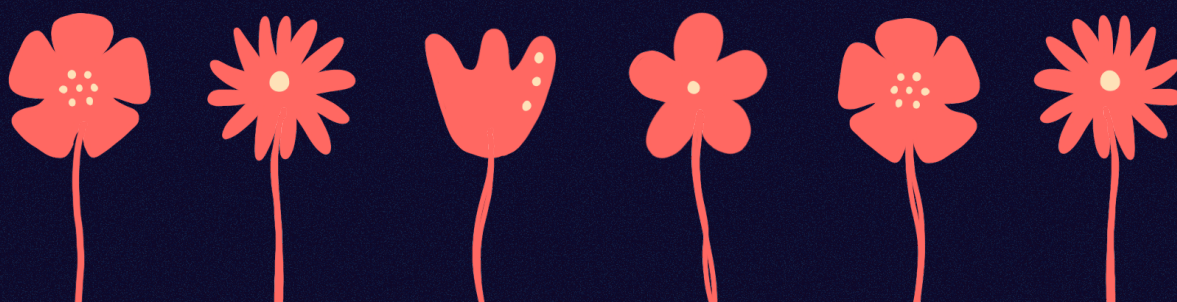




LOCAL LEADERSHIP LABS
Theory of Change - First Update

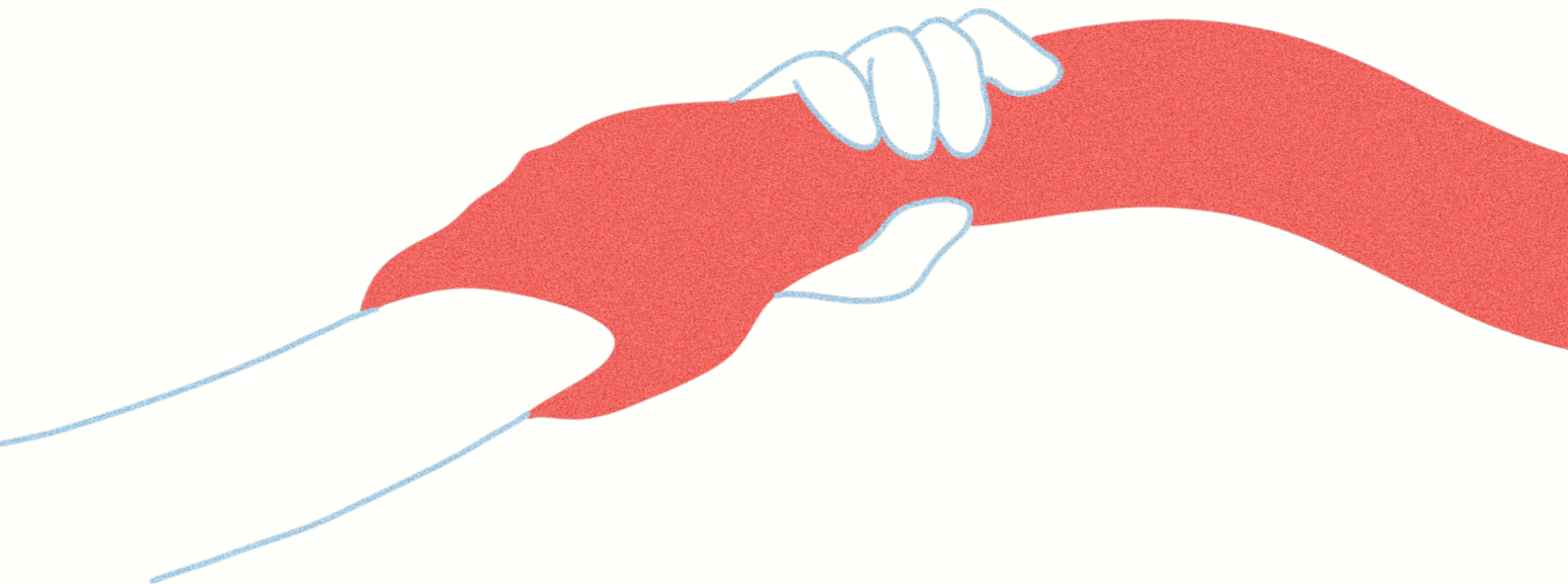


INTRODUCTION

Our vision is of strengthened civil society and civic action that drives locally led development processes, advances expanded civic and democratic space, human rights and a more just, equitable and sustainable world. We expect that the Local Leadership Labs initiative will contribute directly to this vision.

The Theory of Change underpinning the Local Leadership Labs is based on the principle that the initiative is locally owned and locally led, and focuses on solutions that are context specific, building on what we know about practicing constituency accountability, creating safe and inclusive dialogue spaces, and facilitating locally led and co-created processes.

More specifically, we will ensure that the design and implementation of the Local Leadership Labs reflect our common values.



OUR VALUES

Locally Driven

Diverse local civil society actors in the Global South will be the key drivers of the initiative in the ways they will deem more appropriate to their contexts; NEAR and CIVICUS will stand accountable to them and play a catalyst and connector role.

Power- building

The work will be informed by a power-building lens (redistributing power, building collective power, organizing power holders and transforming power structures) centering the political power of diverse local civil society groups and activists representing traditionally excluded communities.

Radically Inclusive

Challenging basic assumptions; prioritizing co-created approaches that unleash collective leadership and shared ownership; and ensuring that no policy or solution will be decided without the full and direct participation of members of the group(s) directly affected by that policy or solution.

Systems Thinking

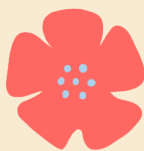
Recognizing that systems change requires new mindsets, cultures, tools, processes and organizing approaches, this initiative will catalyze collaborative leadership and shared ownership across sectors at various levels to unleash the potential for transformative change through relational and experimental trust-building, co-designed solutions and peer learning.

Cultivating Accountability

The initiative will accelerate existing processes or commitments through intentional coordination and complementarity and by creating conditions for mutual accountability between decision makers and local civil society groups.

Reflective

A collective learning mindset will be cultivated to help acknowledge our own biases and silos, stimulate innovation, ongoing adaptation, evidence-based change and to foster periodic reflection to support deep (transformative) learning.

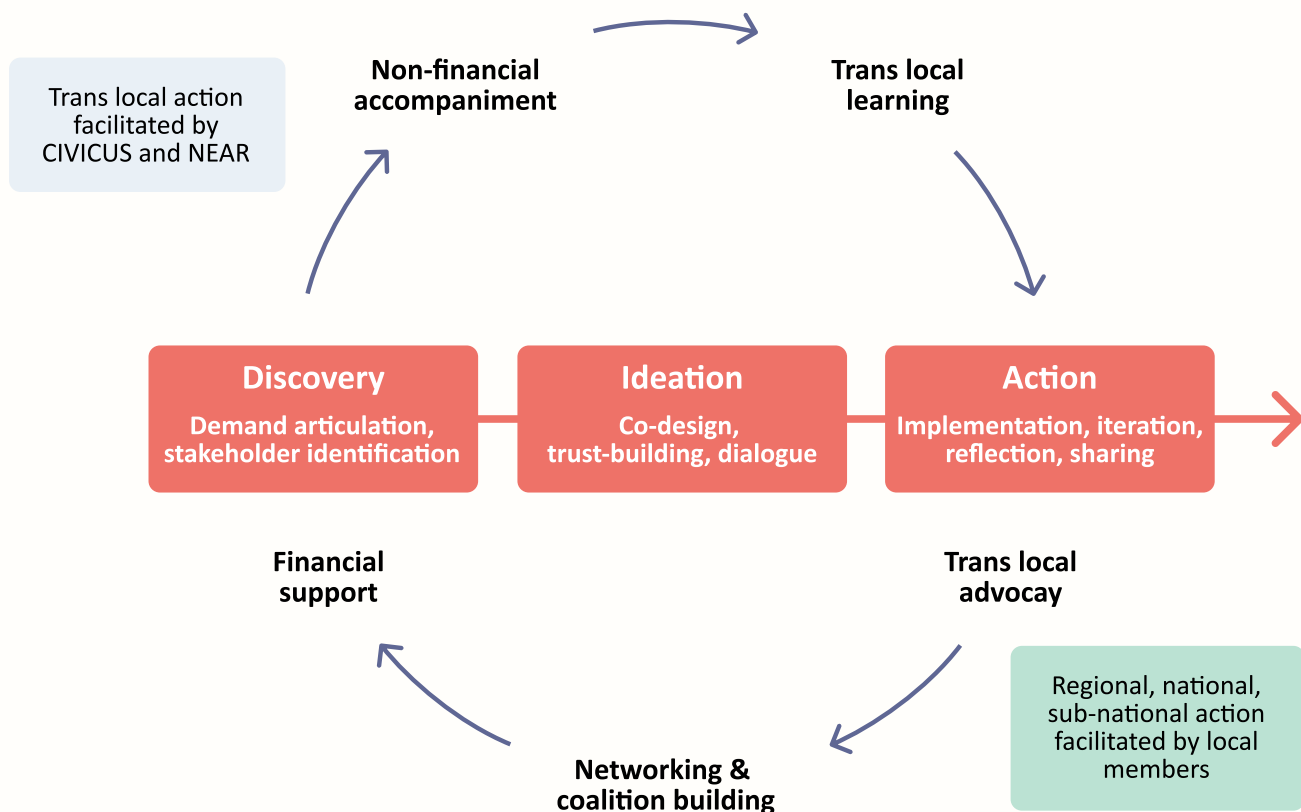


In line with this thinking, the key drivers of the initiative are diverse local civil society actors in the Global South. They will be responsible for convening, co-creating and facilitating activities, including: (1) constituency building/ demand articulation, (2) multi-stakeholder engagement, (3) solution labs and (4) collective learning.

The catalysts and connectors in the initiative are CIVICUS and NEAR, global civil society networks working to improve the support ecosystem for local civil society actors. They will be responsible for identifying and providing financial support and non-financial accompaniment to their local partners, brokering connections and direct engagement opportunities with other stakeholders, coordinating with likeminded processes and initiatives, facilitating learning across local leadership labs and with others in the support ecosystem and - where appropriate- amplifying the analysis, asks and solutions to a global audience.

The initiative will be implemented in three stages, while learning and influencing activities will take place throughout the project period.

1. **Discovery:** demand articulation, stakeholder identification, sense-checking/ co-creating with target groups and other actors in the ecosystem
2. **Ideation:** local co-design exercises, curation of trust-building spaces, dialogues on policy issues
3. **Action:** implementation and iteration of solutions, reflecting and sharing key insights





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Impacts

Increased participation of traditionally excluded groups in decision-making processes

Stronger relationships between local leaders and key enablers based on mutual accountability and trust

Blueprints for spaces, solutions, and approaches that support local leadership

Transformative commitments from diverse actors in the system

Outcomes

Traditionally excluded groups have improved consciousness, confidence and agency to articulate demands and engage key enablers directly

More informed commitments and priorities/approaches by key decision-makers and allies

CS support ecosystem actors are more familiar with inclusive processes to build trust and codesign solutions with local actors

Traditionally excluded groups have improved connection and collaboration among themselves, and key enablers based on trust, collective knowledge, work and shared positions

Collective reflection inspires accountability and changes in mindsets, policies, and practices

Locally led articulated demands

CS and decision-makers have improved understanding of different realities, needs, solutions & roles

Solutions that advance local leadership based on co-creation

Insights & solutions are reflected in the actions of diverse actors with shared purpose

Strategies

Local civil society prioritizing traditionally excluded groups to identify articulated demands

Sustained dialogue between civil society and donors

Solutions Labs: Civil society with key stakeholders develop or discover solutions in experimental spaces

Sharing knowledge and learning of solutions

Discovery Phase

Challenges

In the Sector
Fragmentation and competition within the sector, which undermine inclusive and coherent demands and collective energy

For example: Lack of equitable partnerships, insufficient spaces for shared learning, and insufficient coordination of efforts.

In Local Contexts
Timelines change due to political changes

For example: Political shifts, such as the rise in autocratic power, can lead to further restrictions of civic space, forcing local groups to adjust their plans cautiously to protect themselves and marginalized communities they collaborate with, resulting in delays of envisaged timeline of work implementation.

Lack of accountability, resources, and equitable partnerships, because of unequal power dynamics and lack of trust between local CS and governments, donors, and other enablers

Insufficient, exclusive, or disconnected spaces for local CS to lead solution building with key stakeholders

Insufficient spaces/mechanism for sharing learning and for collective sense-making across the civil society ecosystem

Disparate efforts and initiatives with insufficient mechanisms for coordination and cross-pollination

Partners

