



# Resourcing *youth-led* groups & movements

A REFLECTIVE PLAYBOOK  
FOR DONORS AND  
YOUTH ORGANISERS

# Resourcing **youth-led** groups & movements

A reflective playbook for  
donors and youth organisers

A PUBLICATION OF  
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WITH THE SUPPORT OF



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## ABOUT CIVICUS

CIVICUS is a global alliance of civil society organisations (CSOs) and individuals dedicated to strengthening citizen action and civil society for a more just, inclusive and sustainable world. The alliance works to protect the fundamental civic freedoms that allow us to speak out, organise and take action. We do this by defending civic freedoms and democratic values; strengthening the power of people; and empowering a more accountable, effective and innovative civil society. We strive to promote excluded voices, especially from the global south, and have a growing alliance of more than 8,000 members in over 180 countries.

## ABOUT THE YOUTH ACTION TEAM

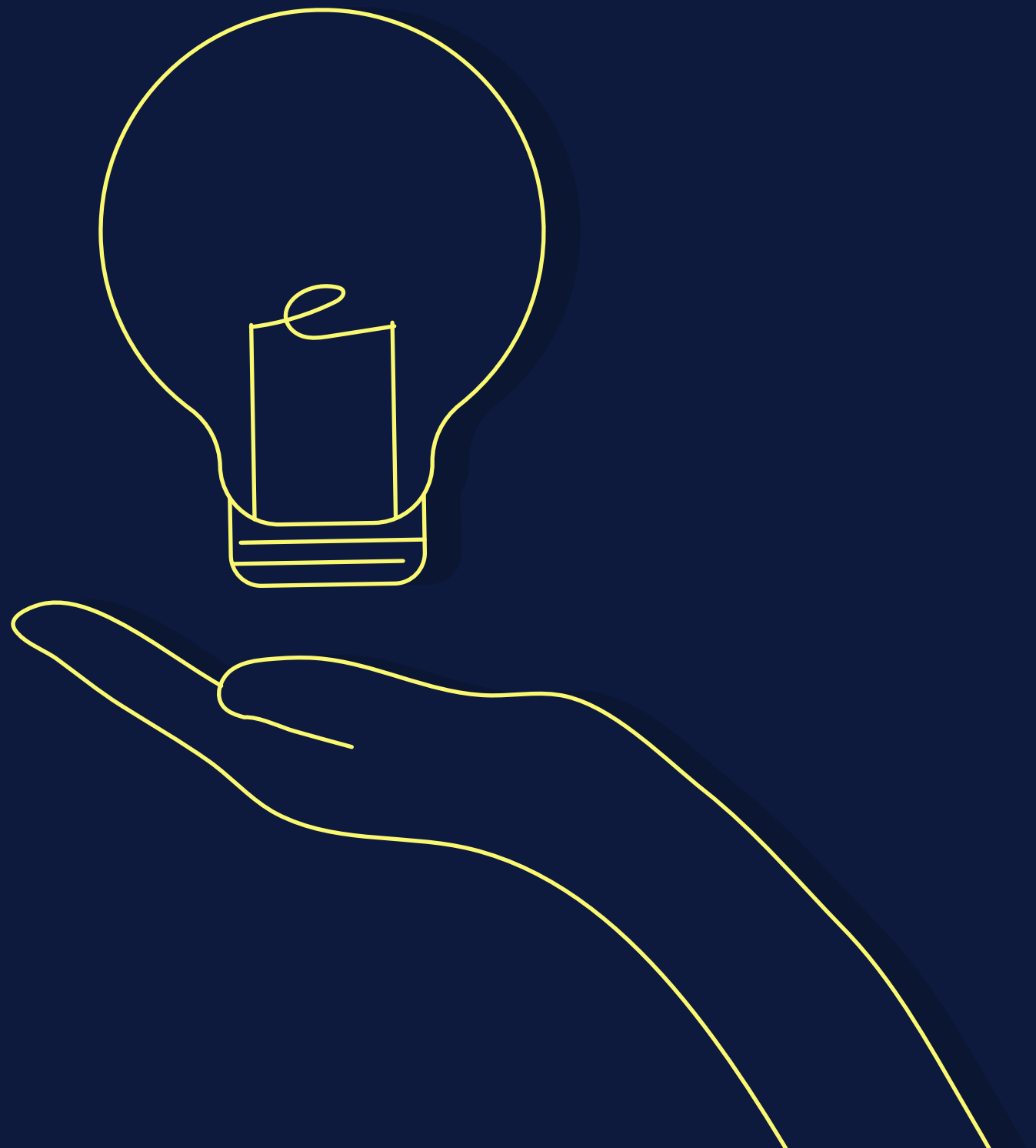
CIVICUS Youth Action Team is an action body of CIVICUS that works on youth and youth-related issues. The purpose of the Youth Action Team is to mainstream youth and youth issues into CIVICUS's programmes and activities and to champion youth engagement and the space for civil society. Institutionally, the Youth Action Team interfaces with CIVICUS's board on specific strategic questions and is able to communicate via the secretariat on suggested youth programming or proposals that should be considered as CIVICUS priorities.

## ABOUT RECREAR

Recrear is a network of young professionals working to integrate young people more holistically in community processes through a model of participatory action research. Our work supplies the space and tools for young people to articulate their needs and build a vision for their community's development. Gioel Gioacchino, who works as director of research at Recrear, was the main researcher behind this publication.

## ORGANISATIONS FEATURED IN THE PLAYBOOK:







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## YOUTH ACTION TEAM VISION STATEMENT TO USER

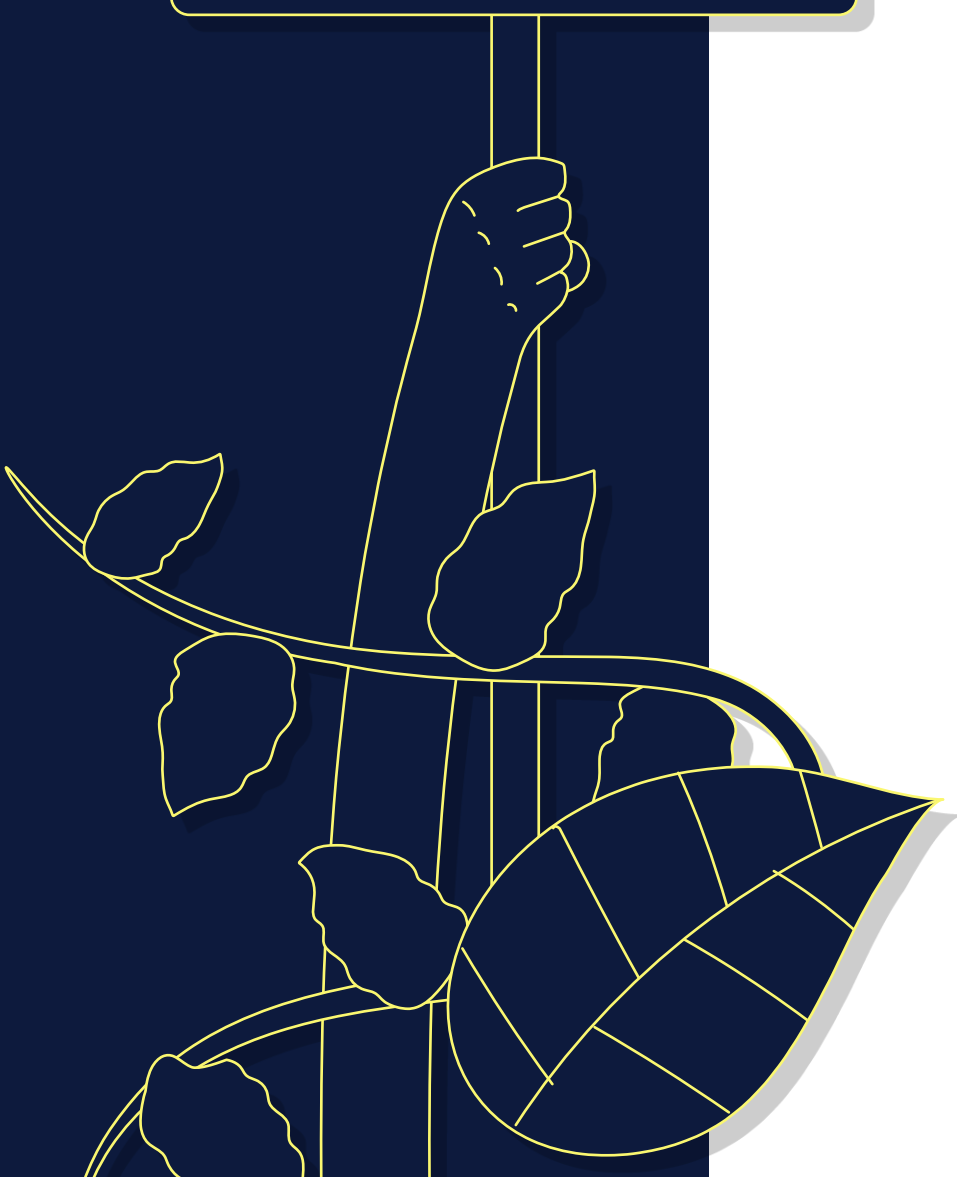
Share your comments to  
**youth@civicus.org** or the  
hashtag **#CIVICUSyouth**

Dear reader,

As members of the CIVICUS Youth Action Team, we would like to welcome you to the first playbook we have co-created. We really hope you will find it useful and recommend it to your colleagues and partners.

We are a collective of eight young activists from all over the world supporting different social justice mobilisations in our regions, holding leaders accountable and testing innovative solutions to pressing challenges. We have come together to work with the CIVICUS alliance to strengthen youth engagement in civil society for a period of three years. During our journey to raise awareness and build partnerships for more and better participation of young people in civil society spaces, we saw a common challenge for young people from all movements and geographic locations: access to resources. The resources available to support the work of young activists are little to none, and the barriers to access are often burdensome. That is why we were very motivated to begin this research to better understand and capture the current realities, trends and potential solutions to resource adequately youth-led groups from the global south that are protecting our democracies and human rights.

Our expectation is that with this playbook, more and more allies from the philanthropy sector, bilateral cooperation agencies, international CSOs and peers from other youth-led groups will join this reflection movement to rethink worldviews and principles around the resourcing landscape for civil society that is seeking real and systemic social transformation in the 21st century.



# HOW YOUTH-LED<sup>1</sup> GROUPS AND ORGANISATIONS MATTER<sup>2</sup>

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What is the impulse that causes a group of young people to come together and spend endless hours dreaming, thinking, organising and learning together to create something new and transform our social reality?

All around the world young people are getting organised around different visions and ideas. There is a commitment, a love, a care, an excitement, an anger, a readiness, a fire – a wealth of emotions – that move us all to dedicate ourselves to this incredibly brave work.

Where do we keep finding the energy to pursue and realise our alternative visions of social transformation despite all the obstacles?

In this playbook ***we understand ‘resources’ as energy.*** We understand that we all have a role – as citizens, as institutions, as youth-led groups and movements – and a responsibility to step into a conversation with each other to make sure we are supporting the creation of new realities.

For this to happen, we need to make sure that the appropriate resources reach the people who are working towards social transformation.

## WHAT DO WE MEAN BY RESOURCES?

Resources include both financial and non-financial resources such as:

- » Knowledge
- » Experience
- » Staff and volunteer time
- » Technology
- » Community trust and relationships
- » Alliances
- » Working space
- » Travelling to exchange knowledge and network
- » Training
- » Mentorship
- » Media space

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1 - CIVICUS defines a youth-led group or movement as a group in which the majority of its leadership is under 30.

2 - This section is adapted from Gioel Gioacchino's PhD thesis, 'Money, culture, and change; financial sustainability, and the inner-life of youth-led organisations in Medellín, Colombia', published in 2019 by the Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex, UK.

Imagine a single group or movement as a small tree in the thicker ecosystem of a forest.

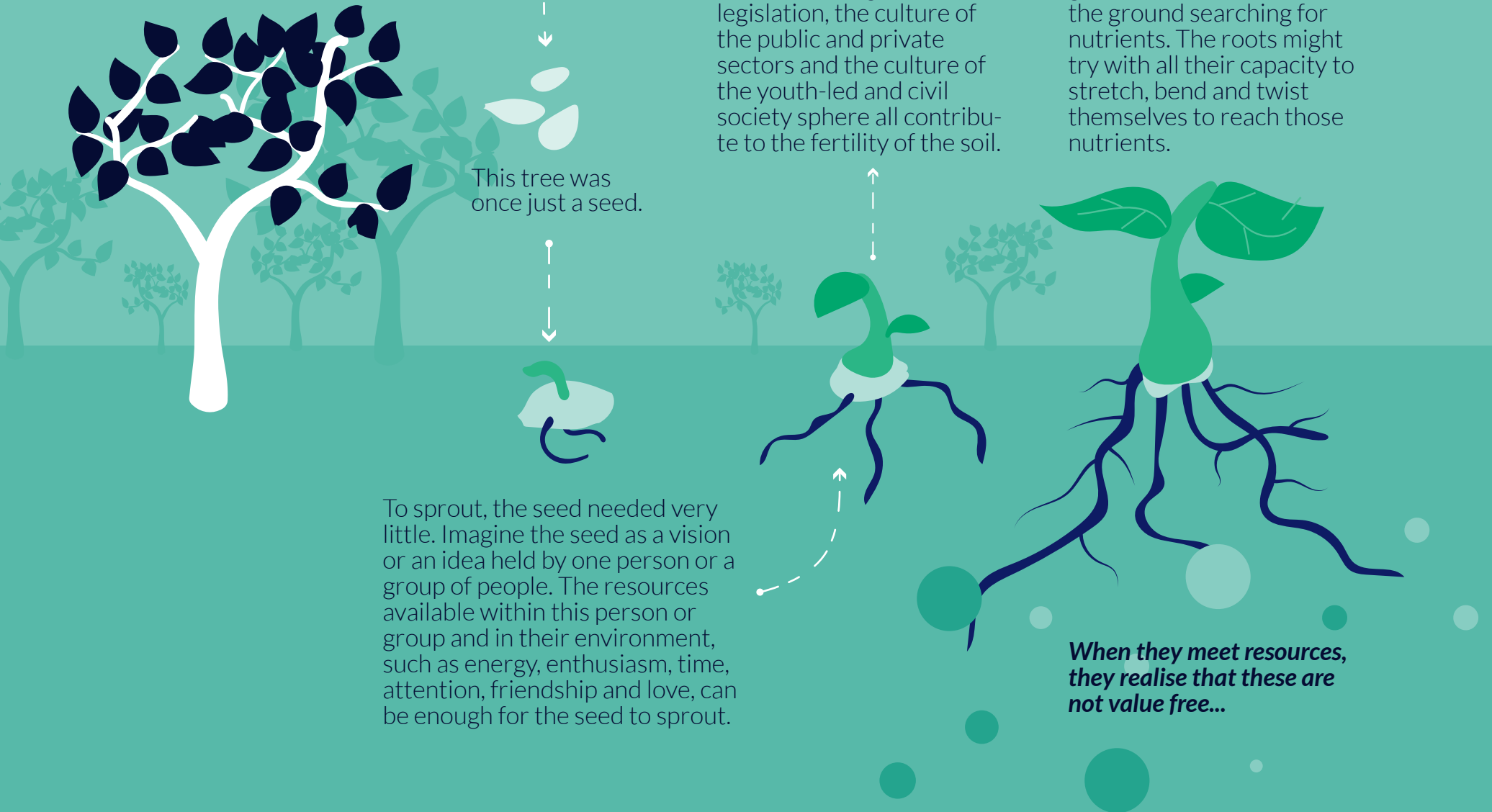
With time, the seed starts growing some roots. The seed is rooted in the soil, representing the various cultural, social, economic and political mechanisms of a society. Things such as legislation, the culture of the public and private sectors and the culture of the youth-led and civil society sphere all contribute to the fertility of the soil.

Through its roots, the tree-to-be absorbs different nutrients from the ground. As the group or movement evolves and gets organised, its need for nutrients also grows. Its roots reach into the ground searching for nutrients. The roots might try with all their capacity to stretch, bend and twist themselves to reach those nutrients.

This tree was once just a seed.

To sprout, the seed needed very little. Imagine the seed as a vision or an idea held by one person or a group of people. The resources available within this person or group and in their environment, such as energy, enthusiasm, time, attention, friendship and love, can be enough for the seed to sprout.

**When they meet resources, they realise that these are not value free...**



Youth-led groups and movements experience that resources come with ways of seeing the world and specific practices. Absorbing these resources, groups and movements might also mean absorbing the worldviews and practices that accompany it.

**Here are some examples of how this might happen:**

- Funding comes with strict deadlines and requirements to demonstrate impact that feel unrealistic.
- Given the limited amount of funding available, groups or movements can become competitive with each other, which does not align with their worldview of wanting to promote cooperation.
- Many resources come with contradictions that youth-led groups and movements want to distance themselves from. For example, large-scale philanthropy may be a tax-sheltered means by which plutocrats exercise power in ways that are unaccountable, non-transparent and donor-directed.

What happens if those practices and worldviews don't feel healthy or appropriate for this growing tree?

The tree will need to find its own balance to absorb resources that feel coherent to its nature and ensure it is nourished.

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*Our small tree is very resourceful and, of course,  
it is not alone.*

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To find nourishment, the tree searches for nutrients aligned with its values. For example, it might access non-financial resources, such as training activities and mentorships, or generate resources collaboratively, such as by forming networks and sharing resources.

Different trees resource themselves uniquely. This diversity is very healthy in the forest of civil society. The most resilient ecosystems are the ones with a rich biodiversity, where each organism has a different nature that informs how it interacts and responds to challenges.

In our metaphor, the branches of the tree represent the initiatives and activities that the group or movement articulates. The flowers and fruits represent the impact of the group or movement. These nourish those who eat them but also fall on the ground and fertilise the soil.

They enrich the soil with micro-nutrients that are essential. No matter how small, youth-led groups and movements can provide inspiration, hope, the practice of solidarity and the continuous exploration of alternative models.

In the soil, there are all sorts of micro-organisms that need to interact in order for the tree to obtain nourishment. Chemical fertilisers are able to synthesise all those mechanisms to make it easier for the tree to absorb nutrients.

But if we feed our tree chemical fertilisers, those micro-organisms slowly disappear. If you feed your tree chemicals, you are more likely to create dependency on those substances.

At the same time, financial resources can allow groups and movements to be more agile. The real richness of civil society remains rooted in relationships, passion, commitment and solidarity. If funding is not coupled with these elements, it can become like the chemicals we feed plants: it can reduce community relationships into technical and transactional exchanges moderated by market logics, devaluing experiences of solidarity and cooperation. This can kill diversity. How can we make sure more of the funding available acts more like organic fertilisers?

When this happens, some invisible and essential nutrients can start to go missing from the soil of community living. Being part of economies of solidarity takes more time. It requires deeper relationships.

Through collaboration and interaction, groups and movements are able to be flexible and in touch with their local reality to respond to emerging challenges.

Youth groups and movements also interact with more established actors. We can imagine these as huge trees, which are able to capture large quantities of nutrients from different sources.

When the small tree grows around a bigger one, there is a risk of dependency: the small group or movement might find itself deprived of its own essence and autonomy.

It is easier for small organisations to bend around the bigger ones, and to learn their language and ways of working in order to interact and fit in with the bigger institutions.

The big trees might have power over discourses and the allocation of resources.

Yet bigger, better-funded institutions might also provide **access to spaces for youth-led organisers to meet and exchange experiences:** in this sense, they might allow youth-led groups and movements to develop power with a broader network.

At the same time, smaller youth-led groups and movements can transmit to the larger organisations some of their ways of seeing the world.

For example, an institution might ‘invite’ representatives of youth-led groups or movements to come together to participate in a project or to consult them on something. Read more about ‘invited spaces’ here:

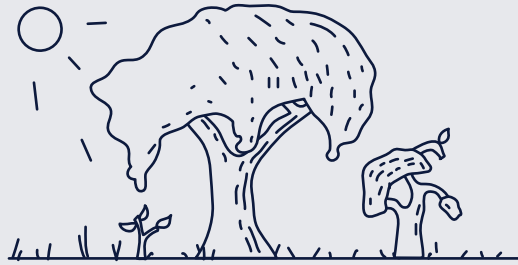
[www.powecube.net/analyse-power/spaces-of-power/invited-spaces](http://www.powecube.net/analyse-power/spaces-of-power/invited-spaces)



**LISA VENEKLASSEN**  
AND **VALERIE MILLER**  
IN **‘A NEW WEAVE  
OF POWER’**  
(2002, PAGE 55)  
DESCRIBE FOUR  
‘EXPRESSIONS OF  
POWER’ AS FOLLOWS:

This information and the descriptions of the expression of power come from the Institute of Development Studies’ Powercube Website and PowerPack. More information can be found here:

[www.powercube.net/  
other-forms-of-power/  
expressions-of-power](http://www.powercube.net/other-forms-of-power/expressions-of-power)



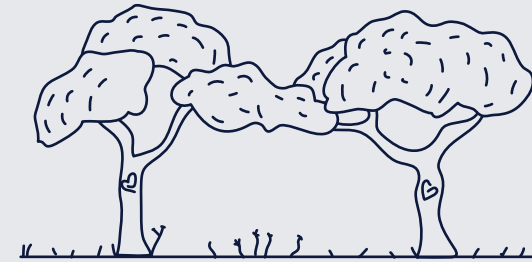
### Power over

The most commonly recognised form of power, ‘power over’, has many negative associations for people, such as repression, force, coercion, discrimination, corruption and abuse. Power is seen as a win-lose kind of relationship. Those who control resources and decision-making have power over those without.



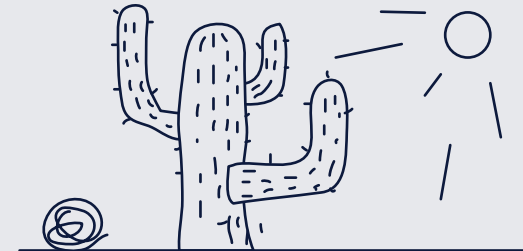
### Power to

‘Power to’ refers to the unique potential of every person to shape their life and world, based on the belief that each individual has the power to make a difference.



### Power with

‘Power with’ has to do with finding common ground among different interests and building collective strength. Based on mutual support, solidarity and collaboration, ‘power with’ multiplies individual talents and knowledge. ‘Power with’ can help build bridges across different interests to transform or reduce social conflict and promote equitable relations.



### Power within

‘Power within’ has to do with a person’s sense of self-worth and self-knowledge; it includes an ability to recognise individual differences while respecting others, as well as an ability to act and change the world. Many grassroots efforts use individual storytelling and reflection to help people affirm personal worth and recognise their ‘power to’ and ‘power with’.

An illustration on the left side of the page shows two hands holding a tablet. The background is dark blue with yellow line art of tropical leaves and plants. A small white text box with a dark blue border is positioned near the top of the illustration.

## HOW TO READ THIS PLAYBOOK

Follow this movement by using the hashtag [#shiftthepower](#)

We imagine this playbook as a symbolic space of encounter between those of you who are searching to do things differently, in particular action-oriented young people full of ideas and motivation, and those of you who are in the position of supporting and engaging with such ideas, such as donors, more established institutions and allies.

In this meeting place, we invite you to give yourself permission to explore, to question, to change your opinion, to see something new.

### But let's start with why we are here

***This playbook is part of a movement.*** It builds on recent publications, convenings and calls for action – see **appendix B** to explore key resources – that are making a case that there is a power imbalance in the way resources are allocated.

Access to resources is a challenge for civil society organisations in general. The idea for this playbook emerges out of a recent research project, the [Landscape and Trend Analysis on Resourcing Youth-led Groups and Movement across Latin America and Africa](#). Through a series of participatory workshops, desk research and mapping of donors, a donor dialogue and 25 interviews, we learned that youth-led initiatives face specific challenges that place them at a disadvantage in accessing resources.

This playbook is an invitation to reflect and explore critically what prevents us from realising the futures that we want.

## **To do so, we are going for the approach of show, don't tell**

We share seven real stories that represent some of the most recurrent challenges we heard from young leaders across Latin America and Africa during our research. Along with each story you will find exercises that are meant to spark your imagination and creativity.

### **If you are a donor or institution supporting youth-led processes, we hope that through this playbook you will:**

- Become aware of the challenges that youth-led groups and movements face around resourcing their work.
- Reflect on your role in supporting youth-led groups and movements.
- Design strategies to support youth groups and movements of different shape, size and character.
- Improve your communication with youth-led groups and movements.

### **If you are a representative from a youth-led group or movement this playbook invites you to:**

- Reflect on key themes that have emerged in the analysis.
- Practise team exercises to develop awareness around resourcing mechanisms.
- Explore how to go beyond donor support to think about alternative mechanisms for sustainability.
- Improve communication with donors.

## CHALLENGES FACED BY YOUTH-LED GROUPS AND MOVEMENTS

### According to the report

Landscape and Trend Analysis on Resourcing Youth-led groups and Movement across Latin America and Africa, youth organisers find that the resourcing landscape is characterised by:

- A sense that grants are unpredictable and unreliable. Very little core funding is available and project grants tend to have a very short turnaround time.
- A general lack of vision about how to be sustainable and a feeling of uncertainty about the future.
- An awareness that groups and movements must cooperate, coupled with a sense that collaboration and alliance building, especially across sectors, is hard, for example, because of differences in organisational and organising cultures.
- A trend towards social entrepreneurship and income-generating strategies; but ‘selling’ social products is not easy, and sometimes is felt to be uncomfortable and inappropriate, especially when working with low-income young people and others.

Youth organisers shared their views that the main challenges experienced in getting resources to youth-led movement and groups include:

- Limited human resources, which means that there is little time to apply for open calls.
- A feeling of powerlessness and frustration when applying to open calls and receiving no feedback.
- Selection processes that bring groups and movements into competition rather than cooperation.
- Tedious paperwork and consuming reporting requirements when applications are successful.
- The struggle by unregistered groups in particular to access resources. They may be able to partner with more established organisations but can lose funding in the process. This can create a perception that they are ‘last in the chain’ and are undervalued.
- Power distance from donors, which can contribute to poor communication. There may be hierarchical relationships with donors, with little relationship building and communication being limited to technical aspects of the relationship.

## The donors consulted reflected that:

- Resources are limited for donors as well. Donors receive so many applications that they do not have the time and resources available to provide custom responses.
- There is a gap between the way that donors communicate and the language used by youth-led groups and movements. This can create communication barriers. There is a need for language mapping to understand how local activists speak of their work, and how donors do.
- Donors often try to make sure their work contributes to global agendas, such as towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and this might not resonate with youth priorities.
- Donors face a challenge in giving resources to non-formal groups. Donors have a need for accountability, and they are scared of giving money to 'a black hole' when they cannot track impact.
- Some donors are open to experimenting with different application formats, such as video applications.
- There is a challenge in accessing more radical groups: groups and movements that are more easily able to access resources tend to be the least disruptive.

## The seven main themes that emerged in the Landscape and Trend analysis are:

1. Movements can have **momentum for resourcing**, but there is a risk of political co-option.
2. There is a **gap** between the funds available to serve youth versus the funding that is managed directly by youth.
3. There is a need to prioritise **the livelihoods** of those putting time into their work.
4. There is confusion and uncertainty around the future of **sustainability** and dependency from donors.
5. Is the balance right between **individual versus collective opportunities**? Many opportunities target individual leaders within groups and movements rather than groups and movements overall. It is not clear how training and other non-financial resources spill over to collective organising.
6. **Mental health and self-care** are important. In trying to balance between doing their core work and obtaining resources, activists risk spreading themselves too thin and becoming exhausted. Young organisers need mental health support to navigate their civil society engagement.
7. Attention should be paid to the **quality of relationships with donors**. Relationship with donors are too often technical, impersonal and cold.

To learn more, see the [webinar that summarises the Landscape and Trend Analysis on Resourcing Youth-led Groups and Movements in Latin America and Africa research](#).

# The Playbook:

**STORIES AND ACTIVITIES**  
FOR YOUTH GROUPS,  
DONORS AND ALLIES

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— *Story I* —

## **Working in alliances**

**Elena, Foro Juvenil de Izquierda, Peru**

.....

*(Pronouns: she / her / hers)*





Elena lives with her mother and her sister in Lima, the capital of Peru. After graduation, she took on a full-time job in a marketing firm. Thinking back, she says that the work was ‘killing her soul’ because it was not coherent with her values.

Today, Elena considers herself a political activist. She is active with a collective called Foro Juvenil de Izquierda: they work towards youth political mobilisation to **ensure dignified working conditions and promote women and youth empowerment in Peru**. They coordinate political campaigns and educational programmes with young women and workers’ groups. The collective works by leveraging its social legitimacy. It is informal and unregistered.

This story is about how her collective’s work and her individual livelihood has been enabled by a non-traditional alliance with Oxfam.

### **Building an alliance between Oxfam and social movements**

In 2015, the International Monetary Fund organised a conference in Lima to discuss the Peruvian ‘economic miracle’. Youth-led social movements in Peru were appalled: the economic policies that the Peruvian government implemented had deepened inequality. In their opinion, there was no miracle to brag about. Social movements organised an alternative progressive event under the hashtag #EnOctubreNoHayMilagros (#InOctoberThereAreNoMiracles).

That year, as part of her political mobilisation under #EnOctubreNoHayMilagros Elena and her colleagues at Foro Juvenil de Izquierda got to know some of Oxfam’s technical advisors, who were also involved as activists in the political mobilisation. During the protest, they started working side-by-side.

As part of the movement, Oxfam and other organisations created spaces to bring together researchers, activists, journalists, social movements and CSOs to create a political agenda to promote social development in Peru. This agenda was com-

pared with those of the candidates running in the 2016 presidential campaign to create more awareness about what policies were being presented.

This work culminated in the creation of a digital platform, [actua.pe](#), designed to monitor the alignment of political candidates against the political agenda that had been demanded by social movements.<sup>3</sup>

The collaboration of **Foro Juvenil de Izquierda** with Oxfam on this agenda built a stronger relationship between the two.

Oxfam had experience of channelling resources to Peru through organisations that reached out to young people as beneficiaries. At this point, they were looking for a different mechanism to work with young people and realised that there was an opportunity to work with social movements.

So the questions that both **Foro Juvenil de Izquierda** and Oxfam explored together were:

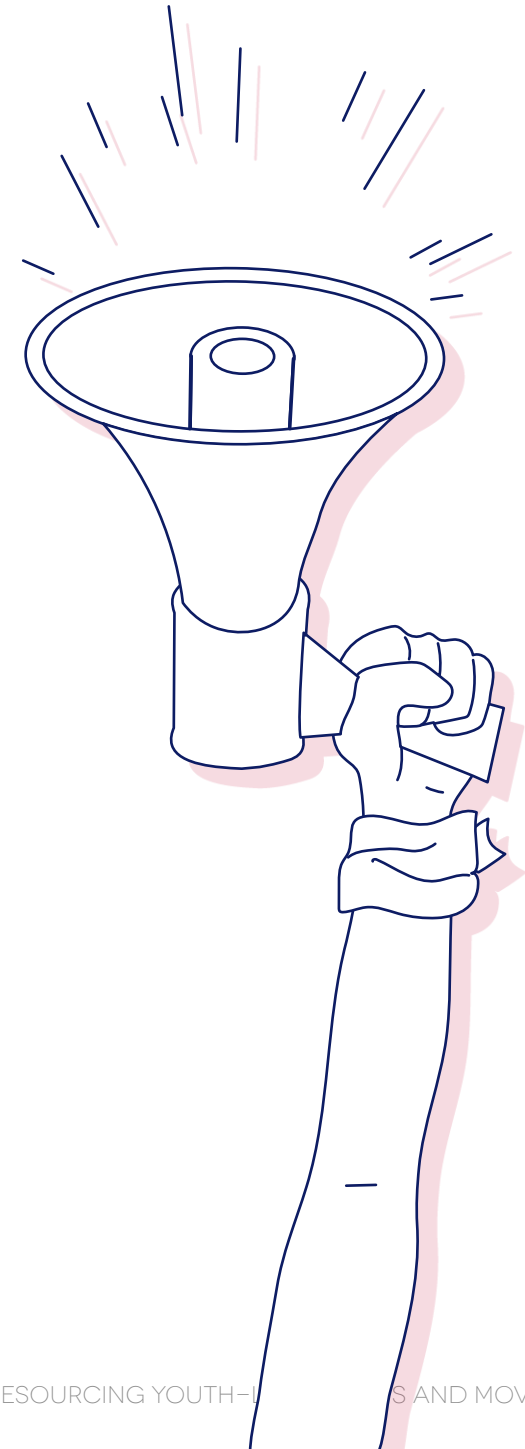
- What do social movements need to advance their agendas?
- What can Oxfam offer to support social movements?

By addressing these questions, **Foro Juvenil de Izquierda** and Oxfam were able to identify a common agenda.

Oxfam had taken a strong focus in the fight against inequality. They had better access to resources, including extensive research on the topic. Meanwhile, to be able to be more legitimate in their work, young activists needed data, information, research and training.

This led to the creation of the [actua.pe](#) labs, training workshops for young activists, which were led by four collectives and Oxfam in Peru, working side by side.

3 - [Actua.pe](#) evolved into a broader online platform to facilitate communication and activism by connecting, monitoring and amplifying citizen action against inequality in Peru.



The project was financed by Oxfam Quebec.

Together, they designed a horizontal working model and eventually launched a political school. The characteristics of the model they co-designed include:

- **Shared values.** The relationship is completely based on shared political ideas and views. These shared values were constructed with time and care, starting with small initiatives, such as the hosting of workshops, that allowed them to get to know each other very well.
- **Context and flexibility.** Keeping in mind the broader goals, the local partner is able to contextualise the work and is encouraged to adapt the content, dates, evaluation and follow-up modes as needed.
- **Debate.** All partners are able to discuss boldly and also respectfully each subject in order to achieve an agreement that, to the extent possible, will satisfy all partners.
- **Honesty and transparency.** There is a shared acknowledgement that ignoring the power difference between partners is detrimental to a partnership: it makes it harder to address the power imbalance when it comes to decision-making. The alliance is characterised by honesty in regard to budget constraints, political stances and the limits of the partnership.
- **Kindness and respect.** Partners treat each other with care and attention, reminding themselves that they are human beings. Striving for horizontality, each partner is respected for their proposals, ideas, opinions and initiatives.



## The project is completely co-owned. This means that:

- What they create together belongs to both organisations, unless previously agreed for any strategic reason, and there is freedom to use it and share it accordingly to shared values.
- Partners have unrestricted access to non-financial resources, such as contacts, literature, materials, media contents and physical and virtual spaces.
- Leadership is shared. Any member can talk and share opinions publicly or privately about the projects or initiatives; this is actively encouraged.
- All logos of the members of the partnership are present in most materials. In this case, Oxfam tends not to have too much visual leadership, and this is something that Foro Juvenil de Izquierda is grateful for because it lets them know the project and its goals are more important than publicity for the partner.
- Budgets are made available transparently. All partners are accountable.

Elena has been involved with the labs and The School from Protest to Proposal, a national level political school led by Foro Juvenil de Izquierda in partnership with Oxfam, working as a consultant to facilitate political training workshops and manage communications. This has allowed her to receive a very basic income to support her political work.

However, ***now the funding cycle of the project is about to end, and Elena is feeling uncertain about how she will sustain her own livelihood moving forward.***

Too often, young activists and organisers work for years as volunteers, without being able to sustain their own livelihoods. This can lead to burn-out and exhaustion. Over time, ensuring the livelihood of the individuals carrying out civil society work is essential to the sustainability of a project.

## EXERCISES FOR DONORS, ALLIES AND ENABLERS

.....

### Working in alliances

Elena believes no social actor can achieve systemic change and achieve social justice alone.

#### Reflecting on Elena's story:

- » What are the elements that you identify as important in establishing a collaboration between Foro Juvenil de Izquierda and Oxfam?
- » Is your organisation in a position to build alliances and support movements? If not, what are the conditions that are missing for this kind of collaboration to take place?
- » What actors do you collaborate with to achieve systemic change? What are your intentions in these alliances? Write a short statement describing your intention when partnering with youth-led groups or movements.
- » How would you describe the power dynamics that you establish when working in alliance? What strategies do you utilise to support social movements or youth-led groups without co-opting them or jeopardising their legitimacy?

- » Does your strategy include an element of receiving feedback from the social movements or youth-led groups you are supporting?
- » What spaces do you or your colleagues participate in alongside young people? What kind of conversations are made possible within these spaces? What spaces could you join to develop more intimate and mutually enriching relationships with young people?

### The 'p word'

Elena believes political work matters. She believes the most meaningful social change work cannot unfold through short-term, quantifiable projects.

- » What do you think? What is your institution's perspective on resourcing youth-led, change-seeking political work? Engage in a discussion with your team to clarify what is your stand about supporting youth-led political work.
- » How comfortable do you feel about participating in movements as individuals that are associated with larger or more established organisations? How do you navigate, negotiate and articulate your participation in social movements?

## EXERCISES FOR YOUTH-LED GROUPS AND MOVEMENTS

### What are we working towards?

In order to build an alliance, Foro Juvenil de Izquierda was able to identify a common agenda with Oxfam in Peru and articulate their collaboration on a mutual goal. This is a reminder that our work does not happen in isolation. We might focus our work and develop a specific methodology, but we are contributing to bigger goals that other organisations, groups and institutions are working towards.

Write a statement of what your work is contributing towards. Be as specific as possible.

For example, this is the statement of Foro Juvenil de Izquierda:

---

*We seek the construction of a comprehensive agenda to change society. We aim for a progressive agenda, that unifies the struggles for social justice with an intersectional approach. This agenda should allow us to face the economic structure that is the root of economic inequality and at the same time worsens other historical inequalities such as gender inequality and climate justice. Within this new proposal for society, where all voices must be heard, youth and women have a crucial role to play as an active, critical and purposeful part of the whole society in Peru, the region and the world.*

---

### Building alliances

- » Once you have written the statement, identify one to three themes that you are contributing towards, such as environmental justice or girls' education. Make a list of five to 10 institutions that work towards similar goals.
- » Elena's story teaches us that relationship building takes time and patience. What are some of the spaces you could participate in and the first steps you could take to interact with some of these institutions?
- » What are your fears and concerns in building an alliance with a more established institution? List all of your fears and concerns. Make a list of questions that you can explore with your potential partners to address some of these.

— *Story II* —

**Contracted relationships and  
transitioning leadership**

**Amanda - Engajamundo, Brazil**  
.....

*(Pronouns: she / her / hers)*





In the format of three journal entries, this story shares the experience of Amanda, co-founder and co-leader of Engajamundo, a youth-led movement in Brazil.

As she transitions out of the leadership position of Engajamundo, Amanda shares three moments of powerful and difficult learning.

### **Part 1: Prioritising**

“May 2014: Today I feel discouraged. Within the last eight months, three of my best friends and colleagues have taken corporate jobs.

I understand them. For the last year and a half, the work with Engajamundo has been constant, uncertain and... unpaid. I understand why a well-paid job is so necessary and appealing. We are all exhausted.

But it has also been amazing. We have had so much fun, learned so much. I don’t want to give up. Working alongside young people in Brazil and getting organised to address social and environmental challenges collectively feels right to me.

I am sad about the team changing, but maybe there is a lesson that we need to learn...

The only way for us to continue dedicating ourselves to Engajamundo and build a solid team is to recognise that we also need to sustain ourselves. We might not earn super well, but we need to earn something. We need to learn how to value our work.

In the last year and a half, we managed to fundraise for a delegation of four young people to participate in our first international conference, COP19 on climate change in Warsaw; we also have volunteers working from the five regions of Brazil, and we’ve facilitated a South America youth convening, the JUVENSUR...



We need to make sure that our partners recognise our work. We are not just a bunch of **young people doing volunteer work**.

To sustain Engajamundo we need to create more solid organisational systems. If we go from project to project, we are left with no time to train our team, create systems of internal and external communication... We need to give priority to creating a solid foundation for our work.

We need to convince ourselves this is also important work.”

## Part 2: Lost in the SDG contract

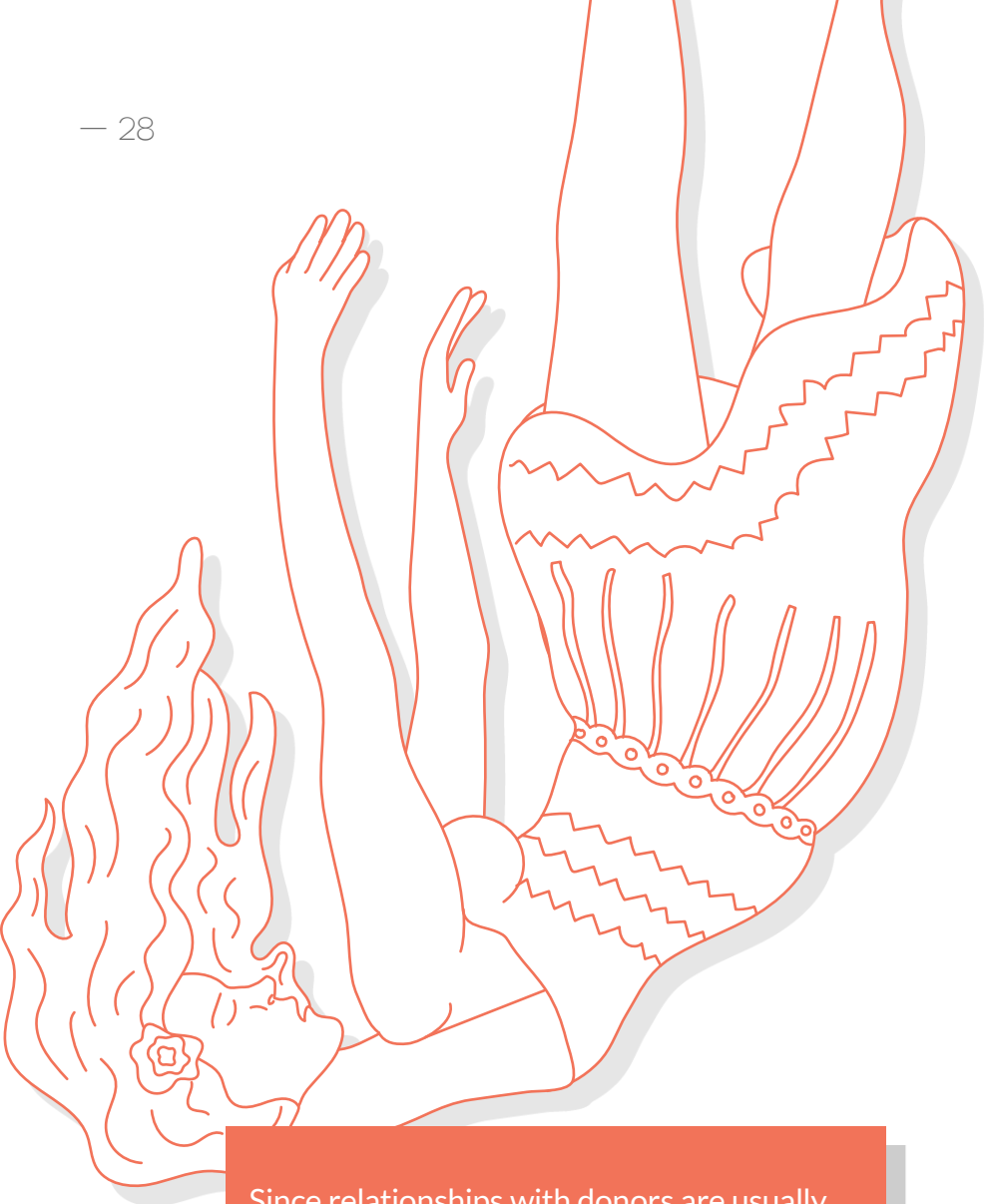
“September 2015: So much has been going on! For the last six months, we have not had a breathing moment. When we accepted the contract to design this week-long event on the SDGs, we thought it would be a good opportunity to resource our organisation and get more visibility. This is the biggest contract we have managed yet. **Getting hired as consultants meant we would be able to generate income** for three of our team members for six months.

We did not realise it would take all of our time. All of it.

What bothers me the most is not just that the work is demanding. The relationship with our contractor is unbearable. It has changed the vibe at Engajamundo. Instead of feeling like we are co-creating an event, we feel that we are just contractors executing somebody else’s vision with no way to put our own creativity and heart into it. It feels so different from the work that we are used to. So different from the work we love doing.

I am so ready for this to be over...”

Many youth-led groups and movements are deciding to work with partners as consultants. Earning revenues from contracts implies that when the contract is over the group would be able to allocate their earning without restrictions. This being said, as Amanda shares, being contracted could imply that a youth-led group or movement is not allowed to be an equal partner in the design of a product, service, or initiative.



Since relationships with donors are usually rooted in personal relationships, changes in team composition in either partner could mean that a youth-led group or movement loses funding.

### Part 3: Transitioning leadership

“May 2018: I can’t express how many emotions have been stirring in me at the idea of transitioning out of Engajamundo.

Engajamundo has been my home for six years. It has been a space for me to grow, learn, meet people, discover Brazil, contribute.

I do trust that Engajamundo is ready to have a new team. Most of all, I trust the decision that Engajamundo would be best managed by a team under 30.

I feel a bit lost thinking about it. Empty, confused, scared. Where am I going next?

I also feel proud. I feel proud of how much I have learned about myself, about working with a team in a way that feels healthy, about engaging and learning with other young people in Brazil.

Now the challenge is to let go gracefully. And thoughtfully.

How are we going to recruit a new team in an inclusive and diverse way? What are the important criteria to recruit new team members? The political context in Brazil is so hard right now; will the new team be able to navigate it?

How are we going to make sure we transfer all the organisational knowledge?

***Will the new team members be able to retain the relationships we have built with donors?”***

## EXERCISES FOR DONORS, ALLIES AND ENABLERS

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### Contracting youth-led groups and movements

Amanda was excited about doing interesting work and earning some revenue. The advantage of working on a project as a contractor could be that **once the terms and conditions of the contract have been met, and the contract is paid out, the youth-led group or movement does not have to report on how they spend the payment they receive.** Yet she had a very tough time engaging as a contractor.

- » If you contract or subcontract youth-led groups or movements: how could you improve the experience of youth-led groups and less-established organisations and movements working with you as a contractor or subcontractor?

Create a list of questions that you can explore in an interview or conversation to help understand the expectations of your contractors.

- » How could we shift the relationship with youth-led groups and movements away from subcontracting to becoming more equal partners?
- » What could it look like to provide your partners with the agency to exercise their creativity and mobilise their work in ways that feel more authentic?

### Talking core values

We can make improvements in our systems if we open up more radical and honest conversations. Youth groups and movements are more amenable to these reflective practices and we increasingly celebrate them for it. As a donor, ally, or enabler, how can you show up in more radical and honest ways?

Engage in a frank conversation with your team about the core values of your institution. You can structure the conversation by organising a **talking circle** (See note on pag.30) around the values of your institution. Consider these questions as guidance:

- » How would you describe the ego of our organisation and how does it manifest in our partnerships with youth-led groups and movements?
- » What are the specific practices or ways of seeing the world that are behind the resources we provide?
- » Are there ways of working or ideas behind our organisation that I disagree with or would like to change?

#### TALKING CIRCLE

A talking circle is a tradition of Indigenous people of North America. It is used to resolve conflict and create a state of shared power. Each person has the same importance in the circle.

Quick guidelines for hosting a talking circle: Decide who will be hosting the circle and introducing the process; speak one at the time - you can use a special object such as a talking stick and pass it around; introduce the circle as a space to explore ideas that will remain for now in this space, unless you agree to take further actions; speak from the heart and listen from the heart; don't plan what you are saying, be present with the conversation and express what you feel and think when it is the time to speak; use first-person language; don't generalise.

Read more about the process here:  
<http://www.muiniskw.org/pgCulture2c.htm>.

## EXERCISES FOR YOUTH-LED GROUPS AND MOVEMENTS

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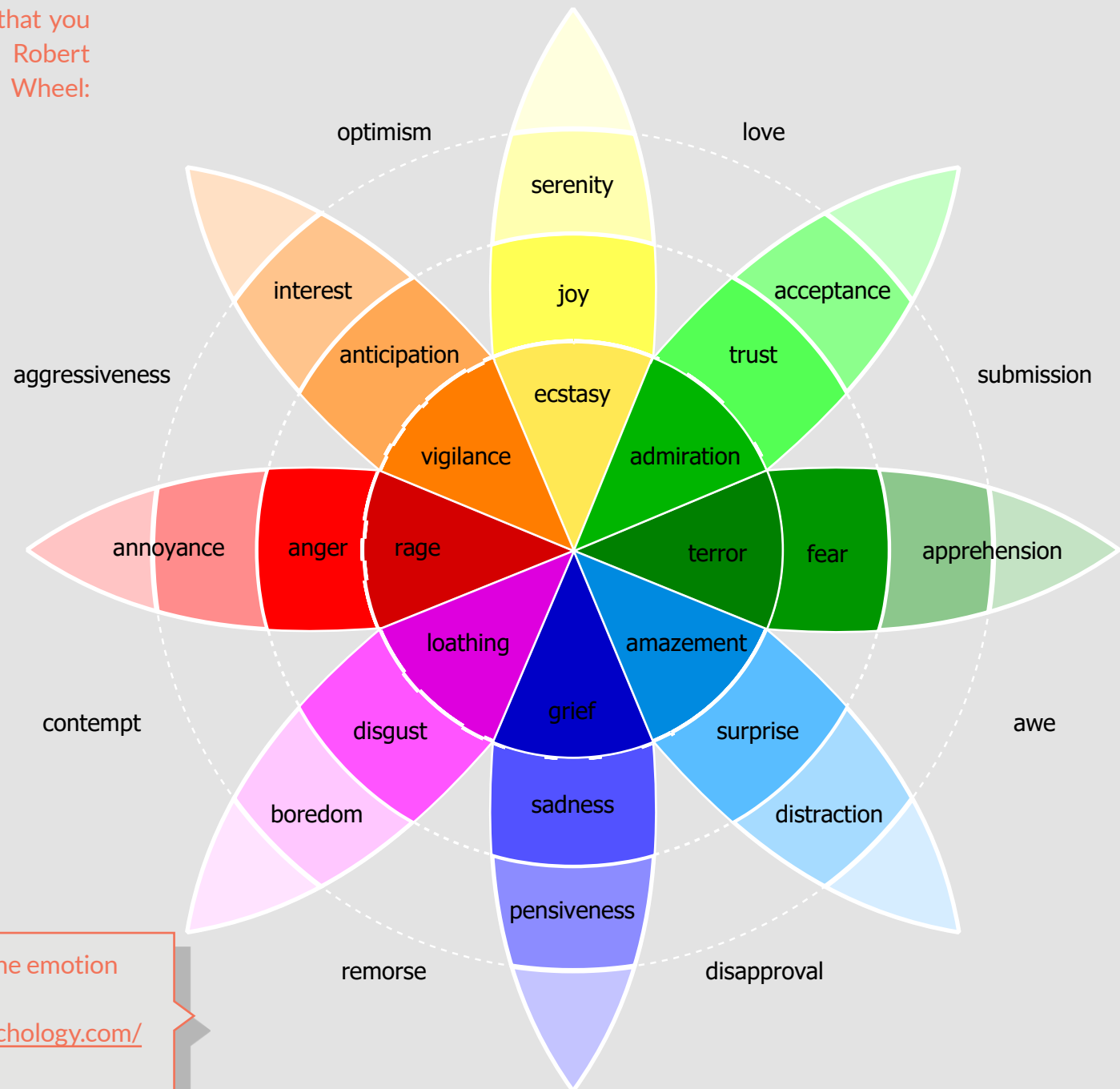
### The emotions behind our work

Can you identify the emotions that Amanda is feeling related to the various aspects of resourcing expressed across the three journal entries?

Do you have regular practices to express your emotions and engage in dialogue around the work that you do with your friends and colleagues?

To experiment with one example of practice, you can host a talking circle to share how people are feeling about the resourcing of your work.

Circle the emotions that you could identify using Robert Plutchik's Emotion Wheel:



Read more about the emotion wheel here:  
<https://positivepsychology.com/emotion-wheel/>

Moments of change or crisis

What have been the moments of change or crisis in your organisation? Can you identify three moments of strong change, crisis, or transformation in your group? Reflect on these three moments:



How would you title this moment?	What happened? Describe what happened.	What were the resourcing elements or implications during this moment?	What made it possible to overcome this moment?	What did you or your group or movement learn?
Moment 1:				
Moment 2:				
Moment 3:				

## Open communication

How can you communicate with donors or contractors more openly about the type of relationship that you wish to develop with them? What could make it easier for you to feel comfortable about speaking openly with donors or contractors?

Create a list of guidelines about your expectations and offerings, such as values and practices, to share with potential donors and contractors.

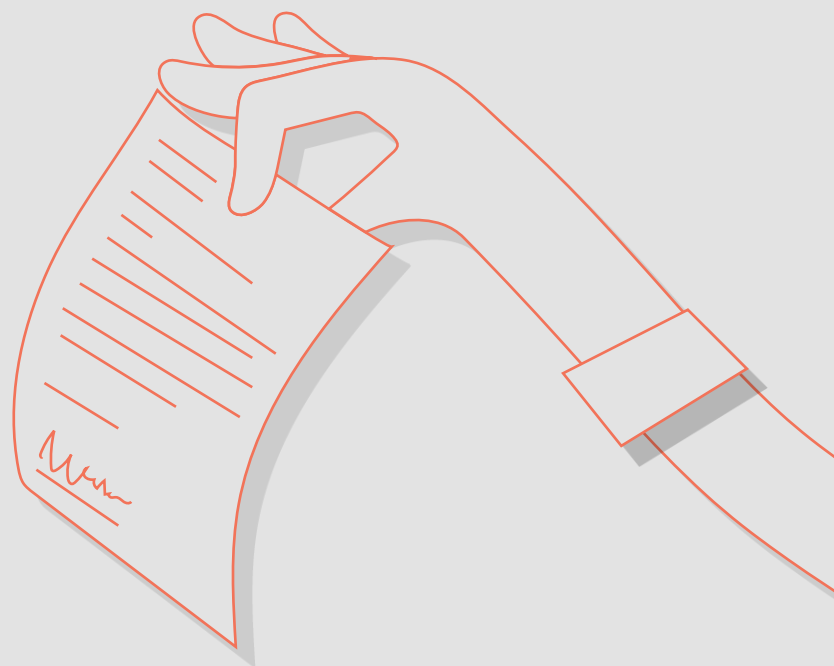
## Transitioning leadership

Who manages the relationship with donors and partners in your group or movement? Imagine that this person was to leave the organisation in six months. Design a strategy to transition the relationship to other people.

Consider whether the relationship could be more diffused in your group of movement.

As inspiration, here are some of the activities that Engajamundo did during her leadership transition:

- » Write a letter to donors introducing the new person.
- » Invite donors to a team training.
- » Have two people in charge of each relationship with a partner or donor.





— *Story III* —

## **Expanding our imagination around resourcing Bonnie - La Múcura, Colombia<sup>4</sup>**

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*(pronouns: she/her/hers)*

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4 - This story is informed by extensive conversations with Bonnie that are documented in 'RAIS, art in South America', a book that La Múcura published independently in 2019. RAIS is a bold exploration of how arts can be used for social transformation amongst grassroots groups in Latin America. It is packed with reflections on reframing sustainability.





This is the story of a band and social research organisation, La Múcura, led by Bonnie and Jimena. La Múcura is registered as a Colombian association and is committed to exploring the arts as a bridge for social transformation.

While reading this story, you can listen to La Múcura's latest album.

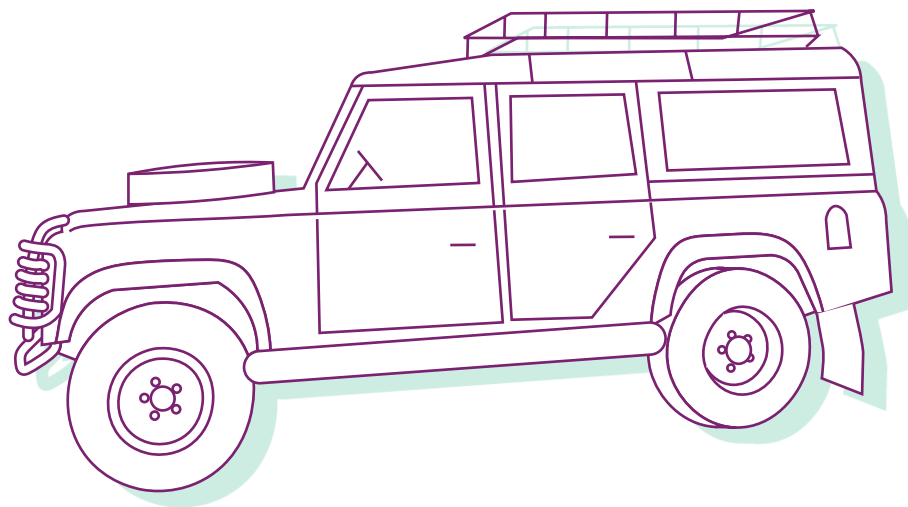
**Surquizofónica:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TZSVVONriVo>

### **The dream**

It was a sunny October morning in Cali, Colombia when Bonnie, Jime, Richi, Diego and Irie left on board their blue 1995 Land Rover Defender, also known as the 'Tractomúcura'.

They had been meeting weekly for months now. They dreamed of travelling across Latin America researching and documenting the role of art in social transformation. They dreamed of producing independent art and research. They dreamed of seeing different faces of their continent, of travelling slowly, with attention, awareness and care.

Their trip ended up lasting three years: they went up and down from Cali to Argentina on board the 'Tractomúcura' - twice.



## Reflecting on sustainability

Bonnie shares that in all the talk about doing 'independent' work, it was humbling to become aware of the interdependent nature of sustainability. What does it mean in practice?

La Múcura travelled Latin America collecting experiences of self-sustainability amongst groups using art towards social change. Meanwhile, they self-sustained their entire trip and research.

To lower costs, throughout the trip ***La Múcura used the technique of 'trueque' (barter), exchanging with the organisations and groups that they were researching.***

They visited each group for about a month and a half and carried out research activities with them. As part of their analysis, they shared a video and a publication with each group that the group could use for their advocacy and fundraising purposes.

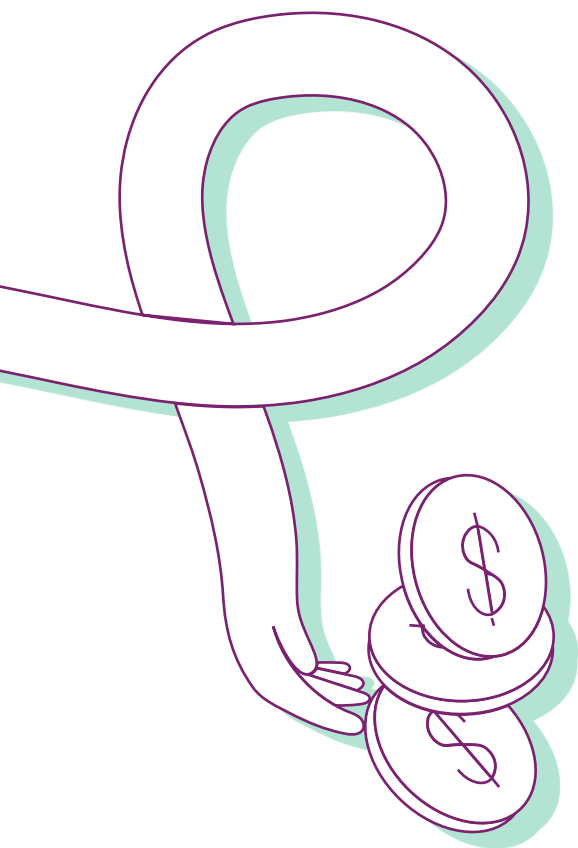
Data were gathered through interviews and participatory workshops but also through cohabiting, sharing meals, watching sunsets, taking part in the group's activities, building friendships.

The organisations valued the experience of having their work documented; in exchange, they provided food and accommodation to the La Múcura team.

Meanwhile, to cover travelling costs, they played small concerts and hosted talks.

La Múcura kept an extensive record of the resources they invested in this research trip. By being aware of their efforts and converting them in monetary terms, Bonnie reflects that when applying for funding she can approach a donor from a point of strength. She can ask a donor to invest in their work with the awareness that, first of all, they themselves have invested in it. This overcomes a mentality of 'begging for money'.

It is common for youth groups and movements to exchange products and services with other grassroots groups. This is a model of resourcing that is made invisible by the formal system that only accounts for financial exchanges.



### **Working alongside other youth-led groups**

In 2019 La Múcura launched their new record, Surquizofónica, and a book documenting their trip, RAIS.

To produce Surquizofónica, they needed to invest about 5.5 million pesos (approx. US\$2,100) to pay for sound mixing. To fund this, they created a ‘godmother programme’ inviting their friend organisations – mostly small social organisations they had worked with – to each become the ‘godmother’ of a song.

Eight ‘godmothers’ invested 500,000 pesos (approx. US\$190) in the record’s production; in exchange they received a space in the CD booklet to advertise or share what they wanted.

La Múcura was awarded a small grant to publish the first 500 copies of their book. With this grant they trained and contracted a women’s group to do bookbinding workshops and hand produce their books.

They are about to start a new tour of Latin America to share their socially conscious music. The trip will be supported by concert revenues and by selling CDs and books. CDs are selling for 25,000 pesos (approx. US\$7.50) and books for 50,000 pesos (approx. US\$15).



## EXERCISES FOR DONORS, ALLIES AND ENABLERS

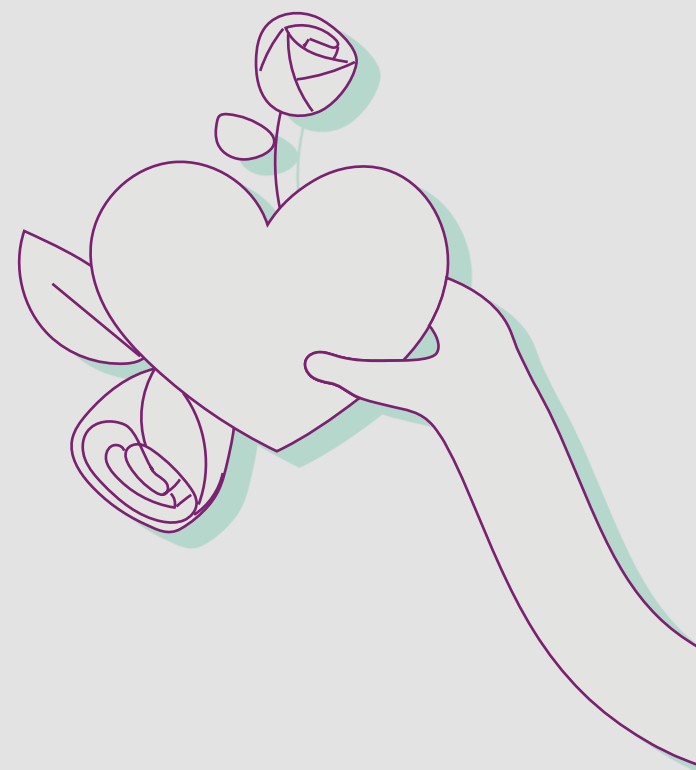
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### Power and affective communication

Given that your institution might be in the position of power over your youth-led partners, what would be needed to develop more power with them?

La Múcura values affection in their interaction with partners, they say this helps them overcome the mentality of begging for money. They feel the type of shared experiences and quality of communication generate relationships that are more authentic. How could affection and friendship contribute in your work?

Working in relation to your work role, brainstorm with your team about any way in which you could construct a more attentive, caring and affectionate type of communication with your youth-led partners.



## EXERCISES FOR YOUTH-LED GROUPS AND MOVEMENTS

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### Thinking of money

Bonnie reflects on the power of decoupling resourcing from money. She has also become aware of the need to navigate the space between valuing their work and building relationships that are not mediated by financial transactions. When relationships are strong and mediated by affection, Bonnie says, their work is more resilient and does not depend exclusively on the availability of cash.

Meanwhile, Bonnie and Jimena have been reflecting on the type of assumptions that they hold around money as a way of generating more abundance. Pay attention to your thoughts and emotions around money for a week and take down some notes.

- » How often did you think of money? In which contexts?
- » What were your feelings associated with money this week?

Individually, come up with a list of five true statements around money that you think are taken for granted in your organisation, such as ‘we need money to pay rent’ or ‘money sucks’. Compare them with your colleagues.

Collectively, come up with a list of at least three true statements.

### Statement 1:

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### Statement 2:

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### Statement 3:

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- » What do these statements say about your organisation’s relationship with money? What do you notice about these statements?

## Doing the maths

To build more transparent relationships with donors, it might be helpful to start calculating the real monetary value of your work.

- » Think of a project you recently managed. Create a list of any non-financial resources that you managed, such as in-kind donations, volunteer time, resources from alliances, or pro-bono extra hours worked.
- » Look up how much each service or product costs in your context. Do the maths to find out the real value of your work.

For example:

Workshop Facilitation				
Time (Hours)	No. of people	Total hours	Amount per hour	Total
30	4	120	USD 10	<b>USD 1,200</b>

For example, Bonnie estimates that each partner organisation visited during the trip invested about US\$3,325 in La Múcura, for a total of US\$46,550. This was calculated thinking of the amount the team would have spent if they had to cover the costs of their food and accommodation while visiting each organisation.

## Paying your team, in different ways

Bonnie and Jimena are able to support their livelihoods exclusively from their research and music. It is helpful for them to keep their team small.

As part of a team, some people might need to ensure their livelihood through shared work while some might be happy to do it in their free time. This is likely to change over time as people's needs evolve.

One person might be happy to volunteer one year but then might find it no longer feasible as they want to become more financially independent.

Someone might feel sufficiently rewarded through participation in a series of training activities, or by receiving mentorship around a specific topic, but another person might need to ensure that their transport costs are covered to continue engaging with the work.

- » Are you aware of your colleagues' and friends' priorities and life situations?
- » Have a conversation with your team and consider how you can collectively reward and invest in strengthening your team.



— *Story IV* —

**The challenges of donors'  
requirements, and small  
income-generating initiatives**  
Priscilla, Ghana

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(Pronouns: she / her / hers)





Priscilla is the executive director of Youth Harvest Foundation Ghana (YHFG), a youth organisation in the Upper East Region of Ghana that supports young people's personal and professional empowerment. The organisation has existed for 17 years and has established a good track record, particularly on supporting young women and providing education on sexual and reproductive rights.

A year ago, Priscilla stepped in as YHFG's new director. In this story she speaks about the organisation's resourcing strategy and shares her thoughts about the future of its sustainability.

### Priscilla shares how it feels to have donor restrictions on asset usage

Over the years, my predecessor learned how to negotiate our specific needs and establish open relationships with donors. We still have some challenges. To me some situations are very frustrating.

For example, recently, we have been able to acquire a car as part of a project with a multilateral donor. This has been very helpful given that we work in rural areas, where access to transport is limited.

A local youth group that we have been supporting and collaborating with has voluntarily offered to organise regular women's circles around reproductive health in a remote community in an underserved rural area. The girls in the local community would benefit greatly from having this space of reflection. The youth group is also really excited about the prospect of gaining experience and connecting with a community that is five hours away. The group has asked us to help cover transportation costs and have offered to pay for fuel if we make the car available. The problem is that the **donor does not allow the car to be used for projects other than the ones they are sponsoring.**

Youth-led groups and movements report that they frequently struggle with the prohibitive restrictions that come along with access to grant money.

I have not been able to negotiate with the donor. Their argument is that if we use it for other projects, the vehicle may break down within a shorter timeframe and therefore increase the cost of maintenance before the completion of the project cycle.

I don't know how to manage the situation because I do not have any **unrestricted funding** in the budget. We have a car, and we can't use it.

### YHFG is taking small initiatives to generate resources

Ninety-five per cent of the work that we do is through grants. All the grants are project specific; we have not managed to obtain any core funding yet. I think that in the future access to grants will become even more unreliable. Our team and board has been thinking about how to increase the amount of resources that we can self-generate. It's not easy though, especially when working in a rural area where people have little income. Here are some of our experiments so far:

#### A computer centre and a cafe

We have recently **opened a cafe where we sell natural fruit smoothies**. A few years ago, we managed to accommodate a computer centre to provide internet access in the rural area. We recently got funding to refurbish it to have faster internet connection and a printer. People walk in and can use computers in exchange for a small fee. These two initiatives generate a small income for the organisation and offer a service to the community at an accessible fee.

#### Youth centre

We manage a girls' remedial school that hosts up to 50 girls who are given six months' remedial tuition in order for them to rewrite their senior high school exams. These are girls from deprived rural areas who would have otherwise been

Unrestricted funding is not earmarked and can be allocated to operating expenses.



To build their sustainability, youth-led groups and movements can strengthen their support base by developing long term relationships with their members, partners and constituencies.

unable to further their education due to their inability to pass some of their subjects. We provide access to teachers, educational material, meals and some sanitary products.

We have had a foreign partner to fund the centre, but this year they told us they did not have funds to support it. The communication was good: they told us that they needed one year to fundraise themselves and will then go back to supporting the centre next year. Nevertheless, it made us aware of our **dependence on donors**.

We are implementing some strategies in the hope of making the centre more self-sustaining. For example, we have an alumni network. We organise a day each year when past beneficiaries of the programme meet with other girls to share their experience. Our graduates get a chance to reflect on their journey, and the young girls get inspired.

***We hope that one day these girls will be very successful and will be willing and able to help us sustain the centre.***

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## EXERCISES FOR DONORS, ALLIES AND ENABLERS

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### Thinking beyond grants

YHFG is becoming aware they need to think beyond grants, but they are not able to sustain their work with the income-generating activities they have launched.

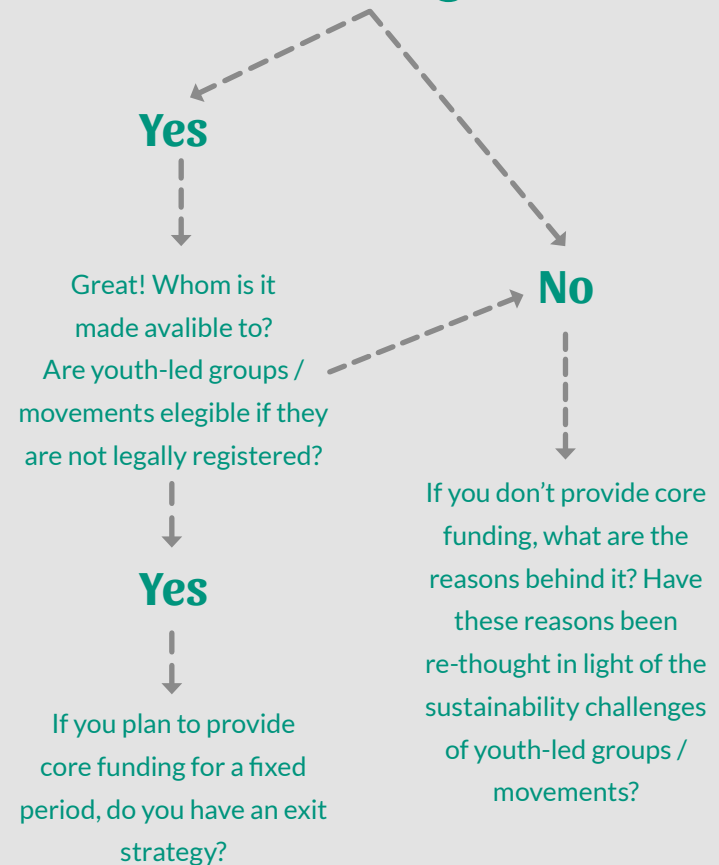
- » How could you support youth-led organisations to become more sustainable?
- » Prepare some questions you could ask YHFG to find out what would be most useful to them.

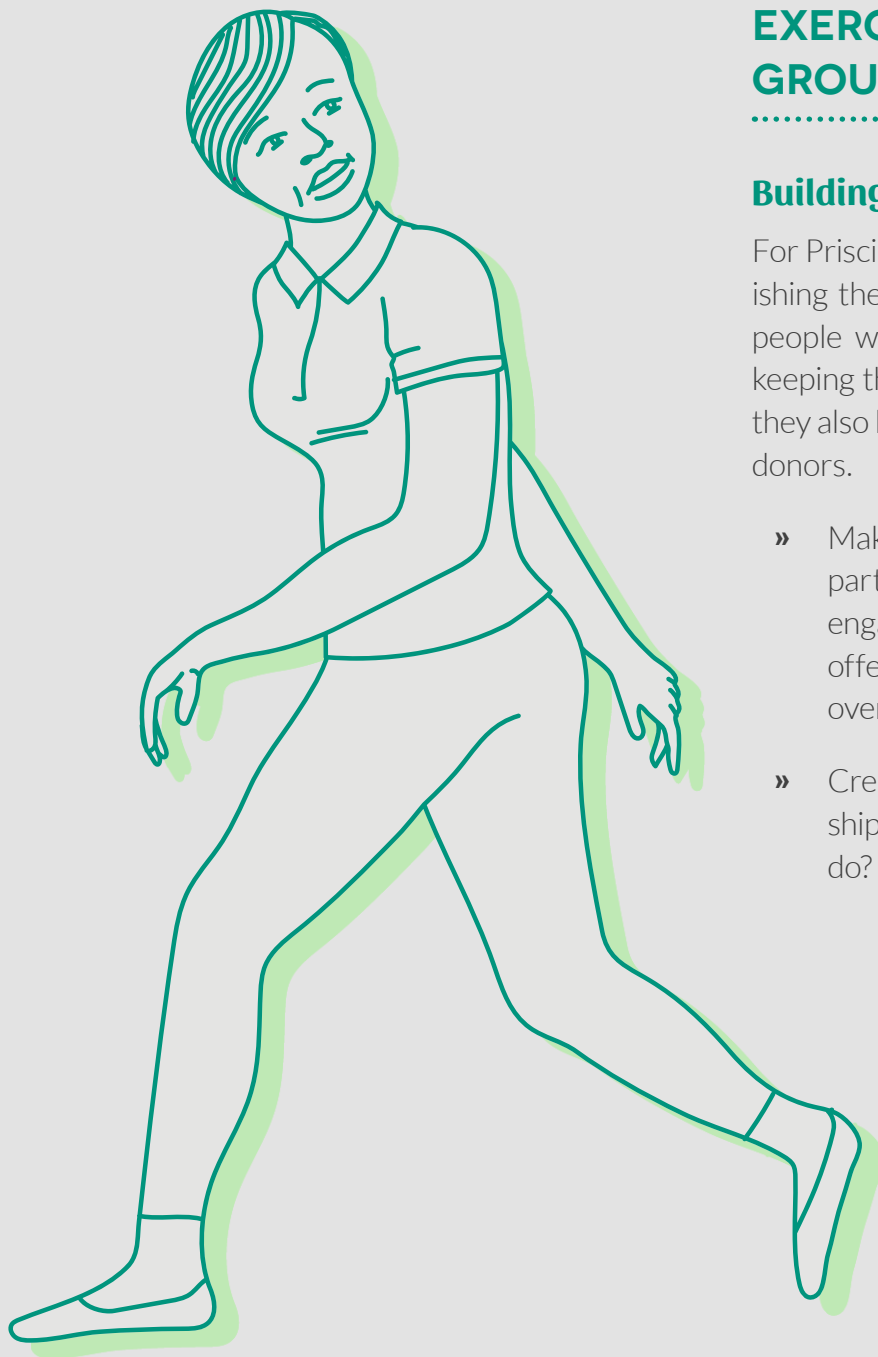
### How restrictive are your conditions?

Review and question your grant restrictions. Are these restrictions having real-life consequences that are unreasonable? If so, what would it take to amend or rethink such restrictions?



## Do you provide core funding?





## EXERCISES FOR YOUTH-LED GROUPS AND MOVEMENTS

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### Building long-term relationships

For Priscilla, organising alumni events is a way to keep nourishing the relationships that the organisation has with the people who have passed through their youth centre. By keeping them engaged with the future of the youth centre, they also hope one day to convert them into supporters and donors.

- » Make a list of any allies for your work, including past participants and partner organisations, that you could engage with more meaningfully. What do you have to offer to them? How could your relationship transform over time?
- » Create a map of the best and worst donor relationships you've ever had. What did they do? What did you do?

## Best relationship with donor you ever had

What we did

What the donor did

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## Worst relationship you have ever had with donor

What we did

What the donor did

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— *Story V* —

**Preparing, living and surviving  
a social movement**

**Lebo, South Africa**

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*(Pronouns: she / her / hers)*





## Preparing for the movement

**L**ebod does not remember what she was thinking about the day the #FeesMust-Fall movement started. She had just stepped out of one of the last classes of her undergrad degree; her head was in the clouds. At the university gate, heading home, she heard a familiar voice with a solemn tone declaring that the university was occupied. There was confusion. All gates were blocked. She clued in to what was happening when she realised the person speaking was one of her friends from a reading group on radical black thought. “We are occupying the university,” she said. “Are you in?”

She shook off her confused look, ran home to get some clothes and went right back to campus. This would become her new home.

Inside of her, she knew something was about to happen. In a sense, she had been preparing for this movement for a whole year by participating in the reading group. The group was underground and very disciplined: reading would be shared on Mondays and the discussion group hosted on Fridays. Over the course of the year the readings had become more militant and their reflections deeper.

An announcement that university fees were going to rise by 10.5 per cent was the spark for the movement. Yet the pillars of the movement were deeper. They had been constructed in long debates around critical black thought and questioning of neoliberalism.

There was a sense of restlessness amongst South African black youth and students. A few months earlier, protesters had thrown excrement at a statue of the British colonialist Cecil John Rhodes, looking peacefully out over the ocean from the University of Cape Town. Protesters expressed their collective disgust at the celebration of white colonialism and requested that the statue be removed: a clear sign that the time for bullshit was coming to an end.

## Living the movement

During #FeesMustFall Lebo was the girl on a bike. She put herself at the service of the movement. Everything moved so fast her head was spinning. Things just started happening.

After a week of occupation, the students sent home all the cleaning staff and started managing the university. Living at the university meant they had to clean, cook, organise protests and manage media relationships, among other tasks. Every morning there was an entire team assigned with preparing food for the occupiers. At Lebo's university, the occupation was managed across four other teams: media, direct action, legal and medical.

How did they manage to resource themselves and coordinate all this work? Lebo explains that the media was giving so much attention to the movement that resources just seemed to flow in: they received, for example, donations of toilet paper, pads, material and food.

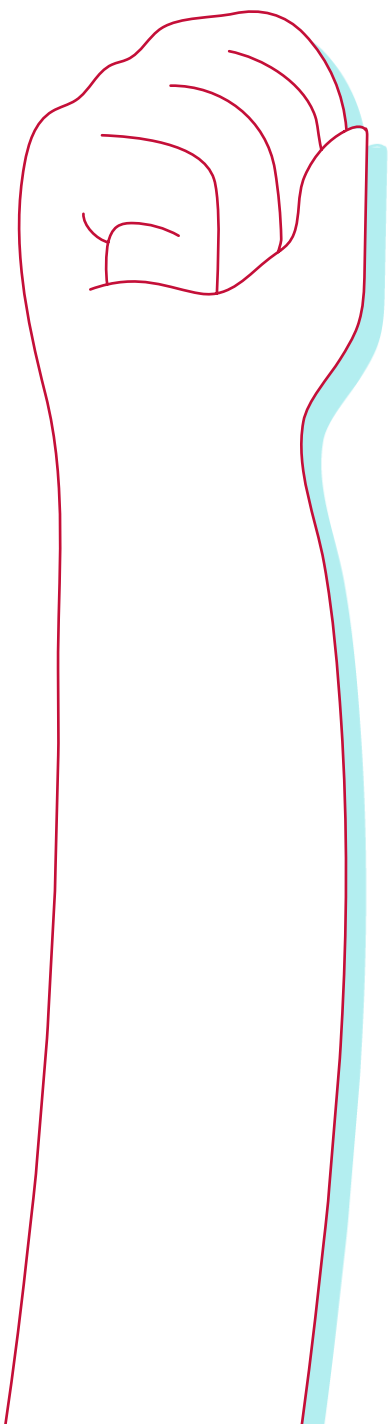
Lebo explains that there was much adrenaline in the air but it was hard to see the whole picture: where were the resources coming from and why?

On 23 October 2015, to appease protesters, then-President Jacob Zuma invited students to Pretoria for an encounter. A couple of dozen buses appeared out of nowhere to drive students to the meeting. Lebo still does not know who paid for the buses.

In Pretoria, it was announced that there would be no fee increase in 2016. Yet to many of the student activists, this did not feel like a win.

It eventually became evident that, as well as the individual donations received, a political party had been paying some of the student leaders to co-opt the movement and separate the students into factions. When Lebo and her friends became





aware of this they felt confused, disillusioned and angry. The students who were associated with the political party lost all credibility. They were effectively isolated by the rest of the movement.

The movement continued throughout 2016 amidst adrenaline, teargas, rubber bullets, screams, chants, blood, stones, media attention and police brutality. All of South Africa was trembling, says Lebo.

### ~~~~~ **Surviving the movement**

Come 2017, #FeesMustFall had wound down. Activists were left drained and traumatised, struggling with **post-traumatic stress disorder**. Their deeper desires for systemic change remained mostly unaddressed. The movement had lost momentum with a sense of confusion. Who had won and who had lost was not clear.

Lebo observes that CSOs had extracted the language and critiques they liked, but not necessarily the depth of the underlying ideologies. To Lebo it feels like being back in the times before the movement started, except that civil society now ‘speaks like them’.

Some of the former movement leaders have joined CSOs, some are doing community projects, some have started social enterprises and others have gone into politics. Many have been left paralysed by trauma. Some were jailed and later given suspended sentences or kept under house arrest.

The movement diffused. Yet the ideas that grounded the movement left an impression on Lebo’s generation of students. Social movements might flare up and then fade. But thanks to her participation with #feesmustfall, Lebo became an activist.



## EXERCISES FOR DONORS, ALLIES AND ENABLERS

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DOCUMENT LINK:

[https://globalclimatestrike.net/  
principles-for-ngo-engagement-with-school-strikes/](https://globalclimatestrike.net/principles-for-ngo-engagement-with-school-strikes/)

SITE LINK:

<https://youngfeministfund.org/home/happiness-manifestx>

### What does it look like to provide resources to a social movement without co-opting it?

Engage in a reflection with your colleagues around this question.

Write down your organisation's principles in relation to working with social movements. ***As an inspiration, you can review the ones designed by 350.org to support youth-led climate strikes***

### A personal and collective care manifesto

The mental health of students was seriously affected by their participation in the movement. In general, activists can experience serious mental health issues that are often invisible.

In order to support youth-led organisations with their mental health, you might want to start by ensuring you have some internal principles to promote self-care and collective care within your organisation.

You might want to create a manifesto around mental wellbeing. ***As an example, see Frida's Happiness 'Manifestx'.***

To design your own manifesto, you can follow the steps in next page (p.56):

Once you have reflected on your own personal and collective care, you might want to start considering what it look like to integrate a mental health component to support activists as part of the resources you offer.

## Building a self-care and collective care manifesto for our organisation

**Material:** Scissor, coloured paper, markers, glue, flipchart or brown paper.

Group size: 10 to 100 people.

### Coming up with a manifesto

**Preparation:** cut out coloured paper of different shapes and sizes

Place the cut-out papers next to big pieces of paper, spread across the room with the following sentences:

1. A beautiful life looks like this:
2. In my life, I take care of myself by...
3. When I enter the space that [x group organisation / group / alliance] creates I want to feel...
4. To protect my personal wellbeing, I can stop...
5. Above all, I believe that to give the best of myself in my work I need...

There should be five stations around the room with one of the sentences above, markers and coloured paper of different sizes and colours.

### Step by step:

- » Invite your colleagues to create a self-care and collective care manifesto: a document that creatively captures your vision, values, motivations and intentions around care.
- » Ask each person in the room to fill in the sentences using symbols, drawings, words and phrases. Keep one idea per paper.
- » Ask each person to pick three papers across all stations and bring them to the centre.
- » Play with the different sentences until they look like something all participants feel happy with.
- » Stick all papers on a flipchart.
- » After the workshop, you can ask someone in the group to write up the manifesto if you want.

## EXERCISES FOR YOUTH-LED GROUPS AND MOVEMENTS

### Strengthening your roots

Lebo explains that reading group discussions helped build the bases for the #feesmustfall movement. What activities could you do to deepen the ideological roots of your group or movement?

Ahead of every meeting with your peer activists, dedicate half an hour for organising a talking circle as a space to reflect, learn and align around the ideas, aspirations and values guiding each of you.

Here are some questions you could address:

### Understanding your ideological roots

- » How do you each understand social change?
- » What are the values guiding your engagement in a social movement?
- » What change you would like to achieve together?

### Preparing for a movement

- » What kinds of resources are needed for this movement to flourish?
- » What do you need to sustain the movement?
- » What kinds of organising and leadership do you need?
- » What would be the scenario in which the movement could or should dissolve or transform?

### Sustaining your movement

- » What can you do to support each other throughout different phases and actions you will be organising and taking part in?

The Extinction Rebellion movement has been emphasising the wellbeing of its members, and has put together a number of useful resources and guidelines. Some of the methods they use to sustain wellbeing across their movement are:

- » Talking circles following actions
- » Buddy guide
- » Connecting to your body and how you are feeling
- » Connecting to your values
- » Connecting to each other
- » Connecting to nature

Could you adopt any of these or other wellbeing activities to support members in your movement?

### Co-option

- » Do you see risks of any form of co-option of your movement?
- » Do you intend to interact with political, institutional, or other entities?
- » How would you like this interaction to play out?
- » Is there any actor who might have interest in buying-off movement members or promoting division?
- » How could you anticipate and mitigate this risk?



— *Story VI* —

**The complexity of competing  
for and managing resources**

Dumi - Success Capital, Botswana  
.....

*(Pronouns: they / them / their)*





## The becoming of an activist

**D**umi's schooling in South Africa transformed their understanding of injustice. The exposure to a more vibrant civil society landscape and a rich history of activism contrasted with that of conservative Botswana. The movement against the apartheid government, the youth uprising in 1976, post-1994 actions for LGBTQI+ equality and the provision of free antiretroviral ARV treatment to manage the HIV/AIDS epidemic opened up space for engagement and improved the civic participation of the LGBTQI+ community.

It was only on return to Botswana that Dumi became aware of the injustices faced by sexual and gender minorities in their country. Dumi had experienced abuse as a younger person, but they had not known how to react and navigate their gender, sexuality and life experiences. They were now moved by a desire to end the normalisation of pain and harm inflicted on young minorities in Botswana.

Dumi started volunteering with larger CSOs while working in the private sector. As a volunteer in a youth collective, Dumi found it challenging to be heard and supported. For example, they wanted to host the first ever local pride event in Botswana. Many community members were going to join Johannesburg Pride and Dumi decided to organise one for those who could not afford to go to South Africa. Although logistical support was promised, the youth collective was left to arrange and execute the event on the day. Power dynamics and politics led to a swift exit and establishment of an advocacy blog (PinkAnatomyBW) and subsequently, Success Capital: a grassroots CSO working on moving young minorities from survival to success. Success Capital aspires to become the first choice of knowledge for LGBTQI+ young people in Anglophone Southern Africa.

## Competition for resources – youth organising set up for failure?

Dumi took on the challenge of resourcing Success Capital's work. They would spend at least **two hours a day after work seeking out open grant opportunities and applying**. They could not reconcile how theories of change for improving the lives of young minorities could fit within a year's log-frame. They were challenged with how proposed log-frames could be realistic in pre-empting Success Capital's impact or contribution to changing society and transforming individuals. What were the right measures of documenting the shift from survival to success?

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*Dumi's efforts resulted in generic emails of rejection or no response at all.*

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Success Capital was competing for the same money that larger domestic and regional organisations were eligible for. As grant opportunities kept opening, Dumi became more frustrated with the process of securing funding. Most opportunities were limited to a focus on HIV/AIDS, the biggest source of financing for minority-led organisations.

Through engaging with the LGBTQI+ community while conducting their master's research on organisational development within minority-led organisations, Dumi discovered high levels of toxicity and abuse of power within civil society. Peers were experiencing mental health issues with no safe spaces for support, within or outside civil society. Yet project proposals on these issues were never successful in grant proposals.

Success Capital's concept notes on nurturing activism, curating knowledge and addressing unemployment among youth minorities were also just not making the

To sustain themselves, many young organisers and activists take up part-time or full-time employment. While this can create financial security, it can also prevent young people from having sufficient time for their civic engagement.

A gatekeeper is a person who controls access to something, in this case information and resources. Dumi refers to the perception that a few people and organisations are aware of and have access to funding opportunities, while others are excluded.

Training volunteers requires investments of time and resources that grants often do not account for.

cut. For example, Dumi questioned how non-binary people living with HIV/AIDS could navigate adulthood in poverty. Calls for proposals seemed too narrow, disregarding the complexity of people's experiences.

Success Capital kept operating with little resources. In five years, only two grant proposals were successful – one related to HIV/AIDS and one around sexual and reproductive health and rights.

Although there were volunteers, availability and skills were intermittent challenges. Dumi was forced to ensure continuity in managing finances, monitoring and evaluation, project implementation, reporting and stakeholder management, among other roles, whilst working full-time and navigating civil society politics and **gatekeeping**.

Passion and intermittent contributions from other volunteers could only go so far: funding was restricted to project activities, there were no stipends for volunteers and board members had competing professional commitments.

This juggling of roles whilst figuring out organising, collaborating with others, studying part-time and having no support structures led to **several breakdowns, disappointments and tension at the personal and professional levels**. It was clear that some aspect of Dumi's life would have to be compromised.

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## EXERCISES FOR DONORS, ALLIES AND ENABLERS

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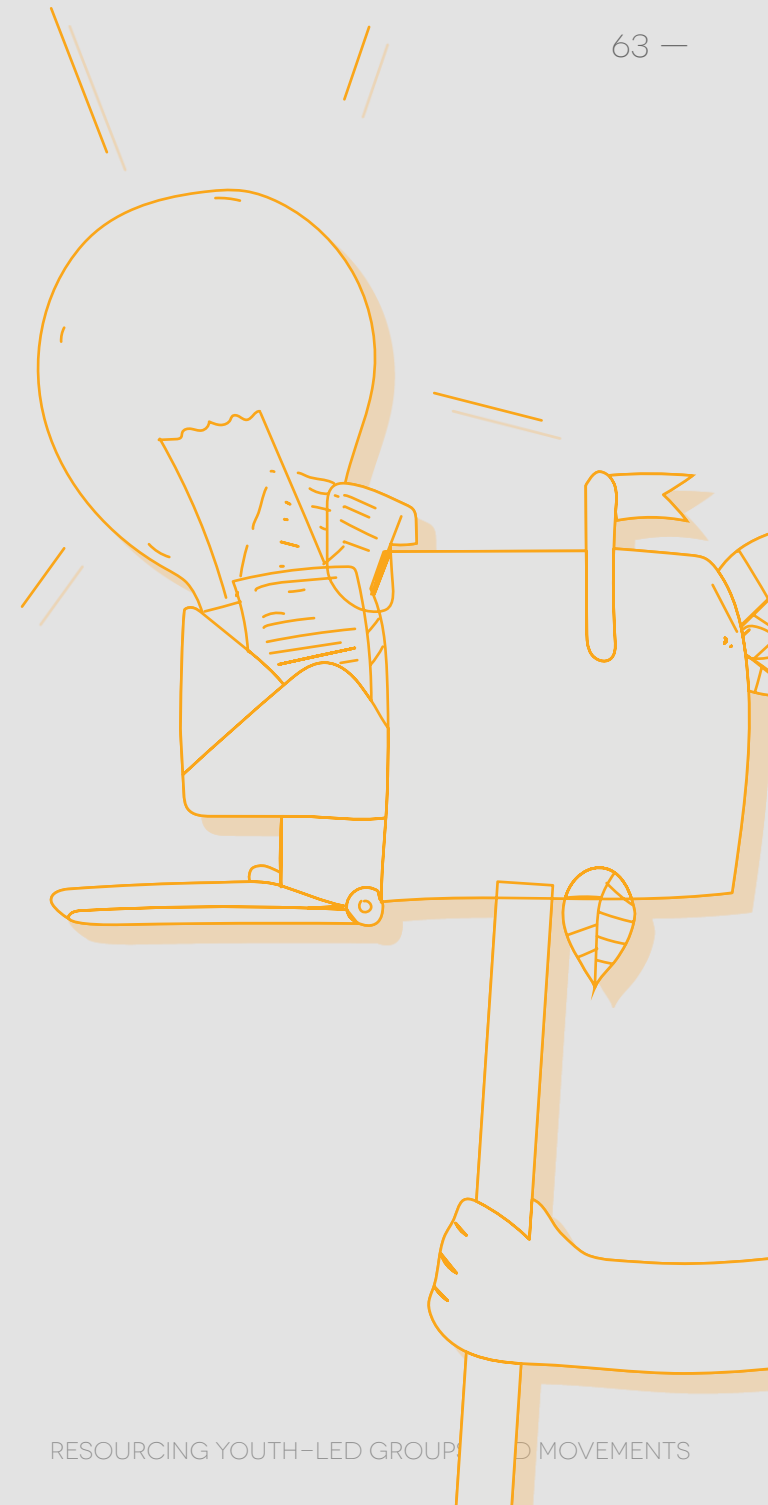
### Researching underfunded areas

How can you learn to reach underfunded areas better? To do so, you might have to learn to sense emerging trends, needs and ideas.

Weaving in different theories of social change, Doug Reeler (2007) suggests that when supporting social change, before asking ‘how do we change things’, it is useful to ask ‘how are things already changing?’

Once you have taken some time to explore the different types of social change, reflect on these questions:

- » Have you considered investing time or resources in learning about the grassroots youth groups and movements in the countries and regions you support?
- » How can the resources you provide enhance their ongoing work to unlock social change?
- » How can you align your vision of change to theirs?



## Reflecting on competition

- » How does your institution prevent competition between grassroots youth-led groups and movements and more established, larger and international CSOs?
- » How can you support more established, larger and international CSOs to work in partnership with grassroots youth-led groups and movements? One example of this is might be by encouraging the formation of multi-stakeholder partnerships or consortia in which smaller organisations have proper recognition and voice.<sup>5</sup>
- » Be mindful of power dynamics and think about how you can support youth organisations to flourish in spaces of competition. You can also co-design agreements with different parts of civil society that include detailed steps on how to support enabling power dynamics and avoid co-option.
- » Reflect on where your money and resourcing can be most useful
- » Are there topics or areas linked to the mission of your organisation that you are passionate about but which are underfunded? How can you plan for your support to be directed at groups and movements that are globally under-resourced and unattractive?
- » What can you do to avoid forcing square pegs into round holes? For example, in the case Dumi shared, what does it look like to avoid providing all support through the lens of HIV/AIDS funding which not only rules out other approaches, but risks distorting activities to qualify for funding?
- » How can you tailor your support to the work of youth organisations that are leading on the ground rather than forcing them to adapt to your support package?
- » Reflect on Doug Reeler's analysis of different types of social change. How can you develop a support package aimed at enabling emergent and transformative change? What would this entail in terms of rethinking reporting, accountability and other requirements for the youth-led group supported?

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5 - Here for example you can find a study on the 'Effectiveness of working in consortia', Institute of Development Studies, 2017, [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5ba3785740f0b6071970c21f/067\\_Working\\_in\\_Consortia.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5ba3785740f0b6071970c21f/067_Working_in_Consortia.pdf).

## EXERCISES FOR YOUTH GROUPS AND MOVEMENTS

### Grassroots mental health support

What kind of community practices can you implement to support your mental health, prevent burnout and ensure self-care when you cannot afford to pay for professional support?

This is a useful practice that can be done individually or in a group in check-ins.

Personal check-ins are an invitation to ask yourself: ‘What is moving inside of me right now?’ The simplest version is a weather check-in: ‘Am I feeling sunny? Stormy? Cloudy? Foggy?’

Once you have checked in with yourself you can find an expression for the way you feel. Checking in with yourself can also help you identify and clarify a need. This could be writing a diary entry, practising mindful activities such as meditation, painting or going for a walk.

Check-ins can also be collective. In a group setting, you can each share your feelings while the others engage in active listening. When doing this, make sure that everyone has an opportunity to share. Once everyone has had an opportunity, the group can decide whether there are some actions that need to be taken to respond to each other’s needs.

To get inspired, you can check out the examples shared by [Ember](#), a project promoting grassroots mental healthcare. Resources from [Extinction Rebellion](#) are also very useful.





— *Story VII* —

**Building south-to-south  
networks of peacebuilders:  
Christian - Peacemaker 360, DRC**  
.....

(Pronouns: he / him / his)



## What was the inspiration to start Peacemaker 360?



I grew up in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), a region affected by decades of conflict. During my undergraduate studies in Kenya I had the chance to get to know young people from other African countries similarly recovering from or undergoing violent conflicts. Students hailed from Burundi, Liberia, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, South Sudan and Uganda, among others.

I was inspired to learn about their experiences and contexts. I wondered why so much of my curriculum was written by academics from the global north: there was so much richness in the knowledge of my peers, knowledge that felt so alive! I dreamed of creating opportunities to connect global south youth organisations of peacemakers so they could start interacting more sustainably, learn from each other and work together.

This dream matured when I was granted a scholarship to study peacebuilding in the USA. As part of my master's programme, I built a beautiful friendship with a young migrant from Colombia named Isaías. Isaías and I exchanged stories about the history of our countries and spent long hours composing music together, creating lyrics inspired by our work and studies. With Isaías I started experiencing the power of storytelling – of evoking emotions to build empathy and create cultural bridges.

As I researched young activists working on peacebuilding for my master's thesis, I realised that the stories and insights of young peacebuilders were invisible in the media. I launched Peacemaker 360 to tell and give visibility to those stories.

## What has been your experience resourcing your work?

Early on I got really disillusioned with donor-led funding models.

In the DRC, I was working with a small CSO promoting youth leadership. We were pretty successful in obtaining funding – we had four funding partnerships and we were growing, under the paradigm that assumes that more financial resources equals organisational growth.

But I got tired of it. I felt all I was doing was answering to the donors. We were caught in the bureaucracy of making deadlines.

This was a big dilemma for me. I kept asking myself: how much am I willing to offer in terms of my own vision and my own passion in order to accommodate the donors' requirements?

After that experience, it has been harder for me to resource my work. I have become more critical of traditional funding models, more interested in doing things not bound to funders' structures.

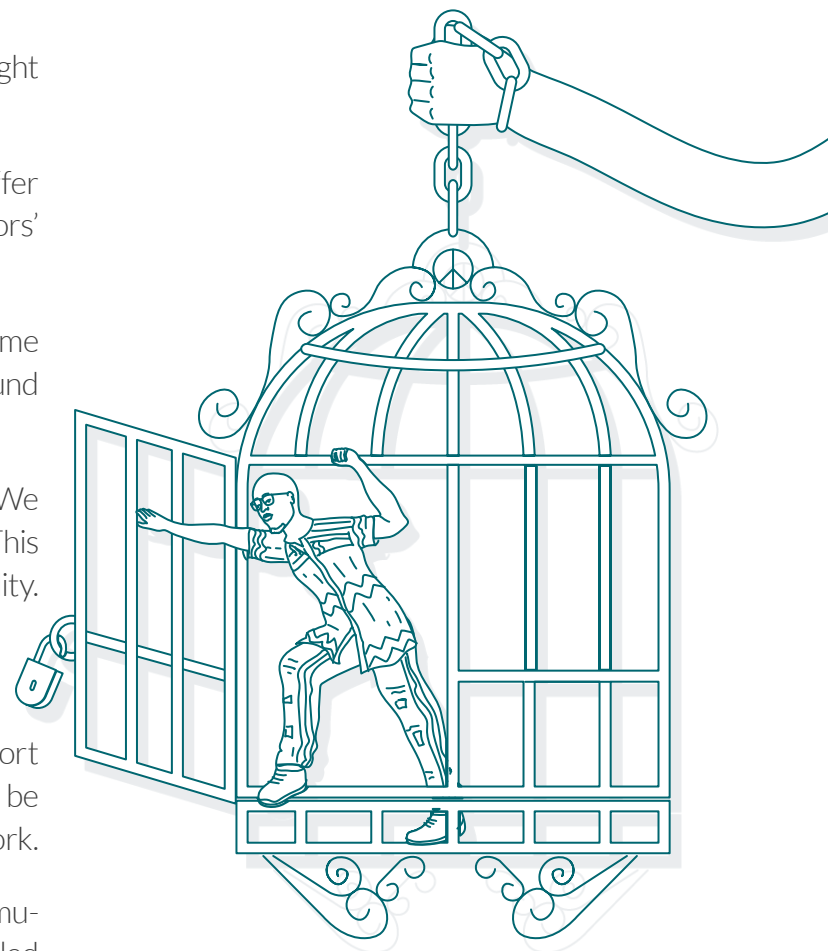
Right now, Peacemakers 360 does not have a financial sustainability strategy. We manage individual donations and have received small grants for specific projects. This being said, I set up the project so that it would not need funding for its sustainability.

## So what are you doing instead?

We are building a network of peacebuilder organisations so that we can all support each other and help raise our profile and visibility. I hope that in the future we will be able to work more closely with our partners so that they can help us sustain our work.

When starting Peacemaker 360 I simply followed my impulse to create a community to exchange knowledge. I was tired of the top-down logic that many youth-led organisations fall into that we cannot do anything without money.

I think there is a value in asking ourselves: what can we do without funding?





To do things without funding is empowering; it reduces the risk of dependency from the donors' funding model.

Of course, alone we can't do it all. I do believe that by taking on a more independent mindset we can get more creative and develop our unique experience. This can give us an edge so that other institutions can recognise our work, respect it and treat us as equals. Or this at least is my hope.

The problem is that **donors are less likely to give you funding if you don't already have other grants because they fear you don't have the capacity to manage finances**: it's a chicken-and-egg dilemma. I think this is a faulty argument though. Donors should support organisations based on their impact, and if we achieve impact with little or no funding, they should help us develop the capacity to manage more.

### How do you understand the practices around impact measurement?

I believe that impact and indicators should be defined by the communities themselves. In the case of the DRC, when we tell a big donor that we are making an impact working with youth leadership, what they are looking to see are the numbers. They ask: how many? How many? How many?

But the value of this work is not about 'how many'. It is about the quality of relationships that these young people are able to have with themselves and with their community as a result of our work. The **quality of the relationship is so much more important for youth organisations**, at least in our case, than just the numbers or ticking the box to please the donor. This is a very different worldview that is important to talk about when we talk about impact and indicators.

## How do you support yourself?

I am working as a consultant, and often get contracted as an individual. It's not ideal, but at this moment, it is helpful for me to keep Peacemaker 360 and my own livelihood separate.

## What is the best relationship you have had with a donor?

I am so grateful to the Pollination Project. They provide small seed funding of around US\$1,000 but are able to give a boost to organisations that normally would not qualify. I reached out to them in 2017 explaining that we wanted to publish a book with 25 stories of young peacebuilders. They were very responsive. They replied promptly, with an informal tone, and had very basic application requirements.

***I enjoyed how kind and caring their communication was.*** For example, they were flexible with the publication deadline. Plus, they even sent me a list of other organisations that they had supported with publishing a book so that I could learn from them and expand my network. That was really encouraging to me.

## Do you have recommendations for donors that want to work with youth-led groups and movements and experiment with new funding models?

I would suggest they focus on the social impact that youth-led groups and movements are already making and develop flexible funding mechanisms that enhance that impact – and understand that impact is not all about numbers. This includes reducing reporting bureaucracy and having quick response basket funds that are accessible to address issues like the protection and evacuation of youth leaders from life-threatening situations. All this is possible if the relationship between youth-led groups is neither transactional nor top-down, but one of equals who choose to work together to transform social injustices around the world.

It can be so frustrating to receive no feedback or an automatic email after spending so much time on a funding application!

## EXERCISES FOR DONORS, ALLIES AND ENABLERS

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### Who selects grantees?

Christian mentions being funded by the Pollination Project, a donor that provides seed grants of up to US\$1,000. We asked the Pollination Project to share some of their best practices:

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*“One of our most successful best practices involves engaging past grantees in selecting new grant recipients. We do this by inviting past grantees to volunteer as ‘grant advisors’.”*

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*“We believe that philanthropic projects need to distribute and decentralise their decision-making power; the profile of those taking decisions should reflect that of the individuals that we are trying to support.”*

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**Reflection questions:** Who selects grant recipients in your institutions? How could it be ensured that young people are more involved in decision-making processes on funding allocation?

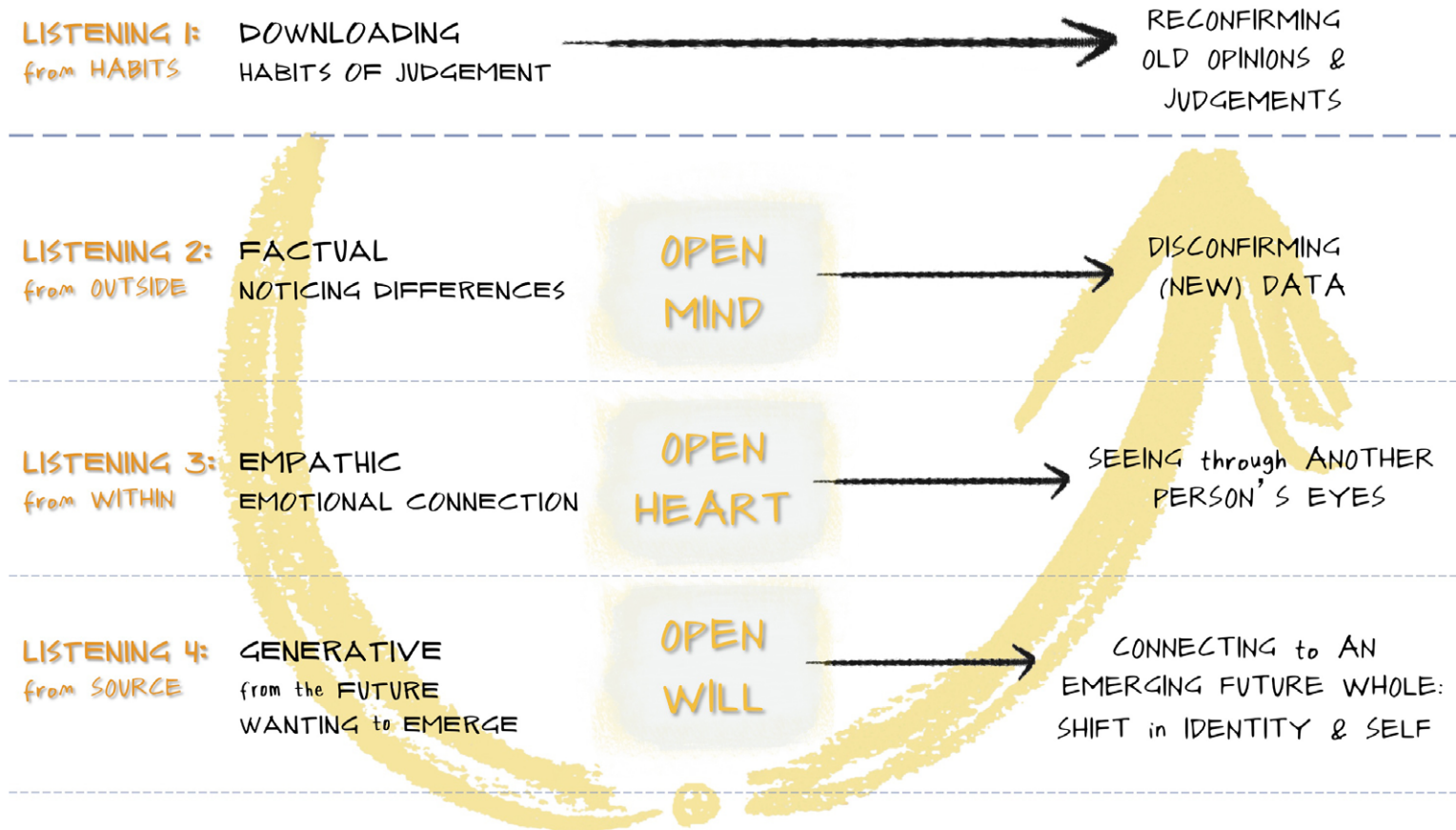
### Reframing impact

Christian highlights that it is important for donors to be able to trust and see potential for impact for youth-led groups and movements that don't have the trappings and track records. What would it look like to develop a process to help understand and assess potential?

How do your grant recipients value their work, and what can you learn from them about different ways of measuring impact? How could you redefine your assessments for impact, keeping in mind that youth-led groups and movements might not think of impact in the same way you might?



# LEVELS of LISTENING





## Authentic communication

### Step 1. Empathic and generative listening

What is the quality of your listening when you are engaging with your colleagues and allies? The Presencing Institute theorizes that we listen in at least four different ways of listening.

Refer to this [video](#) to learn about Otto Sharmer's four levels of listening.

Using the visual above, identify your typical level of listening and where you would like to progress to.

Practise listening with these different levels in your next conversation with your youth-led partners.

### Step 2. Practise authentic communication

Christian values affection and care in his interactions with partners and donors. He feels the type of shared experiences and quality of communication generate relationships that are more authentic.

Here are some tips on how to practise authentic communication:

- » Listen to yourself first, so that you know how to listen to others.
- » Identify where your assumptions inhibit your ability to listen.

- » Check your motivations for what you are about to say.
- » Use words to express your feelings that allow others to do so as well.
- » Speak specifically rather than generally.
- » Ask for clarification, such as 'what specifically do you mean / expect by that?'
- » Allow for silence.
- » Become aware of when you need to speak and when you don't.
- » Do not formulate your response whilst someone is speaking.
- » Respect differences.
- » Be aware of your own barriers.

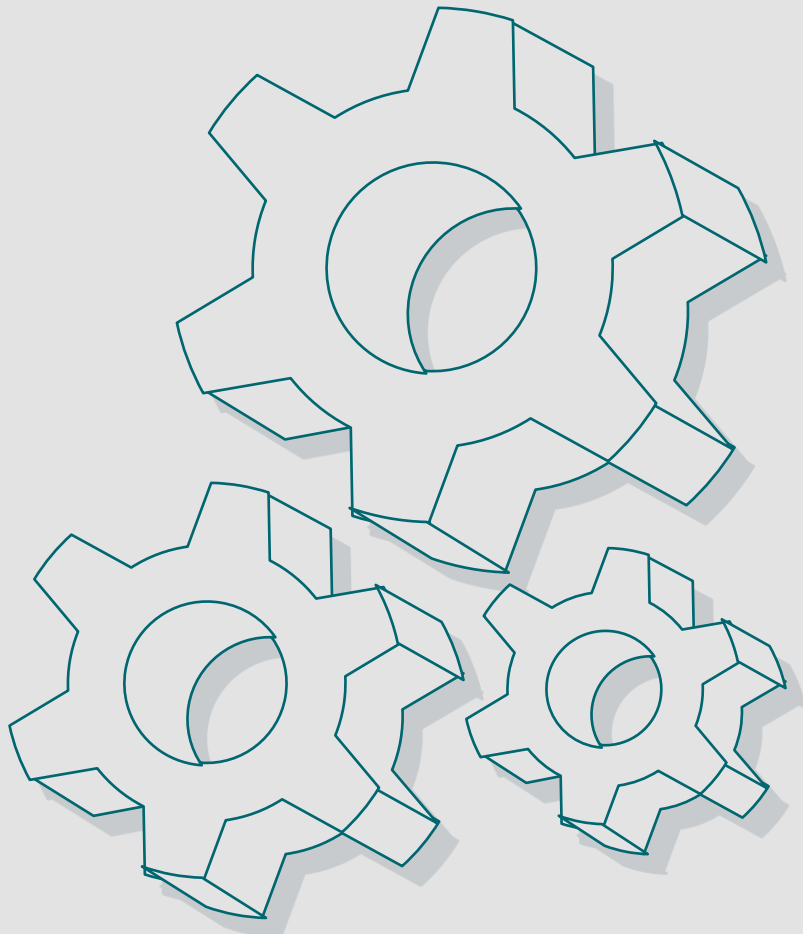
Reflect on this list with your team. Is there anything you would like to add or remove?

Once your adapted list is ready, keep it next to you in your interaction with youth-led partners and check whether you are communicating authentically. What are you already good at? What could be improved in your communication according to the list you and your colleagues drafted?

Use your next meeting to have a short debrief. What has each of you noticed and improved?

## EXERCISES FOR YOUTH GROUPS AND MOVEMENTS

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### How much are you willing to compromise?

75 —

Discuss with your team Christian's question: how much am I willing to offer in terms of my own vision and passion in order to accommodate the donors' requirements?

### Clarifying your model

Christian is clear that for now he prefers 360 to be a platform that can run with little resources. He thinks of his livelihood as separate to 360. This might not be the case for every young person working with a group or movement. Yet it is useful to be clear about your model.

What are the financial resources you need to run your group or movement?

Have you thought about alternative revenue sources? Youth organisations around the world are experimenting with different models, such as social enterprises, provision of services, sales of products and membership models. What could be a model or combination of models that works best for your organisation and context?

You could spend some time doing desk-based research and reaching out to other local youth-organisations to inquire about and be inspired by their funding model. Or you could organise a roundtable with other organisations to share challenges, learn and develop new ideas together.

In what ways can you translate the knowledge you gain through your engagement in civil society into other streams of revenues, for example through consultancies or developing services around that knowledge?

## CIVICUS AND RECREAR'S TAKEAWAYS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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### If you are a donor, an ally, or a potential enabler

- » with this playbook we invite you to be more thoughtful, curious and open to different narratives of social change that might not feature in your institution. We invite you to **listen**. To engage in dialogue and to become aware of how youth-led groups and movements experience their reality. To value the particular way in which youth-led groups and movements work. We believe doing so can strengthen and enrich your work. Developing more equal relationships means you can also **learn from** the experiences of youth-led processes.
- » **Project grants**, or rapid response grants, such the ones mentioned by Christian, can go a long way if they are flexible and light in paperwork. Yet there is also the need to value the individuals that are behind groups and projects. We invite you to respect their commitment and time and **account for their livelihoods as integral to their work's sustainability**.
- » We invite you to consider wellbeing in a holistic sense, starting with rethinking how your institution promotes **self-care and collective care** internally. After this reflection has passed through your institutions, we encourage you to consider integrating mental health components as part of your programmes.
- » Consider providing **core funding** and long-term support. Consider integrating more thoughtfully opportunities for training, guidance and mentorship for youth-led groups and movements. We invite you to think more broadly about whom to support: **go beyond the usual suspects!**
- » We encourage to think more expansively about impact by recognising the **power of art** and creativity to go **beyond log-frame** reporting and indicators.
- » Youth-led groups and movements value the quality of relationships they build with donors. Consider communicating with them with clarity, respect and care. Make sure to balance the power of your words and promises.

## If you are a youth organiser

- » we recognise with you that there is no magic formula for sustainability, based on the research that informed this playbook. We invite you to experiment, try different things, be creative. Keep sustainability into consideration from the onset when organising and strategizing actions, but avoid thinking of the concept in a narrow sense.
- » We encourage you to continue creating communities with other youth-led groups and organisations; to pull resources together, coordinate efforts and learn from each other and in conversation with wider civil society.
- » Think expansively about resourcing yourself. Reflect on what sustainability means to your project, group, or movement.
- » Consider the funding you accept. Be selective!
- » If you are working with donors, we suggest you communicate openly and honestly about the challenges you face. Remember you can ask for help!
- » If you are hesitant about doing this, reflect with your team about why this is the case. How can you build the confidence to be more radically honest in your communication with donors?
- » Having a relationship with a donor seems to be a bit like dating. The young organisers who were part of this study share that the best relationships they have had with donors have been the ones in which they were authentic. You can share what you value and care about, invite donors to witness your work, build empathy about your context and explain your decisions and experiences. Be yourself!
- » We know your work is very demanding. How do you re-establish your boundaries and prevent burnout and exhaustion? We invite you to create accountability and support within your groups and movements so that you can think more consciously about taking care of yourself and each other.

## SOME CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

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We hope you enjoyed reading, reflecting upon and engaging with the stories we shared in this playbook. While they represent only a few of the huge diversity of youth-led groups and movements that are sprouting across Latin America and Africa, these stories are meant to expand our imagination. Youth-led groups and movements – often unregistered and with no legal identity – are responding to young people's needs, hopes and desires for a different society in unique ways. By sharing each story we wanted to hint at the diversity and richness of experiences, visions and perspectives that are held within each youth-led group and movement.

We hope that you were able to understand and value the resilience, creativity and courage that it takes to search for new ways to exist and sustain youth-led and grassroots civil society work, given often restrictive civil society contexts and the scarcity of resources available. The fruits and impact that each of these groups and movements can generate are hard to translate into numbers, but we believe they express the possibility for re-imagining and renewing civil society to help contribute towards profound social and political change.

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## APPENDIX A: METHODOLOGY

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This playbook was inspired by CIVICUS's 'Landscape and Trend Analysis on Youth-led Groups and Movements in Latin America and Africa' research carried out by Gioel Gioacchino between November 2018 and June 2019. The questions that drove the study were:

- What is the current funding landscape of youth groups and movements? What challenges do youth-led groups and movements face to sustain themselves in Latin America and Africa?
- What are some of the organisational models, strategies and practices that youth groups and movements are utilising to ensure long-term sustainability?

Read more in the 'Landscape and Trend Analysis on Youth-led Groups and Movements' [consultation report](#).

To develop the stories featured in this playbook, there was an extensive back and forth between Gioel and the selected youth organisers. Each person featured in this playbook was part of co-constructing and reviewing their story.

The Youth Action Team was actively involved in the creation of this toolkit: They were part of its conceptualisation and the sense-making process and are endorsing and advocating for the recommendations in this work.

## APÉNDICE B: USEFUL RESOURCES

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<https://web.civicus.org/youthfacebook>

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<https://tinyurl.com/tadh997>

**Global Youth Empowerment Fund** <https://gyefund.org/>

**Pollination Grant:** Seed Grants For Projects That Change the World.<https://thepollinationproject.org>

**Youth Giving:** a hub to inspire, connect and inform youth grant-making. <https://youthgiving.org>



*Thanks for reading*



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