more global networks start becoming a 'platform to exchange views and knowledge' rather than a platform to establish one shared voice.

*"The more diverse the membership gets, the less likely it is for us to ever speak with one voice. So it is more about trying to give voice to those who might not have been heard otherwise."*<sup>107</sup> CIVICUS

Scholars point out that building common strategies and standards becomes more difficult as the diversity and conflict within the network increase. The higher the tensions among members, the more concern about legitimacy and the more resources and time required to build agreements on the network strategy.<sup>108</sup> It is therefore crucial to create detailed organisational documents, such as codes of conduct and charters with core values and approaches, to prevent conflicting views among members. PACJA recently revised its constitutional document, after a process that took more than two years, so as to reach full consensus among its increasingly diverse membership.<sup>109</sup>

### **Power imbalances in participation and membership**

Many networks report power imbalances, ranging from inequalities between members from the global North and global South to power imbalances at the operational levels (local/community, national, regional, global). More information on power imbalances between the global North and South is listed at the end of the sub-chapter below.

Capacity issues and practical barriers are also root causes of unequal power relations within networks. As mentioned throughout this study, membership is often very diverse, with differences in financial resources and capacity among members. This leads to differences in the ability of members to actively take part in the network and contribute to advocacy efforts and consultative exercises, for instance. Also reported are power imbalances in the weight given to interventions by different members. This includes member organisations that operate at the community level that have valuable evidence and experience. Network organisations often fail to include or highlight this knowledge in their internal and external

communication—such as advocacy, research or policy briefs—because this evidence has not been externally evaluated and formally validated.<sup>110</sup> Other challenges to equal power relations consist of the network organisations' failure to address communication and language barriers.<sup>111</sup>

## **C. The networks' governance and decision-making structures**

### **Governance structure and institutionalisation**

To be legitimate as a network organisation, its governance and management structure must allow plans, decisions and activities to be made in line with the views of the members. The governance and management structure adopted by a network can vary. It may entail, for instance, a rotating board, a secretariat and committees. It is crucial that the governance structure chosen does not form an obstacle to the 'representative' function of a network.

*"For PACJA, it is important to preserve the character of a network. To do this, the people who work with PACJA are all made aware of the fact that the secretariat needs to answer not to an individual director, but to the organisation as a whole. We really had to mould the mindsets of the people working for the alliance to ensure that the true network spirit remains."*<sup>112</sup>

Some networks begin as an informal cooperation among groups of organisations and then evolve into more formal institutions, while others start as formal institutions. Institutionalisation can bring valuable assets to a network, such as enhanced legitimacy, a legal identity, more effective coordination and the capacity to receive grants directly.<sup>113</sup> There are however also reported drawbacks to institutionalisation. Some members value a more informal and spontaneous network. Members also reported that institutionalisation brings formalities such as administrative rules and financial management, to the extent that the network starts to feel like a bureaucracy.<sup>114</sup> And, the bigger secretariats become, the more money and resources are needed.<sup>115</sup>

*'When we got to Kyoto, lots of people started turning up to CAN. It began to get more formalised, partly because of money. It was getting awkward for countries who funded ECO [newsletter] to just hand over all of the cash to someone at an international meeting. So we started forming a more corporate structure. It was more informal before that, really. It was a pity, in a way, because we had to develop all of these constitutional rules.'* John Lanchbery<sup>116</sup>

*'When I started in 1999 with CAN Europe, CAN did not exist officially. It was a loose cooperation between the different nodes. And I think that was a big problem for CAN. In between the international negotiations, everybody was working more or less on their own. We noticed it became more and more difficult to be one voice without an official structure. So we agreed with people of different nodes that we needed to have a more formal basis to agree on positions for all the work that we did.'* Karla Schoeters<sup>117</sup>

The commitment and effectiveness of leadership and staff working for the network organisation are important for its legitimacy.<sup>118</sup> A relatively high turnover of staff and leadership can delay activities as new staff or board members need time to get to know the network organisation.<sup>119</sup> A high turnover of staff or directors can therefore be problematic for effective functioning and stakeholder perception of its normative legitimacy.

*'Two lessons we are learning are that transitions require adjustments from all sides and that leadership is personal. It had been six years since the organisation welcomed a new Secretary General and three since it had a new Board Chair. New leadership is a tremendous opportunity for the secretariat and the alliance to grow, adapt and change. It is also a challenge to build the necessary relationships and new ways of working, which take time, and to think together strategically so that the alliance, the staff, the Secretary General, the Board members and the Board Chair are all optimally positioned to complement each other.'*<sup>120</sup> CIVICUS

Research has moreover reported that when board members work in senior posts in their own organisations, they sometimes become weak in following through in their position as board member. Board members are often also network members and they thus sometimes find themselves in a conflict of interest when requesting the secretariat to subcontract pieces of work to their organisation (and in some cases, themselves).<sup>121</sup> This may undermine the ability of the network to claim it is speaking on behalf of civil society.

### **Decision-making processes and leadership**

In practice, networks often have both formal decision-making systems emanating from their governance structure, and informal decision-making systems that are shaped by a variety of different factors including the personality of the individuals concerned, their access to information, their financial assets, their decision-making skills, their place in the network, their location or a combination of these, and

their personal and/or professional stake in the outcomes of the decision-making process.<sup>122</sup>

When decision-making powers are centralised in certain member organisations or in a few responsible persons, members of CSO networks may consider these leadership structures dominant.<sup>123</sup> In the case of Forus International, its Secretariat has been hosted by the French member Coordination SUD since 2008. In 2012, in an attempt to better reflect voices from its various regions, Forus partially decentralised the Secretariat to Chile and Brazil.<sup>124</sup> Ensuring that mechanisms are in place and that there is clarity about whom to involve in what decisions in the networks, can also be a way to maintain a balanced network.<sup>125</sup>

Generally, networks make major decisions at international board or assembly meetings and organise annual meetings for their members. Some networks use Internet or video conferencing for decision-making. Managerial or executive bodies then take decisions based on the general direction of decisions taken by the Boards and General Assemblies. Voting patterns vary among network organisations. Some networks arrive at consensus decisions, some take majority votes, some give greater voting power to their larger members than to their smaller ones. In the case of CAN, decision-making is generally based on full consensus. In exceptional circumstances where consensus cannot be reached, CAN is unable to take a position on a certain issue.<sup>126</sup>

*'The governance of CAN is achieved at General Assemblies of CAN. At least once every two years a General Assembly must be convened. CAN General Assemblies will be properly constituted when at least 90% of the following members' representatives are present; the Board will set the agenda in advance, and call on members to propose items for the agenda. All items will be accompanied by a description of the item or the proposed decision; and in addition to this minimum representation, care should be taken to ensure strong representation from non-OECD country organizations, in order to ensure a sufficient voice from the developing world. The CAN Secretariat must ensure that this representation is achieved when organizing and funding CAN General Assemblies.'*<sup>127</sup>

*'Its Steering Committee (SC) is the strategic decision-making committee and the political voice of the Butterfly Effect. In order to ensure that all voices of members in different regions are heard, it is formed by two representatives from each region. It strives to make decisions by consensus, however if disagreements come up, a simple majority will make the decision.'*<sup>128</sup>

### Diversity of membership and decision-making

As already mentioned above under sub-chapter 2 Membership and participation, there can be great dilemmas in decision-making when members from different regions and with different priorities work together as one network. In the past, Amnesty International used to struggle with decision-making and issues were often put off when consensus was not reached among members. For example, it got stuck in long and unclear debates on whether gay rights or landmines were suitable topics for action.<sup>129</sup> CAN also expresses that a global membership is both a curse and a blessing, as it can be difficult to align on priorities.<sup>130</sup>

### Power imbalances between the global North and South

PACJA was founded in 2008, when a group of CSOs who were concerned by the complete absence of an African civil society voice in the international climate change dialogue processes came together.<sup>131</sup> Generally, North-based members of networks have well-established connections to the international policy-making arena and more experience in accessing available funding than their fellow members in the South.<sup>132</sup> This sometimes leads to Northern NGOs emerging as mediators between the global level and the Southern CSOs. In addition, some network organisations originally initiated in the global North set up branches in the global South, but retain their decision-making in their headquarters in the North.<sup>133</sup> There is moreover a reported knowledge imbalance between the North and South with inequalities demonstrated in knowledge production being exacerbated by supply side-incentives. Northern-based organisations 'do' convening and research given the availability of budgets and these key global knowledge mobilisation activities tend to be based out of global head offices.<sup>134</sup>

It is therefore critical that networks ensure North-South harmony and base division of labour between Northern and Southern members on mutual agreements. Acknowledging that Southern-based CSOs have more knowledge on issues and priorities at stake in their regions is crucial, and must be reflected in the network's governance positions, meetings and strategies. However, some scholars have expressed concern about the establishment of networks' offices in the South undermining local grassroots and indigenous CSOs.<sup>135</sup>

*"In the year 2020, it is puzzling how North donor organisations design strategies, policy documents, frameworks, guidelines and so on to guide Africa's water sector and they are endorsed for sector practice with zero participation in authoring, editing or overall*

*contributions by Africans including those from their organisations. Instead, Africans feature in data collection where we are asked the normal questions on how long does it take to fetch water and the like? Does it mean Africans are consumers of knowledge and not producers?"<sup>136</sup>*

### D. The networks' accountability mechanisms and practice

Participation, access to information and transparency are bedrock principles for network accountability towards its members. As emphasised by CIVICUS, 'accountability is more than the frameworks, policies and documents the network puts in place.'<sup>137</sup> CIVICUS states that it is increasingly seeing accountability becoming a dynamic two-way relationship with stakeholders in order to ensure people's participation and the systematic use of feedback in decision making at all levels.<sup>138</sup> The more a network is built on the active participation of its members, the fewer accountability issues there are between the network organisation and its members. These principles are outlined in sub-chapter 2 Membership and participation.

The need to be accountable to key stakeholders as the basis for legitimacy has been generally well implemented among CSO networks, but clear standards and tightly enforced accountability can undermine other characteristics of CSO networks, including independence, flexibility, innovativeness, and willingness to take on unpopular causes.<sup>139</sup> PACJA confirms that it has been facing a challenge between striking a balance between ensuring that the character of a network does not get lost and that it has the best institutional governance and accountability mechanisms in place.<sup>140</sup> The challenge therefore is to balance high standards with space for responsiveness, flexibility and innovation.

### Accountability through official rules and standards

The network organisation must ensure that it accounts for decisions and actions. It is important to have a set of rules outlining the norms, rules, and responsibilities or proper practices of the network organisation and individual members. Organisational charters, rules and codes of conduct are important documents to ensure that the network organisation makes decisions and strategies based on what members once agreed on. They guide the roles and positions that the network organisation can take towards external stakeholders. Rules on governance and decision-making structures moreover serve to prevent unequal decision-making, conflicts of interest or corruption within the network. Annual and multi-annual strategies



- when developed with the full participation of members
- are important documents for members to keep control over the course of the network and its activities, impact and decisions on budgets.

### Activities in the name of the network

Rules and assessments on carrying out activities or releasing statements in the name of the network also need to be developed in order to protect the network's credibility. CAN has adopted rules in its charter that stipulate that regional and national nodes, consisting of national level member organisations, may carry out activities under the CAN name, but should notify the CAN Board before doing so. Further, in the case of a member issuing a statement in the name of CAN that conflicts with CAN's position, another member may raise a formal complaint to the CAN Secretariat. The CAN Board may then take necessary steps.<sup>141</sup> In its internal rules, the Butterfly Effect Coalition states that inclusion of the logo of the Butterfly Effect in statements or proposals needs to be accepted by the Steering Committee if not already agreed in the activity plan.<sup>142</sup>

### Accountability through evaluation and performance measures

The more clearly the network organisation produces information and data on performance and impacts, the more credible the case for legitimacy.<sup>143</sup> Some network organisations commit to self-evaluations, deploying staff to collect and analyse information about programme performance and the extent to which their activities have the intended impacts. Others commission external evaluations to gain the advantage of independent feedback.<sup>144</sup>

Prior to developing its current strategy, PACJA interviewed key stakeholders to gain external perspectives on its achievements, strengths, challenges and opportunities. These included several main funding partners and programme partner organisations. Moreover, feedback on the functioning of the network organisation was also collected from members. Common substantive and institutional issues emerged from these discussions and have helped PACJA define its current strategy. Issues included the need for better monitoring, strengthening policy expertise at the Board and staff levels, improvement of communication and language issues.<sup>145</sup>

Network organisations communicate internal and external evaluations and performances in publications and reports. In most cases, annual reports are accessible through the websites of the network's organisation. Regular updates on

activities, for instance through newsletters and meetings, are important to ensure better accountability than a yearly update. CIVICUS recently implemented a system called DevResults<sup>146</sup> which is a secure web-based monitoring, evaluation and portfolio management system that helps development organisations by tracking programme, progress and organisational results data. CIVICUS states that its accountability framework has progressed significantly since using this system. Analysing the data gave them the opportunity to generate learnings. One lesson learned for instance, is that limited resources for translations hindered their engagement in Francophone Africa and Latin America.<sup>147</sup> It however expressed that more needs to be done to ensure that knowledge management is further embedded in its culture, including incentivising sharing between projects and teams.<sup>148</sup>

CIVICUS has moreover taken the opportunity of a new strategic period to relook at what accountability means to it: 'Accountability does not end with a report or self-assessment, but rather it is an ongoing constructive relationship with stakeholder groups that improves the agency and credibility of CSOs.'<sup>149</sup> CIVICUS elevated its accountability agenda, moving away from an emphasis on technical Monitoring and Evaluating (M&E) to embedding accountability as a culture and a strategic enabler. See the box on the next page.<sup>150</sup>

**CIVICUS’ new accountability framework** was developed alongside its Strategic Plan 2017–2022 to (1) help consistently and systematically track the organisation’s progress and impact against the new strategy; (2) meet accountability commitments; and (3) enable organisational learning. Quantifiable indicators are important for more immediate and intermediate changes. However, longer term changes or measures of success may be, in some cases, less quantifiable because they involve changes in social actors, governments, activists and citizens. CIVICUS has therefore adopted ‘Critical Learning Questions’ to measure these longer-term changes. See table below.<sup>151</sup>

Indicative Impact Indicator	Usefulness	Alternative to Impact Indicators: Critical Learning Question	Usefulness
Degree to which alliance members feel that CIVICUS has defended civic freedoms and democratic values.	This indicator will help measure the alliance perception of CIVICUS. To change the outcome, we need to improve perception of the impact of our work not necessarily the quality of the work we produce.	Is CIVICUS’ research and analysis influencing perceptions among global publics and key stakeholders to spur change in policy and practice regarding civic freedoms and democratic values?  What type of research products have impact, when and why?	The questions help us think critically about what we do and why. Including which of the strategies is most effective. If our goal is to defend civic freedoms, we want to be able to best improve the way we do this. This typifies what is expected from an organisation grounded in learning and self-improvement.

Table available at: <https://civicspacewatch.eu/civil-society-accountability-in-times-of-declining-trust-civiccuss-journey/>

### Performance consequences, mediation and complaint mechanisms

Central values are often laid down in codes of conduct, and strategies are enacted amongst members. If the network organisation moves away from this, mechanisms need to be in place that uncover and correct this. If there are conflicts within the network, it is important to have neutral mechanisms in place that can fulfil a mediation and conflict-solving role. Mechanisms to receive feedback and complaints are moreover an important barometer for a network’s performance. In 2018, CIVICUS enacted an online feedback form to enable it to gather feedback from a wider range of stakeholders.<sup>152</sup> In addition, external feedback and complaints can be filed via the Accountable Now<sup>153</sup> mechanism. This mechanism assists CSO organisations and networks to be more accountable. Members sign up to 12 Accountability Commitments and use a reporting framework in which ‘Accountable Now’ assesses the network’s commitments through an independent review panel.<sup>154</sup>

*‘CIVICUS is confident that having well-designed and responsive mechanisms for handling external and internal feedback (including suggestions, complaints, or positive feedback) will improve the quality of its work, enhance trust and confidence of stakeholders, identify areas of work which need strengthening, and ensure that CIVICUS learns from feedback provided through such a process — thereby embedding a culture of values-based accountability rather than one-directional reporting. Exposing ourselves to critical or dissenting voices is important so that we do not risk locking ourselves in echo chambers.’<sup>155</sup> CIVICUS*

‘The CAN Board will rely on regional coordinators to ensure regional representation in the decisions. It acts as an oversight to the CAN Secretariat, which will be accountable to the Board.’<sup>156</sup>

‘The Board must fulfil the dispute resolution agency within the CAN network, including within the Nodes of organisation within CAN. In the case of a dispute arising that is not adequately provided for in this Charter, the CAN Board must attempt to resolve the dispute, and CAN members agree to this role by the Board.’

The CAN Board may appoint one or more of its members to act as an intervener in disputes, or may appoint an independent third party to do so. All dispute resolution procedures will be designed by the CAN Board, and will in all cases include an attempt at mediation. Arbitration of a dispute may only occur if the parties to the dispute agree to do so and can agree to an arbitrator, who may be a CAN Board member. In the case of arbitration, the decisions of the arbitration will be final and binding. In all other cases where mediation has failed and arbitration is not agreed to, the matter will be referred to the next General Assembly for a final and binding decision.<sup>157</sup>

### Monitoring and evaluating the conduct of individual members

A network consists of more than just its headquarters. All individual members also define the legitimacy of the network as a whole. Thus, individual members also bear accountability responsibilities towards the network that they are part of.

Some networks ask their members to assess their compliance with the networks' code of conduct every year. The Australian Council for International Development adds a complaints mechanism to a self-reporting system so that the general public has a vehicle to raise questions about members' actions.<sup>158</sup>

#### The Australian Council for International Development<sup>159</sup>

The Code of Conduct Committee monitors adherence to the Code through the following mechanisms.

- Assessment of membership applications.
- Annual commitment to full adherence to the Code.
- Annual review of annual and financial reports.
- Signatories' annual self-assessment against all the requirements of the Code (Compliance Self-Assessment).
- Random checks of websites during an emergency appeal.
- An independent complaints handling and discipline process.

InterAction, an alliance of international NGOs based in the United States, adopted standards that guide member organisations to be accountable to their constituencies as well as to the network's principles, and to evaluate and communicate their activities in this regard. See box.

#### InterAction Standards - December 2018

3.5 In all of its activities, a member shall respect the dignity, values, history, religion, and culture of all of its constituents. Each organisation shall institutionalise accountability to affected populations in their organisation structures.

3.6 A member shall recognise that all of its activities impact on the public perception of the NGO community and that it shares a significant responsibility to enhance the public trust.

3.8.2. Accountability and learning. A member shall maintain a written evaluation policy and executive leadership should prioritise evaluation and encourage the use of information for learning and improvement. A member's chief officer shall submit a report to the organisation's board describing the organisation's effectiveness, no less than annually.

3.8.3. Transparency and responsiveness. Monitoring and evaluation activities shall provide appropriate opportunities for community participation, partner and program participant feedback, and stakeholder involvement, as applicable. A member shall publicly disclose information about its objectives and outcomes, as appropriate and in a timely manner.

#### Accountability towards external stakeholders

Legitimacy and accountability towards external stakeholders, including governments and donors is necessary to ensure funding sources. Although most donors acknowledge the need for CSOs to advocate for community interests, other activities such as online presence, professional management, targets reached and financial reporting capacity may have more impact on legitimacy in the eyes of donor representatives.<sup>160</sup> This therefore potentially negatively affects the accountability relationship of the network organisation towards its members. Instead of planning activities based on the common views of its members, it may be more focused on the need to implement the requirements set by the donor.

*'[...] many of our donors are suffering from 'logframitis'. They want us to package the long-term and systemic change we are passionate about into neat little fundable projects that fit their programme and timelines. They work through complex chains of 'fundermediaries' who channel ever-smaller chunks of money with ever-larger relative reporting requirements. Many in civil society*

*are good at playing this game but many of the most innovative, most ambitious initiatives rarely involve project proposals.*<sup>161</sup>

A study on civil society networks in Malawi concluded that conflicting accountability responsibilities is challenging for CSO networks: *'with donors as opposed to members being the main funding source, secretariat attention focuses on the donor project rather than the participation of members. Accountability is directed to donors, not to members. This becomes a vicious circle: as secretariats detach themselves from the membership, so their structures grow, their costs increase, and their need for donor support increases too, spiralling them out of reach of their members and constituents.'*<sup>162</sup>

Monitoring and evaluations are often also based on expectations set by external parties, and to a much lesser degree on their own membership and constituency. Donor interests differ from interests of other stakeholders, and their evaluations may not serve other stakeholders well. Some network organisations therefore collect information required by donors but create additional quite different systems to support their own learning.<sup>163</sup> CIVICUS, being a very large network, has put great effort in aligning the various donor requirements, making it easier to meet these different requirements.

*'CIVICUS demonstrates best practice for the NGO-sector in terms of taking the lead on donor coordination. The fact that they have urged donors to harmonise and align to CIVICUS' reporting requirements through the use of common formats, indicators and reporting periods is appreciated externally by several donors and partners interviewed, as well as internally by staff and management.'*<sup>164</sup> SIDA

It is important that information is available in forms that are comprehensible and useful for various stakeholders, including for its membership that speaks a different language than the majority of its members.<sup>165</sup> Forus has developed a 'Leadership Development Program' in which the organisation's legitimacy and membership base is discussed along with its strategic relations with policymakers and other institutional leaders. Also discussed is the management of the diversity within its membership and how to provide networking space meaningful enough to keep the social change agenda alive.<sup>166</sup>

### **Stronger legitimacy through capacity building**

The legitimacy of a network is heavily influenced by its reputation, that is, the perception of external stakeholders

of the network. This again is largely shaped by the credibility of its individual members. The network may therefore have mechanisms in place that assess and correct its membership's conduct (see above). In addition, the network can help build the credibility of individual organisations through capacity building initiatives. One example is CIVICUS' Resilient Roots programme in which it builds the capacity of its members to be accountable to their constituency, and in this way safeguard their legitimacy.<sup>167</sup> A network furthermore preserves its legitimacy when its members have the capacity to understand the issue and develop the needed advocacy skills. This is largely covered by networks functioning as a platform for information and knowledge exchange between members. If the network organisation wants to stimulate the active advocacy role of its members, capacity building becomes a critical issue.

CAN has always invested in the capacity building of its members. CAN-Rac Canada, for example, held a three day training weekend prior to the Montreal negotiations to help new participants in the negotiations become more effective advocates.<sup>168</sup> Nowadays, capacity building is one of CAN's primary activities and is set out in its Charter. It strengthens its network of regional and national nodes and their members in multiple ways such as through: individual regional communications support and expertise; capacity development; peer-to-peer exchanges to share successes and best practices; catalysing campaigns with seed funding, toolkits, training and joint amplification; collaborative proposal designing; and support in organisational development and governance.<sup>169</sup>

PACJA formed the Pan African Media Alliance on Climate Change (PAMACC) in 2013, which aims to motivate and encourage journalists to consistently engage in climate change and environmental reporting. Capacity building workshops are held to bring together environmental reporters and media trainers from across Africa to train and build their capacity on climate and environmental reporting. Both the public and governments are being increasingly informed about the importance of the environment, resulting in the growing legitimacy of PACJA, greater recognition of PACJA and increased engagement with key stakeholders.<sup>170</sup>

One of the main objectives listed in Forus International's strategic plan of 2016-2020 is to invest in the capacity development of its members so that they are 'legitimate

and influential actors representing NGOs' voices in their national environment'.<sup>171</sup> Forus explains that creating a capacity building programme begins with the recognition of common characteristics and the specificities of each national platform. To this end, it carries out assessments every three years. The findings are used to channel targeted resources and support to its national and regional platforms through a re-granting scheme. The resources may be used to: support the creation of internal codes of conduct; support the strategies of its national and regional members to increase their representativeness; provide advice and support to improve the platform's webpages and communication and media strategies.<sup>172</sup> One example of a joint project implemented on the African continent is Zambia Council for Social Development which improved its capacities by organising training on website and social media management.<sup>173</sup> For its members, Forus also developed three tools that were included in an Advocacy toolkit linked to the 2030 Agenda on monitoring and implementation. The purpose of the toolkit is to increase the capacities of Forus members to effectively advocate in relation to the implementation of Agenda 2030 at national, regional and global levels. The toolkit is available on Forus' website.<sup>174</sup>

way, members can take the floor themselves and be able to fully understand what is going on and have the capacity to formulate their views. They are then able to position themselves and be taken seriously.<sup>177</sup>

The distribution of projects according to **Forus International's** priority areas for **capacity development** is:<sup>175</sup>

- 63% in Advocacy and Partnerships;
- 36% in Communications and strengthening national platforms' member engagement;
- 16% in Leadership and Governance of National Platforms;
- 10% in Resource mobilisation, financial management and accountability.

The geographic distribution of projects is:

- 31% in Latin America • 29% in Africa • 24% in Europe • 16% in Asia

*'To improve Forus members' impact, Forus also needs to improve its own ways of facilitating and networking. It is an ambitious and complex process of mutual learning, experimentation and improvement of practices. Through this process, Forus itself intends to reflect upon its own capacity and role.'*<sup>176</sup>

The Butterfly Effect has learned that building the capacity of the people who convey the messages is critical. The Coalition therefore gathers with members with different strengths to prepare for important advocacy events. This

## 5. Financial sustainability of network organisations

Financial sustainability is crucial for CSO network organisations to be resilient and effective, and it could potentially affect their legitimacy. Financial sustainability affects both the networks' viability and their ability to autonomously implement members' priorities, including L&A work. The sub-chapters below outline some particularly important elements with regard to the financial sustainability of CSO network organisations.

### A. Sources of funding

When network organisations look exclusively at external funding rather than membership contributions, it may affect their sense of accountability towards their members. Usually the provision of funding goes hand in hand with strong financial accountability demands.<sup>178</sup>

Most networks rely on external funding. One of the most important events for the Butterfly Effect Coalition is the World Water Forum, and it relies on its members for in-kind contributions and travel costs. The Secretariat is hosted by the International Secretariat for Water with the support of Action Contre la Faim (ACF) and the technical support of Coalition Eau, who reserve budgets mainly from bilateral donors for their work. CAN is completely funded by private donors while Forus International and CIVICUS are both mainly funded through public resources.

Nevertheless, most of the network organisations in this study rely on in-kind contributions by their members rather than financial contributions. In CAN's first few years, bigger member organisations contributed financially and had their logos displayed as the 'core members' of CAN. After CAN increasingly succeeded in raising funds, it stopped relying on membership fees. However, it does not rule out the reintroduction of membership fees in the future.<sup>179</sup> In 2017,

PACJA introduced membership fees in order to increase members' effective participation and ownership of the network. It has come to realise, however, that members were not able to afford this. Most of PACJA's membership consists of voluntary initiatives that already struggle to find sufficient funding for their work. Although they provide PACJA with sufficient in-kind contributions, PACJA is considering the reintroduction of smaller membership fees in proportion to the member's size.<sup>180</sup> The Butterfly Effect Coalition survives almost entirely on in-kind contributions and fundraising activities around the World Water Forums. The International Secretariat for Water (ISW)<sup>181</sup> hosts and finances the Butterfly Effect's Secretariat.<sup>182</sup> In 2017, Forus International started charging membership fees to help the sustainability of the network.<sup>183</sup>

All the network organisations in this study argued that, irrespective of whether they charged membership fees or not, members were represented in decision-making. They state that their governance structures were such that they could enact their legitimacy and accountability responsibilities towards their members.

In addition, all the CSO network organisations stated that the security of their funding does not impact their plans and strategy definition. To the question 'Does the network organisation make plans and strategies based on available funding? Or does it first plan and then try to find budgets for it?' all interviewees responded that they first adopt strategies and plan activities with their members, and then try to obtain funding for them. Although plans are made according to members' priorities, and are not influenced by available funding, it takes much effort at later stages to ensure that the activities and priorities agreed are implemented with budgets mobilised by the network.

#### Categories of funding sources

Network organisation	Public donor (government) (% of total funding)	Private foundation (% of total funding)	Membership contributions (excl. in-kind) (% of total funding)
Forus International <sup>184</sup>	97%	0%	3%
CIVICUS <sup>185</sup>	70%	30%	Max. 1% <sup>186</sup>
Butterfly Effect Coalition	No information available	No information available	No information available
Climate Action Network <sup>187</sup>	0%	100%	No information available
PACJA	No information available	No information available	0%

## Public and private funding sources

Network organisation	Public donor	Private foundation
<b>Forus International</b> <sup>188</sup>	EuropeAid's grant (€ 702,937) transferred by Forus' French member Coordination Sud (acting as fiscal agent), and the grant awarded by the French Development Agency, of which € 191,372 was allocated for financing activities in 2018	
<b>CIVICUS</b> <sup>189</sup>	For the year 2018-2019: Dutch MFA: US\$ 2,848,878 Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency: US\$ 2,140,962 European Commission: US\$ 823,929  Other public funding included: <i>Ministry of Foreign Affairs Denmark, Finnish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation</i>	Ford Foundation: US\$ 1,568,081 Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation: US\$ 1,029,597 Open Society Foundations – Core/ Fellows / MLAB: US\$ 537,892  Others include; <i>Avaaaz – The World in Action, CS Mott Foundation, Freedom House, Centre for Intercultural Dialogue, Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research, Leland Stanford Junior University, Wallace Global Fund, Solidarity Centre</i>
<b>Butterfly Effect Coalition</b> <sup>190</sup>	The yearly budget was around € 110,000 Euro while most of the costs (travel and accommodation of the Steering committee) are usually covered by financial and in-kind support by the Coalition's core members. For the period 2017-2019, the Secretariat of the Butterfly Effect was formed by the International Secretariat for Water with the support of ACF and Coalition Eau. The costs are usually covered from the members' funds. For the ISW (being the Secretariat), most work for the Coalition is based on bilateral donor agencies.	
<b>Climate Action Network</b> <sup>191</sup>	CAN has no public donors	<b>Funders:</b> Bread for the World, KR Foundation, V. Kann Rasmussen Foundation, Pisces Foundation, The Norwegian Forum for Development and Environment, The Minor Foundation for Major Challenges, ClimateWorks Foundation, Franciscan Sisters of Mary, World Resources Institute. <b>Contributing partners:</b> ClimateWorks Foundation, European Climate Foundation, Mission2020, Stanley Foundation, We Mean Business
<b>PACJA</b>	<i>No information available</i>	<i>No information available</i>

CIVICUS is privileged in having a mix of both private and public funders. CAN has deliberately chosen not to accept core funding from governments so that it can remain independent.

*"Our biggest strength in terms of financial sustainability is the general support and multi-year support of different donors that allows us to juggle with budgets and to really freely define our strategies."<sup>192</sup> CIVICUS*

As argued by scholars, the most valuable sources of funding for network organisations are the contributions by members, either financial or in-kind. This is the most effective way to keep them meaningful and accountable to members and members' primary constituents.<sup>193</sup>

## B. Type of funding

Their funding relationships mean that CSO network organisations need to account for their activities to donors and prove that they fit within their funding contracts. Institutional core funding helps CSO network organisations autonomously perform L&A work and enables them to build a professional organisation with sufficient human and other resources.

### Access to types of funding

Network organisation	Access to core funding/ institutional funding (% of total funding)	Access to short-term funding/ project-based funding (% of total funding)
Forus International <sup>194</sup>	80%	20%
CIVICUS	62%	38%
Butterfly Effect Coalition	0%	100%
Climate Action Network	50?	50?
PACJA	No information available	No information available

Network organisations like CAN point out that core funding gives room to breathe and enables the network to be more flexible.<sup>195</sup> CIVICUS says that its 'funding flexibility' is one of its major strengths: 60% of its funding qualifies as 'general support' which makes it easier to cover all its activities under its own conditions and priorities.

Network organisations emphasise however, that even with core support there are limitations on how to use the funding as budgets are earmarked. For instance, CIVICUS' funds from trusts and foundations from the United States have restrictions on usage for L&A work.<sup>196</sup> CAN on the other hand is bound to use foundation funding to influence particular political decision-making processes.<sup>197</sup> CIVICUS also states that European multiannual general support streams also impose certain criteria and restrictions, for example the countries where the funds may be used and the type of target beneficiaries.

Generally, however, core funding is crucial for networks' capacity to establish effective governance structures and allows it greater opportunity to securely plan ahead. CIVICUS' financial strength lies in particular in the *variety* of multiple funding sources, making it possible to 'juggle' budgets and donor restrictions in order to cover most of the funding gaps.<sup>198</sup> This kind of flexibility greatly contributes to a financially sustainable organisation, making it more resilient and able to take autonomous decisions on activities.

The Butterfly Effect Coalition is almost entirely based on members' in-kind contributions. External contributions are based on short-term and activity-specific funding, particularly around political events, for civil society to participate.<sup>199</sup> Short term activity specific funding is a double-edged sword. For The Butterfly Effect, activity-based funding offers flexibility to budget around momentum, allowing the network to take action when its members are truly aligned with one another on an urgent common cause. However, finding sufficient ongoing resources remains a recurring problem and is a barrier to capacity building of members, for instance.

#### Researchers' recommendations to Donors.<sup>200</sup>

*'Flexibility is required in the allocation of funding, including in the type of activities funded. Such flexibility allows for the diversity of roles within CSO coalitions, as well as for changes to take place over time.'*

*'Establish multi-year grants instead of short-term funding. Multi-year grants would enable sustainable coalitions and capacity building and generate lasting, structural change. Funding strategies should be guided by the principles of programme sustainability and be aligned with the interests and priorities of the target beneficiaries.'*



Scholars point to the general existence of a 'hierarchy in the aid chain' in which Northern donors are at the top, followed by international non-governmental organisations, national level CSOs and local organisations at the bottom of the ladder.<sup>201</sup> This hierarchy is influenced by the accountability mechanisms attached to obtaining available funding. The primary reason for these accountability mechanisms is to ensure that the donors' resources (Northern taxpayers' money) are efficiently and effectively used.<sup>202</sup> In one example, the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs' 'Dialogue and Dissent' policy framework prescribes that its strategic partners (including networks) do not need to submit 'detailed programme proposals'<sup>203</sup>, but the Ministry does require the formulation of '*joint strategic goals and envisaged results together*' with the Minister.<sup>204</sup> Several researchers observed that the accountability rules of Northern donors (including the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs) are 'managerial' in nature, that is, they 'focus on measurable results and measures to minimise financial risk'.<sup>205</sup> This may have considerable impacts on the legitimacy of network organisations towards their membership, as they are bound to stringent accountability relationships with their donors.

#### **Resilient Roots initiative – upcoming programme phase**

The next phase of CIVICUS' Resilient Roots initiative will focus on donor advocacy: trying to make the case for donors to not only reward organisations that can demonstrate that they are accountable to their constituencies, but to also invest in the capacity of organisations to do so. 'For most of the organisations in the global South, it is hard to prioritise the development of accountability mechanisms for their constituencies as they are struggling with sufficient resources and already have to account for one project after another to their donors.'<sup>206</sup>

#### **Funding opportunities within the network**

Some of the network organisations in our study stated that they fulfil a 'brokering' role. That is, they mediate available funding at the donor level to national CSOs.<sup>207</sup> This type of brokering role can, however, contribute to power imbalances within the network and potentially affect the networks' legitimacy. As reported by respondents, there is considerable competition among members of a network.<sup>208</sup> The network organisation often finds itself in a difficult position when Northern-based donors ask the secretariats to advise on which national organisations to fund, or

ask the network organisation to provide a brokering or gatekeeping role for international funding. Network organisations are put in a difficult balancing act regarding which members to recommend, how to avoid perceptions of favouritism, and meeting their obligation to support as many members as possible versus their desire to maintain good relationships/credibility with the donor and hence potentially not put forward members that *in their opinion* do not perform well.<sup>209</sup>

Some CSO networks have established funds themselves through which some of their members can obtain funding. CIVICUS' New Membership Solidarity Fund enables members to support fellow members. This mechanism is entirely governed by the network members who set criteria and use advisory groups to allow certain organisations to tap the fund.<sup>210</sup> Forus also supports emerging national platforms for civil society through Solidarity Grants.<sup>211</sup> PACJA set up a sub-granting scheme in 2018 whose funds it uses to strengthen new national platforms of membership organisations.<sup>212</sup>

#### **CAN Charter: Funds raised by CAN Funds raised by the CAN Board**

87. Funds raised by CAN must first be utilised to fund the activities of the CAN Secretariat, CAN activities, and CAN publications and media.
88. Further funds raised may be specific to projects and programs, or to CAN members or Nodes, in which case they should be accounted for on this basis.
89. General funds held for assistance to members or Nodes may be distributed to members on the following conditions:
  - a) The allocation of funds is on written application by the member(s) in good standing.
  - b) The allocation has been approved by the CAN Board
  - c) The member has accounted to the CAN Secretariat to the satisfaction of the auditors for all previous allocations of funds.
  - d) The member provides proper proof of spending of funds to the satisfaction of the auditors.
90. In the allocation of funds, special consideration will be given to regions/countries/members which are short of funding to enable them to participate at General Assemblies, COPs, intersessional and expert meetings.

91. The CAN Secretariat will from time to time publish the routing of all funds within CAN and to CAN members. Any member is free to comment on and give advice to the CAN Secretariat regarding the allocation of funds raised.
92. The decisions of the CAN Board on the sourcing, administration, and distribution of funds is final, but is subject to full disclosure to CAN members and CAN membership comment.

While policy influencing is one of the main goals of most of the CSO networks partaking in this study, not all have a dedicated budget for this category of activities. All the network organisations in this study state that the type of messages and priorities in advocacy work is never compromised by funding sources or types of funding, as their networks consist of highly motivated member organisations and staff who always find ways to make ends meet. Having both variety in the type of donor and major core funding is seen as the ideal situation for networks to be more flexible, efficient and independent in their work.

### C. Resource mobilisation: challenges and good practices

#### Resource mobilisation by the network

Some CSO Networks, like the Butterfly Effect Coalition, are 'self-financed' through sources like network fees and 'in-kind' contributions from their members. There are also CSO networks that operate entirely on the basis of grants from public authorities or large donors.<sup>215</sup> For the latter category, fundraising is often done by the secretariat of the network organisation.

Over time, secretariats may raise funds independently with corresponding activities rather than being driven by the demands of their members. However, their contractual

obligations towards their funders, and because it may be quicker and less risky to hire staff themselves (or contract consultants), they risk shifting from 'engaging' members to 'informing' members.<sup>216</sup> Care should be taken not to shift from a network to an individual organisation.

Forus' funding strategy has an external and an internal component. The executive team's staff is trained on resource mobilisation and public donors and private foundations are approached for direct and indirect support. Several donors, including multilateral donors, bilateral donors and private foundations, are contacted for direct support. In terms of indirect support, Forus seeks funding through strategic partnerships and coalitions, recipients of bilateral funding who may provide funding to Forus for joint initiatives. Its funding strategy states that 'particular attention will be paid to complementarity of funding and avoiding duplication.'<sup>217</sup>

CIVICUS has had no staff dedicated to fundraising since 2012. It invests more in partnerships with donors in order to secure funding, rather than having a team of staff seeking opportunities for different types of funding.<sup>218</sup>

PACJA notes that, at present, there is a lot of goodwill and optimistic expectation among development cooperation partners with respect to working with PACJA in supporting civil society action in climate change and environment programmes in Africa. Many are reportedly waiting to see a clear plan of action from PACJA in which they can identify areas for cooperation. In response, PACJA is developing a Resource Mobilisation Strategy whose initial activities include 'putting in place management capacity, development of funding leads and a contact management system'.<sup>219</sup> Its core systems will be a donor database and tracking system and it will need to allocate sufficient staff resources to 'ensure concentrated and consistent effort'. Its 'Secretariat may also consider engaging an external consultant to support the process'.<sup>220</sup> In parallel with putting the management and information system in place,

#### Budget allocated to lobby and advocacy work

CSO network organisations	Percentage of the overall budget dedicated to lobby and advocacy work
Forus international	23% <sup>213</sup>
CIVICUS	Estimated roughly at 10-15% - this figure is not readily available given CIVICUS' current budgeting /accounting practices. <sup>214</sup>
Butterfly Effect Coalition	All its work is focused on influencing. A very small part is reserved for travel costs etc.
Climate Action Network	No information available
PACJA	No information available

the content and format of the marketing materials will have to be developed so that 'as soon as potential funding sources are identified, they can be approached with appropriate requests without delay.'<sup>221</sup>

**PACJA is developing a Resource Mobilisation Strategy which will identify the following actions to be taken.**<sup>222</sup>

- Securing personnel and management capacity for implementation of the actions to be supported.
- Development of efficient funding leads and contact management system.
- Assessment of key donor interests.
- Alignment of key messages to mainstream policy priorities and indicators such as equity, environmental rights, social and economic development, security and health – there has been a clear message from a number of development cooperation partners that PACJA's role needs to be clearly defined and adding distinctive value to what is already being undertaken by other stakeholders.
- Development of a programme action plan that ensures effective & measurable interventions which form the basis of all subsequent funding.
- Development of a network and constituency in donor countries for PACJA's work.
- Development of programmes that address donor country climate change and environmental issues.
- Development and implementation of a media and government awareness strategy.
- Development and implementation of a resource mobilisation action plan, including initial contacting, meeting individual donors, presentations to donor groups, fundraising tours, and follow-up activities.

**The risk of becoming competitors to the members**

Without realising it, network organisations become competitors of their own members when large funding institutions prefer funding network organisations to individual organisations. This may occur when donors reason that funding one single network benefits many CSOs at once.<sup>223</sup> Additionally, they may prefer funding one known network than different unknown partners. This strengthens the secretariat, but may weaken individual members when funding is mostly used to strengthen the network's secretariat. The Butterfly Effect Coalition was aware of this risk and avoided it by specifying in its Internal

Rules that it 'promotes joint initiatives without competing with (or taking over from) other international, regional and local initiatives.'<sup>224</sup> Similarly, CIVICUS has adopted a resourcing and sustainability strategy (see below) that states that 'CIVICUS does not compete with its members for funding: *'We do not respond to requests for proposals that will put us in direct competition with our members or disadvantage some members over others.'*<sup>225</sup>

**Investing in partnerships with donors**

CIVICUS explains that its relative financial sustainability is due to its established relationships with donors. The network organisation invests in strong partnerships over long periods of time, and always seeks ways to engage donors as strategic partners beyond the funding relationship. This means that it involves not only its current donors, but also ex-donors and potential donors. CIVICUS has a donor coordination group that consists of both current and former donor partners. It sustains these relationships, even where there is no strategic alignment that allows for funding. This builds trust and legitimacy in the sector and maintains CIVICUS' reputation as a reliable partner now and in the future.<sup>226</sup> PACJA emphasises that securing funds will be easier when the network organisation's leadership has good 'marketing skills'. Personal motivation, and truly believing in the capacities of the network organisation, help leadership persuade the right people.

**Reserve fund**

CIVICUS' Board of Directors actively monitors financial sustainability and has a five-year projection table with an overview of different donors. This enables the Board to track new grants and assess the status of negotiations with different donors. The Board was aware of the need to oversee the sometimes messy scenario of fund diversification. It oversees a reserve fund, which was US\$ 1.5 million in 2018. This is reportedly enough to cover a four-month period, but the aim is to build up a six-month reserve. Funds are set aside every year for the reserve. The Board of Directors must approve any spending from the reserve fund.<sup>227</sup>

**Relevance of the networks' mission**

CIVICUS believes that the fact that the network is rewarded with enough access to funding is also due to the nature and mission of the organisation. Its 'uniqueness', plus the growing restrictions and pressure on CSOs makes CIVICUS' work even more important.<sup>228</sup> Significantly, its financial sustainability is moreover largely embedded in *'having a mission that resonates with the kind of objectives of our partners.'*<sup>229</sup>

These objectives are, however, not set in stone unless networks continuously adapt their strategies and missions to donors' liking. As observed by the Butterfly Effect Coalition, there is a tendency among Northern donor agencies to move away from funding civil society to funding upcoming causes like 'young entrepreneurship', for instance.<sup>230</sup> On top of this, networks with missions that go against established opinions or practices need to be financially able to represent voices even though they may dissent from the general opinions or objectives of donor agencies. It can therefore become a difficult balancing act between adherence to a changing donor priority environment, and the mission of the network's constituency.

### The advantages of a 'resource mobilisation policy'

Resource mobilisation policies help ensure that by undertaking fundraising activities, the organisation retains its reputation and adheres to its membership's values. These policies moreover make the network's financial support base transparent. Policies may impose requirements on the acceptance of funds, for instance that: funds shall not damage the network's reputation; donors do not contradict the network's mission, aims and objectives; there is no attempt on the part of the donor to influence the network's policy or actions; and donors must meet relevant national or international standards, and abide by relevant regulations.<sup>231</sup>

*'We ensure that projects for which we raise funds reflect our mission, priorities, and that neither the funding opportunities we pursue, nor the requirements of funders, will deflect us from our strategic objectives.'* And *'We will not solicit or accept gifts from individuals, governments or organisations that might use their funding relationship with Amnesty International UK to deflect criticism from their own involvement in human rights abuses, or with whom association would significantly risk our reputation.'* Amnesty International Fundraising Policy<sup>232</sup>

Resource mobilisation policies can also define the role of the secretariat in raising funds and establish criteria that ensure that funding is aligned with members' priorities and helps the secretariat avoid becoming a competitor to the latter.

It is important that fundraising policies are reviewed from time to time as values, membership and priorities may change over the years. CIVICUS recently reviewed its policy, and included some additional points that reflect the vision and values of its network. It has contributed to important discussions on the values of the organisation – values that were always known by staff and members, but that had never have been formulated and articulated.

### Resourcing & Sustainability Strategy, 2017-2022

- CIVICUS seeks funding and support from a number of different actors representing private foundations, government agencies etc., so that **we are not dependent on any single source**. *Our ambition is for no one donor to make up more than 25% of our total income.*
- CIVICUS aims to **diversify its donor portfolio**. *Complementary to this approach, CIVICUS will engage progressive, mission-aligned philanthropies in its membership.*
- CIVICUS seeks to **increase support coming from Southern actors** (public and private). *Donors from the Global South, emerging economies or countries that are newer to development cooperation, included.*
- CIVICUS strives to **become more independent through income-generating activities**. *Any income generation should also be mission-aligned and contribute to our strategic goals.*
- CIVICUS **prioritises long-term, flexible support** (i.e. core funding) that allows us to be responsive to the changing context and needs of the alliance. *This approach is reflected in our civil society resourcing advocacy and the CIVICUS Solidarity Fund.*
- CIVICUS **does not accept funds which would compromise members' legitimacy (real or perceived)**. *Historically, CIVICUS has not accepted US Government funding on the advice of members in Latin America and the Middle East.*
- CIVICUS **does not compete with its members for funding**. *We do not respond to requests for proposals that will put us in direct competition with our members or disadvantage some members over others.*
- CIVICUS supports consortium arrangements that help us **to deliver more, better coordinated and holistic support to our constituencies**. *We adhere to the principles of development effectiveness.*
- CIVICUS attempts to model the behaviours we advocate for with the donor community in our own sub-granting. **Our sub-granting practices should 'shift the power' to constituents** in terms of *decision-making, accountability and funding approach; provide flexible, predictable funds, complemented by other types of support; and cater for movement building and a diversity of civil society actors.*<sup>233</sup>

*"There were all these kind of things that we already knew, because they were just what we had always done. But it was interesting to go back and try to articulate why we do or do not do certain things."<sup>234</sup>*

For instance, it was common knowledge among staff that 'we do not take United States Government funding', although it was really not known why they would decline funding from this source. The process of articulating these issues in the funding policy revealed that this was based on perceptions from members in Latin America and the Middle East who felt that their credibility in the eyes of their constituency would be undermined if the network accepted grants from the United States. In its policy, CIVICUS included the clause that it does not accept funds that would compromise members' legitimacy, either real or perceived.<sup>235</sup>

Since its very beginning, CIVICUS has intentionally not participated in certain calls for proposals with global consortia, worried that it would become a competitor to its own members. Its policy recently articulates that 'CIVICUS does not compete with its members for funding'. This now gives staff something on paper to refer to for clarity and explanation when requests or situations come up.<sup>236</sup>

## 6. Findings

CSO network organisations play key roles in national and international political decision-making. Their legitimacy is central to this role. That legitimacy depends on on-going communication with many stakeholders that articulate the values and priorities underlying their work and how they will be accountable. Financial sustainability is central to the networks' viability and their ability to autonomously implement members' priorities, including L&A work. This study found some critical issues and learned lessons in how networks guard their legitimacy and financial sustainability.

### A. Findings on ensuring the legitimacy of CSO network organisations

**The purpose and reasons why members decided to form a network is important for legitimacy.** If financial resources are the primary motivation for creating or joining a network, members drop out when funding inevitably declines or ends. A **networks' shared organisational identity is crucial for its legitimacy**: it forms 'the glue among members' and underpins their active participation in the network.

It is important for a network organisation to track the factors and circumstances that influence the development of the various roles adopted by the network organisation. **Shifts in organisational roles and a change in priorities should foremost be based on 'trends' as observed among its membership.** Trends can be picked up by the networks' governing bodies and translated into new strategies. It is important that this 'translation' is then fed back to members so they can give their feedback and consent.

Network organisations need to be careful that their effective functioning, fundraising opportunities and institutionalised governance structures **do not lead to their becoming yet another more powerful, individual voice.** Moreover, networks must continuously remain **innovative and creative** so that members consider their membership a plus.

The larger networks become the more they tend to move away from trying to 'speak with one voice'. Networks with a growing diverse membership have come to realise that there is more of a need to **support individual voices than trying to form a single voice.**

Network organisations that do claim they are voicing the needs of their diverse constituencies on the ground, need to realise that these voices have gone a long way up from local levels into national platforms, and eventually into messages brought forward by the network organisation. It is therefore crucial that participatory mechanisms are in place that **track whether constituencies are well represented** through participatory practices of their regional or national platforms.

Members should not only participate in decision-making based on developed strategies, but also actively participate in **defining the course of the network from the outset.**

The networks' **legitimacy may be at risk when its membership consists of different types of members.** Questions arise as to the **weighting of votes and level of influencing power** when members range between individuals and large CSOs (with a constituency of thousands of individuals) or research institutions, for instance.

Another consideration regarding a networks' legitimacy is whether **membership organisations' engagement with networks is predicated on particular individuals** within that organisation. Participation and influencing in the network may be based on a single person instead of the entire organisation and its different offices, be they local or worldwide.

In order to better reflect the character of a network, **members, and especially southern members, should be more involved in becoming the 'face' of the network and its advocacy messages,** rather than only a few persons from the secretariat attending all the political events and conferences.

**Vertical hierarchies** are sometimes created in which **one-way communication streams form an obstacle for the active participation of member organisations.** Moreover, **practical barriers** may stand in the way of members being heard. These barriers may consist of language barriers, weak communication, slow Internet connections, or capacity issues such as a lack of financial resources or knowledge. This leads to members becoming detached from network activities – putting the network's credibility at risk.

One of the commonly cited challenges in networks is the **inactiveness of members**. Frequently, secretariats take increasing responsibility in implementing advocacy initiatives. This is largely due to **funding restraints in the member organisations**: the more time – paid or unpaid – spent on network activities, the more members' own CSO work suffers.

CSO network organisations use several strategies to motivate their membership to be actively involved. A recurring event may be the **catalyst** towards which members work with a collective mission. **Face-to-face meetings** are also an effective means to establish personal relationships that lead to enhanced involvement with network activities. To avoid long distance travel, which is costly and has a negative environmental impact, and during the current Covid-19 period, other smart ways of communicating and activating members must be considered. Open dialogue and the use of programmes such as Google Documents can be used to work on a theme with several people simultaneously. Webinars and group calls that allow people to dial in from landlines allow everyone to participate, even when Internet connections are interrupted.

Many network organisations activate members by installing **'working groups'** made up of members that stimulate each other around a particular theme. Some network organisations sign MoUs with members to ensure active participation. Lastly, some network organisations in this study have considered **membership fees** as a means to increase the ownership of networks' activities by their members.

A network's ability to represent its growing membership is an important factor in remaining legitimate in the eyes of the actors it aims to influence. It may therefore need to track whether it still sufficiently represents its membership and to **set criteria** that ensure meaningful representation is safeguarded in the future. A **targeted membership development strategy** may guide this process.

Generally, members' diverse missions, values and focus areas can strengthen a network by increasing the range of ideas and its reach. Yet diversity can also lead to more difficult decision-making and a failure to represent all the members. It is therefore crucial to **create detailed organisational documents**, such as codes of conduct and charters with core values and approaches to prevent conflicting views among members and avoid delays in decision-making processes.

**Differences in financial resources and capacities among members lead to power imbalances in the network.** For example, they affect the members' ability

to actively participate and contribute to advocacy efforts. The study also revealed power imbalances in terms of the **weight given to interventions by differing members**. Network organisations often **fail to include or highlight community level knowledge** in their internal and external communication such as advocacy, research or policy briefs, because the evidence was not externally evaluated and formally validated.<sup>237</sup> Other challenges to equal power relations include the **network organisations' failure to address communication and language barriers**.<sup>238</sup>

**Governance structures must not be an obstacle to a network's 'representative' function.** When decision-making powers are centralised in certain member organisations or in a few responsible persons, members of CSO networks may consider these leadership structures overly dominant. Putting mechanisms in place that foster the network's 'representative' function and provide clarity about whom to involve in what decisions can be a way to maintain a balanced network.

There is a reported **power imbalance between the global North and global South** that is apparent in a knowledge collection gap, and in Northern-based members of networks often having well-established connections to the international policy-making arena and more experience in accessing available funding than their fellow members in the South. Other challenges to equal power relations consist of the failure to address communication and language barriers. It is therefore critical that networks ensure a North-South harmony and base the division of labour between Northern and Southern members on mutual agreements. **Acknowledging that Southern-based CSOs have more knowledge on the issues and priorities at stake in their regions is crucial and must be reflected in networks' governance positions, meetings and strategies.**

**The more clearly the network organisation can produce information and data that indicate performance and impacts, the more credible the case for legitimacy.** Regular updates on activities, for instance through newsletters and face-to-face or online meetings, are important. The DevResults<sup>239</sup> system can be used to assist network organisations in tracking programme, progress and organisational results data. **Mechanisms to receive feedback and complaints** are also an important barometer for networks' performance.

The need to be accountable to key stakeholders as the basis for legitimacy has been generally well implemented among CSO networks. The challenge is to **balance high accountability standards with space for responsiveness, flexibility and innovation.**

Rules and assessments on members **carrying out activities or releasing statements in the name of the network** need also be developed to **protect the network's credibility**.

**Monitoring and evaluation are often based on expectations set by external parties and are, to a much lesser degree, designed for their own membership and constituency.** Donor interests are different to the interests of other stakeholders, and their evaluations may not serve other stakeholders well. Some network organisations therefore create additional systems to support their own learning and to inform their membership on activities.

The legitimacy of a network is heavily influenced by its reputation and the perception of external stakeholders of the network. This again is largely shaped by the credibility of its individual members. **Standards can be developed to guide member organisations in being accountable to their constituencies** as well as to the network's principles, and to evaluate and communicate on their activities. The network can also help **build the credibility of individual organisations through capacity building initiatives**. One example is the Resilient Roots programme which builds the capacity of its members to be accountable to their constituencies. In doing so, Resilient Roots safeguards their legitimacy.<sup>240</sup>

## **B. Findings on the financial sustainability of network organisations**

Most of the networks in this study rely on **external** funding from either public or private sources for the continuity of their organisation. They also rely on in-kind contributions from members rather than financial contributions. A few of them, however, are **considering introducing membership fees to create an increased sense of ownership of the network by its members**. Constraints to imposing membership fees include the current inability of their members to pay contributions.

Networks should take into account that the **most valuable sources of funding for their organisations are the contributions by members**, either financial or in-kind. This is the most effective way of helping them remain meaningful and accountable to members and members' primary constituents.

Institutional, or core, funding helps CSO network organisations autonomously perform L&A work and enables them to build a professional organisation with adequate human and other resources. Network organisations,

however, emphasise that there are limitations to institutional support as the funding is still earmarked. **Limitations to core funding are felt in the type of work (L&A), in areas to be reached, and the type of programme recipients. A combination of core funding and various donors gives network organisations greater flexibility to develop their activities and be more financially resilient in the medium term in implementing their strategies.**

**All CSO network organisations interviewed in this study indicate that funding security does not impact the content of their plans and strategies.** Although plans are made according to members' priorities and are not influenced by available funding, it takes much effort at later stages to ensure that commonly agreed activities and priorities are implemented with the available budgets mobilised by the network.

Network organisations often find themselves in a **difficult position** when Northern-based donors **ask secretariats to advise on which national organisations to fund** or ask them to **play a brokering or gatekeeping role for international funding**. Network organisations need to avoid perceptions of favouritism and abide by their obligations to support as many members as possible.

Northern donors' accountability rules are often 'managerial' in nature, that is they 'focus on measurable results and measures to minimise financial risk'.<sup>241</sup> This may have **considerable impacts on the legitimacy of network organisations towards their membership** as they are bound to stringent accountability relationships with their donors.

Investing in strong **partnerships with donors** over long periods of time can create more financial sustainability. Donors can moreover be engaged as strategic partners beyond the funding relationship, building trust and legitimacy in the sector and retaining the network's status as a reliable long-term partner. Additionally, the **'marketing skills', personal motivation, persuading capacities of leadership** can help to build sustainable funding relationships.

It is helpful when networks have a mission that resonates with donor's priorities. But this can change according to trends in donor priorities or the political sensitivity of the network's mission for instance. It can thus be a **difficult balancing act for networks** between keeping up with a changing funding environment and the mission of its constituency.



**Resource mobilisation policies** help ensure that by undertaking fundraising activities, the organisation retains its reputation and adheres to its membership's values. The policies can also establish rules to prevent network organisations becoming unconscious competitors to their own members. Resource mobilisation policies create greater transparency on the network's financial support base. It is important that resource mobilisation policies are **reviewed from time to time**, as values, membership and priorities may change over the years. Discussions around the policy can moreover contribute to important discussions on the values of the organisation.

### C. Final remarks

This study addresses research questions that are central to CSO network organisations. Their credibility and authority are largely grounded in their ability to speak on behalf of many organisations and associated constituencies. At the same time, their added value is often contested and they increasingly find themselves in positions where they need to defend the networks' relevance.<sup>242</sup> They moreover need to maintain accountability relationships with different stakeholders. On top of this, they need to ensure that they are financially viable, without compromising the priorities of their members and maintaining good relationships with their donors.

Although there are limitations to this study in terms of scope and research time, the value of this study is twofold. One, it has succeeded in providing an informative overview of the concepts and issues related to 'legitimacy' and 'financial sustainability' of CSO networks. Two, it has discussed the shared experiences and challenges across network organisations of all types. The study furthermore sheds light on the relationship between legitimacy and financial sustainability.

The findings of this study were shared during a webinar with Watershed partners. Representatives from these network organisations confirmed that the findings of the study resonate with their experiences as part of different global networks and their secretariats. They consider it important to share these findings among their members and networks to trigger conversation about the challenges of guarding the networks' legitimacy and their financial sustainability (*without threatening their legitimacy*).

Some suggestions made by the global and regional WASH CSO networks to take the study results forward and increase their applicability, include the following.

1. Create a summary of key findings and main recommendations that are easy to share among more parties.
2. Create a 'tool' or 'checklist' that acts as an informative overview of the concept of legitimacy and financial sustainability. This helps to better understand what is needed to guard a network's legitimacy and to strive for financial sustainability without negatively impacting the former.
3. Build on this study with more interviews and desktop research to add to the findings and good practices found so far.
4. Carry out a new study that focuses on *the impact* that WASH CSO networks have, their added value and effectiveness. Sharing success stories could potentially strengthen their general legitimacy.

# Annex 1 - Research questions

**The central research questions are the following.**

1. How do the selected CSO networks guarantee their legitimacy? What are good practices and lessons learned?
2. How do the selected CSO networks most successfully ensure long-term financial sustainability for independent and autonomous L&A work? What are good practices and lessons learned?

**The sub questions are the following.**

## **A. On legitimacy**

1. **What structures or mechanisms are in place to ensure a network's legitimacy with regard to their representation?**
  - a. On the meaningful participation and communication with members.
  - b. On its raison d'être and its added value.
  - c. On its accountability towards members and funders.
2. **What are good practices in enhancing/ ensuring strong legitimacy? This part should include the efforts that help maximise the functioning and benefits of the existing structures and mechanisms etc.**
  - a. How do CSO networks successfully ensure that their constituency meaningfully participates in their L&A decisions, plans and activities, including message creation and delivery? How is both horizontal and vertical consultation ensured among members (national, regional, international) and the network organisation?
  - b. How does the network continuously ensure its added value for operating as a network (with regard to L&A activities)?
  - c. How does the network ensure its accountability towards members?
  - d. How does the network organisations define their raison d'être and keep control over external factors that influence the roles that they adopt?
3. **What are lessons learned? Question on what worked, what not and why?**

## **B. On financial sustainability**

1. **What type of financing structure/ income basis is used for the network – and in connection to its members in order to ensure financial sustainability?**
  - a. What role do membership organisations play in fundraising activities by the network? Does the secretariat fundamentally rely on contributions from the members? Can members only meaningfully participate if they finance the network? Or is it also the concern of the secretariat to financially support (fundraise for) its members?
  - b. Does the network have a multi-annual plan with a corresponding multi-annual budget? What percentage of the total financing of the multi-annual plan/budget is usually covered/ensured?
  - c. What is the percentage the total budget allocated to L&A? How are these costs funded?
2. **What strategies/tools or good practices are in place to obtain sustainable long-term funding (as opposed to short term activity based funding?). What type of sources and donors do they come from? And,**
  - a. what part of the funding comes from a government or government agency and how does this influence the agenda/ activities/ accountability by the network?
3. **What are lessons learned on how to best achieve financial sustainability? And,**
  - a. what are lessons learned on balancing financial sustainability and legitimacy (i.e. to obtain as much funding as possible while remaining independent of donors)?
  - b. what are the lessons learned on the relationship between legitimacy and financial sustainability if any?

## Annex 2: List of resources

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# Notes

1. Note that CIVICUS is included in this study even though any natural or legal person or entity can become a CIVICUS Member, as long as certain criteria are met. More information on: <https://www.civicus.org/index.php/membership-policy>
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5. Liebler and Ferri, 2004, p. 15.
6. Fenomena, 2019 p. 12.
7. Taela 2015, p. 38.
8. Ashman, D. et al., 2005, p. 8.
9. Ashman, D. et al., 2005, p. 8.
10. Fenomena, 2019 p. 4 and Ashman, D. et al., 2005, p. 8.
11. Fenomena, 2019 p. 11, 12.
12. Liebler and Ferri, 2004, p. 4.
13. Ashman, D. et al., 2005, p. 4.
14. Liebler and Ferri, 2004, p. 4 and Ashman, D. et al., 2005, p. 7.
15. Ashman, D. et al., 2005, p. 7.
16. MAVA 2018, p. 6.
17. MAVA 2018, p. 6.
18. MAVA 2018, p. 1.
19. <https://www.vocabulary.com/dictionary/legitimacy>
20. <https://www.lexico.com/definition/legitimate>
21. Suchman 1995, p. 574.
22. Based on: Brown and Jagadananda, 2007, p. 7.
23. Brown and Jagadananda, 2007, p. 5.
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27. Goris et al., 2020, p. 19.
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31. Brown and Jagadananda, 2007, p.17.
32. Ashman, D. et al., 2005, p. 8.
33. Elbers et al., 2019, p. 6.
34. See for example CIVICUS 2015, p. 3.
35. Brown and Jagadananda, 2007, p. 17.
36. Taela, K. 2005, p. 30.
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38. Interview CIVICUS, 5 June 2020.
39. James, R. and Malunga, C., 2006, p. 49.
40. Interview with CAN, 22 May 2020.
41. From interview with PACJA, 19 June 2020.
42. Global Environment Facility Independent Evaluation Office, 2016, executive summary.
43. <https://civicspacewatch.eu/civil-society-accountability-in-times-of-declining-trust-civiccuss-journey/>
44. Interview with Climate Action Network, 22 May 2020.

45. Interview with Climate Action Network, 22 May 2020.
46. James, R. and Malunga, C., 2006. p. 49.
47. CAN Charter, art. 2.
48. Fenomena, 2019, p. 11 .
49. See: <https://www.pacja.org/our-projects>
50. Interview with PACJA, 19 June 2020.
51. In: Forus International, Strategic Plan 2016-2020, p. 35.
52. CIVICUS Annual Report 2018-2019, p. 35.
53. CIVICUS Annual Report 2018-2019, p. 35.
54. CIVICUS Annual Report 2018-2019, p. 35.
55. From <http://forus-international.org/en/about-us/what-we-do>
56. Interview with PACJA, 19 June 2020.
57. In: Forus International, Strategic Plan 2016-2020, p. 35.
58. Nowottny and Aspinall, 2020, p. 6.
59. CAN Charter art. 35-41.
60. Interview with CIVICUS, 5 June 2020.
61. Members include: foundations, civil society organisations, national or regional civil society platforms or networks, social movements, and individuals who have attained recognition in their communities and/ or among their peers. See: <https://www.civicus.org/index.php/membership-policy>
62. Interview with CIVICUS, 5 June 2020.
63. Interview with CIVICUS, 5 June 2020.
64. Interview with Butterfly Effect Coalition, on 19 May 2020.
65. Interview with Butterfly Effect Coalition, on 19 May 2020.
66. Taela, 2015, pp. 39, 62.
67. Taela, 2015, pp. 39.
68. Fenomena 2019, p.11.
69. Blogpost CIVICUS, 19 January 2019.
70. From interview with CIVICUS, 6 June 2020.
71. Forus International Annual report 2018, p. 11.
72. Topsøe-Jensen, B. et al., 2018, p. 30.
73. At: <https://www.civicus.org/index.php/media-resources/news/blog/4042-enabling-members-to-truly-drive-the-civicus-alliance> and at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MNwWVgHh1gw>.
74. Interview with Butterfly Effect Coalition on 19 May 2020.
75. Forus International Annual Report 2018, p. 10.
76. CIVICUS Annual Report 2019.
77. Interview with Butterfly Effect Coalition on 19 May 2020.
78. Interview with CAN on 22 May 2020.
79. CAN Charter, art. 29-31.
80. As explained on: <https://www.civicus.org/index.php/who-we-are/about-civicus>. At CIVICUS any natural or legal person or entity can become a CIVICUS Member, as long as certain criteria are met. More information on: <https://www.civicus.org/index.php/membership-policy>.
81. See: <https://www.civicus.org/index.php/get-involved/become-a-member/>.
82. See more at: <https://www.civicus.org/index.php/membership-policy>.
83. Webinar with Watershed partners, 15 July 2020.
84. From interview with CIVICUS, 5 June 2020.
85. Email from contact person at WSSCC, 21 July 2020, on file with author.
86. Fenomena 2019, p.11-12.
87. James, R. and Malunga, C., 2006, p. 50.
88. Interview with Butterfly Effect Coalition, 19 May 2020.
89. James, R. and C. Malunga, C., 2006, pp. 50-57.
90. Interview with Butterfly Effect Coalition held on 19 May 2020.
91. Email from contact person at WSSCC, 21 July 2020, on file with author.
92. Feedback from Coalition Eau, email 24 July 2020, on file with author.

93. Interview with Butterfly Effect Coalition held on 19 May 2020.
94. Interview with Butterfly Effect Coalition held on 19 May 2020.
95. From Interview with CAN, 22 May 2020.
96. Interview with Butterfly Effect Coalition held on 19 May 2020.
97. James, R. and Malunga, C., 2006, p. 51.
98. CIVICUS Annual Report 2018-2019: <https://www.civicus.org/documents/reports-and-publications/annual-reports/annual-report-2019-en.pdf>.
99. Based on Clark, 2003, p. 24.
100. Forus International Annual Report 2018, p. 9.
101. CIVICUS, Annual Report 2018-2019, p.36.
102. From Interview with CAN, 22 May 2020.
103. Webinar with Watershed partners, 15 July 2020.
104. CAN Charter, art. 14.
105. Ashman, D. et al., 2005, pp. 9-10.
106. Delia Villagrasa in Climate Action Network, 2014, p. 81.
107. From interview with CIVICUS, 5 June 2020.
108. Brown and Jagadananda, 2007, p. 28.
109. Interview with PACJA, 19 June 2020.
110. Based on feedback from a contact person at WSSCC, email 21 July 2020 – on file with author.
111. Clark, 2003, p. 24-25.
112. Interview with PACJA, 19 June 2020.
113. Ashman, D. et al., 2005, p.
114. Ashman, D. et al., 2005, p.
115. James, R. and Malunga, C., 2006, p. 51 and Church 2003 p. 40.
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119. James, R. and Malunga, C., 2006, p. 51.
120. CIVICUS Annual Report 2018-2019.
121. Global Environment Facility Independent Evaluation Office, 2016, executive summary and James, R. and Malunga, C., 2006, p. 51.
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125. MAVA, 2018, p. 12.
126. Interview with CAN, 22 May 2020.
127. CAN Charter art. 35-47.
128. Internal Rules Butterfly Effect Coalition, October 2016.
129. Amnesty International (2000), in Clark, 2003, p. 22.
130. Interview with CAN.
131. Information available on the website: <https://www.pacja.org/index.php/about-us/who-we-are>.
132. Haynes et al., 2019.
133. Clark, 2003, p. 23.
134. Jim Delaney's views as reflected in Blogpost Luseka, 2020.
135. Clark, 2003, p. 27.
136. Luseka, 2020.
137. Blogpost CIVICUS, 19 January 2019.
138. Blogpost CIVICUS, 19 January 2019.
139. Brown and Jagadananda, 2007, p.37.
140. Interview with PACJA, 19 June 2020.
141. CAN Charter, art. 120, 134.
142. Art. 10 Internal Rules October 2016.



143. Brown and Jagadananda, 2007, p. 25.
144. Brown and Jagadananda, 2007, p. 22 .
145. PACJA 2016-2020 Strategy, p.19.
146. <https://www.devresults.com/>
147. Blogpost CIVICUS, 19 January 2019.
148. Blogpost CIVICUS, 19 January 2019.
149. Blogpost CIVICUS, 19 January 2019.
150. Blogpost CIVICUS, 19 January 2019.
151. <https://civicspacewatch.eu/civil-society-accountability-in-times-of-declining-trust-civiccuss-journey/>
152. <https://www.civicus.org/index.php/feedback>
153. <https://accountablenow.org/our-work/reporting/>
154. <https://accountablenow.org/our-work/reporting/>
155. CIVICUS 2018, P. 5.
156. CAN Charter Art. 64.
157. CAN Charter Art. 69.
158. See ACFID, 2011.
159. ACFID, 2011, p.16.
160. Spierenburg et al., 2019, p. 11.
161. CIVICUS 2015 p.3.
162. James, R. and Malunga, C., 2006, p. 58.
163. See Ebrahim, 2005, p. 813.
164. Topsøe-Jensen, B. et al, 2018, p. 23.
165. Brown and Jagadananda, 2007, p. 22.
166. More information on: <http://forus-international.org/en/news/ifp-steers-the-first-edition-of-the-leadership-development-program-for-csos>
167. See: <https://www.civicus.org/index.php/what-we-do/innovate/resilient-roots>
168. Climate Action Network, 2014, p. 60.
169. See Annual Report 2017, p. 9.
170. More information on website: <https://www.pacja.org/our-projects> and in 2016-2020 Strategy.
171. Forus International, Strategic Plan 2016-2020, p. 25.
172. Forus International, Strategic Plan 2016-2020, p. 25.
173. Forus International, Annual Report 2018, p. 13.
174. Available at: <http://forus-international.org/en/resources/toolkits>
175. Forus International, Annual Report 2018, p. 12.
176. Forus International, Strategic Plan 2016-2020, p. 35.
177. Interview with the Butterfly Effect Coalition held on 19 May 2020.
178. Ebrahim, A., 2010.
179. Interview with CAN, 22 May 2020.
180. Interview with PACJA, 19 June 2020.
181. The International Secretariat for Water (ISW) and Solidarity Water Europe (SWE) are movements headquartered in Montreal, Canada and Strasbourg, France respectively. See <https://www.sie-see.org/en/>.
182. Interview with Butterfly Effect, 19 May 2020.
183. Forus International, Strategic Plan 2016-2020, p. 38.
184. Based on numbers in 2018: <https://forus.ams3.digitaloceanspaces.com/production/documents/RA2018-EN-web.pdf>.
185. From interview with CIVICUS, 5 June 2020.
186. Membership contributions are allocated to the CIVICUS Solidarity Fund (<https://www.civicus.org/index.php/what-we-do/defend/solidarity-fund>) which enables members to support fellow members. This mechanism is entirely governed by a Member Advisory Group that establishes eligibility criteria and determines funding awards. From interview CIVICUS, 5 June 2020.
187. Interview with CAN, 22 May 2020.
188. Based on numbers in 2018: <https://forus.ams3.digitaloceanspaces.com/production/documents/RA2018-EN-web.pdf>.
189. CIVICUS Annual Report 2018-2019 and Financial Statements 2019: <http://www.civicus.org/documents/CIVICUSAggregatedSignedAFS-30June2019.pdf>.

190. Information from correspondence with Butterfly Effect Coalition, email on 24 June 2020. On file with author.
191. Based on Annual Report 2017.
192. Interview with CIVICUS, 5 June 2020.
193. Ashman, D. et al., 2005, p. 14.
194. Information from correspondence with Forus international, email on 8 July 2020. On file with author.
195. Interview with CAN, 22 May 2020.
196. This is due to rules set by the US Government on the classification of 'non-profit organisations' that does not allow for more than 20% of received funding to be spent on lobby activities. Explained in interview with CIVICUS, 5 June 2020.
197. From interviews with CIVICUS, 5 June 2020, and CAN, 22 May 2020.
198. Interview with CIVICUS, 5 June 2020.
199. Interview with Butterfly Effect Coalition, 19 May 2020.
200. Goris et al., 2020, p. 29.
201. Nencel et al. 2019; Van Wessel et al., 2019; Elbers et al., 2019; Verschuuren et al., 2019, in Goris, 2020, p.27.
202. Elbers et al., 2019, p. 6; Verschuuren et al., 2019; Goris et al., 2020, p. 27.
203. Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2014, p. 6.
204. Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2014, pp. 5, 7, 8.
205. Nencel et al., 2019; Elbers et al., 2019, Spierenburg et al., 2019, in Goris et al., p. 27.
206. Interview with CIVICUS, 5 June 2020.
207. Including Forus international, CAN and CIVICUS, for instance.
208. Webinar with Watershed partners, 15 July 2020.
209. Email from contact person at WSSCC, 21 July 2020, on file with author.
210. From interview CIVICUS, 5 June 2020.
211. Forus International, Annual Report 2018, p. 11.
212. Interview with PACJA, 19 June 2020.
213. Forus International, Strategic Plan 2016-2020, p. 38.
214. It is estimated at 10-15% but this is difficult to calculate based on varying definitions of lobbying and advocacy activities, and CIVICUS' internal budgeting/accounting which does not allocate funding by function but by teams and projects. Email by contact person CIVICUS, 17 June 2020.
215. MAVA 2018, p. 6.
216. Banks, N., Hulme, D., 2012, p. 31 onwards.
217. Forus International, Strategic Plan 2016-2020, p. 38.
218. Interview with CIVICUS, 5 June 2020.
219. PACJA Strategic Plan 2016-2020, p. 37.
220. PACJA Strategic Plan 2016-2020, p. 37.
221. PACJA Strategic Plan 2016-2020, p. 37.
222. PACJA Strategic Plan 2016-2020, p. 37.
223. James, R. and Malunga, C., 2006.p. 54.
224. Internal Rules, 2016, Article 1.
225. CIVICUS Resourcing & Sustainability Strategy, 2017-2022.
226. Interview with CIVICUS, 5 June 2020.
227. Topsøe-Jensen, B. et al, 2018. p. 23.
228. Interview with CIVICUS, 5 June 2020.
229. Interview with CIVICUS, 5 June 2020.
230. Interview with Butterfly Effect Coalition, on 19 May 2020.
231. Based on an example of Cambridge Live' fundraising policy <https://www.cambridgelive.org.uk/support-us>.
232. Amnesty International UK Fundraising Policy. Available at: <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/files/AIUK%20Fundraising%20Policy.pdf>.
233. Resourcing & Sustainability Strategy, 2017-2022, p. 3. On file with author.
234. Interview with CIVICUS, 5 June 2020.
235. Interview with CIVICUS, 5 June 2020.
236. Interview with CIVICUS, 5 June 2020.
237. Based on feedback provided by contact person from WSSCC, email 21 July 2020 – on file with author.
238. Clark, 2003, pp. 24-25.

239. <https://www.devresults.com/>

240. see: <https://www.civicus.org/index.php/what-we-do/innovate/resilient-roots>

241. Nencel et al., 2019; Elbers et al., 2019, Spierenburg et al., 2019, in Goris et al., p. 27.

242. Based on feedback received from respondents to this study. On file with author.

