

HOW ACCOUNTABLE ARE CIVICUS' RESOURCING PRACTICES?

PART 1: SETTING THE SCENE



An action organised by Centro de Derechos Zeferino Ladrillero, a CIVICUS member supported by the Solidarity Fund which works with indigenous communities in Mexico.

At [CIVICUS](#), redistributing funds to our members and partners is a crucial way in which we work towards the alliance's strategic objectives. So the [Resilient Roots](#) team is helping the secretariat to look inwards, capturing how we are striving to be more accountable in the ways that we do this, and where we must go further.

We also examine how our resourcing programmes and processes encourage and help our members and partners to themselves be more accountable to their own constituents (the people they serve and support).

This five-part series shares what we've learned, using the three dimensions of constituent accountability:



GIVING ACCOUNT:

Telling our constituents (members and partners) why we fund, what and who we fund, and how we do it.



TAKING ACCOUNT:

Collecting and responding to feedback about the way we fund.

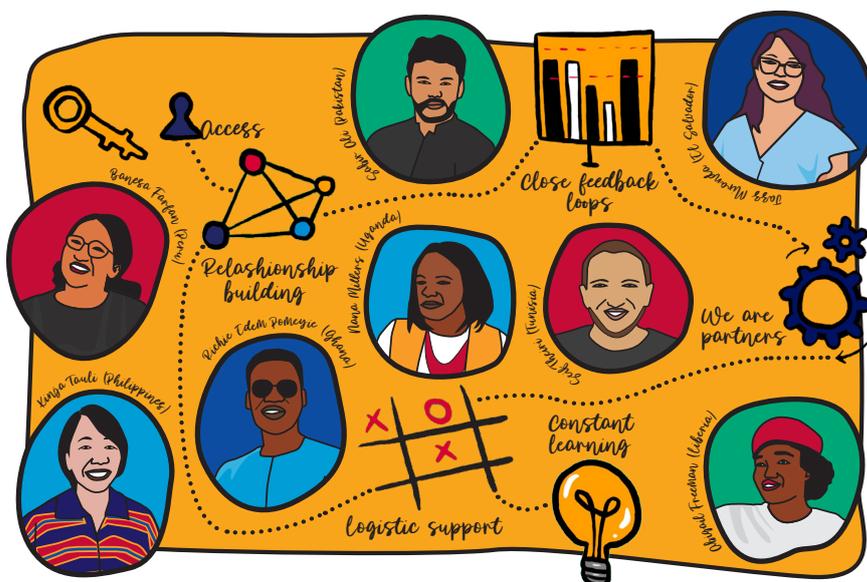


BEING HELD TO ACCOUNT:

Enabling our constituents to inform and make direct decisions about the way we fund.

The series will examine three programmes in particular:

- CIVICUS Solidarity Fund:** A member-led mechanism which redistributes the membership fees we collect from voting members to other members.
- Youth Action Lab:** A pilot programme providing flexible, multi-faceted support for young activists.
- Crisis Response Fund:** A rapid response resourcing mechanism for civil society actors under threat.



It's important to emphasise that CIVICUS is not a donor. The majority of the money we redistribute comes from our own institutional donors, so our sub-granting practices are bound by the rules they set and that we are independently audited against. This is not the case for the Solidarity Fund, however, as this pot of money comes entirely from voting member fees.

Our colleagues in the Operations department are therefore faced with a big challenge – to create workable policies and processes which keep us compliant with the many differing requirements of our multiple donors.

Similarly, we have often struggled to update our own guidelines quickly enough to keep up with the changing external context and resourcing landscape. For example, even our smallest re-grants still have rigid compliance and reporting requirements, and we are yet to find a way of reimbursing virtual event participants for their mobile data costs (although this is something we are working on!).

We therefore haven't really experimented with the most flexible and 'power-shifting' forms of funding (e.g., 'participatory grant-making' and 'trust-based philanthropy'). But we are still innovating in response to members and partners' needs, and trying to better support them to centre the voices and experiences of the people they serve.

Because we inhabit this 'intermediary' space and have long-term relationships with our donors, we still have both the power and a responsibility to track and reflect upon how our rules and priorities impact our constituents (in both positive and more negative ways). We must also relay this information to our stakeholders – not least our donors, and continue improving our systems and practices based on what we learn to be the most effective ways of assisting our constituents.

What's more, we have a strategic imperative to support grassroots and more informal civil society groups, as exactly those who may be overlooked or struggle to access the resources and solidarity they need. Reaching these groups is a major reason why several of our donors give to us in the first place. But these are usually the constituents who struggle most to meet our often complex compliance requirements.

If we are to effectively perform this role, we require our members and partners to share their learning, ideas, and frustrations openly. However, to create the space and maintain the trust that this requires, we must also do the same.

This mini-series is therefore something we hope will be relevant and interesting to our members and partners, donors, and wider intermediary resourcing organisations. We really hope that you'll join us in this discussion!