

# HOW ACCOUNTABLE ARE CIVICUS' RESOURCING PRACTICES?

## PART 4: BEING HELD TO ACCOUNT



Fundación SIMAS, a CSO in Argentina, used Solidarity Fund support to create the city of Mendoza's first-ever indigenous, women-run online radio station.

Beyond the information we share and how we approach feedback, to what extent are our constituents able to steer or even make direct decisions about the way we fund? While there is very little scope for members and partners to directly make decisions about our resourcing policies, there are several ways our strategies and activities are influenced - and even led - by these constituents.

### Member representatives in the driving seat:

- Our member-comprised [board of directors](#) inputs into and signs-off our overall resourcing and sustainability strategy. This directly affects the way we redistribute resources because it informs the type of partnerships we pursue with donors.
- The [Solidarity Fund](#) is in a unique position as CIVICUS' only funding programme where the money comes from member fees rather than a

donor. As such, members are more directly setting the Fund's agenda via a [Member Advisory Group \(MAG\)](#), and there is more flexibility in what the mechanism can fund.

- As grassroots actors from the CIVICUS membership, the MAG brings direct experience of operating at this level into the application review process. The previous year's [Youth Action Lab](#) participants play a similar role in helping to select the next cohort.
- We soon realised – including through feedback received – that these voluntary roles could be rather extractive and inaccessible to many of our constituents. We therefore started remunerating the YAT for their time and efforts. This also boosted engagement levels, and has since been replicated for the MAG and [other programmes](#) in which members help select sub-grantees.



### The power of co-creation:

- Both the Youth Action Lab and [Grassroots Change-Makers](#) programmes have used a [co-design process](#) which relies on participant input to shape the funding mechanism so that it fits their particular needs and preferences (but as ever, within the parameters of CIVICUS' granting rules).
- Part of this is creating a sense of ownership among activists and a more equitable partnership between them and CIVICUS staff, so that participants have the confidence to really drive the programme in the direction they choose.
- We know this doesn't just lead to more effective projects and campaigns, but we also want to test a model which confronts some of the power imbalances so entrenched in the (sub-) grantee-grantee relationship.

### Reporting-back more easily and meaningfully:

- The Lab has also experimented with letting participants choose how they'd like to report back on their impact and lessons learned,

including through storytelling and community testimonies, so that the process can be as useful to them as possible (although financial reporting obligations remain the same).

- But the Lab suggests we could go further still with the narrative reporting we expect from participating activists by exploring more peer-to-peer approaches where all members of a cohort work together to help assess progress and lessons learned.

### Sounding the alarm:

- The ability to have complaints heard is another important accountability mechanism. As with all our programmes, whether grant-giving or not, constituents can do this via the online [CIVICUS Feedback Form](#).
- What we have seen here is that most complaints related to resourcing emanate from a misunderstanding about who and what we are able to fund, and how we make these decisions. This reinforces the need for us to continue improving the ways in which we 'give account' of our resourcing processes (see Part 2 of this series for more on this).