



Addressing the Resourcing Problem: Strategic Recommendations on Mechanisms to Increase Resources Going to Civil Society Groups in the Global South

Extract from the Final Report prepared for CIVICUS by
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INTRODUCTION

Small and informal civil society organisations (CSOs) based in the global south face significant challenges in accessing sufficient, sustainable and flexible sources of funding. In response to this issue, CIVICUS commissioned the consultants to develop possible mechanisms that would increase the scale and quality of resources, both financial and non-financial, both international and domestic, for grassroots movements based in the global south.

This report outlines four potential mechanisms - at this stage, concepts - that surfaced at the end of an in-depth and participatory process commissioned by CIVICUS, as these could potentially increase the resources for and help shift the power towards global south grassroots movements.

Conclusions have been developed through an in-depth and participatory process over five months:

- Literature review and steering interviews with five CIVICUS members of staff and trustees
- 18 interviews with a wide range of grassroots movements and activist funders
- Ideation session undertaken by the consultancy team to develop new concepts
- Survey sent to interviewees with proposed concepts - two responses received
- Eight interviews with sector experts and three focus groups (involving 25 people) with activists and funders to test the concepts

Of course no one mechanism is going to single-handedly shift power to grassroots movements in the global south or solve their resourcing problems; the problems are too systemic, pervasive and embedded to be easily overcome. Challenges of power dynamics, elitism and accessibility exist in the development of every potential new funding programme or platform and require constant vigilance. **Yet the four concepts presented here, or some elements of these, with further consultation, research and investment, have potential to make significant positive contributions.**

INTRODUCING THE CONCEPTS

In proposing new concepts, or mechanisms, it is crucial to be clear about the problems they are attempting to solve. The following issues have been identified within the aid sector:¹

- A prevalence of short-term, project-based funding
- Application processes that are inaccessible, complicated and lengthy
- Burdensome reporting, compliance and risk management requirements
- A long-term decline in international funds available, particularly for middle-income countries
- Southern governments placing more restrictions on civil society
- Power dynamics that allow funders to set the agenda and define 'success' and leave little room for southern CSOs to design their own interventions or respond to their changing contexts

¹ These issues are explored in detail in this [comparative analysis](#) that preceded the consultation phase.

All of these issues make it particularly difficult for small, informal CSOs or grassroots movements to access the funding and support they need, especially those that are not registered, don't have a bank account or are operating in politically and socially hostile environments.

Consequently, the concepts we have developed collectively seek to:

- Offer long-term, core or flexible funding with accessible application processes and light-touch reporting requirements
- Offer funding for more informal, potentially unregistered grassroots movements, particularly those operating in restrictive contexts
- Build relationships between and among activists, funders and experts (local and international) that enable the reciprocal sharing of non-financial resources
- Unlock other sources of resource that would reduce reliance on international funding

In the table below, the concepts are mapped against the solutions they offer before going on to explain them in more detail below.

	Accessible, long-term, core and flexible funding	Funding for grassroots movements, and in restrictive contexts	Build relationships that enable the sharing of non-financial resources	Unlock other sources of resource
Concept 1: Grassroots Change Lab	✓	✓	✓	✓
Concept 2: White Label Basket Fund	✓	✓		
Concept 3: Funders Kitemark	✓			
Concept 4: Online Resourcing Platform			✓	✓

It is also important to note that in order to solve the resourcing problem, grassroots movements also have areas in which they need to improve and develop. Getting more resources to them alone will not automatically result in more impact and change on the ground. Those that can provide movements with resources understandably drive to ensure that funds are used well and that the effectiveness and quality of interventions is high. The concepts take these issues into account and try to build relationships and opportunities for mutual learning between both sides of the funding system.

The 4 concepts identified are briefly presented indicating the reasons they have been developed and the problems they seek to solve, as well as explaining the main points of feedback received during the consultation about how to strengthen them. A more detailed description is instead provided in Annexes 1 including some imagined articles and emails from the future to bring each concept to life.

CONCEPT ONE: GRASSROOTS CHANGE LABS

A Grassroots Change Lab is a co-working space for grassroots movements, CSOs and funders. It is a non-intimidating, welcoming place for people to work and meet each other. As well as providing subsidised office space with good internet connectivity, the main components of the Lab would be: a programme of incubators to co-create new projects that funders and local philanthropists would pre-fund; hosted hackathons to support the development of new business and funding models for CSOs; and a programme of training and themed seminars/ workshops delivered by members, and local and international experts. Labs could be based in global south cities, small towns or even rural areas.

Bringing people together and building reciprocal, supportive networks where people share their expertise and skills with others will be at the heart of the Lab. A membership scheme will engage members from three distinct groups. **Grassroots activists** will use the Lab as an office space and a place to meet others in their field, get help to develop their own ideas and activities, find mentors, connect with new donors, activate new funding models, and offer and receive peer-to-peer support and training. They will take part in the incubators as people who have lived experience, ideas, understanding of social problems and legitimacy. **Local philanthropists and businesses, social entrepreneurs and international funders**, will use the Lab as a place to work, build networks and connections with civil society, and to find exciting and pioneering activities and movements via the incubator programmes that they can invest in and fund. **Local and international experts** (including grassroots activists) in areas such as programme design, advocacy, technology, law, finance etc. will offer training and support, and take part in the incubator and hackathons.

Detailed comments received on the draft version of this concept are included in Annex 2, but in summary, the key points of feedback are as follows. There was some enthusiasm for this idea among stakeholders, particularly for the way it could foster collaboration between small organisations and build relationships between movements and funders. The incubator element, as a mechanism to resource the work of grassroots movements and find new programme ideas, was seen as a key strength in and of itself. The concept as a whole was seen as a way to support grassroots organisations to develop new business models and alternative forms of funding that would help them to move away from the traditional donor model; as well as bringing local and national philanthropists and funders closer to grassroots movements and so building greater understanding.

There was also some challenge of the concept. Questions were raised about how the Lab would be managed. It would need staff to host and 'hold' the space. The management style would need to be creative and flexible, not bureaucratic. Activists raised questions about the fee structure and flagged the potential risk that this becomes another expensive structure that takes money away from grassroots groups. One interviewee suggested that membership fees could be based on the organisation's turnover, so that membership is free for very small organisations but grows as they grow. This could become a Key Performance Indicator and driver for success for the Lab: as organisations get new forms of resources and grow, they start to pay more into the hub.

Youth activists raised concerns about elitism - that this becomes another resource for the usual suspects, particularly those in urban centres. The following were mentioned as ways to mitigate against elitism: recognising the expertise within local civil society, not just international organisations; peer-to-peer

mentoring; a diverse Board; hiring community members representing marginalised groups; making sure the physical space was welcoming and not intimidating. Activists also stressed that Labs should be accessible and safe for women, including childcare services for example.

Donors expressed some doubt that funders would actually come to the Lab. They might fear being pestered for funding by members. And the sheer, incessant busyness of their jobs was felt to be a real obstacle to attendance. It was suggested that it might be most realistic to structure the participation of funders in the problem-solving or programme-design incubators and hackathons, where they would have a clearer incentive to attend i.e. to potentially identify organisations or interventions to fund. It was also suggested that funders might be most engaged if these meetings or the Labs were thematically profiled.

Several stakeholders commented that this type of model already exists, for example, the [Impact Hub](#) network, [Sensi Hub](#), [CC Hub](#), or [Bongohive](#) to name a few. Beyond just learning from best practice, they felt that this concept would be most successful if CIVICUS could collaborate with existing hubs and run some elements of the concept through those already established networks. For example, CIVICUS could run an incubator programme through an Impact Hub that brought together the existing entrepreneur network with grassroots movements and funders. It was felt that this convening of different sectors was not currently happening, and could be a good aspect for CIVICUS to take the lead on.

CONCEPT TWO: NON-BRANDED BASKET FUND

This is a fund which distributes grants to grassroots movements and individuals working on the frontline of social change in politically or socially restrictive environments. The grants are small (up to \$50k), but they are unrestricted and so offer core, flexible and reactive funding for movements. The application process is short and accessible, having been designed and tested by frontline groups. Groups and individuals would register to the fund first, so the compliance is done up front; and could then apply for proactive core funding or for reactive funding when opportunities for new work arise. The turnaround time from application to funding is therefore just a few days. There are very light-touch reporting requirements on these grants. Recipients are asked to share their 'stories of change' with donors to bring to life how the money has made a difference in their context, and to provide very basic feedback on spend.

The whole funding process is app-based. A bespoke app designed by CSOs allows people to submit applications, receive and manage their grant in real time, connect and talk with other grantees via encrypted messaging, communicate with fund staff, and log stories and pictures of change. The app can act as a digital wallet and way to 'pay' activists digitally and quickly (Like Monzo, Revolut or Mpeza); negating the need for traditionally tight financial compliance. Future evolutions of the app could also deliver training modules in topics such as budgeting, resource mobilisation and campaign planning.

This non-branded basket fund is managed by a mixed advisory group, made up of funders, activists, grantees and people from other sectors including business and tech. It is well staffed, with people who value listening and activism, and they spend time in conversation (whether virtual or face-to-face) with members of the community or organisation that is invested in. The app enables the applications to be shared quickly and securely with them and decisions made quickly and transparently.

It is unbranded (or ‘-label’) in order to draw the focus onto being supportive and ‘behind the scenes’ of the work led by grassroots movements, rather than profiling the role of the fund itself. Being unbranded also allows funders to share the risk of investments. Any grants issued by a basket fund cannot be directly attributed to a specific funder, as it is a collective decision. This means you can take more risks than if you were funding directly with your brand explicitly attached. It also enables funders to take credit for all the successes that get funded too.

This concept received very positive feedback. The most popular aspects of the idea included the fast turnaround time that would allow grassroots movements to be more opportunistic, the flexible nature of the funds, and the lack of heavy reporting requirements. In fact, initially the concept proposed that these grants would have no reporting requirements, but activists and donors all felt that light-touch reporting requirements would be better, as long as they were simple and flexible. The ‘story-telling’ approach was particularly well supported, including among donors who thought this could work very well for grassroots movements.

In terms of the decision-making process, some suggested that the fund could be managed by a network that included members from a range of large, small, international, domestic and grassroots organisations, as well as people from other sectors. Applications would be submitted via the app and members would give their individual decisions on the app within a specified amount of time. The network would become the source of trust and expertise that would help to manage risk.

Another key suggestion was to add a crowd-funding element to the fund; as a way to enable local giving in particular, increase and diversify the resources going into the fund and have a closer connection and feedback loop into communities.

Other practical suggestions included offering micro-grants that could be used for much smaller expenses such as bus fares to a march, printing banners or arranging events, and some suggested that using existing apps, such as Instagram or WhatsApp, would be easier than building a new app. Activists commented that it would be important to make sure the fund reaches beyond the usual suspects. Outreach would need to be well planned and the app would need to work for those with low connectivity.

Survey respondents raised questions about how the fund would be managed. They commented that pooled decision-making structures need to be very well thought out and that it would be important to learn from others that have failed. Some questioned the need to set up an additional fund, feeling that energy and resources might be better spent on growing support for existing funds. Examples mentioned include: Fund Action (European); Amplify Change; HIV/AIDS Alliance; SRHR Trust; Defend Defenders; Global Fund for Women; Urgent Action Fund; and the START Network.

However, the key challenge of this concept would be managing the risk of offering funds with little formal due diligence and light reporting. Three suggestions were made for managing these risks: first, asking a more established organisation to act as a ‘guarantor’ to an activist or fledgling grassroots group; second, developing the fund iteratively - using an ‘angel investor’ in the first phase that is willing to take the higher risks and using that testing phase to develop effective, but light-touch risk management processes; third, simply working with the funders that are willing and able to take these risks in their support to small and creative change agents.

CONCEPT THREE: GRASSROOTS KITEMARK FOR FUNDERS

The 'Grassroots Kitemark' is an accreditation scheme for those funders that are genuinely funding grassroots movements well and in a way that is led by people with lived experience of poverty or injustice. It would become a standard to aspire to, that adds credibility, legitimacy and 'currency' to their work. The scheme would be designed by activists, with advisory support from funders and infrastructure bodies such as CIVICUS. It would need a Secretariat to provide momentum, hold the standards, administer the accreditation process and develop partnerships.

In order to gain accreditation under the kitemark, the funder would need to demonstrate a number of facets to their values, ways of working and relationship management, including:

- Provision of a certain proportion of core or unrestricted, long-term funding
- Funds following community-defined priorities
- Accessible application processes
- Appropriate 'listening' and community feedback loops as monitoring tools
- Staff that are judged by partners/communities to listen and understand their needs
- Community representatives on their Board
- Robust and appropriate standards of safeguarding and real-time feedback
- Inclusion of a certain percentage of their funding that explicitly seeks to shift power in the system
- Unified forms and templates among funders, shared and streamlined compliance and reporting processes

Funders would undergo an assessment and accreditation process. Not everyone would reach the standard initially, but the process of working towards it would be an important and useful exercise. The applicant would undergo an assessment, and then would put in place a plan for moving towards accreditation - receiving advice, training, accompaniment, and off-the-shelf tools to support improvement and learning.

Initially this concept also included a kitemarking accreditation for CSOs, but this received strong and fairly universal pushback as activists were concerned about the potential to further fragment the sector and were cynical about the way in which donors would use such an accreditation scheme. We have therefore dropped this aspect of the concept.

The idea of a kitemark for funders received quite a mixed response. Some people, and in particular the 'sector experts' that we engaged in testing interviews, felt that it was the concept with most potential to 'change the system', even if it was a bit 'boring'! It would have the potential to bolster the agency of grassroots leaders by giving them a tool to communicate with and influence the behaviour of donors. Some of the focus group participants felt excited by this.

Practical suggestions for the kitemark included: a graduated scale of accreditation so that funders can get on the first step and then make progress - this would help to get funders on board early; ensuring that grassroots activists and CSOs make decisions about accreditation; putting in place clear, quantitative metrics about the percentage of funds that needs to be spent in certain ways. There are also some best-practice funders (like MamaCash, FRIDA etc.) who could be awarded the kitemark immediately, which would be a helpful way to launch the product.

Activists commented that for the funder kitemark to work, donors would need to invest in their own capacity in order to improve their communication with grantees. They felt that 'best practice' is ultimately about donors being more transparent, and this requires time, energy and investment.

Youth activists favoured this concept the least. They doubted whether donors would value the kitemark sufficiently to invest in changing their behaviour, and felt that it could even be used as a PR tool by donors. A few suggestions were made to address this concern. Some commented that funders would need to be included in the design of the programme to ensure that it was realistic in terms of their institutional needs. It was also suggested that a concerted PR campaign would be needed to raise awareness and appeal of the scheme, in order to attract participants. Others felt that the kitemark might be more successful if applied to 'fundermediaries' as it could be used by larger donors investing in these organisations to ensure they were funding in positive ways. Others still suggested that CIVICUS could share the list of organisations they would and wouldn't kitemark with donors and then give them two years to adjust their practices before going public. This would be a more challenging and potentially conflictive approach, but one that might have more impact.

There were also discussions about whether a kitemark approach would be the most effective way of shifting donor behaviour, given the costs and effort involved. Another option would be for CIVICUS to collaboratively develop a code of donor behaviour and an influencing plan to ensure the code is implemented.

CONCEPT FOUR: ONLINE RESOURCING PLATFORM

An online platform would serve to connect, advise and inform grassroots organisations and movements, to support them in meeting their resourcing needs. It would create efficiencies by facilitating the sharing of resources, and would open up significant new opportunities to organisations through proactively sharing funding opportunities as well as technical advice and support to develop alternative resourcing strategies.

The platform would be designed by advisers from grassroots movements and tech experts and would potentially offer the following:

- Proactive information on calls for proposals and funding opportunities, or opportunities to partner and connect into consortia
- Financing facility and advisory support to grassroots movements seeking to explore more commercial wings to their approaches
- Off-the-shelf models, forms and templates that could be used by funders, which had been designed or approved by CSO representatives
- A 'practice learning' section where examples of alternative resourcing approaches could be shared
- A space for offers of skills sharing or consultancy to be shared
- Facilitated discussions between funders and movements around particular issues, problems or areas of innovation, including for example, building a domestic donor base
- A 'challenge' area where ideas can be worked up using Open IDEO methods, and funders could also offer engagement and support
- A pool of advisers offering advisory services via skype and chat services - on business and funding models, strategy development, legal, financial planning, fundraising, advertising, mental health
- In all areas of the platform participants would be able to reach out and make connections with others

- A peer-review facility for funding proposals or business development ideas - to ensure that they were as high quality as possible

This concept received very mixed feedback, and was least popular with the strategic sector ‘experts’ we engaged in testing through interviews. Several people felt it would be a waste of time and energy as there are already similar platforms out there that are not being used. Whereas among the youth activists, this was the most popular concept (in combination with elements of other concepts, such as the fund).

However, even those who rejected the idea of setting up a platform thought that some aspects of the concept would be valuable, including a peer review of funding proposals, having access to a pool of advisors and webinars on funding mechanisms. They suggested that these elements could be incorporated into the other concepts, for example, setting up a peer review process in the Grassroots Change Lab. Others felt it would be a better use of resource to enhance existing platforms, for example FundsforNGOs.com. This would also help resolve issues of governance.

The concept of an online resourcing platform was more positively received in focus groups. The primary concern of activists and donors was around ensuring that the platform would be accessible to all types of individuals and organisations. Suggestions made to increase accessibility included: ensuring free access; making resources available in multiple languages; making the site jargon free; and guaranteeing access to those with poor connectivity (could an app work offline, or could there be a USSD version?). Youth activists raised the possibility of using this platform for activists to offer consultancy services to others and therefore as a way for them to earn an income and so continue their activism.

Donors felt that in order for this concept to be successful, funders’ commitment to the platform would be crucial and would need to come first, before activists invest time and energy. They also raised the issue of digital security: this is crucial for people working in hostile environments and yet can make online platforms very difficult to use.

THE WAY FORWARD

The next phase of our work following this consultation, from July 2019 to June 2020, will focus on and dig deeper into these emergent themes:

1. As a starting point, we will identify principles and elements from each of the above concepts that can be embedded into existing CIVICUS initiatives, grant-making practices and specific areas of work.
2. We will explore the strategic alignment, feasibility and added value of CIVICUS further developing and testing one of these concepts, or a spin off of one. We will assess what collective approach could best contribute to changing donor behavior towards a more inclusive, community-led and distributed system, or help grassroots movements develop alternative sources of support and funding that will ultimately reduce their reliance on international aid and help them become more sustainable.
3. Since these are all valuable prototypes that have been already sense-checked with potential users, we will present the four concepts to relevant groups that we feel might be interested to hear about these and well placed to take them forward. We are planning to organise a dedicated learning session, around September or October 2019, inviting various organisations involved in the previous reflections, plus other potentially relevant groups, with the goal of promoting collaborative mechanisms to support the grassroots resourcing ecosystem. This meeting could be live-streamed so that more people can attend remotely.

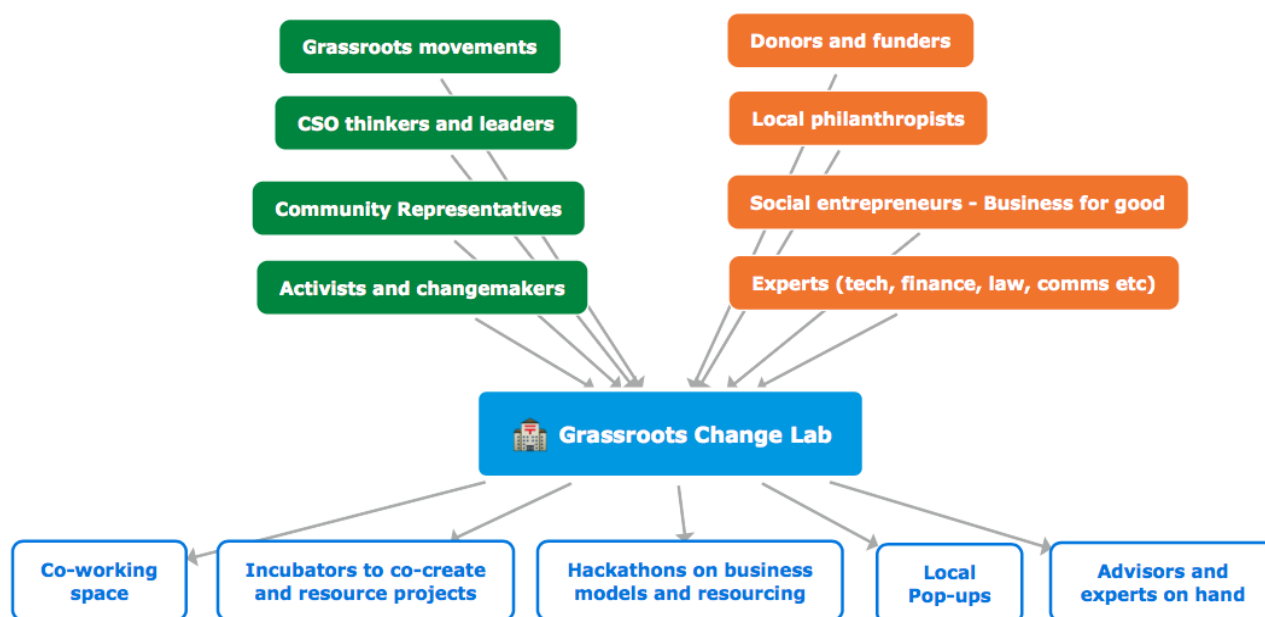
ANNEX 1: DETAILED CONCEPTS POST-TESTING PHASE

Grassroots Change Labs

Concept One - Post-testing phase

The Grassroots Change Labs will be a physical place to meet, work, build relationship and practically work together to find and resource grassroots solutions to the big social problems facing communities. This is a physical space that could be set up in small towns, rural areas or big cities. It would offer the following:

- A co-working office space for grassroots movements, CSOs, funders
- A programme of incubators to co-create new projects that funders would pre-fund
- A programme of hackathons to support new business models for civil society organisations and alternative ways to resource their work
- A roster of advisors and experts to provide support, one-to-ones and trainings to grassroots movements
- The opportunity to bring people together and build reciprocal, supportive networks



Building relationships and bringing people together will be at the heart of the Lab and the flagship programme that will take place there will be the incubators and ‘hackathons’ designed to fund the work of grassroots movement and support them to develop alternative financing and business models. The **incubators** will provide regular ways for Lab members to co-create and fund exciting community-led projects; using light-touch, ‘human-centered’ design methodologies. The **hackathons** will support grassroots organisations to work with others to look at **alternative and innovative ways to resource their work** and develop their business models to be based more on national and local resources.

A membership scheme will engage members from three distinct groups and have a tiered cost; being free to small groups. Membership fees would then be used as a KPI and driver for success for the Lab; as organisations get new forms of resources and grow, they start to pay back into the hub. Membership will be aimed at the following groups.

Firstly **grassroots activists**, community representatives and civil society thinkers and leaders. They will be able to use the Lab as an office space and a place to meet others in their field, get help to develop their own ideas and activities, find mentors, connect with new donors, activate new funding models, and offer and receive peer-to-peer support and training. They will engage in the incubators as people who have lived experience, ideas, understanding of social problems and legitimacy.

The second group will be **local philanthropists and businesses, social entrepreneurs and international funders**. For many this will be a place they can work when they travel and a place where they can meet and engage with community groups (as opposed to working out of the business suite in the intercontinental). A Lab would also provide an easy and simple solution for those foundations or donors looking to move offices to the south or have more locally-rooted staff. They will bring the funds they are looking to invest in community groups to the incubators programmes and also bring expertise in solution design and multi-sector change.

Finally **local and international experts** (including grassroots activists) in areas such as programme design, advocacy, technology, law, finance etc. who want put their skills to use for good, will be able to use the co-working space and take part in the programmes too. Many might feel isolated in their fields so this provide a place to connect with others in their fields that want to put their skills to use for their communities.

A diverse Board would govern the Lab and plan its activities. It would be a welcoming place and provide childcare services. It would be based on a sharing economy model - so experts or advisors could use the co-working space when in town in return for providing **advice or consultancy** to grassroots and CSO members.

There are several similar hubs already in existence so whilst this could be run as a stand-alone Lab, it could also be in partnership with an existing one; or by hiring local community meeting spaces in rural areas and smaller towns to prevent it becoming urban centric.

Article in Stanford Business Review in May 2029

Jamal - People of the 20's (2029)

Today I am interviewing Jamal, one of the best known disability activists in the region and social entrepreneur; and one of our 10 people of the 2020's. He talks about his experience trying to change life for disabled people, firstly in Kampala and how he set his sights on the rest of the world. He arrives for our interview a bit fidgety, frantically sending messages on his mobile. He is just back from WEF in Davos where he has been instrumental in getting governments and businesses to sign up to a new charter promoting employment of disabled people. After a coffee he calms down and is engaging and extroverted as he tells me about his story.

So where did it all begin?

Probably when I started going to the Grassroots Change Lab in town. I started using the space in the evenings; as whilst I've been supporting disabled people in Uganda all my life - it's kind of hard not to when you are a wheelchair user yourself - I wanted to try to set myself up as a community group and support others, rather than be the angry student activist I had been. So I set up my own small group, Disabled People of Kampala Group.

That all sounds like a pretty standard path but what was the real catalyst that made you into the superstar you are now in the activist world?

The Lab was a place where I met people and got to learn and develop my ideas. I met other activists and community groups; got good advice from comms people about how to set up the crowdfunding campaign I used to get started; and some other Lab advisors helped me with budgeting and registering my CSO. I also met people from two other Disabled People's Organisations and it was good to get advice on what issues we should (and shouldn't!) be focussing on and how to work better together.

What was key though was when I met someone from DfID. He said that he used the desk space there as it was a chance for him to meet real people rather than sit in the stuffy old embassy and he was also looking to fund projects that were more rooted in communities. Every month the Lab ran an incubator programme for three days - and six months into my time there the theme was 'How do we support employers to employ more disabled people'. It was a fantastic few days working with a whole mix of people and we developed a brilliant idea that set up an app that disabled people could use to rate employers on how accessible they were and then provide consultancy support to businesses so they could achieve a better rating. At the end of the three days, DfDI said they would fund us to get it up and running and give us a stipend too. The stipend was critical as it allowed me to also use my time to take up other advocacy and lobbying opportunities.

This was the first proper funding we had received. But we also didn't want to be reliant on this type of funding so then a year later we got involved in the resourcing hackathons that helped us to develop our business model, which saw other some local social investors and few social enterprises work with us moving forward.

So it sounds like this was the Lab making of you?

Well, it certainly was the boost I needed. I like to call it an energy pack! I learnt as much as I could from all the people I connected with too - that was the fuel for my energy pack!

From: Jim Smith <jes@westernfunder.com>
Subject: Re: This great new space in Freetown
To: Boss <bigboss@westernfunder.com>

Hi boss, Just a quick update from Freetown. The scoping visit is going well, but as ever it's been hard to meet some of the right people. Intriguingly though I came across this new Grassroots Change Lab where some local organisations wanted to meet as they use it for office space. Really good vibe to the place. If we join (we have to put some money into it) we can then use the office space but also be involved in these incubators they run to develop new community projects - wow they'd surely be a much more legitimate way to find great genuinely community-led projects (?) not least a much quicker way to do it too.

There are also Labs in some of our other main hubs, Nairobi, Kampala and Dhaka. I also think we should feed it into our early thinking about office re-location. It beats working out of the business suite at the Hilton and it'd be loads more straightforward than some of the initial plans for relocating the office. Anyway, see you on the Skype call later on (Thankfully the Lab has great wifi!) - Jim

Non-branded basket fund

Concept Two - Post-testing phase

This is a fund which distributes grants to grassroots movements and individuals working on the frontline of social change in politically or socially restrictive environments.

The grants are small (up to \$50k) but there are many of them so the overall value of the fund is significant. The application process is short and accessible, having been designed and tested by frontline groups. Groups and individuals would register to the fund first, so the compliance is done up front, and then apply for grants - with the turnaround time just a few days.

The recipients are social disruptors. They can be individual activists, communities or small, informal grassroots organisations that may or may not be registered. They are pioneers, seeking to bring change in contexts that are culturally and politically hostile or even dangerous.

The grants are unrestricted funds and can be used by recipients however they wish, including to cover the costs of activist salaries, campaign materials, legal costs or necessary security measures: anything that will further the work of and protect these committed and creative people. Ideally, as core, flexible funds, they will help to build the strength and confidence of each organisation.

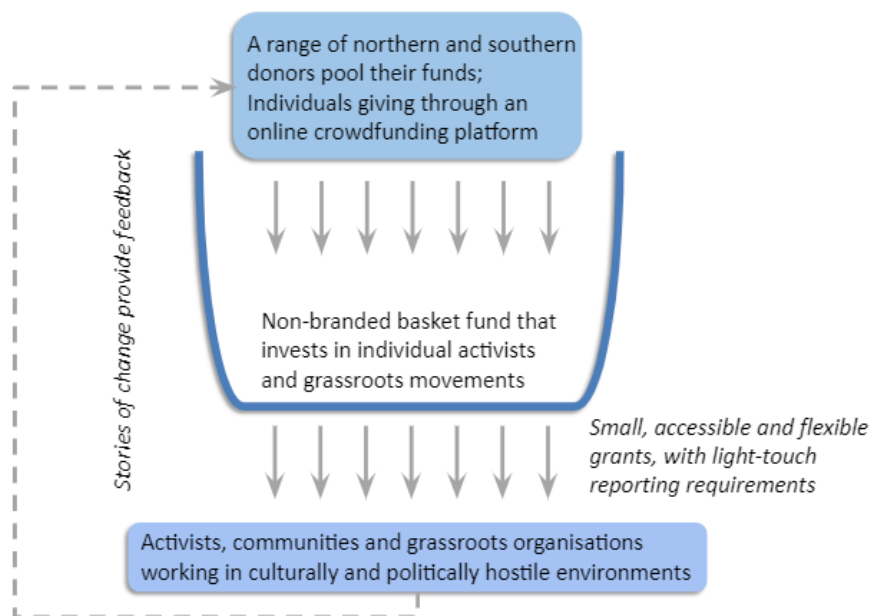
The reporting requirements are based around stories. They are very light touch; stories of change can be logged in a variety of formats, such as a photo or link to a news story on an app designed by CSOs, with very light financial feedback.

The whole process is app-based. A bespoke app designed by CSOs allows people to submit applications, receive and manage their grant in real time, connect and talk with other grantees via encrypted messaging, communicate with fund staff, and log stories and pictures of change. The app can act as a digital wallet and way to 'pay' activists digitally and quickly (Like Monzo, Revolut or Mpeza); negating the need for traditionally tight financial compliance. Future evolutions of the app could also deliver training modules in topics such as budgeting, resource mobilisation and campaign planning.

It is unbranded (or 'white-label') in order to draw the focus onto being supportive and 'behind the scenes' of the work led by grassroots movements, rather than profiling the role of the fund itself. Being unbranded also allows funders to share the risk of investments. Any grants issued by a basket fund cannot be directly attributed to a specific funder, as it is a collective decision. This means you can take more risks than if you were funding directly with your brand explicitly attached. It also enables funders to take credit for all the successes that get funded too.

Local people and individuals also donate through a crowdfunding platform; powered by the positive stories of change. This will diversify the resourcing and also create meaningful feedback loops with individuals in local communities.

The fund is managed by a mixed advisory group, made up of funders, activists and grantees. It is well staffed, with people who value listening and activism, and they spend time in conversation (whether virtual or face to face) with members of the community or organisation that is invested in. The whole fund is of an ambitious scale and it draws in funders who would not normally have a high risk appetite (as well as those who do) because it has such an impressive reputation.



Article in Stanford Business Review in May 2029
Samaira - People of the 20's (2029)

Today I am interviewing Samira*. Samira has been working for the last 20 years to build women's rights in Saudi Arabia. Over the last 10 years, Samira and her network of over one million women activists have won significant legal and policy victories. Women in Saudi Arabia can now travel outside of the home and even abroad without the guardianship of a man: they can also officially be the head of a household and get a job without needing permission. Today we talk to Samira about how she has been able to bring about such significant change.

How did you start to get involved in this work?

It all started for me back in 2010 when I was 15. My cousin was arrested one day after complaining to an official about a sexist comment he had made. The injustice of it made me so angry, but I felt so helpless, I just didn't know what to do about it. I managed to get access to a mobile phone and set up a twitter account in a different name. This helped me to connect with other women who felt like I did and wanted to do something about it. We were able to arrange secret meetings through twitter and eventually we decided to

set up a Facebook page and organisation that we called Women United, which would help other women to connect and get involved.

How did you go from this to leading a women's rights movement of over one million women?

It was tough. We had our organisation and a core group of activists, but it was difficult to find the resources and support we needed to grow the movement. But one day, one of my contacts told me about this fund that would help groups like ours. It was really easy to apply for the money and we had it within a few weeks. It changed everything. It paid me and one other activist a small stipend for three years which meant we could carry on with campaigning. During that time we were able to organise protests, sit-ins and flash mobs to challenge the restrictions on women's rights. More and more women kept connecting online and getting involved, it was amazing and the government had to take notice in the end.

It sounds like that grant was a real catalyst for you. How were you even able to get the money, given your context?

The money was paid into an app on my phone which meant I could keep it a secret from my parents. I could then use it as I needed to, to cover my own expenses as well as the costs of organising the campaigning activities. The flexibility was crucial as it meant I could take advantage of opportunities as they arose. What was really amazing about it though, was using the app to connect to other activists that were in similar positions to me. We could chat through the app, using an encrypted messaging service, and share ideas and just encourage each other. That made such a difference and helped me keep going, even when I was arrested.

Even though it wasn't much money, that grant made all the difference. I guess it was the sense of being trusted enough by people I had never met that they would give me money and believe that I would use it well. Without that grant I could never have continued my activism and we wouldn't be where we are today.

*Not her real name

From: Jim Smith <jes@westernfunder.com>
Subject: Re: New non-branded fund
To: Sarah Boss <bigboss@westernfunder.com>

Hi Sarah,

When the funding committee meets next week I really hope you can convince them to approve my request that we invest in the new non-branded basket fund.

We've been looking for a way to get to the real grassroots for so long and this enables us to do it and share the risk with other funders. I am sure that not all the people or groups that get funded will be amazing work; and some of it won't come off... but some of it will be brilliant and make a huge impact. And the great part of it is that we can - we would never be able to spread the net and risk like that by ourselves. I also love that they will have a public donating side to it too - so our money will work alongside local people donating too - which feels new.

We've known for some time that our grantees find our reports onerous and not useful, so this lets us trial ways of lighter touch reporting - and also reach people who might have been put off by our reputation and would never apply for our funds directly (you know how fed up I am of always funding the usual suspects).

Anyway, I'll stop going on. Just let me know what the committee decides as soon as you can - it will make my year if we can get involved in this! - Jim

Grassroots Kitemark

Concept Three - Post-testing phase

The 'Grassroots Kitemark' would be an accreditation scheme for funders who are working in a way that is people-led, and helps to shift power towards communities in the global south. Its main aim would be to change funder behaviour. The scheme would be designed by activists, with advisory support from funders and infrastructure bodies such as CIVICUS. It would have a Secretariat to provide momentum, hold the standards, administer the accreditation process and develop partnerships.

The kitemark would verify and reward funders that are genuinely funding grassroots movements well and in a way that is led by people with lived experience of poverty or injustice. It would become a standard to aspire to, that adds credibility, legitimacy and 'currency' to their work. It would open up conversations more easily with grassroots groups, and would make the funder a more attractive potential partner for them. This would help funders to attract the most dynamic and exciting grassroots work (and implicitly reduce the risk for the funder). The kitemark would be a step towards inverting the power balance between funders and grassroots groups.

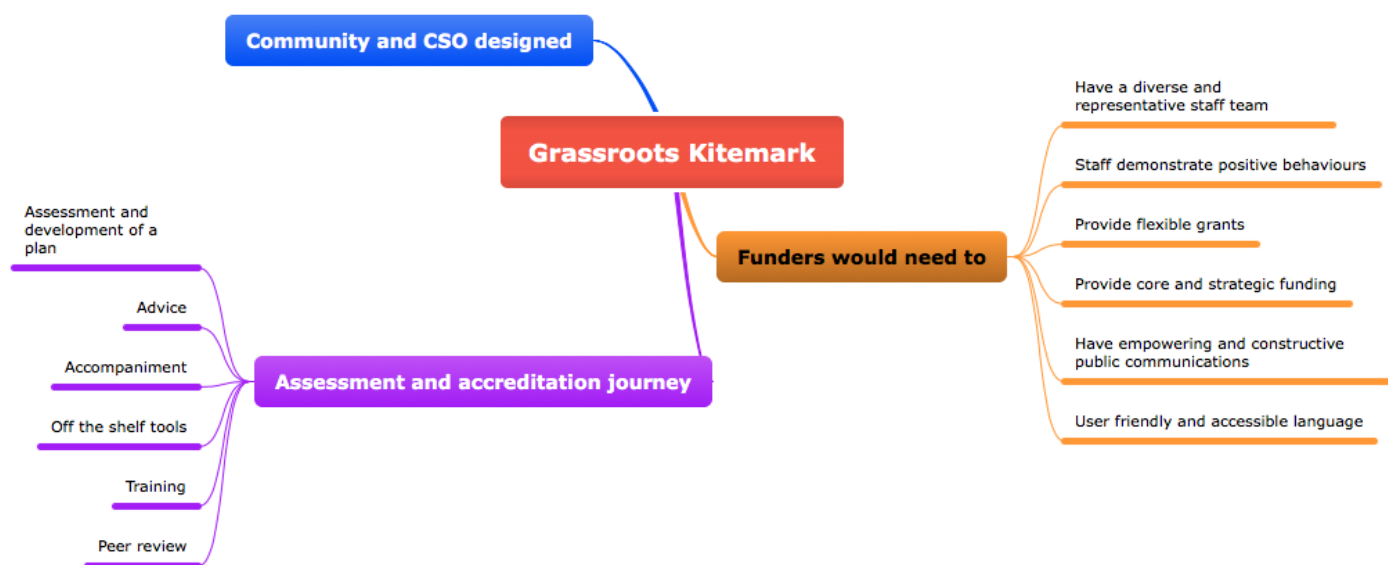
In order to gain accreditation under the kitemark, the funder would need to demonstrate a number of facets to their values, ways of working and relationship management. The precise design and weighting of these elements would depend on the design developed by the group of activists and community leaders (facilitated by CIVICUS), but could include elements such as:

- Provision of a certain proportion of core or unrestricted, long-term funding
- Funds following community-defined priorities
- Accessible application processes
- Appropriate 'listening' and community feedback loops as monitoring tools
- Staff that are judged by partners/communities to listen and understand their needs
- Community representatives on their Board
- Robust and appropriate standards of safeguarding and real-time feedback
- Inclusion of a certain percentage of their funding that explicitly seeks to shift power in the system
- Unified forms and templates among funders, shared and streamlined compliance and reporting processes

Funders would undergo an accreditation process. Not everyone would reach the standard initially, but the process of working towards it would be an important and useful exercise. The applicant would undergo an

assessment, and then would put in place a plan for moving towards accreditation - receiving advice, training, accompaniment, off the shelf tools all to support improvement and learning.

In order for the kitemark to become aspirational for donors, a positive campaign would be needed to raise awareness of the importance of supporting grassroots movements and communities in a positive way (for sustainability, rights, strengthening focus and outcomes), and the damage that can be imposed when this is not done (wasted resources used for applications and reporting, distraction from mission, failed projects). The narrative of #ShiftThePower and the need to work differently will need to be further strengthened, which will require tactical and collaborative work across the sector.



Article in Stanford Business Review in May 2029

Rita Maposa - People of the 20's (2029)

Today I am interviewing Rita Maposa, who has been a dynamic and influential change-maker in the world of philanthropy and community action in South Africa for over 20 years. Rita has been chosen as one of our 10 people of the 2020s and is here today to tell me about her passion for equality and justice, the importance of getting the right money, and how a kitemark shifted power.

So, Rita, tell me about the work you do in South Africa

I have been a community leader working on land rights for 20 years. I became passionate about this issue when a mining company arrived in my local town and started to extract gold. They took land from communities and offered paltry compensation. So, we started to organise. We connected with other pressure groups within South Africa and in other countries, and that helped our campaign, but we lacked adequate funds for the first 10 years, so it was really hard to give it the time it needed.

You also work hard at the global level to drive to more and better resourcing for passionate grassroots activists like yourself - tell me more about this.

About 10 years ago, I attended a conference and met someone from CIVICUS when we spoke on the same panel. I was delighted to hear about the global network that CIVICUS manages, and we joined up - getting advice and connections which were really helpful. And soon after I was asked whether I would like to join an advisory group for a new idea that CIVICUS was developing that would help with resourcing to grassroots movements. I was curious, so I went along, and the rest is history!

The Grassroots Kitemark is world famous now - tell me why it works.

The Grassroots Kitemark turns the tables of power between the donors and grassroots movements. It is an accreditation scheme, where donors have to prove that they are working in a positive and supportive way, building the power and agency of communities, and not taking away from that. They go through a process of assessment, and if they don't have all the elements yet, then they are supported to develop them. It might be that they don't have a strong enough approach to listening to communities, or that their public communications materials don't tell the full story of people-led change... But there is a strong technical team in the Secretariat that supports the funder to work towards improved approaches.

How has it changed the behavior of funders?

It has been a powerful tool. The kitemark has become a bit of a mark of honour, something to be proud of. And it has helped us as community groups in two ways. It has helped to signpost funders who are likely to be a good fit for our work. But more importantly, it has made us feel that we are in the driving seat.

The Guardian Newspaper article - July 2021

Comic Relief celebrates getting CIVICUS Grassroots Kitemark

Following increasing criticism of both its fundraising and the impact of the money it donates, Comic Relief, the much-loved British institution, has celebrated its 35th year by winning the CIVICUS Kitemark for Grassroots funding.

It is a welcome relief to the organisation; but also the end of a long road of reform. "It's been great to finally get this. It's a real validation of the effort our staff have made in recent years to try and move our work closer to the people and communities we want to serve." said their CEO, on receiving the award. "We've been a household name in the UK for a long time but not amongst the grassroots organisations and heros we have tried to fund and invest in over the years; so it is great that it is these people, the real heros in the development story, who have given us this award. We can now be talked of in the same breath as MamaCash, AWDF and Kenyans for Kenya, as funders who are funding the real frontline heros out there changing communities and the lives of people within them."

"It has not been a tick box exercise by any stretch of the imagination. It has taken time and a serious change in mindset." Comic Relief has developed a new online feedback mechanism; made more of its funding unrestricted; and worked with activists to re-develop its reporting requirements. But key has also been changing the stories they tell to the public here in the UK too. "We realised you have to also tell the right stories of what's going on on the ground - empowering, uplifting ones that are told by people themselves - and that has been a big change for us too."

Comedy still runs through their veins though and the CEO couldn't resist a cheeky comment on leaving the stage: "I hope next year you can finally award the kitemark to DfID," she says with a wink.

Resource Centre Platform for Grassroots Movements

Concept Four - Post-testing phase

A global online platform would serve to connect, advise and inform grassroots organisations, to support them in meeting their resourcing needs. It would create efficiencies by facilitating the sharing of resources, and would open up significant new opportunities to organisations through proactively sharing funding opportunities, providing technical advice and support to organisations, and facilitating peer support. It would enable connections to be made between funders and activists, as well as peer to peer between activists.

The platform would be designed by a joint team of advisers from grassroots movements and tech experts, to ensure that it really did meet the needs of activists. Testing would be undertaken with further, varied groups of activists - working in a range of regions/contexts, in different scale organisations and on a range of issues.

The platform would potentially offer the following:

- Proactive information on calls for proposals and funding opportunities, or opportunities to partner and connect into consortia
- Financing facility and advisory support to GMs seeking to explore more commercial wings to their approaches
- Off-the-shelf models, forms and templates that could be used by funders, which had been designed or approved by CSO representatives
- A 'practice learning' section where examples of alternative resourcing approaches could be shared
- A space for offers of skills sharing or consultancy to be shared
- Facilitated discussions between funders and movements around particular issues, problems or areas of innovation, including for example, building a domestic donor base
- A 'challenge' area where ideas can be worked up using Open IDEO methods, and funders could also offer engagement and support
- A pool of advisers offering advisory services via skype and chat services - on business and funding models, strategy development, legal, financial planning, fundraising, advertising, mental health
- In all areas of the platform participants would be able to reach out and make connections with others
- A peer review facility for funding proposals or business development ideas - to ensure that they were as high quality as possible

Resource Centre for Grassroots Movements



From: <joseph@whosevoice.org.tz>

To: <localleader@acomunity.net>

Re: Broadening our resourcing options

Dear Reverend Mzuzi,

I do hope you are well. Thank you so much for your very useful comments last week at the 'Whose Voice?' Board meeting. It is always really good to receive the guidance of our community Board at those meetings. Thanks also for offering to do some thinking with me about our resourcing plan. I look forward to our coffee conversation next Thursday. In the meantime I promised to send you the link to the Grassroots Resource Centre, the online platform designed to help organisations like ours to get the support needed for building up their resourcing.

I think the 'Resource Centre' could be a huge help to us. I have managed to find a really excellent set of resources there - examples of great projects and collaborations between funders and grassroots groups; case studies of what works; loads of information about what type of funding each donors provides, when it is awarded etc. There are some great tips on how to work with different partners, as well as a chat area for

making connections and talking directly to programme officers from some of the major funders. You can just start a conversation bilaterally, or you can take part in one of the monthly moderated thematic discussions. Next month is on how best to support girl-led work, which could be really helpful for us. I have heard from other activists that they have had really fruitful funding relationships that started through making contact with a funder on the platform.

One of the elements of the Resource Centre that I think could be particularly helpful to us is the online advisers. You can arrange a series of meetings with a specialist adviser on particular issues, such as your business model, or a legal problem. I was thinking that once we have our early thoughts on resourcing together I could talk these through with one of the advisers.

So, do have a look at the website, and let's discuss how it might be most helpful to us at 'Whose Voice?' and other ideas for the funding strategy. I really look forward to it.

Thanks again for your time Rev Mzuzi.

Best wishes

Joseph

Joseph Kagama
Co-ordinator, Whose Voice?
Arusha



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