

# CIVICUS SOLIDARITY FUND CONVERSATIONS

## ONELIFE INITIATIVE, NIGERIA



**Tell us a little bit about your organisation/activism and what kind of support was requested from the CIVICUS Solidarity Fund (CSF)?**

Onelife Initiative was founded to promote access and linkage of young people to resources that can unlock opportunities for them. Our target group is the segment that represents over 65% of the country's entire population — youths (15-35 years old). The organisation started operations in 2014, some months before the 2015 general elections in Nigeria to help tend to the developmental needs of young people. Our mission is to empower young people with the right skills using participatory tools whilst giving them access to appropriate information needed to activate sustainable changes in the society. Our thematic areas of operations include governance and policies; sexual and reproductive health and rights; and enterprise development and employability.

Our work on the governance and policies desk is guided by the knowledge that the youth population in Nigeria is the largest demography and leaving them illiterate about civic processes is dangerous for democracy. Onelife Initiative therefore uses in-depth research and its knowledge networks to help young people make sense of government processes and systems by providing simplified information to them through easy-to-access channels. Through the Dial the Government project funded by CIVICUS, we will be expanding the civic space for youth involvement and engagement in Oyo State, one of the 36 sub-nationals in Nigeria.

**If you could summarize in one sentence what was most significant, in terms of learnings, from receiving funding (CSF and in general), what would that sentence be?**

The networking, idea sharing, and bimonthly review has aided our work as an organisation to learn clearly from what others are doing and to also benefit from validation and capacity building on resource mobilisation.



**Other than the financial support, has being part of the CSF been helpful in any way?**

It has also given us a world view of development concerns across the world. It was strange for me learning how a number of countries are combative towards non-governmental organisations. The environment created with other grantees on the Zoom call has also been beneficial in facilitating co-learning and also getting feedbacks.

**What did you enjoy the most and the least from being part of the CSF? How can the CSF improve their engagement with future applicants/grantee-members?**

What I enjoyed the most is the camaraderie which I think will have been more impactful if the grantees had physically met at some point. The least sometimes is the quality of the network which isn't 100% dependable. Also for some of the learnings, I think the time span between one session and the other is too long. A 3-day session in 2 hours will be fine. Again, some of the capacity building session can be built into recorded videos by the facilitator and the grantees can watch before coming in for the sessions.

### **How is your organisation's experience in mobilising resources?**

We have gone through some tough moments to arrive at our current destination. We have had high and low moments in resource mobilisation. We majorly have been funded by foreign organisations whose RFP we applied for without any initial contacts with the organisation. We compare better in this regard than other organisations who majorly network very well and through that get resourced. In 2021, we wrote 21 proposals and only 3 got a nod.

### **What are the main barriers you face in seeking resources?**

Sometimes we are not sure what the barriers are. We just keep trying. In some way, we however think maybe it is the quality of the proposal that we have written or the idea we are pushing. Very few donors give feedbacks. We also do not know who is the best person to reach in some organisations and if this is right and will not come across as trying to unevenly influence their decision making process.

### **What types of resources (financial and non-financial) are most important to your activism/organisation?**

Capacity strengthening for staff is important for us especially as our work force are majorly young people. Secondly, for financial, we wish we could get supported to attract quality hires for a period of 2 years as we are sure that it will help firm up our work and also attract more resources needed for the work of the organisation. Another non-financial resource we require is capacitation around research and prospecting for the right publication to also get our work published to reach an even bigger audience.

### **What would be your advice to donors to facilitate access to resources for small and/or informal organisations?**

Proposal calls should start at the concept note level. The resources that go into putting a proposal together is huge. Where the idea is not acceptable then it is fine to let the concept note decide that so that the organisation can go ahead to use that resource for other activities. That way, they won't need to tie it to proposals.

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