



CRISIS RESPONSE FUND GUIDELINES AND PROTOCOLS

Contents

A. Why the Crisis Response Fund?.....	2
B. Guidelines for the use of the Fund.....	2
C. What is the Response?.....	4
D. Protocols for the use of the Fund.....	4
E. Cross department and unit involvement in the response.....	5

A. Why the Crisis Response Fund?

CIVICUS is currently guided by its [2017 - 2022 Strategic Priorities](#), which were identified through an extensive consultation process. These Strategic Priorities are to i) **Defend** civic and democratic freedoms, ii) **Strengthening** the power of people to organise, mobilise and take action and iii) **Empowering** a more accountable, effective and innovative civil society. The Crisis Response Fund (CRF) supports these priorities by mobilising quick, principled, and effective responses to events that threaten civil society's fundamental rights to collectively express, associate and organise.

While some threats develop gradually, others materialise swiftly and require an immediate response. The CIVICUS Crisis Response Fund, set up by CIVICUS in 2007, serves as a mechanism for mobilising quick, principled, and effective responses to events that threaten civil society's fundamental rights to collectively express, associate and organise. In 2011 CIVICUS joined a coalition of 7 international civil society partners¹ administering [Lifeline](#), an emergency fund for civil society established multilaterally by 19 donor governments² and independent foundations, to provide additional financial and technical support to embattled civil society around the world.

B. Guidelines for the use of the Fund

The CIVICUS Crisis Response Fund differs from other civil society campaigns to support human rights defenders. Rather than focusing on individual cases, it aims to protect the civil society sector, as a whole, against systemic threats to its existence with a specific focus on protecting the rights to [Freedom of Assembly and Association](#) (FOAA). Such threats include, but are not limited to, the introduction or existence of restrictive legislation, the systemic targeting of human rights defenders, arbitrary closure of civil society organisations, fiscal threats to civil society organisations such as the freezing of bank assets, and barriers to or attacks on free civic expression and assembly.

The CIVICUS Crisis Response Fund monies will be used in cases that require immediate action – either to forestall imminent threats (through resiliency grants), or to address new restrictions (through advocacy grants). Although responses should be as immediate as possible, CIVICUS evaluates when, why and how it should respond to particular situations.

If the situation under review makes us answer YES to the following three questions, CIVICUS will then have sufficient justification to mobilise the Fund's resources.

1. (For advocacy grants) Is it a crisis in freedom of assembly and association? (For resiliency grants) Is it a crisis that requires action to enhance the resilience of civil society actors?
2. Are there systemic threats to civil society?
3. Will our actions be beneficial?

1. Is it a crisis?

It is a crisis if the case can be categorised as one of the following:

¹ The Lifeline Consortium is made up of Freedom House, ICNL, SILC, PINF, Forum-Asia, Frontline Defenders and CIVICUS.

² Lifeline is now supported by a Donor Steering Committee of 19 governments including: Australia, Benin, Canada, Chile, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Mongolia, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Sweden, United Kingdom, United States, and Uruguay.

- Significant deterioration of civic space in the areas of freedom of assembly and association: for example, urgent response is necessary to prevent the curtailment of civil society activities, because there are enough indications that restrictions on civil society are imminent.
- Escalation of existing threats to civil society: for example, civil society is already suffering from restrictions on its activities. This includes cases where civil society activity has been recently curtailed, as well as situations involving a growing number of threats over a period of time.

2. Are there systemic threats to civil society?

Systemic threats to civil society include those which undermine civil society in general in the country or region. This also includes threats to specific sectors of civil society, e.g. women's groups, environmental organisations, indigenous movements, among others. An individual attack on an activist would not generally be seen as a systemic threat; however, numerous attacks on activists could be part of a campaign to intimidate civil society groups, which would then be seen as systemic.

3. Will our actions be beneficial?

In addition to deciding whether a situation has become a 'crisis', we must assess whether a response by CIVICUS will be of assistance and will have a positive impact. This must always be considered in consultation with local partners or members, where they exist. In countries where CIVICUS does not have members or partners, CIVICUS will consult with other international organisations working on the ground.

In evaluating potential positive impact, some of the criteria to consider are:

- a) Security. Will our actions place CIVICUS' staff or local members, partners or civil society in general in greater danger?
- b) Local actions: Will our actions complement and enhance, or undermine, the work of local civil society?
- c) Presence of other international actors: Are there already other international actors working on this crisis? Would our involvement provide additional assistance, or make an additional impact?
- d) Strategic value: Is the country in a position to influence other countries in the region? Will CIVICUS' work in this country have a positive impact externally as well as, or only, within the country?

Importantly: The Crisis Response Fund cannot provide funding for matters related to the freedoms of religion, expression or LGBTI advocacy as there already exist funds for this emergency response at [Freedom House](#).

C. What is the Response?

Responses will be chosen in consultation with local partners and members, and where possible or relevant, other international organisations working in the area. Actions taken using the Fund's resources are envisaged to be short-term (i.e. under six months in duration).

Prospective advocacy responses could include, but are not limited, to:

- Convening of working groups of local, regional and international civil society to address the crisis.
- Supporting civil society representatives from the ground in advocacy at international and regional forums.
- Submissions of reports to the human rights monitoring bodies of regional and international institutions.
- Solidarity visits or missions by international high-level officials and/or celebrities.
- Networking regionally with other civil societies under siege to exchange best practices and share legal expertise.
- Regional and international advocacy campaigns directed at regional and international bodies.
- Technical assistance for the analysis of pending or existing repressive legislation.
- National workshops to discuss and plan advocacy strategies, such as to repeal restrictive legislation.

Prospective resiliency activities under the grant could include (but are not limited to):

- Training for organisations on the ground, such as in digital security.
- Activities to improve the physical security of the civil society organisation's premises.
- Psychosocial capacity development and support for civil society actors.
- The creation of safehouses to support the relocation of civil society actors at risk.
- Development of strategic responses to anticipated and verifiable threats e.g., in response to prospective laws restricting access to foreign funding, the development of an alternative funding protocol for civil society.

While the CIVICUS Crisis Response Fund Crisis is designed to protect the civil society sector against systemic threats to its existence; emergency assistance that is required for an individual or a CSO where two or more individuals are at risk will be coordinated with Freedom House and Frontline Defenders as key international partners. [Click here](#) to read more about the funds available to individual human rights defenders under the Lifeline Embattled CSO Fund.

Emergency assistance consists of mainly, but not limited to: legal representation, medical support, relocation costs, and transportation for family members, equipment replacement, and other such expenses. Freedom House and Frontline Defenders will lead on any emergency assistance required using their own established guidelines and protocols.

D. Protocols for the use of the Fund

The use of the Fund can be proposed by any civil society organisation in a situation of crisis, including any CIVICUS members and partners. Applicants do not need to be CIVICUS members to apply for the CRF. Steps towards an approved use of the Fund's resources will be as follows:

1. Requests will be submitted on an [online form](#) which will contain all necessary information to allow the request to be properly evaluated.
2. Only in circumstances where partners feel unsafe or do not have access to the internet, they can either email the CRF team for the Word application, or post it to the CIVICUS office in Johannesburg at:
CIVICUS
25 Owl Street, 6th Floor
Johannesburg,
South Africa,
2092
3. Requests will be evaluated by the CRF team according to the criteria presented above. Relevant partners and members will be consulted in evaluating the requests.
4. Partners are eligible to apply for personnel costs on the fund, but these must be in proportion to the activities undertaken and should not be in excess of 40% of the overall budget. Similarly, core costs will be considered in the budget commensurate with project activities undertaken.
5. Recommendations for use of the Fund's resources, the amount, as well as the type of response will be submitted to the Secretary General.
6. The Secretary General will approve or reject. The Secretary General may delegate the responsibility of approval to other member(s) of the Management Team.
7. The application will then be referred to the Lifeline Consortium for review, before final approval of the grant.
8. CIVICUS issues grants through a tranche system. Upon signing the sub-partnership agreement, partners receive a first tranche payment (e.g. 60%) of the grant which is calculated based on the partners' risk profile. When submitting the final reporting documents, partners are required to have spent 100% of the funding, and thereafter CIVICUS will provide the remaining balance as a reimbursement (e.g. 40%) within 14-20 working days.
9. Partners are required to submit monthly grant updates, a final narrative report and an impact report as part of their undertaking in the implementation of the grant.

E. Cross department and unit involvement in the response

In addition to resources, CIVICUS is able to provide additional support across its clusters for the overall enhancement of envisaged project activities. This may include:

- Identifying partners and networks for additional coordination during the project;
- Identifying possible crises;
- Developing new media contacts in countries and regions where CIVICUS has not worked previously;
- Raising awareness among networks;
- Mobilising partners and networks to support campaigns;
- Providing convening space to address issues; and

- Assisting with the development of long-term initiatives in particular countries.