



CRISIS RESPONSE FUND GUIDELINES AND PROTOCOLS

A. Why the Crisis Response Fund?

CIVICUS is currently guided by its 2013-2017 Strategic Priorities, which were identified through an extensive consultation process. These Strategic Priorities are to i) **Influence** decisions and shape global solutions, ii) **Connect** sources and forces of citizen action to work more effectively and iii) **Enable** civil society to work more effectively by providing timely monitoring and powerful solidarity and advocacy whenever civic space is threatened. The Crisis Response Fund supports these priorities by mobilising quick, principled and effective responses to events that threaten civil society's fundamental rights to collectively express, associate and organise.

While some threats develop gradually, others materialise swiftly and require an immediate response. The CIVICUS Crisis Response Fund, set up by CIVICUS in 2007, serves as a mechanism for mobilising quick, principled and effective responses to events that threaten civil society's fundamental rights to collectively express, associate and organise. In 2011 CIVICUS joined a coalition of international civil society partners administering Lifeline, an emergency fund for civil society established multilaterally by 17 governments and independent foundations, to provide additional financial and technical support to embattled civil society around the world.

B. Guidelines for the use of the Fund

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

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

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

1. Is it a crisis?
2. Are there systemic threats to civil society?
3. Will our actions be beneficial?

1. Is it a crisis?

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

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

2. Are there systemic threats to civil society?

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

3. Will our actions be beneficial?

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

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

- a) Security. Will our actions place CIVICUS' staff or local members, partners or civil society in general in greater danger?
- b) Local actions: Will our actions complement and enhance, or undermine, the work of local civil society?
- c) Presence of other international actors: Are there already other international actors working on this crisis? Would our involvement provide additional assistance, or make an additional impact?

- d) Strategic value: Is the country in a position to influence other countries in the region? Will CIVICUS' work in this country have a positive impact externally as well as, or only, within the country?

Primarily through the [CIVICUS Monitor](#), CIVICUS seeks to actively identify and monitor changes in the space for civil society. CIVICUS will also rely on the regular monitoring of civil society space conducted by other projects and units, as well impending or perceived threats highlighted by individual partners and members.

C. What is the Response?

Responses will be chosen in consultation with local partners and members, and where possible, other international organisations working in the area. Actions taken using the Fund's resources are envisaged to be short-term (i.e. under six months in duration), but efforts will be made to fundraise for longer-term CIVICUS activities where desirable.

Advocacy responses could include, but are not limited, to:

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

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

- Training for organisations on the ground, such as in digital security.
- Activities to improve the physical security of the civil society organisation's premises.
- Psychosocial capacity development and support for civil society actors.
- The creation of safehouses to support the relocation of civil society actors at risk.

The CIVICUS Crisis Response Fund Crisis is mobilised for advocacy to protect the civil society sector as a whole against systemic threats to its existence; whereas crisis responses that also require "emergency assistance" for an individual or civil society organisation will be coordinated with Freedom House and Frontline Defenders as key international partners.

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

D. Protocols for the use of the Fund

The use of the Fund can be proposed by any civil society organisation in a situation of crisis, including any CIVICUS members and partners. Steps towards an approved use of the Fund's resources will be as follows:

1. Requests will be submitted on an [online form](#) which will contain all necessary information to allow the request to be properly evaluated.
2. Where partners feel unsafe or do not have access to the internet they can either email the CRF team for the Word application, or post it to the CIVICUS office in Johannesburg.
3. Requests will be evaluated by the CRF team according to the criteria presented above. Relevant partners and members will be consulted in evaluating the requests.
4. Recommendations for use of the Fund's resources, the amount, as well as the type of response will be submitted to the Secretary General. Available human resources will be considered in designing the appropriate response.
5. The Secretary General will approve or reject. The Secretary General may delegate the responsibility of approval to other member(s) of the Management Team.

E. Cross department and unit involvement in the response

The Crisis Responses envisaged under the Fund will require cross department and unit cooperation and support within CIVICUS. This may include:

- Identifying partners and networks
- Identifying possible crises
- Developing new media contacts in countries and regions where CIVICUS has not worked previously
- Raising awareness among networks
- Mobilising partners and networks to support campaigns
- Providing convening space to address issues
- Assisting with the development of long-term initiatives in particular countries

F. Who is also working in this area?

There are a number of other actors working in the human rights field to provide urgent responses to crisis. A selected number of organisations conducting crisis responses on human rights issues are listed below.

Amnesty International accepts donations primarily from individuals. They do not accept funds from governments or political parties and accept support only from businesses that have been carefully vetted. Amnesty International provides some financial assistance for basic requirements in individual cases of current and former prisoners of conscience, people who have fled their own country to escape being subjected to torture, "disappearance" or extrajudicial execution and medical help to people suffering ill-health or injury as a result of torture. Each of the Amnesty branches conducts some of their own fundraising. AI USA, for example, has a General Endowment Fund that "provides a growing base of financial support for Amnesty's future human rights work."

Freedom House: has a Global Human Rights Defenders' Emergency Fund that provide assistance, including emergency funds and services, to human rights defenders who are under threat, attack, detention, prosecution, or otherwise at immediate risk due to government repression. Freedom House and CIVICUS also receive funding and work together in the Embattled NGO Fund Consortium.

Front Line seeks to provide rapid and practical support to at-risk human rights defenders, through activities including a 24 hour emergency response phone line, publishing reports and manuals, assisting with relocation, conducting lobbying and advocacy. Front Line is funded by donations from individuals, trusts, foundations, businesses and government sources. Front Line and CIVICUS also receive funding and work together in the Embattled NGO Fund Consortium.

Human Rights Watch is supported by contributions from private individuals, foundations, estates, trusts and businesses. It accepts no funds from governments or government funded agencies. In 1999, HRW launched an endowment campaign which was envisioned to "support efforts that Human Rights Watch's annual \$15 million budget cannot cover adequately. Those efforts include guaranteeing Human Rights Watch's capacity to respond quickly to human rights emergencies anywhere on the globe as well as providing funds for areas of the world that attract less financing because they are outside the limelight."

International Center for Not-for-Profit Law has an Urgent Action Fund which it can use to offer support through meetings with local partners; provide commentaries on legislative drafts; funding to support dialogue with official organs; as well as technical assistance in implementing legislation affecting civil society. The Fund is supported by governmental and foundation donors, including USAID and the Ford Foundation. ICNL and CIVICUS also receive funding and work together in the Embattled NGO Fund Consortium.

Urgent Action Fund for Women's Human Rights supports and protects the safety of women's rights defenders. They provide rapid response grants that enable strategic interventions, and participate in collaborative advocacy and research. Grant requests are accepted 365 days per year, in any language, from activists around the world. Each request receives a response within 72 hours and funds can be wired within a week. The Urgent Action Fund receives donations from governments, as well as individuals, public and private foundations and trusts, faith based organisations, and businesses.