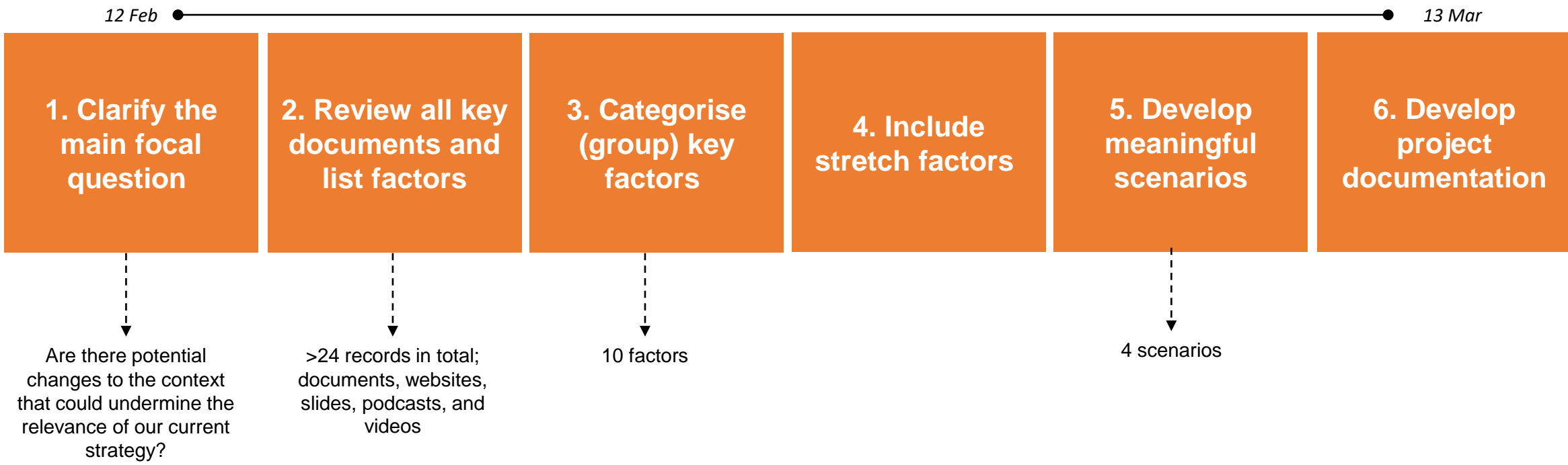




CIVICUS Scenario Planning

Final – March 2021

Scenario planning process



Interviewees and document sources

Interviewees

Actors were engaged because they represent perspectives beyond CIVICUS' core constituency

- Grassroots: 1 Environmental activist – Columbia
- Tech: 3 representatives from Bytes for all – Pakistan
- Government: 2 representatives from Swedish Embassy - Ethiopia
- Business: 1 representative from The B Team - USA

Document sources – members and allies

1. The Road Ahead (National Council for Voluntary Organisations)
2. National platform strategic foresight inputs (Dochas)
3. Surviving Digital Transformation: ensuring civil society, digitally (TechSoup)
4. Feminist/queer context analysis (Success Capital)
5. COVID-19 context analysis (Charities Aid Foundation)
6. Scanning the Horizon (International Civil Society Centre)
7. Stress Testing PWYP Vision2025 against COVID-19 scenarios (Publish What You Pay)
8. Africa: Trends for Women by 2030 (African Women's Development Fund)
9. Civic Space 2040 (International Center for Not-for-Profit Law)
10. Oxfam blogs

Resources - external

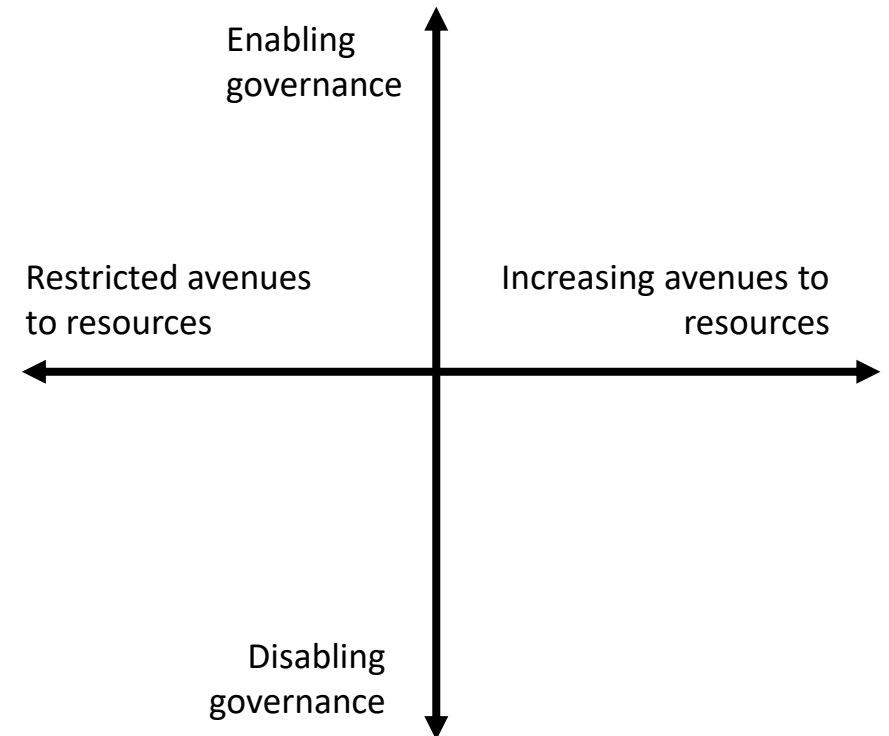
1. Strategic foresight for the COVID-19 crisis and beyond: Using futures thinking to design better public policies (OECD)
2. Our COVID Future The Long Crisis Scenarios (Local Trust)
3. The world remade by COVID-19: Scenarios for resilient leaders (Salesforce/Deloitte)
4. Scenario Planning for a Post-COVID-19 World (International Institute for Management Development)
5. Civil Society in the Fourth Industrial Revolution: Preparation and Response and Future Role of Civil Society (World Economic Forum)
6. UN publications
7. Civil Society Futures

Concepts in this scenario planning

- **Scenario:** Description of a possible future context (of civil society in 2-5 years). This is based on trend data/information. It is a plausible future context but there are varied levels of certainty of the specific events and trends to occur.
- **Trend:** A statistical on extrapolated pattern in data.
- **Driving factors:** Trends that are highly plausible, the extent to which it occurs is uncertain and the trend will have significant impacts on many other trends.
- **Secondary factors and effects:** Trends that are highly plausible, the extent to which it occurs is somewhat certain and the trend will have limited impacts on other trends, but will be highly effected by driving factors.
- **Stretch factors:** Trends that are plausible, but there is high uncertainty of its occurrence and may have major effects on driving and secondary factors
- **Persona:** Description of a person, their behaviour and specific context in which they operate.

Definitions of selected driving factors

- **Enabling/disabling governance:** systemic levels of oversight and regulation, particularly around disabling/enabling operation of civil society and human rights violation. Trends in centralised vs decentralised philanthropy, collaboration in decision-making and safeguarding of personal information are also considered.
- **Restricted/increased avenues to resources:** Includes global/regional/country and organisational levels. Related to trends on access to funding and resources, as well as the conditionality of these funds and resources, and the dependence (or independence) on certain sources, countries, etc. At organisational level resource access is influenced by innovation and focus, there are new models introduced for accessing funds in non-traditional ways such as crowd-funding and impact investing and approaches to engaging partner and private sector on access to human capital, tech and other resources.



Scenario matrix



- Secondary factors and effects**
- Cooperation
 - Funding
 - Technology
 - Changing ways of thinking, working, acting
 - Human rights
 - Feminist focus
 - Economic development
 - Social/Human development
 - Climate change

Civil society is surviving



“We spent a lot of time building new relationships with other activists and civil society partners to access resources and collaboration opportunities. It is hard to access resources, but we are not limited by strict processes once we do.”

– Olwethu, Activist and CSO employee

Civil society is thriving

“The consortium has grown, we now have partnerships with activists across the region. The space is exciting as there is always support for new initiatives and we recently accessed impact investing for a social media campaign and protest support.”



– Olwethu, Activist and CSO employee

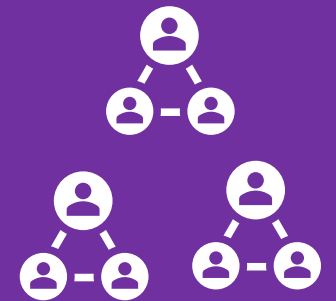
“The consortium has fallen apart. The strict controls for funding disbursement and increased competition for new opportunities amongst the partners makes it hard to focus on the actual work at hand.”



– Olwethu, Activist and CSO employee

Civil society is marginalised

“We accessed sufficient funding to maintain operations. But they have had to make the tough decision to separate from the consortia of partners. We had conflicting views on focus and accessing funding from Eastern tech philanthropists. Nonetheless we have identified potential new resource partners such as in-kind support from local companies and organisations.”



– Olwethu, Activist and CSO employee

Civil society is controlled

Civil society is surviving

Enabling governance with restricted avenues to resources

- Olwethu had to invest a lot of time over the past few years into building new relationships with other activists and civil society **partners to access resources and collaboration opportunities**.
- With low capacity (human resources, networks, rapid solutioning), there are limits to collaboration opportunities Olwethu can enter into, or to funding opportunities Olwethu can pursue.
- If it was not for joining a consortia Olwethu would not **have accessed funding to keep the doors of the CSO open**. There is an increased demand for their services, while operating with reduced resources and low capacity.
- As a local organisation, Olwethu has been more involved in local **government engagement**. Their work received recognition from the communities who have had some service delivery issues addressed through their advocacy. But Olwethu struggles to extend services to more communities with current resource constraints.
- Issues of **GBV and poor COVID-19 vaccine roll-out (among others) continue** as it takes a lot more effort to access national level budgets and compete for funder budgets which are currently directed towards the crisis. At the same time, Olwethu struggles to adapt and **refocus their advocacy efforts** on critical human rights areas such as access to water and sanitation, education, and basic health access.
- With little success, they have tried moving some of their outreach and campaigns **to digital platforms** – leaving behind most of the communities they work with. The communities Olwethu works in have very poor infrastructure which has delayed their **virtual campaigns and civic space access to social media** to drive collaborative action.
- New tech service providers are being introduced which has made mobile tech more accessible, yet connectivity and rapid access to tech is limiting development in the communities.



Civil society is marginalised

Disabling governance with low capacity to adapt

- The consortia that Olwethu was part of has dissipated due to the **strict controls for funding disbursement and increased competition** for new opportunities amongst the partners.
- They are likely to shut the CSO doors in the coming months if Olwethu is **not able to identify new means of funding and greater legitimacy from other stakeholders**.
- Olwethu's attempts to engage government partners have been aggressively blocked and **they fear arrest for their persistent online advocacy communication**.
- Olwethu and other CSOs do not have the means or the **opportunities to self-organise** in order to strengthen their engagement with government
- Citizens are **disengaging** and existing issues continue to degrade society. Olwethu is aware that most organisations can neither reach nor provide services in remote and critical locations, but there is little that Olwethu can do.
- Government remains in **crisis management mode** since COVID-19, including ongoing restriction of movement which is even more stringent for those who have not received the COVID-19 vaccination. Death rates are high and **new zoonotic diseases have emerged**.
- **New tech from economic giants in the West and East bombards cities** and even smaller communities with growing levels of debt as citizens and CSOs invest in the new tools for operating in the current context.
- Olwethu worries about the future of democracy and civil society as she observes accelerating levels of **human rights violations**.
- With limited capacity to be innovative, or capacity to self-organise with other organisations, Olwethu knows that in order to survive, they will need to be responsive to government interests, even when they are in conflict with Olwethu's mandate.



Civil society is thriving

Enabling governance and increasing avenues to resources

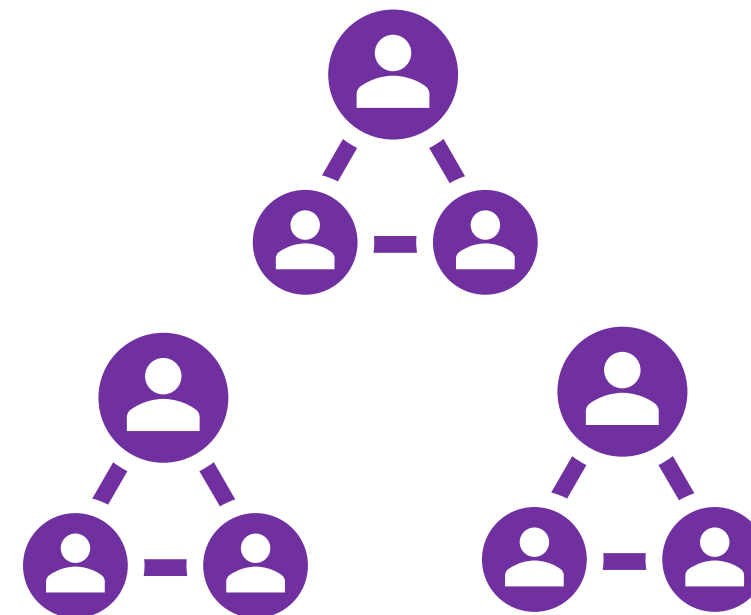
- Olwethu has grown the CSO over the past 5 years and **created partnerships with activists across the region**. Global strategies guide their work and they have built an informal network of support in all the communities.
- They were able to access **impact investing and other forms of funding** from multiple local and national givers, with less dependency on international funders. They have a **strong team in place** who constantly scan the context and rapidly churn out responses to calls for proposals.
- They have gained a **reputation for demonstrating evidence-based outputs** on their work and are able to access lessons and best practices in the civic space.
- Having many opportunities to **network and learn from other CSOs** has allowed Olwethu to seize opportunities, even during drops in resources. This has also supported **civic space to informally convene** and act as and when needed.
- Olwethu and the team regularly **engage government and private sector** directly. They partnered with an organisation with known **'business acumen'** who have helped them better connect and negotiate with corporates. They are seen as a **leader in advocacy in current issues** such as malicious tech, climate change reform and feminist ideologies.
- Olwethu's CSO regularly **accesses, and the team has the skills to use open data** on development goals which they use to raise virtual and physical campaigns. These have gone viral regionally and **driven rapid solutioning and resource mobilization** to address social issues. The decline in COVID-19 was delayed but scaled rollout of vaccines is one such example of success.
- The use of **new tech such as AI and machine learning** are part of civic space, and a niche area for some activists who continue to drive for decentralized regulation of tech and the innovative use in monitoring human rights violations. **Human-rights based approaches to digital tech** and policy development are visible. Olwethu is part of virtual communities that share monthly updates and lessons on the topic.



Civil society is controlled

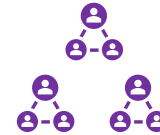
Disabling governance and increasing avenues to resources

- Olwethu **has accessed sufficient funding** to maintain operations. But they have had to make the tough decision to **separate from the consortia of partners due to conflicting views on focus and accessing funding from Eastern tech philanthropists**. They have identified potential new resource partners such as in-kind support from local companies and organisations.
- Olwethu's team struggles to engage government and private sector as access is restricted, but have identified **informal avenues** to reach officials and **are testing new ways** of engaging these spaces.
- **Climate change activities increasingly receive threats as citizen protests grow**, demanding transparency on budget spend, service delivery, voting and other issues. Olwethu has considered **self-censorship as the team re-evaluates** how they safely continue climate change activism.
- Human rights groups are under-resourced as states **limit access to funding for social justice causes** and smaller CSOs like Olwethu's **quickly adopt service-delivery roles or work in the shadows** with some local support. The restructuring has allowed them to preempt and organize work with this change. Human rights violations are increasingly evident but with varied levels civil society action and many new interventions being tested.
- **Malicious tech** is wide-spread and creates fear across civil society as a means of new sabotage such as accessing personal location information through AI breaches and surveillance of citizens. Olwethu's team is working on a strategy to address these, but is uncertain about how they will implement it.
- The context is precarious, shifting agendas, competition and divisions amongst CSOs create **civic space suppression**. Independent civil society no longer represents diverse perspectives or challenges the status quo, but are testing many small-scale initiatives with the hopes of getting them to scale.



	Civic space is surviving <i>Enabling governance with Low CSO capacity</i>	Civic space is marginalised <i>Disabling governance with many Low CSO capacity</i>	Civil society is thriving Enabling governance and increasing avenues to resources	Civil society is controlled Disabling governance and increasing avenues to resources
Cooperation	High levels of collaborations for funding and local level interventions lead by locals.	Collaboration eroded by stringent control and competition. Citizens disengage.	High regional and global support for common good. Increase in consortia and informal CSO initiatives emerging.	Cooperation driven by where the funding flows creating a multipolarised context.
Technology	Tech as way of life, but poor infrastructure remains and cost for enforcing regulation stifles implementation of tech governance frameworks.	Digital tools forced into civil society with poor infrastructure to support use. Data security is major concern and internet regulation is strict and targeted.	Rapid scale up of existing and new forms of tech across sectors. Malicious tech is a growing area of probing by civil society.	Malicious tech is wide-spread and creates fear across civil society. Tech companies a main source of philanthropic funding but hold covert and risky policies on data security and ownership of tech (e.g. China).
Changing ways	CSOs adjust to narrowed government agendas and online participation, citizen participation weakened due to limited tech access.	Increase in informal movements, chaotic and often violent protests. More so in regions with weak social media regulation.	Increased investment in virtual operation (convening, participation and protests), and CSOs driving equitable access to tech is a priority.	CSOs choose the lesser evil in accessing new sources funds for civic action from China or large tech companies. CSOs rethink focus and where to play in the multipolarity context.
Human rights	Focus placed only on ‘critical’ human rights issues with poor implementation capacity, CSOs who play outside these foci shut their doors, existing human rights issues persist.	Prolonged crisis management and restricted movement due to vaccination status. Including suspension of democratic elections	Governance not sufficient to ameliorate all human rights issues as China operates outside the new bubble. Increase in tech to support democracy and use of tech for new forms of activisms. Increased resourcing for human rights	Expanded digital divide and ‘new’ unmonitored human rights violations. Increase in online fraud, theft, and private sector navigating loopholes for scale. Migrant rights affected as polarity forces movement.
Feminist focus	Reduced efforts to push feminist ideology in governance due to resource constraints. Meaningless representation of women in public leadership.	Feminist movements seen as a destruction during a crisis period.	Positive cases of feminist ideology emerging in countries, particularly in Africa. New focus in feminist tech emerge.	Growing online protests on issues of gender and addressing the needs of minorities.
Economic development	Increased tax, stringent government and donor spending to manage slow economic recovery post-COVID.	Most countries remain in tactical or absolute recession. China philanthropy becomes stronger.	Positive development as countries supported to recover post-COVID.	East is the driver of economic power. Countries with close alliances to China are able to recover from COVID19, but others move into on-going recession.
Funding/resources	Despite enabling regulations and better coordination of private sector by government, CSO struggle to adjust to the “new normal”, and cannot access new funding opportunities.	Government centralizes access to foreign and domestic funding during crisis. There are limited avenues to collaborate to attract alternative sources of funding. Only CSOs who serve government interest can access funding.	Many impact investing and other forms of funding from multiple local and national givers are available and there is less dependency on international funders. The network for resource access is open and collaborative.	Many avenues for funding exist, but dependency for international funders remain. CSOs able to access and interact with network for resource opportunities but strained by processes and formalization.
Social/Human development	Increased marginalization and no positive impacts on SDGs. Poor COVID19 vaccine roll-out.	Basic infrastructure (e.g. health) is a focus, as countries focus inwardly and minorities struggle to access COVID19 vaccines as death rates due to new zoonotic diseases rise. SDGs are not a priority to most countries.	Civil society is able to rapidly access data and info on red flags and uses this well in advocacy. Regional cooperation enforces and supports rapid solutioning to address social issues.	CSOs raise questions on return on social investment. Poor systems of accountability leave gaps in SDG measurement. Funds go into black hole interventions.
Climate change	Climate change reform wanes as financial constraints force reliance on private sector. Individual activities growing in climate change and emerging tech.	Environmental issues not entertained. Regional and country dependency result in blindly following powerful countries.	Climate change leadership and action is positive. Governments drive accountability and transparency around climate change reform.	Climate change reforms fail , giving rise to climate change riots and pressure placed on private sector and global level collaboration.

How to use the scenarios



Now that the four scenarios have been developed and validated, CIVICUS and/or members can use them to review the appropriateness of its current strategy. The point of this exercise is to stress-test current strategies for different contexts.

It is good practice to identify "No brainers" (strategies that are robust across the range of scenarios). However, it is also possible that scenarios are sufficiently diverse that no single strategy will prevail across all of them. In that case it is a good idea to have a strategy appropriate to each scenario.

The following are recommended steps to be followed in testing strategies against these scenarios:

Step 1: Take one scenario at a time, and for a moment, assume this scenario occurs with a probability of 1. Play out the scenario to its conclusion and ensure that all participants understand the critical elements of the scenario.

Step 2: Once the scenario is understood, attempt to answer the following questions and document the responses:

- Are your set of strategic objectives appropriate in the scenarios?
- What obvious gaps are there in the current strategy for the scenario?
- What additional/alternative strategies should be developed to close the gaps?
- Considering the gaps/alternatives, how should the Theory of Change be adjusted?

Step 3: Repeat step one and two for each scenario until all scenarios are covered.

If you have sufficient time, move on to step 4...

Step 4: Stand back and look at the lists of strategic options appropriate to each scenario. Pull out those that show up on all or most scenarios. These are the "no brainers," the strategic options that look good in any and all scenarios. Start working on a consolidated Theory of Change from respective ToCs in each scenario with gaps covered/replaced by alternative strategy.

Step 5: Test the ToC for logic and refine it. And finally, update the current strategy.