AGNA STRATEGIC PLAN 2017-2022

BACKGROUND

The CIVICUS Affinity Group of National Associations (AGNA) was created in 2004 with the aim of responding to the needs of national associations (networks of CSOs) and facilitating learning and information sharing among them. At CIVICUS we believe that these associations of civil society organisations (CSOs) are uniquely positioned as the guardians of civil society in their respective countries. They ensure that the sector has the necessary information and capacity to effectively engage in and contribute to development and governance processes; they connect their constituents with each other and build strong external linkages to other actors, and they promote engaged and accountable civil society organisations that garner respect from both governments and citizens.

The focus of the AGNA Secretariat since the inception of the network has been to reinforce the group at the organisational and operational levels, to better serve the needs and interests of our membership base, and to improve the efficiency and sustainability of the network as a global hub. During the last four years, AGNA has seen positive developments in its ways of working and strategizing, opening up spaces for collaboration between members, giving more vibrancy to the group and reviving the engagement of its members and allies. The AGNA network currently counts with 93 members from over 75 countries in different regions, which in turn represent more than 30,405 CSOs and 162 national networks/platforms from around the world, making its potential reach unique.

AGNA's geographic representation[1]

Our vision:

A worldwide community of informed, inspired, committed citizens engaged in confronting the challenges facing humanity

Our mission:

To strengthen the role of civil society networks to advance solidarity, social justice and democratic freedoms.

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[1] National members represented in red and regional ones in blue.

WHAT DO WE WANT?

In the past few years we have seen reinvigorated participation in the day to day life of the network and promising signs of increased engagement and sense of belonging by its members; however, the network still faces difficulties in making its constituency own the process and keeping it committed beyond intermittent exchanges and interactions (whether virtual or in person). The decline of democracy in many countries, the abuse of citizen's human rights, the organizational challenges of our members and the constant changes and threats to the civic space are some of the elements that influence this situation.

Based on the lessons learned and the findings and recommendations gathered in consultation with the members in the last few years, AGNA would like to adopt a more strategic approach for the next five years (2017-2022) to better serve its main purpose. This is a unique opportunity for us given the newly adopted CIVICUS Strategic Priorities[2] for the same period, in which AGNA member's views and needs had a strong imprint through their participation in multiple consultations and discussions. CIVICUS' Strategic Goals acknowledge the need to better coordinate with and strengthen our support to CS networks as key actors in the defense of democratic freedoms and social change.

In AGNA, we believe that a five-year Strategy will serve our purpose of addressing the challenges identified since the network's creation, and consider new opportunities to build on the network's strengths and strategic niche.

AGNA understands this strategic approach not only as a way of building on CIVICUS' new Strategic Priorities, but also as a progressive move towards a more effective and sustainable network, and would like to embed in its functioning the following four core principles: broader accountability and legitimacy (trust and ownership by members),

revitalised engagement and participation (innovative approaches and joint work), deepened internal flexibility and adaptability (learning process and feedback loops), and external functionality (visibility and partnerships).

These principles feed into three strategic objectives that are interrelated and build on each other:

Strategic Objectives 2017-2022

1. Build our expertise and voices: Strengthen the capacities and amplify the voices of our members, respecting their autonomy, as key actors for development and the defense of civic space.

2. Build alliances and influence: Promote alliances and partnerships with different stakeholders and sectors by unlocking new spaces for dialogue and consensus building that can allow our members to collectively construct new solutions in building global solidarity, achieving socio-political and civil rights, and the SDGs.

3. Build our impact and sustainability: Enable the sustainability, accountability, credibility and effectiveness of the AGNA network and of its members by showcasing their contribution to human development, and by exploring new funding and operational models that facilitate their efforts to be more agile, responsive, coordinated and accountable.

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[2] http://www.civicus.org/index.php/strategic-priorities-2017

HOW WILL WE ACHIEVE IT?

Build our impact and sustainability

Build our expertise and voices

Build alliances and influence

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 1.

STRENGTHEN THE CAPACITIES AND AMPLIFY THE VOICES OF OUR MEMBERS, RESPECTING THEIR AUTONOMY, AS KEY ACTORS FOR DEVELOPMENT AND THE DEFENSE OF CIVIC SPACE

Under this objective, AGNA will support its members to strengthen their ability to advocate on behalf of civil society at the national, regional and global levels and build their capacity to coordinate, represent, sensitize and mobilise people and organisations working towards global justice. We will promote learning, knowledge generation and exchange of good practices between civil society networks across the globe through innovative and collaborative ways that can amplify their voices and forge their collective responsibility towards effective impact.

To achieve this goal, we will:

- Create practical tools and applications to increase the institutional and operational capacity of our members to deliver effective services and increase their outreach and impact at the national, regional and global levels. At the same time, we will enhance connections, access to tools and resources, and opportunities for collaboration in different languages and in ways that transcend issues, geographies and organisational models without duplicating efforts and in coordination and collaboration with the Innovation Hubs and other capacity development initiatives.

- Deepen our members' resilience through technical assistance and training for them to cope with the crises and threats they endure to be confident and competent voices on issues that impact their constituents and communities.

- Provide a shared global platform for a growing alliance that facilitates peer-learning exchanges for better solidarity and interconnectivity between national and regional networks. And act as a vehicle of systematized knowledge generation around best practices and lessons learned with our members and for our members.

- Facilitate opportunities for members to organize coalitions around specific issues or constituencies to increase their leverage and advocacy capacity.

- Use targeted communications that enhance peer-understanding and learning, and develop and implement a new communications strategy for the network to amplify the voices of our members, promote visibility and their collective impact as a sector.

- Create an online platform (web portal) for members to interact, share knowledge, best practices and collaborate bilaterally and multilaterally beyond the steering of the Secretariat. This will include:

  ✓ Interactive tools in multiple languages for member's collaboration and sharing of information.

✓ Repository of knowledge and information on good practices populated by members and Secretariat.
✓ Working Groups sub-portals for thematic information sharing and interaction between members.
✓ Opportunity section to disseminate funding and learning opportunities: populated by members and Secretariat.
✓ News and events calendar.
✓ Link to member's profiles and websites for broader visibility.
✓ Toolkits and capacity development resources.

- Continue promoting thematic peer-learning exchanges between members from different regions and explore the possibility of having some of these with open agendas for members to get to know each other and connect/brainstorm joint initiatives.

- Widen the reach and potential of global exchanges with other stakeholders and civil society representatives that are not easily accessible through regular convenings.

- Continue facilitating short term staff exchanges as an effective capacity development and collaboration tool.

- Continue promoting solidarity between members and with others in defense of the civic space and democratic freedoms.

- Strengthen working groups (or learning/action groups) by ensuring member's commitment to achieving common products and implementing specific work plans; and promote the development of joint actions and analysis pieces.

- Map existing relationships and collaborations between members: members to provide information and Secretariat to document and disseminate in order make their efforts and the value added of the network more visible; and promote similar practices and learning within the broader network.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 2.

PROMOTE ALLIANCES AND PARTNERSHIPS WITH DIFFERENT STAKEHOLDERS AND SECTORS BY UNLOCKING NEW SPACES FOR DIALOGUE AND CONSENSUS BUILDING THAT CAN ALLOW OUR MEMBERS TO COLLECTIVELY CONSTRUCT NEW SOLUTIONS IN BUILDING GLOBAL SOLIDARITY AND ACHIEVING THE SDGS.

Under this goal, AGNA will facilitate the creation of new partnerships, led by its members, with other stakeholders that have a key take in the promotion and protection of civic space as well as the effective achievement of the SDGs. We will help raise the role of our members as key conveners, advocates and facilitators of dialogues and collaborations with the private and public sector, and other key actors in the national, regional and international spheres (donors, academia, international bodies). We will work towards bridging the gap between formal/informal, organised/non-organised civil society around the world.

To achieve this goal, we will:

- Identify best practices and models for multi-stakeholder partnerships and create a collaborative intersectoral strategy that can be implemented by each member in its own country and jointly at the regional and global levels, to promote network's leadership in mobilizing and driving partnerships between government, private sector and civil society to effectively achieve the SDGs.

- Promote skills and experience in partnerships building, and provide spaces that will enable our members to effectively engage with multiple actors and sectors at the local, regional and global levels (private sector, grassroots, social movements, donor community, academia, governments, international bodies, etc.) to work towards common goals.

- Map out existing alliances and coalitions with shared interests and goals at the regional and global levels and facilitate collaboration and coordination with them around advocacy for the SDGs (especially goal 16 and 17) and other areas of work that might add value to

advancing our member's agendas. This will help create a new global campaign, or join forces with an existing one, on goals 16 and 17 led by members around the implementation of the SDGs with the following components: sensitization around the SDSs (targeting different audiences, from public officials to citizens) and empowerment of citizens to make their governments accountable in their implementation.

- Ensure the voices of our members are reflective of local realities and the voiceless groups needs at the international level by facilitating their participation in regional and global forums through participative mechanisms (HLPF, UPR, etc.).

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 3.

ENABLE THE SUSTAINABILITY, ACCOUNTABILITY, CREDIBILITY AND EFFECTIVENESS OF THE AGNA NETWORK AND ITS MEMBERS BY SHOWCASING THEIR CONTRIBUTION TO DEVELOPMENT, AND BY EXPLORING NEW FUNDING AND OPERATIONAL MODELS THAT FACILITATE THEIR EFFORTS TO BE MORE AGILE, RESPONSIVE, COORDINATED AND ACCOUNTABLE.

Under this objective AGNA will engender a learning culture across the Secretariat and foster practices that leverage collective resources to bolster our member's impact. We will ensure that we become ever more relevant to our member's needs and foster enhanced relationships by: exploring new funding and operational models that shift more resources to the key areas of work identified by our members as priorities for the network; and investing in practical measures that promote credibility, transparency, accountability and sustainability in everything we do, which will model the behavior that we expect from others.

To achieve this goal, we will:

- Invest in networked analysis and research to foster greater understanding, by the national and international policy community, of the added value of the sector in general, and our

members in particular; and why they are needed for the effective promotion of socio-economic development, peace and security.

- Ensure that the AGNA network has effective feedback loops with its members and learning mechanisms to adapt to change when necessary and achieve bigger impact and greater responsiveness.

- Clarify benefits and roles/responsibilities of members to make it easier for them to identify the added value of belonging to the network and encourage and facilitate their involvement and engagement in joint initiatives.

- Explore new funding and operational models that shift more resources to the advocacy, accountability, and human rights work of our network members. Identify and secure additional sources of funding to support members in creating joint actions and projects (whether with a thematic or a geographical approach) beyond the facilitation of the Secretariat. These can be grants managed by external actors or sub-grants facilitated by the Secretariat.

- Generate knowledge around good practices in accountability and impact generation, and identify collaborative mechanisms that can help promote the role of our members as key actors in ensuring accountability, transparency and legitimacy at national and global levels.

- Ensure higher levels of synergy with CIVICUS' initiatives and the Alliance's upcoming membership strategy.

HOW WILL WE DEFINE OUR SUSCCESS?

Going forward, AGNA will invest in improved feedback loops and a new monitoring, evaluation and learning framework that will help us consistently and systematically track our progress and impact for both accountability and learning purposes.

This framework will be part of CIVICUS' M&E strategy and will help us document, understand and learn from our successes and failures, as well as provide data and evidence of our progress towards results. It will enable us to respond more effectively and efficiently to the needs of our members, adapt to the changing dynamics that we constantly face, and adopt a more participatory programming.

The changes we seek to contribute to are summarised below, and our monitoring, evaluation and learning framework will outline how we will track progress and impact in greater detail.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 1.

STRENGTHEN THE CAPACITIES AND AMPLIFY THE VOICES OF OUR MEMBERS, RESPECTING THEIR AUTONOMY, AS KEY ACTORS FOR DEVELOPMENT AND THE DEFENSE OF CIVIC SPACE.

By 2022, AGNA members will have greater capacity to deliver their mandates and serve their constituency, they will be more inclusive and representative, and will have stronger voices that influence decision making around development and the protection of civic space.

Changes we will seek to contribute to include:

- ✓ More members are receiving support for training, collaboration and joint actions that strengthen their ability to build coalitions and catalyse change.
- ✓ More members are adapting their ways of working through new tools and approaches, and they result in higher levels of responsiveness and effectiveness.
- ✓ More members are leading joint initiatives that raise their voice and that of the network, resulting in direct action to drive positive social change.
- ✓ Members are successfully implementing mobilisation and advocacy actions that result in greater influence in decision making processes; and reporting involvement in new initiatives that result in improved legal and regulatory environments for civil society in more countries.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 2.

PROMOTE ALLIANCES AND PARTNERSHIPS WITH DIFFERENT STAKEHOLDERS AND SECTORS BY UNLOCKING NEW SPACES FOR DIALOGUE AND CONSENSUS BUILDING THAT CAN ALLOW OUR MEMBERS TO COLLECTIVELY CONSTRUCT NEW SOLUTIONS IN BUILDING GLOBAL SOLIDARITY AND THE SDGS.

By 2022, there will be many and diverse examples of how AGNA members have used multi-stakeholder dialogues and have organised and mobilised to drive positive change from influencing local actors to changing global policies.

Changes we will seek to contribute to include:

- ✓ More members are leading multi-stakeholder initiatives.
- ✓ More members are identifying and implementing new inclusive opportunities for citizens and civil society, particularly grassroots movements, to come together to participate in and influence global governance institutions and processes.
- ✓ Our members jointly lead, or join forces with, a global campaign on goals 16 and 17 around the implementation and monitoring of the SDGs.
- ✓ Our member's voices are increasingly reflecting local realities and the voiceless groups needs at the international level through their participation in regional and global forums (HLPF, UPR, etc.).

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 3.

ENABLE THE SUSTAINABILITY, ACCOUNTABILITY, CREDIBILITY AND EFFECTIVENESS OF THE AGNA NETWORK AND ITS MEMBERS BY SHOWCASING THEIR CONTRIBUTION TO HUMAN DEVELOPMENT, AND BY EXPLORING NEW FUNDING AND OPERATIONAL MODELS THAT FACILITATE THEIR EFFORTS TO BE MORE AGILE, RESPONSIVE, COORDINATED AND ACCOUNTABLE.

By 2022, AGNA members and the Secretariat will have found new ways to maximise their impact, will be experimenting higher levels of trust in

their local context, and have better access to resources through diversified sources of income.

Changes we will seek to contribute to include:

- ✓ More members are experimenting with new resourcing models that result in increased levels of financial sustainability.
- ✓ More members report having increased recognition by and access to national and international policy makers.
- ✓ More members are adopting new operational practices that have increased their impact.
- ✓ More members are adopting new resourcing models that result in increased levels of financial sustainability.
- ✓ More members are implementing effective accountability and transparency mechanisms.
- ✓ More members count with additional financial support facilitated by the Secretariat to engage in and lead on joint AGNA initiatives.
- ✓ AGNA counts with effective feedback loops and learning mechanisms that results in a more responsive and adaptable network.