



Trends and challenges in civic space resourcing

Clara Bosco

A vigilant, vibrant and diverse civil society is key to preserve democratic values and to build a greener, just and inclusive post-pandemic world...

Some its essential roles in our societies

Enabler and defender of communities and excluded groups

Trusted partner and valued source of support and information

Advocate for people-centered and rights-based policies

Watchdog, accountability and oversight over the state & market

Champion of equity and inclusion, standing up for the rights of vulnerable & marginalized communities

Vehicle for participation, confrontation & solidarity to steer collective visions of change



To play its different roles effectively, civil society must be adequately and flexibly resourced

Resourcing civil society & civic action is a key enabling condition for protecting & expanding civic space.

Enabling factors for resourcing include things as:

- the regulatory and tax environment for raising funds & receiving grants (including cross-border giving)
- public narratives, practices and incentives promoting giving to the sector
- Building appropriate support infrastructure
- The quality and quantity of resources & support accessible for different groups

A well-resourced, networked & autonomous civil society is a public good which governments and other actors should recognise, protect and enable.



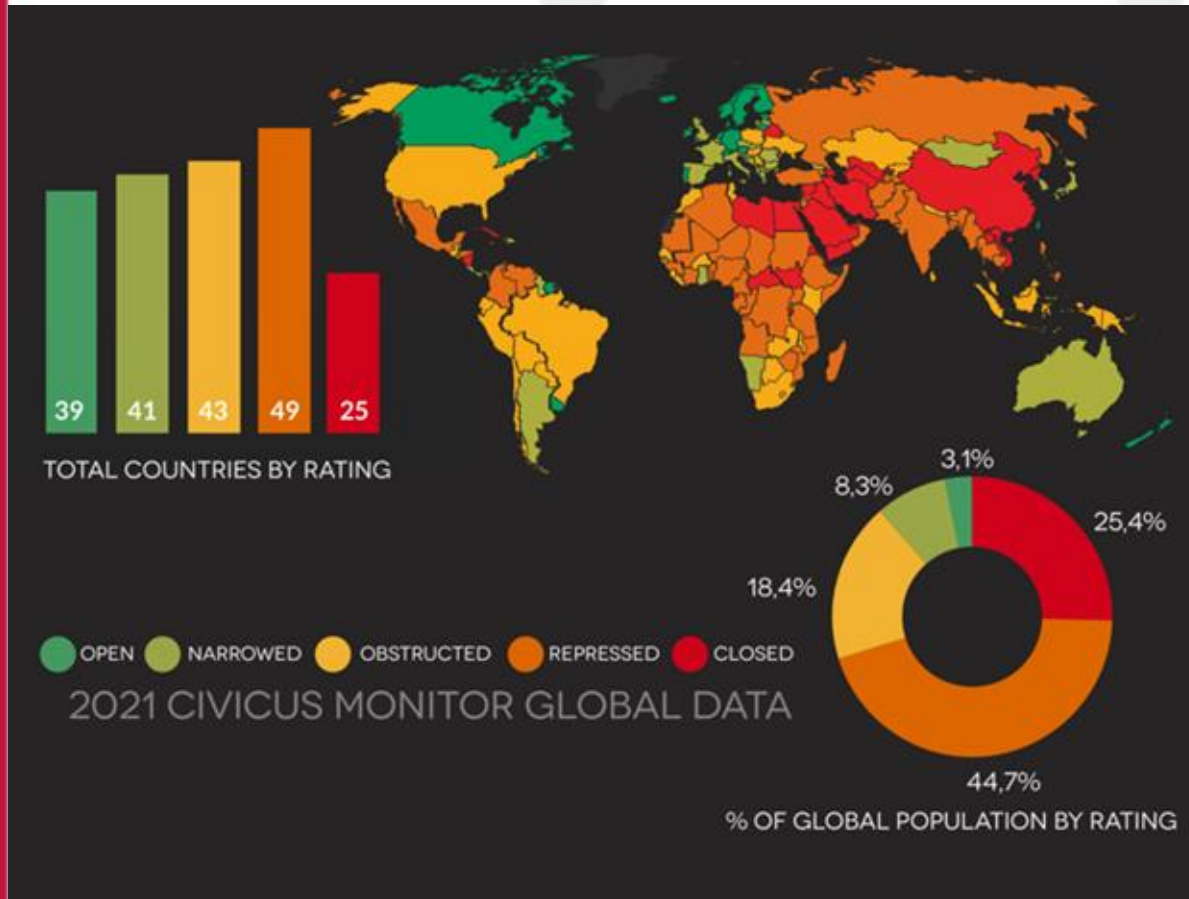
...Yet civil society's essential roles are seriously hampered by a rapidly worsening operating environment...

Only 3.1% of the world's population lives in countries where civic space is rated as 'open'

Increasing number of governments abusing their emergency powers to suppress fundamental civic freedoms

Increase in restrictive laws and a concerning use of propaganda and censorship by authoritarian governments

Effects of prolonged lockdowns and a disabling resourcing landscape for the sector pose a serious risk to the survival and autonomy of important parts of the sector



Why local actors struggle to access the resources they need

Quantity

Only a tiny amount of ODA provided directly to local groups; criminalization of cross-border giving; limited opportunities/capacity for accessing domestic funding & solidarity

Quality

Project based funding and external measures of success undermine sustainability and social change processes

Access

Few resources available for change-seeking actors, esp. from less formal groups, with a strong preference for intermediaries

Distance

Behavior of support ecosystem not conducive to build local autonomy, agency and resilience. This limits the effectiveness, responsiveness and relevance of the support offered.



...confirmed by data and facts!

RESOURCES FOR CSOs IN LATIN AMERICA: KEY FINDINGS FROM THE ANALYSIS OF OVER 6,500 CALLS FOR PROPOSALS



THERE ARE FEW EXCLUSIVE RESOURCES FOR CSOs

only **12%**
of all tracked resources were exclusively offered to CSOs

only **3%**
were addressed exclusively to Latin American CSOs



COMPETITION FOR ACCESS TO RESOURCES IS UNFAIR AND UNEQUAL

Latin American CSOs had to compete with:

International CSOs in **74%** of calls for proposals

The private sector in **71%** of calls for proposals

National state entities in **46%** of calls for proposals

International bodies in **36%** of calls for proposals



THERE IS LITTLE INVESTMENT IN THE PROMOTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS, POLITICAL ADVOCACY AND ACTIVISM

Less than **6%**
of the resources accessible to CSOs were offered for these activities



THERE IS MINIMAL INVESTMENT IN THE SUSTAINABILITY OF CSOs

Less than **3%** of resources accessible to CSOs were aimed at **funding** core operations, institutional strengthening and sustainability

97% of resources were directed to **project implementation** and the provision of basic services



THE NORTHERN HEMISPHERE IS STILL THE LARGEST DONOR, BUT LATIN AMERICA IS PLAYING A SIGNIFICANT ROLE IN PROVIDING FUNDS

65.5% of resources accessible to CSOs came from the global north

Latin America is providing **33%** of resources accessible to CSOs

Concrete ways to respond to these challenges

Actions needed to support & sustain civil society



1 REMOVE RESTRICTIONS,
AND AMPLIFY THE VALUE
OF AND CONTRIBUTIONS
FROM CIVIL SOCIETY



2 SUPPORT CIVIL SOCIETY TO
MEET AND REDUCE
OPERATING COSTS



3 PROVIDE FLEXIBILITY
IN REGULATORY
REQUIREMENTS



4 INCLUDE CIVIL SOCIETY
IN COVID-19
STIMULUS FUNDS
AND SUBSIDIES



5 DEVELOP THE
INFRASTRUCTURE
NEEDED TO UPSCALE
CIVIL SOCIETY EFFORTS



6 EMPOWER
CIVIL SOCIETY
TO DEVELOP
SUSTAINABLE
ALTERNATIVES

For more information visit our website at web.civicus.org/RebuildingForGood



OFFICIAL GROUP OF NATIONAL ASSOCIATIONS
AGNA



Zooming into the resourcing realities of many grassroots activists: what have we heard?

- Grassroots groups **struggle to be understood, trusted by and meaningfully connected with** Donors and allies; there are no spaces to build mutual understanding and meaningful relationships and alliances
- **Activists' realities, needs and visions for change don't match** donors' priorities, impact metrics and resourcing modalities
- **Stigmas, different mindsets** and **power dynamics** also get in the way
- **Transactional and extractive relationships** only feed reciprocal mistrust
- **Most funding for civil society goes to organisations considered more stable, skilled, trustworthy and less “controversial”**

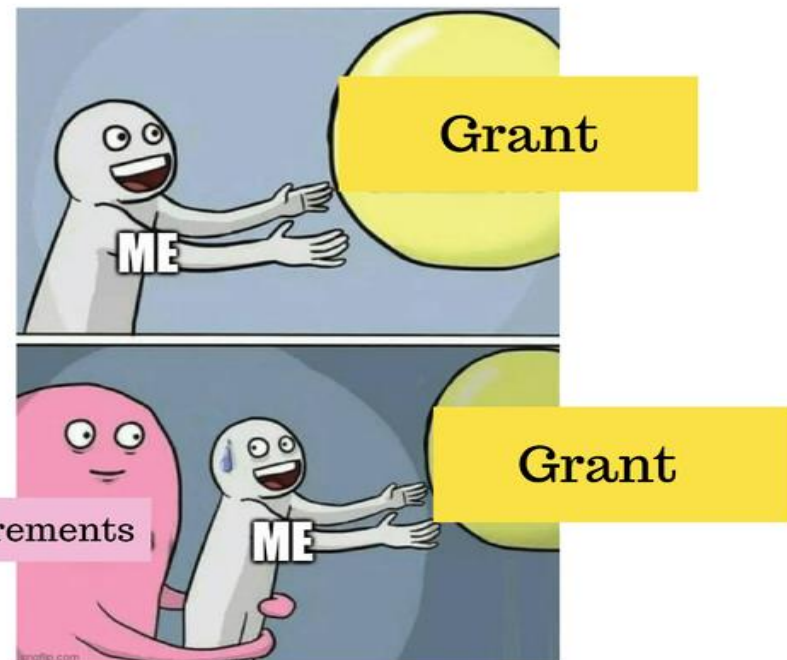
Barriers between grassroots activists, donors and other allies (ex. INGOs) hinder the flow of essential resources to the frontlines of change

Barriers in accessing timely & relevant information about opportunities



Resources are diverted from mission-critical work towards these processes with very low success rates

Application processes are bureaucratic, difficult and time-consuming



Eligibility & compliance requirements (financial, legal, operational) are often impossible for small, recently established and informal groups operating under the radar.



Examples:

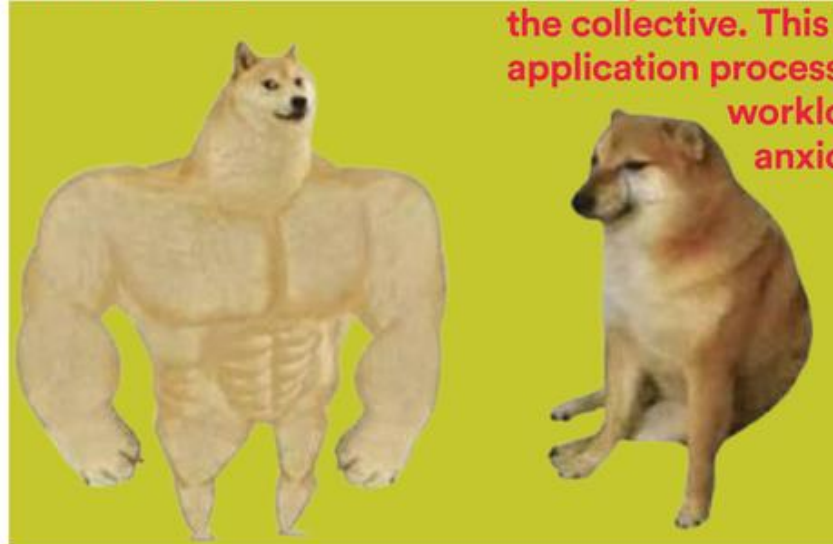
- Having a bank account in the name of the organisation
- Being legally registered
- Track record of successful projects
- Prior experience in managing grants of important sizes

INGOs and larger CSOs

We have an administration and fundraising department. Filling out this grant application is very easy!

Smaller, informal groups & activists

I am my own administrator and fundraiser. I accompany victims of violence. I do lobbying and advocacy. I manage the social networks and the collective. This long and tedious application process represents more workload. I am already anxious!



Competing for resources on unequal grounds reinforces existing inequities & fosters a culture of competition (instead of solidarity) within the sector

With most of financial support available through project grants, it is difficult to strengthen organizations, support activists' livelihoods and wellbeing or the basic needs of their groups. This ultimately hinders the sustainability and impact of these groups.

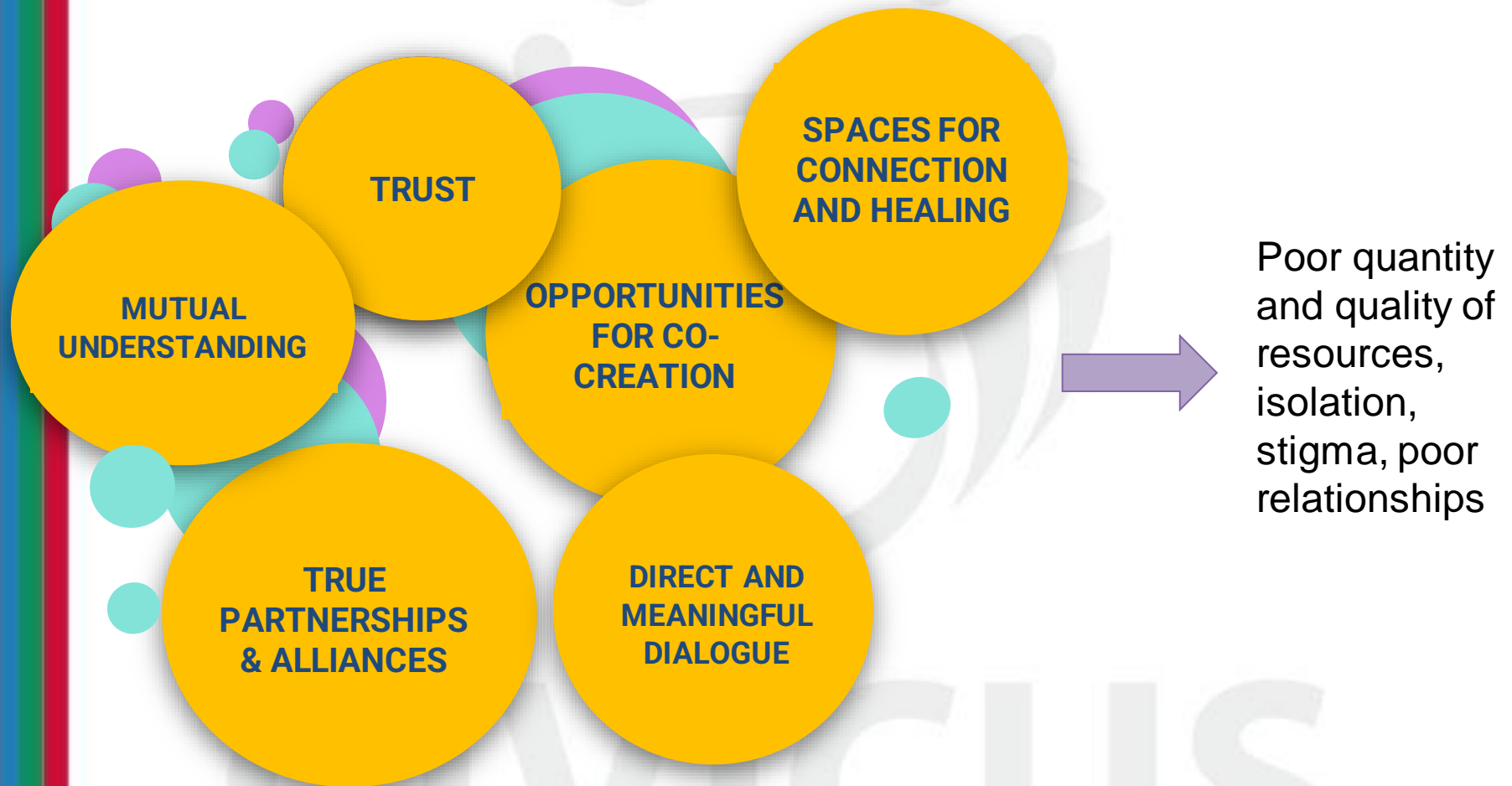
I am presenting
a new project
proposal to
support
the expenses
of my collective.



Our organisation's
expenses!

Mainstream narratives about grassroots activist are problematic, distort understanding of the types of resources and support needed and undermine activists' legitimate seeking of support and monetary compensation.

What is missing



How to drive more resources and care for grassroots groups and activists ?

**GRASSROOTS
SOLIDARITY
REVOLUTION**



JOIN THE REVOLUTION!

GRASSROOTS ACTIVISTS are calling on donors and allies to invest in more caring relationships, empowered alliances and resources that boost activists' autonomy, visions, growth and livelihoods.



#BREAKBARRIERS #BUILDSOLIDARITY

<https://civicus.org/grassrootsrevolution/>



THANK YOU

Find out more about our work & join us at

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info@civicus.org



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