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1. What is the YAL Playbook
The Youth Action Lab Playbook is a culmination of CIVICUS Youth’s five years experimentation with the Youth Action Lab. It outlines the conception, development, accomplishments, and the lessons learned from the gaps and obstacles encountered during this pilot project. The YAL Playbook offers a range of approaches, reflections, recommendations and lessons used for youth allies and practitioners who are exploring non-traditional approaches to resourcing unregistered groups and individual activists, and are seeking inspiration or guidance to support citizen action in the 21st century effectively and meaningfully.

2. Where does the YAL Playbook come from?
Thanks to the CIVICUS Youth experience and the findings of the 2020 ‘Resourcing youth-led groups and movements playbook’, it is evident show that young human rights defenders and community organisers often face donor mistrust when requesting flexible, core, or multi-year funding. Funders' granting criteria repeatedly do not include partnering with youth-led organisations or non-registered collectives, and their administrative requirements can be burdensome and unrealistic for these groups. Strict criteria distract activists from their social or advocacy work, jeopardising their well-being and sustainability. This behaviour has demonstrated that it perpetuates exclusionary systems in the social justice seeking ecosystem, leaving powerful social change makers behind.
The reader or user of this Playbook, will go through the journey that 30 young grassroots activists and the CIVICUS Youth coordination team took together between 2019 and 2022, co-designing and iterating the Youth Action Lab pilot project. The Playbook is divided into 9 main practices that are grouped in a first phase of programme design; followed by onboarding; skills and network development and a last one about evaluation and learnings. Each practice includes a brief description of the approaches used, a critical analysis of the conditions or factors for success, a summary of the outcomes with some quotes from participants and recommendations to avoid the mistakes or the challenges encountered. These practices are not a one-size-fits-all solution, but rather a set of adaptable recommendations and insights.

**Overall, this playbook seeks to contribute to:**

- The dissemination of evidence, critical messages and credible advice in resourcing young individual community organisers, non-registered groups, or spontaneous formations of citizen action.

- The evolution of key actors in the resourcing ecosystem and shift their perspectives in positively supporting innovative resourcing for activists/changemakers.

- The effectiveness of the funds available for youth development.
**IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS:**

- The information and recommendations presented do not suggest that a programme like the Youth Action Lab must be followed entirely. Each civil society or philanthropy practitioner interested in or already working with young changemakers, grassroots organisers or individual activists can use all or some of the practices presented below, depending on the type of programme they are offering, their intentions, their organisation, resources, context and experience.

- The practices described and analysed here apply for resourcing of youth as well as non-youth groups.

- Newcomers to youth resourcing work are especially welcome to review this Playbook for inspiration.

- More experienced partners in resourcing youth or frontline human rights groups are encouraged to complement this resource with the knowledge and evidence from their programmes by writing to youth@civicus.org in order to keep nurturing this resource and the community of practice of allies.

In addition to the above, it is worth noting that the Youth Action Lab originally planned to include in-person meet-ups, but due to the global pandemic it was conducted entirely online. **Resourcing mechanism that offer in-person gatherings will achieve more and quicker changes in the same period of time.**
To ensure that the Youth Action Lab Playbook is accessible and user-friendly, a series of UX testings were conducted with members of the Youth Action Lab Advisory Group. The process involved multiple rounds of user testing, feedback gathering, and iterative design improvements. The UX testing aimed to verify the toolbox's accessibility, ease of navigation, and usefulness for its target audience, youth allies and practitioners. You are the right audience for this tool if:

- Your organisation is **progressive**, it works with young activists, grassroots groups and individual activists as partners and/or co-leaders.

- Your organisation has a **programme structure and reporting indicators that can be adjusted** or modified to your constituent's input and feedback. This Playbook is for participatory design, implementation and evaluation of initiatives between the youth ally organisation and the young groups.

- Your organisation has the **staff capacity** and can outsource support to offer tailored and hands on assistance to grantee-partners.

- Your organisation enjoys **large networks** that can serve as resources to offer to grantee-partners.

- Your organisation has the right human resources and **management systems** and policies in place to protect and support the staff and the grantee-partners.

- You have **realistic expectations** about the change the toolbox expects to achieve with the resources it is allocating.
BACKGROUND

What is the Youth Action Lab?

A co-created initiative with young grassroots activists for young grassroots activists to enhance their agency, autonomy and impact through supporting their well-being, relations, knowledge/skills development and alliance building. Full programme summary here.

PURPOSE

Test a supporting mechanism with a small cohort of 10 to 11 youth-led movements, collectives and non-registered groups from marginalised communities in the course of one year offering holistic and intense support to enable them to advance in their social justice seeking work.

APPROACH

Participants in the Lab work to build solidarity and networks, strengthen capacities in engaging with policy processes and access financial and non-financial resources to support their movement or social change initiatives. The Lab acts as a hub for testing new ways of working within civil society and mobilising learnings from across sectors in support of youth-led movements.

MINDSET

From the very beginning of the co-design process in December 2018, the CIVICUS Youth team understood that the main factors for success were partnerships, collaboration, horizontality, experimentation, equity and justice. This means that from the very start of the experiment, our target audience and the CIVICUS staff positioned themselves in a mindset of trust, curiosity, openness, experimentation and vulnerability. This is important to highlight because it determines the flow of every single phase of the YAL journey and explains the tone of the interactions between CIVICUS and the young activists, external and internal partners, the offerings, requirements, etc.

TARGET AUDIENCE

Young (18-32) grassroots activists from the global south operating in informal structures of civil society, with a minimum of two years of activism experience and no previous relationship with international philanthropic organisations. Due to security risks, not all participants were able to share their profile and/or real names online safely. However, most of them can be found here. They all participated remotely from their home countries: Argentina, Bangladesh, Brazil, Colombia, El Salvador, Fiji, Ghana, Liberia, Libya, Malawi, Nicaragua, Pakistan, Palestine, Peru, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Tunisia, Uganda, Zambia, Zimbabwe.
FINANCIAL SUPPORT

- A USD5,000 flexible micro-grant to each YAL participant for one year.

- One-on-one coaching for each Learning Partner (2 learning partners per YAL participant).

- USD25,000 in kind per year to each cohort for virtual coaching and training sessions with external experts.

- A USD300 stipend to each YAL participant for six to eight months after the Lab to organise networking and knowledge sharing dialogues. (More information about the Global Perspectives Lab series 2022 [here]).

All YAL virtual meetings or workshops offer simultaneous interpretation in Spanish, French and Portuguese, making this one of the few truly language inclusive initiatives in response to one of the biggest barriers to access funding for grassroots organisers: language.

SUPPORT STAFF

Three full-time team members provided communications, logistic, monitoring and evaluation and coordination support between 2019 and 2022. The three members of the CIVICUS youth team were fluent in the languages the participants felt most comfortable speaking: English, Spanish, French and Portuguese. All three members were also under 32 years old which strengthened the creation of mutual trust and understanding with the participants.
INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

PHASES

1. **RESEARCH/CONSULTATION** with similar organisations who have experience in youth fellowships or grants and share similar missions and concerns: OXFAM Quebec, ActionAid Denmark, Africa Rising, 350.org, etc.

2. **RECRUIT CO-DESIGN TEAM**: through an open call, a group of nine young people were selected to work alongside CIVICUS staff to co-design this new initiative.

3. **CREATE AN ADVISORY GROUP**: with the aim of capitalising on the existing resources, networks and learnings of peer organisations: Restless Development, Plan International, ActionAid, Oxfam, Africa Rising, CAMY Fund, Hackaton and the Melton Foundation were invited to become advisors to the CIVICUS team coordinating the Youth Action Lab.

4. **RECRUIT AND SUPPORT TWO COHORTS OF YOUNG INDIVIDUAL ACTIVISTS.**

5. **HARVEST AND SHARE LEARNINGS INTERNALLY (CIVICUS) AND EXTERNALLY WITH FUNDERS AND INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS.**
DO YOU WANT TO KNOW ABOUT OTHER PRACTICES?

The Playbook is to be read and applied according to your context and can be adapted to suit your needs. Each practice is independent of the other so the order you want to choose to explore is always the right one. Click on one of the circles below to learn more about each practice.