WHY THIS RESEARCH IS IMPORTANT...

The question of how grassroots groups and activists based in the global south can mobilise adequate support to overcome the growing ecological, social, political and economic challenges they face and achieve positive change is a serious one that requires our attention. These groups face significant challenges in accessing key resources (financial and otherwise) to sustain their work.

In recent years, progressive funders and civil society platforms have explored different resourcing strategies and modalities that better support smaller, less formal groups to continue their work and amplify their positive impact, especially at the local level. Feminist funds and community philanthropy organisations have long been at the forefront of this effort, but there is a lot more that could be done to fill important resourcing gaps across movements and geographies. There is a struggle to identify practical and innovative resourcing tools for grassroots actors beyond the traditional development aid framework. There is also a lack of methods to bring innovative approaches to fruition.

In response to this challenge, CIVICUS embarked on a consultation process to identify, in a participatory way, possible mechanisms that would increase the scale and quality of resources, both international and domestic, for these groups and movements. Over the course of five months, we have had the privilege to learn from activists, organisers, young leaders and progressive funders from around the world about resourcing challenges, and to sense-check solutions and co-create scenarios based on lived experiences, bold ideas and deep understanding of social problems.

This consultation is an attempt to move conversations forward at a practical level, exploring options that, pulled together, could help start a radical transformation in the range and quality of resources accessible to grassroots groups. As well as sense-checking the relevance, appeal and feasibility of emerging concepts, the process itself has been significant. These early explorations have directly engaged the groups that we seek to better resource, including a cross-section of grassroots activists, the financial arms of social movements and other strategic partners.

This document is a distillation of our findings and learnings.
EMERGENT CONCEPTS

Four concepts were developed that could potentially increase the resources for and help shift the power towards global south grassroots movements, based on the challenges and needs identified during the initial consultation phases. Short descriptions of the concepts are outlined below, and at this link you can find additional details, including the main comments and reactions from the various activists and funders consulted.

A GRASSROOTS CHANGE LAB - a flexible working space within countries that welcomes people from grassroots movements, civil society organisations (CSOs) and funders, to work in the same space, meet and make connections. It would offer incubator sessions to co-create and fund new projects, share new business models, provide training and seminars, and offer access to peer and expert advice on resourcing.

A NON-BRANDED BASKET FUND – which distributes small unrestricted grants (up to US$50,000) to frontline groups, using light and creative application and reporting processes, facilitated by a new bespoke app and designed and governed by CSOs.

A “QUALITY TRADEMARK” FOR FUNDERS – which would incentivise and reward funders for empowering engagement with grassroots movements. The quality trademark would be designed by activists and implemented by a secretariat, and would support funders to improve their policies and practices with training and support.

AN ONLINE RESOURCING PLATFORM – which would connect, advise and support grassroots movements to meet their resourcing needs and develop new, alternative resourcing approaches. It would be designed by tech experts working with activists, and facilitate access to opportunities and technical advice while contributing to efficiencies and connections.

IN THE TABLE BELOW, THE CONCEPTS ARE MAPPED AGAINST THE SOLUTIONS THEY OFFER BEFORE GOING ON TO EXPLAIN THEM IN MORE DETAIL BELOW.

| Concept 1: Grassroots Change Lab | Accessible, long-term, core and flexible funding | Funding for grassroots movements, particularly in restrictive contexts | Build relationships that enable the sharing of non-financial resources | Unlock other resources |
| Concept 2: Non-Branded Basket Fund | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | |
| Concept 3: Quality Trademark for Funders | ✓ | | | |
| Concept 4: Online Resourcing Platform | | | ✓ | ✓ |
The next phase of our work following this consultation, from July 2019 to June 2020, will focus on and dig deeper into these emergent themes:

1. As a starting point, at CIVICUS we will identify principles and elements from each of the above concepts that can be embedded into existing CIVICUS initiatives, grant-making practices and specific areas of work.

2. We will explore the strategic alignment, feasibility and added value of CIVICUS further developing and testing one of these concepts, or a spin off of one. We will assess how the concept can contribute to changing donor behaviour towards a more inclusive, community-led and distributed system, or help grassroots movements develop alternative sources of support and funding that will ultimately reduce their reliance on international aid and help them become more sustainable.

3. Since these are all valuable prototypes that have been already sense-checked with potential users, we will present the four concepts to relevant groups that we feel might be keen and well placed to take them forward. We are planning to organise a dedicated learning session, around September or October 2019, inviting various organisations involved in the previous reflections, plus other potentially relevant groups, with the goal of establishing collaborative mechanisms to support the grassroots resourcing ecosystem. This meeting could be live-streamed so that more people can attend remotely.

Interests? Let us know!

If you are interested in learning more about this consultation or participating in the further development of any of these concepts, please contact clara.bosco@civicus.org or yessenia.soto@civicus.org.