



AFFINITY GROUP OF NATIONAL ASSOCIATIONS

**AGNA**

**Global Civil Society Exchange  
30<sup>th</sup> November 2016  
Johannesburg, South Africa**



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# Agenda

## **Discussion about the future of AGNA**

09:00-10:00 Steering Committee feedback on AGNA's work and future strategy.

(AGNA members only)



## **Global Exchange**

### ***Unusual Connections for Change: Understanding the challenge and sharing perspectives***

10:00-10:30 Arrival & Welcome- Oli Henman, CIVICUS

- First Global Exchange meeting
- Provides an opportunity for CIVICUS to work closely with one of our core networks AGNA (Affinity Group for National Associations) to connect with wider networks of activists, movements and informal civil society in order to get them thinking together and to assist in renewing the approach to providing a shared space for civil society
- We have also made a link with networks focused on sustainable development and the theme of Leave No One Behind as many of our national AGNA partners are also hosting National Dialogues on this theme.

10:30-11:00 *Challenging times call for united action*

- Presentation of latest trends for civic space around the world, including perspectives from the State of Civil Society Report and CIVICUS Monitor
  - ✓ Mandeep Tiwana, CIVICUS
- South African perspective- what are key priorities for civil society in South Africa? Learning from 20 years of activism; how has perspective of the government changed? what is the changing role of NGOs? How can we reach across to informal activists?
  - ✓ Corlett Letlojane, Human Rights Institute of South Africa (HURISA)
  - ✓ Stuart Wilson, Socio-Economic Rights Institute of South Africa (SERI)
  - ✓ Moderator Oli Henman, CIVICUS

11:00-11:30 Q&A

11:30-13:00 Break-out groups- setting the scene

- What challenges are you as civil society facing in your country, context or area of work?
- What solutions are you working on to overcome those challenges (from the perspective of each participant and the group they represent)

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- How do you already collaborate across civil society? Do you see any new opportunities for collaboration to overcome those challenges?

13:00-14:00 Lunch

14:00-15:00 Sharing inspiring stories- panel discussion

- Presentations from 4 speakers on how they see collaboration across different parts of civil society, what is the changing role of NGOs? How can we reach across to informal activists? What skills and ways of working will ensure stronger solidarity in challenging times?
  - ✓ Aya Chebbi, Africa Youth Movement (Tunisia); Ibrahim Ceesay, African Youth Initiative on Climate Change (The Gambia); Amanda Segnini, Engajamundo (Brazil)
  - ✓ Moderator Jenny Ricks, Action Aid

15:00-15:30 *Refreshments*

15:30-17:00 Break-out groups

- What tactics work for collaboration? Share examples of your own network building, joint action, advocacy strategies
- How can we collaborate better between formal and informal civil society?
- What type of solidarity would you seek from international partners? What support would you seek from CIVICUS?

17:00 Closure

## **Summary of the Global Exchange**

***In attendance: 60 delegates from all around the globe as well as CIVICUS staff members***

The first ever Global Exchange meeting was held on the 30<sup>th</sup> November 2016 in Johannesburg, South Africa at CIVICUS House. It provided the opportunity for CIVICUS to work closely with one of their core networks, AGNA (Affinity Group for National Associations) to:

- Connect with wider networks of activists, movements and informal civil society in order to get them thinking together
- Assist in renewing the approach to providing a shared space for civil society
- Discuss the latest trends for civic space around the world
- Share challenges being faced in participants own countries and areas of work
- Suggest opportunities for collaboration and support

The meeting brought together 60 delegates from all around the world working together and discussing common interests.

### **Opening Panel: Challenging times call for united action**

Mandeep Tiwana from CIVICUS started the session off with a very powerful statement: *“As much as it is a time of hardship for civil society, it is also a time for hope”*.

He was able to set the scene, highlighting that according to CIVICUS’s own research over the past year 109 countries have seen their basic freedoms challenged and two thirds of people now live in places where the overall space for civil society is closing.

According to Mandeep Tiwana, there are four main drivers of this change: a) predominance of security discourse after 9/11; b) the rise of authoritarian leaders; c) focus on economic growth at the expense of all other agendas; d) the rise of extremism and xenophobia in many parts of the world. CIVICUS is now able to follow and measure the changes in each country through the use of the new CIVICUS Monitor which aims to draw together regular evidence from across the globe to track the changing conditions for civic space.

The presentations from South Africa both shared perspectives on how the new settlement that was established after 1994 is being eroded. They highlighted that the South African constitution is very strong but there are pervasively high levels of inequality in South Africa and high levels of corruption in the government. There is therefore a pressing need for joint action by civil society, including human rights defenders to continue to call for fulfilment of all the rights set out in the constitution, including social justice and freedom of assembly.

**The session focused on challenging times for civil society and some of the further discussion points coming out of the session include:**

- Civic space is no longer only a global South issue, the core freedoms which allow us to do our work are under threat all over the world. It was found that one of three core freedoms were violated in 109 countries around the world.

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- When we try to reach out to marginalised groups and networks barriers are put in place to prevent that and this often includes physical attacks. Attacks do not only come from governments and authoritative parties but also private entities. Increasingly attacks are coming from all directions.
- Governments/leaders are in some places breaking apart the social cohesion that civil society is working so hard to build. We need to watch the misuse of power by states. The rise of xenophobia is also a growing challenge for civil society. Xenophobia leads to division in societies
- As much as there are challenges, CSO's are also winning battles and claiming victories. We should avoid a disempowering discourse because we are winning in some aspects.
- We need a stronger clearer messaging as to why civil society matters, what is the value of civil society in achieving the type of society we want.



### **Break-out Groups: Setting the scene**

**Participants broke out into groups to discuss challenges and solutions CSO's, the main findings are set out below:**

#### **1. *Coordination and communication***

- There is often a lack of coordination across civil society, many CSO's tend to work on their own.  
Possible solutions:
  - Information sharing and support for network development. Demonstrate what we can do and how we can support others.
  - Bridge the opportunities for informal learning too to share ideas
  - Create safe spaces for activists
- Lack of communication – members and CIVICUS team are engaged in lots of activities and attend many events however this isn't always shared amongst the community in an effective way  
Possible solution:
  - Increase information flows, including AGNA newsletter, as well as continued use of social media, such as Facebook and twitter

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## **2. Joint Strategy**

- Formality and informality: perspective of legitimacy. NGOs need to find new ways of collaborating with informal groups so that voices of citizens can be sustained in the long-term
- There is still limited self-understanding about the processes CSOs follow and therefore it is difficult to self-evaluate their practices

Possible solutions:

- As a sector we need to self-regulate
  - Methodology: articulation can be achieved through common rules and accepting diversity. We must talk about the responsibilities of each member. We must assign roles and responsibilities to everyone
  - Self-assessment and accountability
  - We must have participatory knowledge of concepts - Exchange good practices
  - Articulation and networks, we should be sector-wide and include many actors
- 
- Visibility and inclusivity, the process of setting a common direction must be open to all partners
- Possible solutions:
- Methods that allow us to implement a bi-directional approach to setting strategy.
  - Communication and interaction are key to ensure a two-way dialogue.
  - Funding for advocacy, peer support

## **3. Funding**

- Many CSOs continue to be dependent on donors, how do we build an effective solution if we are reliant on public funds? Our activities/motives are money driven but we need funds to put words into action. Many NGOs and CSOs tend to follow the money and lose their missions
- As a large active group in society, members expressed that they have a right to funding just like other stakeholders, but questioned why is it that governments and large business can receive funding without question, but restrictions are being placed on CSOs. It is the foreign donors who are helping to shrink civic space.
- Funding of certain projects is often linked to agendas that are favoured by the government. For e.g., if the government is anti-abortion, it will restrict funding to these CSOs
- There is a high burden on CSOs due to the admin required to submit proposals and bids to donors. It is often very complex to register and this inhibits growth.

Possible solutions:

- New models of funding based on smaller micro-donations
- Collaboration between registered NGOs and smaller community-based organisations to jointly manage project funds
- Improved project management and financial skills to secure and deliver funds.

## **4. Legal Requirements**

- The laws and regulations that often govern CS (e.g. in Nepal and South-Asia) are old.
- Many CSOs are facing increasingly restrictive laws on registration of NGOs

Possible solutions:

- In some countries young activists prefer not to register as NGO but instead to operate as social entrepreneurs
- Joint advocacy to guarantee legal basis for independent CSOs

## 5. *Wider Engagement*

- Many NGOs don't have a youth engagement strategy and that is where a lot of the energy and momentum for change comes from

Possible solution:

- Identify youth priorities and connect with established NGOs in key countries
- Develop inter-generational mentoring
- Some groups have been completely left out. Indigenous people hold invaluable knowledge and local experiences and are the real people that can drive change, we must include all marginalised groups in our work

Possible solutions:

- Build wider alliances at local and national level to enable sharing with non-traditional partners, including those who are often 'left behind'
- The state and private sector and other stakeholders may have challenging relationships with CSOs.

Possible solutions:

- Do we need to build relationships beyond CSOs?
- What kind of multi-stakeholder partnerships can work in a spirit of trust and mutual respect?



## 6. *Public Visibility*

- Due to lack of funds, a challenge is visibility and visibility of 'good governance' of CSOs. In a number of cases the media focuses on instances of corruption but does not highlight examples of success.

Possible solutions:

- Joint awareness campaigns on value of civil society, rather than competing stories of separate individual 'brands'.
- Improved communication skills within CSOs to ensure clear messages

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- Education about CSOs, campaigns and movements needs to be incorporated in core education
- In many cases, governments ‘cherry pick’ SDGs to suit their own agendas and only certain NGOs will be favoured.

Possible solutions:

- Ensure comparative accountability across all SDGs
- Develop clear framework for citizen reporting and data generation
- It is difficult to bring all key communities together at a 3-day conference in Johannesburg.

Possible solution:

- Ensure timely follow-up and regular feed-back from beneficiaries
- Lack of awareness of complexity of environmental challenges faced by regions such as the Pacific, loss of land will restrict civic space in areas such as Fiji

Possible solution:

- Make better use of AGNA and wider CIVICUS network as an early warning system to raise awareness of emerging challenges.

### *Inspiring Stories*

The afternoon panel featured a number of young activists engaged in developing new networks and building new forms of citizen participation in different parts of the world.



Amanda Segnini from Engagjamundo in Brazil shared her insights from the group of Brazilian activists who felt that youth voices were not being sufficiently heard in the Rio +20 conference, so they set about establishing a network to enable young people to have access to decision-making. They are now present in many parts of Brazil and ensure engagement in local and national decision-making in a fresh and uplifting way. Amanda also highlighted the importance of ensuring collaboration so that different networks reinforce each other, in her view all CSOs and activists are part of an ecosystem, each aspect reinforces the others.

Aya Chebbi from the Africa Youth Movement, discussed her own experiences as an activist in the so-called ‘Arab Spring’ in Tunisia. In her view, many NGOs are too slow and bureaucratic to be able to deliver the kind of disruptive change that is needed in many parts of the world. She highlighted some of the differences between NGOs and social movements are that they learn by doing; they are

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fast and flexible; they are open source and use social media; they decentralise decision-making so do not rely on a central decision-maker that can slow the process down. This process has been called the 'leaderless revolution' whereby there is collective leadership and not focus on a few individuals. In her view, the opportunities for collaboration with NGOs should focus on solidarity including sharing specific resources, provide practical support and access to opportunities, such as at the UN.

Ibrahim Ceesay from the Africa Youth Initiative on Climate Change defined himself as part of the 'frustrated youth' of Africa. He set out the important shift in approach that is underway across civil society. In his view this must be based on greater collaboration not competition, such as was the case in the action/2015 campaign around the establishment of the SDGs. He also stressed the importance not to be donor-drive but instead to be 'people-led' in the work of all CSOs. He then highlighted some ways to change the approach to appeal more directly to youth leaders, this should include: creative forms of communication including music and artistic expression; plus, establishing safe spaces for dialogue between different parts of civil society.

## **Break-Out Session 2: Tactics and joint action**

**In the final session of the day the participants broke out into small groups to share tactics for collaboration, and what support they would seek from CIVICUS and fellow partners. Participants agreed on concepts of solidarity (it is essential to meet and share), information sharing and 'local solutions for local contexts'. Further ideas are listed below:**

### *Knowledge sharing*

- AGNA members should contribute to a mapping of each country and how civil society works together to approach key issues such as the SDGs and civic space, what are their solutions to the challenges and how can CIVICUS help as a global network?
- We should promote concepts of: volunteerism, activism and professionalism
- Governments are learning how to restrict civic society with a challenge of new laws, how can we as CSOs keep up with this? We need a platform to be able to share legal documents, evidence and advice, changing definitions and to raise awareness of these through workshops
- "Agenda of shrinking spaces" – needs to be a formal, specific agenda.
- Encourage the use of citizen-generated data (CIVICUS monitor)

### *Capacity strengthening*

- Partners expressed a need for training and capacity strengthening on themes of: funds, finances and different tax systems to understand the often changing laws in their countries
- Members stated a need for the framework to change. They suggested there is currently top-down support from AGNA but want bottom-up action. Action needs to be led from the members.
- Share human resources and skills amongst AGNA partners, staff secondments regionally and internationally
- CIVICUS could continue to provide support for specific training. Eg. on advocacy, access to new technology, CSO accountability and good governance

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### ***Regional exchanges***

- Regional exchanges will provide platforms for members to work and connect to promote shared and collective ideas
- A global mentorship programme was suggested to match an activist/advocate with someone in the field who has more experience
- Collaboration with business was also suggested as we need to be able to support one another's causes and to learn from different sectors
- Participatory forums were discussed at length with the objective of gathering to increase evidence and then share perspectives with governments on how to improve dialogue

### ***National support***

- We need spaces for dialogue with the government, a space to both engage and oppose
- Civil society reflection spaces to be able to collaborate and reflect across civil society in order to break down the silos, to engage with like-minded individuals and encourage community integration across a country

## List of participants Day 1 – Wednesday 30 November 2016

Country	Organization	Name	Position
Argentina	Red Argentina para la Cooperacion Internacional (RACI)	Guillermo Correa	Director Ejecutivo
Argentina	Wingu Leader of DataShift in Argentina	María José Greloni	Leader of DataShift in Argentina
Argentina	#NiUnaMenos	María Mercedes Funes	Member/Founder
Belgium	Global Call for Action Against Poverty (CGAP)	Ingo Ritz	Director of Programmes
Bolivia	Union Nacional de Instituciones para el Trabajo de Accion Social (UNITAS)	Verónica Salinas	Coordinator of Programme "Promotion of Human Rights Org. "
Bolivia	Cuántas Más	Raisa Valda Ampuero	Director
Brazil	Engajamundo	Amanda Segnini	Network's Coordinator
Burkina Faso	Réseau des Organisations de la Société Civile pour le Développement (RESOCIDE)	Siaka Coulibaly	Director
Burundi	Burundi Child Rights Coalition (BCRC)	Hussein Nduwayo	M&E officer
Canada	Youth Action Team	Max Seunik	Volunteer
Chile	Observatoire Jeunesse Oxfam Québec	Sebastian Vielmas	Volunteer
Colombia	Confederacion Colombiana de ONG (CCONG)	Luz Angela Ramirez Ruiz	Programme Coordinator
Dominican Republic	Alianza ONG   República Dominicana	Mallerlyn Ariela Lizardo	Project Officer

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		Pérez	
Ecuador	Confederacion Ecuatoriana de Organizaciones de la Sociedad Civil (CEOSC)	Carlos Ernesto Zapata Erazo	Director
France	Climate Action Network (CAN)	Sarah Strack	Deputy Director & Head of Network Development
France	International Forum of NGO Platforms (IFP)	Elena Magda Toma	Director
Gambia	African Youth Initiative on Climate Change	Ibrahim Ceesay	Executive Coordinator
Ghana	Ghana Assoc.of Private Voluntary Organisations in Dev. (GAPVOD)	Frank Boakye-Dankwa	Administrator/Acting Executive Secretary
India	Voluntary Action Network India	Harsh Jaitli	Director
Jamaica	Association of Development Agencies-Jamaica	Lionel Dunstan Whittingham	Chairperson of ADA national Working Committee on Trade and Development
Japan	The Japan Association of Charitable Organizations (JACO)	Yoshiharu Shiraishi	Senior Research Associate
Lithuania	NGO Information and Support Center (NISC)	Inga Aksamitauskaite-Bruziene	International Relations Coordinator
Mozambique	KEPA Mozambique	Leopoldino Jeronimo	Advisor – Civil Society
Mozambique	JOINT – Liga de ONGs em Mocambique	Simoa Tila	Coordinator
Nepal	NGO Federation of Nepal (NFN)	Daya Sagar Shrestha	Executive Director

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Nepal	Beyond Beijing Committee-Nepal	Rakshya Paudyal	Program Manager
New Zealand	Hui E! Community Aotearoa	Dave Henderson	Manager, External Relations
Nigeria	Pink Blue Project	Khadijat Banwo-Fatai	Project Supervisor
Pakistan	AwazCDS/Pakistan Development Alliance	Zia ur Rehman	Director
Pakistan	Pakistan NGOs Forum (PNF)	Prof.Mohammad Ismail	Secretary General
Palestine	Palestinian Consultative Staff for Developing NGOs (PCS)	Areen Rob	Programme Officer
Philippines	CODE-NGO Caucus of Development NGO Networks	Roselle S. Rasay	Deputy Director
Philippines	Philippines Rural Reconstruction Movement (PRRM)	Beckie Malay	Director for Advocacy and Development Cooperation
Regional-Asia	Asia Development Alliance (ADA)	Doun Moon	Coordinator
Regional-Caribbean	Caribbean Policy Development Centre Barbados (CPDC)	Gordon Bishpam	Incoming Officer in Charge
Regional-Central Africa	REPONGAC-Réseau des Plates Formes Nationales d'ONG (PFN) de l'Afrique Centrale	Mushya Kabamba Denis	Communications Manager
Regional-Pacific	Pacific Islands Association of Non-Governmental Organisations (PIANGO)	Akmal Ellyas Ali	Special Projects Officer
South Africa	South African National NGO Coalition (SANGOCO)	Ndivhuho Sekoba	Secretary
South Africa	Eritrean Movement for Democracy and Human Rights (EMDHR)	Kulubrehan Abraham	Executive Member

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South Africa	Eritrean Movement for Democracy and Human Rights (EMDHR)	Tekulu Solomon	
South Africa	Outreach Social Care Project (OSCAR)	Patrick Newton Bondo	CEO
Tanzania	KEPA: The Finnish NGO Platform in Tanzania	Asna Juma Mshana	Adviser (Civil Society)
Tanzania	Africa Philanthropic Foundation	Stephen Chacha	Founder and CEO
Tunisia	Africa Youth Movement	Aya Chebbi	Founder of AYM
Turkey	Third Sector Foundation of Turkey (TÜSEV)	Liana Varon	Deputy Director
Uganda	Uganda National NGO Forum (UNNGOF)	Sophie Kange	Coordinator Capacity Development
Uganda	Independent blogger	Rosebell Kagumire	Freelancer
UK	Development Initiatives	Cat Langdon	Policy and Engagement Coordinator
UK	Project Everyone	Alice Macdonald	Campaign Director
USA	Stakeholders Group on Aging	Jack Kuperman	President
USA	CS Mott Foundation	Nick Deychakiwsky	Programme Officer
Venezuela	Sinergia	Diana Vegas	Director
Zambia	Zambia Council for Social Development (ZCSD)	Bwalya Pascal	Head of Programmes
<b>CIVICUS Staff- Small Groups facilitation</b>			

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Cecily Rawlinson	Coordinator Civil Society Innovation Initiative (CSII)
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Patricia Deniz	Coordinator Affinity Group of National Associations (AGNA)
Suhani Bushan	Sustainable Development Programme Officer
Suzi Nandera	Capacity Development Officer

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