



What is Civil Society, its role and value in 2018?

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Question

What is Civil Society? How is the term used and what is seen to be its role and value (internationally) in 2018?

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1. Summary

Civil society is widely understood as the space outside the family, market and state (WEF, 2013). What constitutes civil society has developed and grown since the term first became popular in the 1980s and it now signifies a wide range of organised and organic groups including non-governmental organisations (NGOs), trade unions, social movements, grassroots organisations, online networks and communities, and faith groups (VanDyck, 2017; WEF, 2013). Civil society organisations (CSOs), groups and networks vary by size, structure and platform ranging from international non-governmental organisations (e.g. Oxfam) and mass social movements (e.g. the Arab Spring) to small, local organisations (e.g. Coalition of Jakarta Residents Opposing Water Privatisation).

Civil society roles include:

- service provider (for example, running primary schools and providing basic community health care services)
- advocate/campaigner (for example, lobbying governments or business on issues including indigenous rights or the environment)
- watchdog (for example, monitoring government compliance with human rights treaties)
- building active citizenship (for example, motivating civic engagement at the local level and engagement with local, regional and national governance)
- participating in global governance processes (for example, civil society organisations serve on the advisory board of the World Bank's Climate Investment Funds).

Civil society has created positive social change in numerous places throughout the world. For example, Wateraid UK provided over 1.3 million people with safe drinking water in 2017/18¹, whilst in El Salvador, the government passed a law in 2017 banning environmentally and socially harmful metal mining practices following civil society action since 2004². However, questions about civil society's value, legitimacy and accountability are increasingly. Reasons for this include:

- recent NGO scandals, such as Oxfam workers in Haiti
- a growing disconnect between traditional CSOs and their beneficiaries
- a tough funding climate which has encouraged some CSOs to 'follow the money' and move away from their core mandates
- the growing role of new social movements which are able to connect with and mobilise large numbers of people

Increasingly researchers and practitioners are focusing on the role and value of diaspora communities and their potential contribution to international development. In 2017, diaspora communities remitted over USD 466 billion to low and medium income countries (World Bank, 2018). Remittances fund both family members' needs and investments in co-development projects and entrepreneurship. The potential role and value of diaspora communities in

¹ https://www.wateraid.org/uk/sites/g/files/jkxoof211/files/Annual_Report_2017_18_HI_RES.pdf

² https://www.civicus.org/images/Saul_Banos_EI_Salvador.pdf

development is widely recognised, for example, in the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Key issues in maximising the potential of the diaspora are reducing transaction costs associated with remittances and capacity building for diaspora civil society groups.

Academics, researchers and practitioners are concerned about **“closing space” around civil society**. Closing space refers to governments enacting regulatory, legislative or practical restrictions on civil society, including foreign funding for CSOs and limits on the rights of freedom of association, assembly and expression (see for example, Rutzen, 2015). Constraints on civil society began following the 9/11 terrorist attacks in America, with a second wave of restrictions following the Arab Spring (Rutzen, 2015). Both developing and developed countries are enacting restrictions (Rutzen, 2015). Practitioners and researchers are actively seeking ways to enhance civil society's resilience and sustainability (see for example, the US Center for Strategic and International Studies, who have launched a global consortium to identify specific remedies³). Other important trends in civil society include the changing funding climate, the role of technology and the role of faith groups.

There is a wealth of literature related to civil society, its roles, values and trends. This includes both academic and grey literature. Consequently, this report provides a brief overview of selected issues and a small number of examples. It highlights the trends closing spaces and the role of diaspora communities, but each of these could easily constitute its own separate report.

Potential avenues for future research include:

- The increased focus on demonstrating impact: northern donors and international organisations are increasingly calling for CSOs to demonstrate impact as part of their funding requirements. Future research could examine the effects of this on different sized and resourced CSOs, as well as the different models for measuring impact (see for example, WEF, 2013, p. 16).
- State strategies for closing spaces: what strategies do states use to demobilise civil society and how have these strategies changed over time? Kreienkamp (2017) argues that our empirical knowledge of the restrictions CSOs face remains limited, consequently our understanding of why and when states seek to demobilise CS remains limited as well.
- The growing role of the private sector in national and international governance and its implications (CIVICUS, 2018, p. 14).
- The changing funding climate: foreign funding is a common government justification for restrictions on CSOs. This is occurring at the same time as CSOs are facing a tougher, more competitive international funding climate (see for example, the 2016 introduction to the Open Global Rights debate on closing spaces⁴).

³ <https://www.csis.org/programs/human-rights-initiative/strengthening-civil-society>

⁴ <https://www.openglobalrights.org/introducing-openglobalrights-newest-debate-closing-s/>

- Civil society sustainability: researchers argue that civil society is at a crossroads and action is needed to increase its sustainability⁵. USAID, CIVICUS and the West Africa Civil Society Institute have developed measures to assess civil society sustainability.
- Impacts on gender and sexual minorities' organisations and movements: these can be a particular target of closing spaces, which can increase communities' marginalisation (see for example, Mbote, 2016).
- The role of faith groups⁶: religious affiliation is decreasing in Western Europe and North America, but is increasing in the rest of the world. Faith-based social, economic and political associations and movements are disrupting the status quo in many parts of the world in the pursuit of social justice.

2. What is civil society?

Civil society has been broadly defined as the “area outside the family, market and state” (WEF, 2013p. 8)⁷. For example, the EU defines civil society as “*all forms of social action carried out by individuals or groups who are neither connected to, nor managed by, the State*”⁸. The African Development Bank argues that civil society is the voluntary expression of the interests and aspirations of citizens organised and united by common interests, goals, values or traditions and mobilised into collective action (AfDB, 2012, p. 10). Civil society encompasses a spectrum of actors with a wide range of purposes, constituencies, structures, degrees of organisation, functions, size, resource levels, cultural contexts, ideologies, membership, geographical coverage, strategies and approaches (WEF, 2013, p. 8; AfDB, 2012, p. 10).

Typologies of civil society actors include (WEF, 2013, p. 7; AfDB, 2012, p. 10):

- NGOs, CSOs and non-profit organisations that have an organised structure or activity, and are typically registered entities and groups
- Online groups and activities including social media communities that can be “organised” but do not necessarily have physical, legal or financial structures
- Social movements of collective action and/or identity, which can be online or physical
- Religious leaders, faith communities, and faith-based organisations

⁵ Civil society sustainability may be defined as the capacity and capability of organized and loosely formed citizens associations and groupings to continuously respond to national and international public policy variations, governance deficits, and legal and regulatory policies through coherent and deliberate strategies of mobilizing and effectively utilizing diversified resources, strengthening operations and leadership, promoting transparency and accountability, and fostering the scalability and replicability of initiatives and interventions (VanDyck, 2017).

⁶ For more information see <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2015/08/faith-communities-essential-disruptors/>

⁷ Evers (1995) argues that civil society is a tension field between state, market and family/community, which explains why it differs across contexts: CSOs are simultaneously shaped by the respective influences coming from the state, the market and family/community, and generate tensions, which cut across the borders of the state, market and family/community (pp. 162-3). Evers' work also highlights how definitions of civil society have a tendency to be normative as civil society, premised on non-coercive association is related to democracy (this type of association is not normally permitted in authoritarian or hybrid regimes).

⁸ https://eur-lex.europa.eu/summary/glossary/civil_society_organisation.html

- Labour unions and labour organisations representing workers
- Social entrepreneurs employing innovative and/or market-oriented approaches for social and environmental outcomes
- Grassroots associations and activities at local level
- Cooperatives owned and democratically controlled by their members
- Youth clubs
- Independent radio, television, print and electronic media
- Neighbourhood or community-based coalitions
- Academic and research institutions
- Organisations of indigenous peoples

Civil society occupies an important position in the development dialogue as it provides opportunities to bring communities together for collective action, mobilising society to articulate demands and voice concerns at local, national, regional and international levels (AfDB, 2012, p. 10). Civil society groups also provide services such as education and healthcare.

Changing definitions of civil society

Defining civil society is not a simple task (VanDyck, 2017, p. 1). The term civil society became popular in the 1980s⁹ when it was identified with the non-state protest movements in authoritarian regimes in Eastern Europe and Latin America (Jezard, 2018). VanDyck (2017) argues that there have been significant changes over time in the civil society landscape and the concept has evolved from associational platforms to comprise a wide range of organised and organic groups of different forms, functions and sizes. At different periods, community-based organisations, workers' or labour unions, professional associations, and NGOs have been the most prominent in the civil society space (VanDyck, 2017, p. 1). However, today, civil society is "*recognised as a diverse and ever-wider ecosystem of individuals, communities and organisations*" (WEF, 2013, p. 6).

The World Economic Forum launched the 'Future Role of Civil Society' project in 2012 to explore the rapidly evolving space in which civil society actors operate (WEF, 2013, p. 3). The report argues that definitions of civil society are changing (WEF, 2013, p. 5). Civil society is now "*recognized as encompassing far more than a mere "sector" dominated by the NGO community: civil society today includes an ever wider and more vibrant range of organized and unorganized groups, as new civil society actors blur the boundaries between sectors and experiment with new organisational forms, both online and off*" (WEF, 2013, p. 5).

The WEF (2013) highlight how information and communication technologies have opened up spaces for action. For example, there has been significant growth in online civil society activity, which has enabled the growth of networks across geographical, social and physical divides (WEF, 2013, p. 6). The WEF (2013) highlight the example of the documentary Kony 2012 as an example of the ability of a small group of people to rapidly mobilise significant online activity and

⁹The concept of civil society has its roots in the work of 19th century political scientist de Tocqueville and 20th century philosopher Gramsci. For more information on the concept's history, see Edwards, M. (2014). *Civil Society*. Polity Press.

media attention around a topic that had previously been relatively unknown (p. 6)¹⁰. Jezard (2018) argues that the nature of civil society, what it is and what it does is evolving in response to both technological developments and nuanced changes within societies.

As well as changing definitions of civil society, the roles and operating environments of civil society are also changing (Jezard, 2018; WEF, 2013). According to the WEF changing roles includes civil society actors acting as facilitators, conveners and innovators as well as service providers and advocates (2013, p. 5). The changing context includes: economic and geopolitical shifting from Europe and North America; technology is changing traditional funding models and dramatically shifting social engagement; and political pressures are restricting the space for civil society activities in many countries (WEF, 2013, p. 5). The WEF report argues that looking forward to 2030 civil society leaders need to understand how shifting external contexts will shape their opportunities to achieve impact and what this evolution will mean for their relationships with businesses, governments and international actors (p. 5). They argue that in a turbulent and uncertain environment, actors can no longer work in isolation (WEF, 2018, p. 5).

VanDyck (2017) proposes a definition of civil society as an ecosystem of “*organized and organic social and cultural relations existing in the space between the state, business, and family, which builds on indigenous and external knowledge, values, traditions, and principles to foster collaboration and the achievement of specific goals by and among citizens and other stakeholders*” (VanDyck, 2017, p. 1). This definition encompasses the wide range of actors operating in the civic space. In light of the changes civil society is undergoing, the WEF (2013) argues it should no longer be viewed as the third sector, but as the glue that binds public and private activity together in such a way as to strengthen the common good (p. 5).

Organised and Organic Civil Society

Changes within the civil society landscape since the 1980s mean that researchers and practitioners distinguish between new/traditional, informal/formal, and organised/organic forms of civil society actors (see for example, WEF, 2013). VanDyck (2017) refers to organised or traditional civil society and new actors or organic civil society.

Organised civil society

CSOs encompass a wide range of groups, from local community-based organisations to highly professionalised international non-governmental organisations (INGOs) (Kreienkamp, 2017, p. 1). Large development actors and political institutions largely rely on, and sometimes define, civil society in terms of CSOs. For example, the World Bank defines civil society as:

“the wide array of non-governmental and not for profit organisations that have a presence in public life, express the interests and values of their members and others, based on

¹⁰ Kony 2012 was released by the campaign group Invisible Children, received 100 million views in 6 days and resulted in 3.7 million citizen pledges calling for the arrest of Joseph Kony, the leader of the Lord’s Resistance Army in Uganda. Invisible Children argue that this contributed to the ISA’s President Obama reauthorizing the US mission to support the African Union in combatting Kony and the Lord’s Resistance Army (for more information see <https://invisiblechildren.com/kony-2012/>). There were a number of problems with Invisible Children’s Kony 2012 campaign, which in part led to the dissolution of the organisation in 2015 (for more information see https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2014/12/30/why-did-invisible-children-dissolve/?utm_term=.10b6985e195f).

ethical, cultural, political, scientific, religious or philanthropic considerations. Civil society organisations therefore refer to a wide array of organisations: community groups, NGOs, labour unions, indigenous groups, charitable organisations, faith-based organisations, professional associations, and foundations”¹¹

The governance structures of CSOs are varied but are by their very nature independent of direct government control and management (Tomlinson, 2013). One study suggests that NGOs, a prominent type of CSOs, across 40 countries represent USD 2.2 trillion in operating expenditures and employ the equivalent of 54 million full-time workers with a global volunteer workforce of over 350 million people (Jezard, 2018). At the national level, the number of CSOs has also increased in developing and emerging economies (WEF, 2013, p. 6). India and China are estimated to have large numbers of NGOs: 460,000 and 3.3 million respectively (WEF, 2013, p. 6).

CSOs have become part of the development process, both on the ground, where they may be responsible for delivering services or implementing donor-funded projects (see for example Village Water Zambia, a Zambian NGO supporting safe water, sanitation and hygiene¹²) or as part of governance processes. For example, the EU defines CSOs as an organisational structure whose members serve the general interest through a democratic process, and which plays the role of mediator between public authorities and citizens”¹³. CSOs have a recognised role in the EU’s good governance, which includes dialogue with CSOs when preparing proposals for EU laws. EU examples of CSOs include social partners (trade unions and employers’ groups), NGOs; and grassroots organisations (e.g. youth and family groupings)¹⁴. In contrast, the African Development Bank’s definition of civil society includes reference to CSOs comprising “the full range of formal and informal organisations within society” (AfDB, 2012).

Organic civil society

New actors in the civil society ecosystem include social movements, online activists, bloggers and others (VanDyck, 2017, p. 3). CIVICUS, a global alliance of civil society organisations and activists dedicated to strengthening citizen action and civil society throughout the world, defines civil society broadly in order to capture the wide range of actors:

“non-governmental organisations, activists, civil society coalitions and networks, protest and social movements, voluntary bodies, campaigning organisations, charities, faith-based groups, trade unions and philanthropic foundations” (CIVICUS, 2017, p. 1).

Civil society networks, protest and social/resistance movements include the Arab Spring and reflect the fact that citizens are becoming more networked (WEF, 2013, p. 6). The WEF (2013) argue that since 2010 there has been renewed citizen participation and expression around the world (p. 6). The Arab Spring was enabled by mobile and social communication technologies and

¹¹ <http://www.worldbank.org/en/about/partners/civil-society#2>

¹² <http://villagewaterzambia.org.zm/>

¹³ https://eur-lex.europa.eu/summary/glossary/civil_society_organisation.html

¹⁴ https://eur-lex.europa.eu/summary/glossary/civil_society_organisation.html

was supported by the traditional institutions of organised civil society, e.g. trade unions in Tunisia, Egypt and Bahrain (WEF, 2013, p. 6).

Research suggests that the success of non-violent mass resistance campaigns has declined over the past decade, but that they have demonstrated the power that civil society movements can sometimes exercise (Kreienkamp, 2017, p. 5). The success of popular mass movements, such as the Arab Spring, has led to governments around the world initiating measures to restrict civil society in order to prevent similar uprisings on their own soil (Rutzen, 2015, p. 30) (see section 4 of this report).

Some practitioners, including the CEO of CIVICUS argue that “(n)ew social movements may undermine the need for and importance of organized civil society. As people connect and mobilize spontaneously, key actors (citizens, policy-makers, business) may question why we need institutionalized NGOs” (quoted in WEF, 2013, p. 17).

VanDyck (2017) argues that there is a growing gap between organised civil society and the constituencies they represent (p. 2). This is for a number of reasons including growing public distrust and uncertainty about their relevance and legitimacy; organisations failing to uphold their mandate in the face of adversity; and organisations ‘following the money’ by accepting money for programmes and initiatives that are not aligned with their core mandate (VanDyck, 2017, p. 2). Taylor (2011) outlines how groups can also become co-opted by accepting money from governments, which limits their ability to criticise or work towards their goals for fear of ‘biting the hand that feeds’.

New actors are bridging the divide between the people and organised CSOs through their mode of engagement, tools and approaches, which have democratised the advocacy space (VanDyck, 2017, p. 3). VanDyck (2017) argues that the challenge is for traditional, organised civil society and the loosely formed organic actors to identify means of collaboration and focus on comparative advantages in light of the rapid changes taking place within civil society and the development landscape (p. 3).

Global, national, local

Civil society includes a range of actors operating over different levels, for example, Oxfam is an international NGO (INGO), operating around in the world on a number of issues, whereas Women for Change is a Zambian NGO undertaking capacity building activities in rural areas. INGOs have become increasingly active in political processes and global governance, including transnational policy-making, from agenda-setting through to implementation, evaluation and monitoring (Kreienkamp, 2017, p. 1). For example, organised civil society groups and more loosely networked civil society groups are engaged in the official consultation processes of the G20 and the United Nations, as well as monitoring the implementation of the SDGs through the Together 2030 civil society alliance¹⁵ (WEF, 2013, p. 7). Some civil society leaders feel that the power and influence of organised groups has emerged at the expense of becoming more ‘establishment-orientated’, which is a departure from civil society’s political roots in numerous parts of the world (WEF, 2013, p. 7).

¹⁵ <http://www.together2030.org/>

The concept of a transnational civic space or global civil society refers to the space within which individuals mobilise across borders on issues of global public interest (Kreienkamp, 2017, p. 1). Research suggests that transnational civil society activism has implications for both national and international policy-making (Kreienkamp, 2017, p. 1). For example, where states are inaccessible to the demands of domestic actors, CSOs can make strategic use of transnational coalitions and intergovernmental organisations to build pressure from ‘above’ in addition to pressure from ‘below’ (Kreienkamp, 2017, p. 1).

The African context

There is a lack of academic literature on contemporary African civil society, particularly in East and sub-Saharan Africa (O’Driscoll, 2018). Civil society in Africa is often based on religious or ethnic connections and includes traditional and spiritual forms of social organisations and networks of indigenous institutions (O’Driscoll, 2018; Kleibl & Munck, 2017, p. 204). In authoritarian regimes, it is likely that these civil society forms are more effective than (what has been termed) ‘Western professional civil society’ as they have more space to manoeuvre and have large support bases (O’Driscoll, 2018).

Kleibl & Munck (2017) argue that the dominant conception of civil society is Eurocentric and a Northern imposition on local realities in African states (p. 204). Consequently, ‘official’ civil society in Africa is occupied by Western-type NGOs, certain churches and professional organisations and more traditional forms of African civil society are ignored or deemed irrelevant (Kleibl & Munck, 2017, p. 204). In terms of funding, indigenous non-state actors do not receive large shares of development funding: for example, only 10% of the total funding for US-funded health projects in Uganda was allocated to indigenous non-state actors¹⁶

There is a wealth of grey literature on African civil society. For example, Privacy International (2018) argues that civil society groups in Africa are opposing new cyber security laws at a time when they are operating under increased threat of arbitrary arrest, unlawful searches and raids or funding restrictions. In Kenya, a petition by the Bloggers Association of Kenya, supported by the Kenyan Union of Journalists and Article 19 (the East Africa Journalists Defence Network) successfully challenged the new 2018 Computer Misuse and Cybercrimes Act (Privacy International, 2018). The High Court suspended 26 of the Act’s provisions relating to offences that threaten freedom of expression, freedom of the media and right to privacy as well as new investigate powers (Privacy International, 2018).

3. Civil society’s role and value

Civil society roles include:

- ‘watchdog’ holding governments and institutions to account (for example, some CSOs monitor human rights abuses and provide information to both domestic constituencies and international organisations/ other states (Kreienkamp, 2017, p. 6))¹⁷

¹⁶ <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development-professionals-network/2014/may/07/africa-diaspora-philanthropy-development>

¹⁷ As such, they act as ‘informal auditors’, imposing costs on states that would prefer to keep such information private (this may contribute to those states restricting civil society) (Kreienkamp, 2017, p. 6).

- Advocate/representative raising awareness of issues, giving a voice to the marginalised and advocating for change (for example, Civic Council of Popular and Indigenous Organisations of Honduras campaigns on issues such as logging and dams which will affect indigenous peoples¹⁸)
- Service provider (for example, Village Water Zambia provide water and sanitation in rural areas).

As mentioned above, civil society is also a recognised partner in the development process and contributes to global governance processes. The Asian Development Bank outline five roles for civil society in advancing the sustainable development goals (SDGs):

- Complement government poverty alleviation programmes with community-based tailored assistance using evidence-based, innovative and sustained solutions;
- Localising the SDGs and monitoring progress;
- Promote citizen-centric, collaborative governance (as many CSOs in Asia's developing countries operate at grassroots level, so have active engagement with local actors and citizens) and co-production (whereby citizens produce or improve existing services without relying too much on public agencies);
- Advocating for the poor, including lobbying government;
- Empowering women for climate action (Nazal, 2018).

Examples of civil society roles in 2018

Global civil society: Bangladesh's Ready Made Garment Industry

NGOs and trade unions in both Bangladesh and countries that consume clothes made in Bangladesh have been working together to improve working conditions, raise awareness and call for a fair minimum wage. For example, the Clean Clothes Campaign, a global alliance of NGOs and trade unions is currently running a campaign calling for fashion brand H&M (the biggest buyer of clothes from Bangladesh) to 'Turn Around' and honour its commitment that the 850,000 workers who make their clothes will be paid a living wage by the end of 2018¹⁹.

The Accord on Fire and Building Safety in Bangladesh was launched in 2013 after the collapse of the Rana Plaza building, which housed a number of garment factories²⁰. The Accord is an independent, legally binding agreement between brands and trade unions, with four NGO witnesses (the Clean Clothes Campaign, the International Labor Rights Forum, the Worker Rights Consortium and Maquila Solidarity Network). The NGOs and trade unions have been monitoring implementation, running campaigns to ensure brands follow through on their commitments, highlighting problems with implementation and campaigning (successfully) for compensation for the families of workers who lost their lives in the 2013 building collapse.

¹⁸ <http://copinhenglish.blogspot.com/>

¹⁹ For more information on the campaign see: <https://cleanclothes.org/news/2018/10/12/international-solidarity-with-the-workers-in-bangladesh-who-demand-the-16-000-taka-minimum-wage>

²⁰ For more information see: <http://bangladeshaccord.org/>

National civil society: Zambia

Civil society in Zambia occupy a number of roles. For example, Village Water Zambia, supported by funding from international NGOs including the Norwegian Church Aid Alliance, install boreholes in rural areas, provide hygiene and sanitation training in schools and villages, and install latrines in schools²¹. In addition to domestic NGOs, international NGOs such as Oxfam are active in Zambia. For example, Oxfam has been working to improve livelihoods in the Copperbelt region, including launching a Land Rights Centre²².

Faith groups are integral members of civil society in Zambia, with groups providing a number of services including running schools. Faith-based organisations include the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA), which runs drop-in centres around the country for women and children in crisis situations²³.

Zambia has 288 rural chiefdoms: this system of traditional leadership includes village headmen/women, local chiefs, and prominent tribal chiefs (in the case of the Lozi people, this is their king, the Litunga). The system also varies by tribe. The government of Zambia, NGOs and international organisations recognise the role of traditional leadership in Zambian society. For example, in November 2017, over 30 spouses of traditional leaders from various chiefdoms participated in a dialogue meeting in Lusaka with the government, international organisations and donors on the subject of safeguarding adolescent girls at the community level²⁴. Zambia's First Lady stated that as *"custodians of customs and traditions, traditional leaders can be champions, initiators and agents of change towards eliminating child marriage, teenage pregnancy and gender-based violence"*²⁵.

Advocacy and delivering services

Many domestic African organisations working with gender and sexual minorities deliver critical services as well as engaging in advocacy (Mbote, 2016). These organisations often face a difficult or repressive climate and do not always receive support from other civil society organisations when faced with government moves to restrict them (Mbote, 2016). For example, the Kenyan High Court has ruled that the government cannot block the National Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission, but the group is still unregistered (Mbote, 2016). In Botswana, a similar organisation won a protracted case for registration: the Catholic Church labelled the judgement a deliberate attempt to push dangerous agendas and ideologies that are un-African and un-Christian (Mbote, 2016).

²¹ For more information see: <http://villagewaterzambia.org.zm/>

²² http://www.fao.org/gender-landrights-database/country-profiles/countries-list/civil-society-organisations/en/?country_iso3=ZMB

²³ http://www.fao.org/gender-landrights-database/country-profiles/countries-list/civil-society-organisations/en/?country_iso3=ZMB

²⁴ For more information see <https://zambia.unfpa.org/en/news/spouses-zambian-traditional-leaders-commit-safeguarding-health-and-well-being-adolescent-girls>

²⁵ For more information see <https://zambia.unfpa.org/en/news/spouses-zambian-traditional-leaders-commit-safeguarding-health-and-well-being-adolescent-girls>

Mbote (2016) argues that funding for organisations representing marginalised groups is critical to their success, because they are unlikely to raise resources from their membership (who may suffer from economic impoverishment) or even wealthier citizens in their own countries. However, there are few organisations that fund gender and sexual minorities specific issues globally, and for those that do, this funding represents a tiny portion of their budgets (Mbote, 2016).

Partnerships with the private sector

These include ‘bottom of the pyramid’ business models, creating new products and services to target unmet needs, and setting voluntary standards for a specific issue or industry sector (WEF, 2013, p. 9). Examples include:

- CARE in Bangladesh partnering with Danone communities to form a rural distribution system targeting marginalised people;
- Mercy Corps co-founded MiCRO with Haiti’s largest microfinance institution Fonkoze, partnering with DFID and Swiss Re (WEF, 2013, p. 9).

Business leaders from major multinationals are actively contributing to global governance processes, for example, the World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WEF, 2013, p. 10). Some actors have expressed concern at the emergence of the private sector in the civil society space (see for example, CIVICUS, 2018).

The value of civil society

Green (2017) argues that civil society is at a crossroads: it is buffeted on one side by questions about its relevance, legitimacy and accountability from governments and their beneficiaries, and on the other side it is having to adjust to a rapidly deteriorating operating environment (closing spaces is discussed in section 4 of this report). Questions about the value of civil society mean that CSOs are facing more pressure to demonstrate their value to and connection with local communities (Green, 2017). Increasing public distrust, combined with uncertainty about the relevance and legitimacy of CSO has called into question civil society effectiveness in bringing about real change (VanDyck, 2017). For example, recent safeguarding scandals, including the actions of Oxfam workers in Haiti, have raised questions about the role and value of NGOs, from both the UK public and internationally²⁶.

Green’s 2017 report on civil society at a crossroads highlights how many CSOs rely on donor support to enact the change they want, which has led to critiques of their grant-driven business model, including the failure of traditional CSOs to bring transformative change. However, traditional CSOs have achieved impressive on the ground results, including improvements in maternal and child health, access to education and holding governments and companies to account (Green, 2017). Critics allege that these successes are palliative rather than transformational for three reasons:

- Many traditional CSOs lack deep roots in the communities in which they work;

²⁶ For more information see <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/jun/15/timeline-oxfam-sexual-exploitation-scandal-in-haiti>

- Donors' insistence on quantifiable results has created a bias towards a limited set of projects and service delivery as opposed to a focus on transformation or systemic change;
- Organisations are accountable 'upward' to donors rather than 'downwards' to their beneficiaries, putting donor satisfaction above CSOs broader goals (Green, 2017).

VanDyck (2017) argues that CSOs are facing questions about their relevance, legitimacy and accountability from governments and beneficiaries because of a widening gap between the sector, governments and beneficiaries. Many traditional CSOs are dependent on short-term funding, which creates incentives to focus on achieving future funding rather than gaining community buy-in and ensuring the sustainability of projects (Green, 2017). Consequently, traditional CSOs have been accused of being illegitimate, out of touch, or in the sector for prestige or money (Green, 2017). For example, India's Prime Minister has accused environmental and community based organisations opposing large-scale investment projects of being foreign puppets, working against India's national interest (Green, 2017).

New and emerging forms of civic activism have disrupted traditional CSOs and may be better placed or able to meet the needs of their communities more efficiently and sustainably (Green, 2017). For example, social movements using social media may be able to bring together more people around a common cause than traditional advocacy organisations, which typically rely on known supporters (Green, 2017). Combined with the concerns outlined above, this has led some commentators to question the viability of the traditional grant driven CSO model (Green, 2017). However, Green (2017) argues that there are synergies between the two forms and the key is to build bridges between the two.

Debates about the role and value of civil society are likely to continue. However, it is important to remember the contribution that civil society makes to improving the lives of some of the world's poorest people and advocating/campaigning for positive change around the world. For example, in 2017-2018, Wateraid UK reached over 1.3 million people in the developing world with clean water; volunteer movements in Kerala, India and the US saved lives during natural disasters in 2018; and social movements including Black Lives Matter focused attention on important social issues.

In terms of international development and the value of civil society, an interesting trend is the movement to #shiftthepower²⁷. Launched in 2016 as a hashtag by the Global Fund for Community Foundations in the run-up to their conference in Johannesburg, #shiftthepower aims to move development away from its current top-down, top-heavy system and towards people-based development. More research is needed into how this movement and grassroots, community-based organisations and new models of philanthropy including local giving circles are creating positive changes and new forms of civil society. Some of the issues raised by #shiftthepower are also relevant in the case of diaspora contributions to development, which are the focus of the following sub-section of this report.

²⁷ For more information see <https://www.rethinkingpoverty.org.uk/cross-posts/shiftthepower-two-years/>

The value of civil society: the case of the diaspora

A diaspora is a community of people living outside their country of origin, whilst maintaining active ties with it (MADE, 2016, p. 9). In 2015, there were approximately 250 million people living outside their country of origin and diasporas remitted USD 431 billion (MADE, 2016, p. 7). In 2017, remittance flows to low and medium income countries were USD 466 billion and globally were USD 613 billion (World Bank, 2018, p. v). Remittance flows are expected to increase in 2018 (World Bank, 2018, p. v).

Diaspora remittances are extremely important in sustaining local livelihoods and supporting national development, particularly in Africa (CFLP, 2015, p. 1). Academics at Boston University argue that remitters and their families are at the forefront of forging a new kind of global community with transnational families and inter-personal networks that are creating new forms of social and economic interconnections (CFLP, 2015, p. 15). Diaspora organisations and networks are important civil society actors for mobilising diaspora communities' economic, social and cultural resources (MADE, 2016²⁸).

Diasporas contribute to their communities of origin through both individual and collective remittances (CFLP, 2015, p. 1). Individual remittances to family members are largely used for consumption, education and healthcare (CFLP, 2015, p. 13). Some evidence suggests that approximately 80% of the total remittances to Africa are used for education (CFLP, 2015, p. 13). Diaspora networks can also be sources of social remittances in the form of ideas, values and skills transferred to the migrant's community of origin (CFLP, 2015, p. 2).

Collective remittances are invested or used for development projects administered through networks and organisations including 'hometown associations', ethnic associations, alumni associations, religious associations, welfare and refugee groups etc. (CFLP, 2015, p. 2). For example, women's microfinance initiative Mwanzo Upya in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo is a diaspora co-development project established in 2012 and organised by US NGO Congolese Genocide Awareness Inc. (CFLP, 2015, p. 9)²⁹. Research on the impacts of collective remittances, including in fragile and post-conflict situations, is scarce (CFLP, 2015, p. 2)³⁰.

The World Bank estimated official migrant remittances to sub-Saharan Africa were USD 40 billion in 2015 (CFLP, 2015, p. 1). Remittances have increased approximately six-fold since 2000 (CFLP, 2015, p. 1). Informal remittances (sent outside the formal financial system) to Africa are estimated to be twice that of the official estimate (CFLP, 2015, p. 2). Private remittances constitute the largest source of international financial flows to Africa and a stable source of foreign exchange for national development (CFLP, 2015, p. 2). This is particularly important in

²⁸ MADE, the Migration and Development Civil Society Network, is an open network of CSOs working on migration issues. It engages with policy-makers and other important stakeholders to protect on issues related to the well-being and protection of all migrants and communities. The network's thematic Working Group on Diaspora and Migrants in Development was coordinated by AFFORD-UK (the African Foundation for Development), an African diaspora organisation. See <http://afford-uk.org/about-us/about-afford/> for more information.

²⁹ In 2013, diaspora remittances to the DRC were USD 7 billion, approximately USD 1 billion less than the DRC government's budget.

³⁰ There are some concerns that remittances could contribute to perpetuating conflict as well as contributing to peace-building (CFLP, 2015, p. 2).

light of diminishing aid flows from OECD countries to low-income countries in Africa (CFLP, 2015, p. 2).

Transaction costs

Within the literature on the diaspora, one of the key issues is high transaction costs for remittances (see for example, MADE, 2016). In the first quarter of 2018, the global average cost of sending remittances was 7.1% of the amount sent (World Bank, 2018, p. v). Estimates of transaction costs are higher for Africa: for example, a 2015 report estimated transactions costs were 12.5% of the sum remitted (CFLP, 2015, p. 7).

Factors contributing to high costs include de-risking measures³¹ by commercial banks and exclusive partnerships between national post office systems and a single money transfer operator (World Bank, 2018, p. v). These factors constrain the introduction of more efficient and cheaper technologies, including Internet and smartphone apps and blockchain, hinder the growth of formal remittances, restrict competition and increase prices (World Bank, 2018, p. v; CFLP, 2015, p. 6).

Reducing transaction costs would increase remittances' value to the sender and the receiver (MADE, 2016, p. 6). The World Bank estimates that up to USD 100 billion could be raised annually by developing countries through reducing remittance costs, reducing migrant recruitment costs, mobilising diaspora savings and philanthropic contributions from migrants (MADE, 2016, p. 5). Reducing the costs of remittances is part of the international development agenda. For example, the G8 have set a target of reducing costs to 5% and the UN's Sustainable Development Goals have a target of 3% for costs by 2030 (CFLP, 2015, p. 1, p. 8). If the G8 target is met, it would increase the amount recipients receive annually by USD 1.8 billion (CFLP, 2015, p. 8).

Development, co-development and collective remittances

The profile and contribution of diaspora communities to development are receiving increasing attention. For example, the UN's Sustainable Development Goals call for the development of ways to mobilise diaspora savings and collective remittances, whilst the African Union argues that novel mechanisms are needed for harnessing and investing remittances for national development (CFLP, 2015, p. 1). MADE (2016) argue that policy efforts are necessary in receiving countries to integrate remittances into broader national development strategies and financial democracy initiatives (MADE, 2016, p. 9).

Co-development projects are increasing (MADE, 2016). However, diaspora organisations, including diaspora-led NGOs face a number of problems, including a lack of funding and challenges working in partnership with 'traditional' NGOs³². Diaspora-led NGOs are often on the margins of the sector and one of the challenges is finding ways for diaspora groups and

³¹ For example, banks are closing the accounts of customers in countries or sectors deemed to pose a high risk of money laundering or terrorist financing (World Bank, 2018, p. 6).

³² <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development-professionals-network/2013/may/01/african-diaspora-global-development>

international NGOs to collaborate³³. Examples of collaboration include Progressio working with Somaliland Focus UK to organise election observations in Somaliland since 2005³⁴. Vark (2013) suggests that due to the size of diaspora remittances to developing countries, collaboration between diaspora organisations and NGOs could significantly improve aid effectiveness³⁵.

Collective remittances, which are invested or used for entrepreneurship, can contribute positively to national development (MADE, 2016, p. 11). It is estimated that the African diaspora saves USD 53 billion annually, the majority of which is currently invested outside of Africa, instruments including diaspora bonds and other innovative financing mechanisms could mobilise these funds for development in Africa (MADE, 2016, p. 12). A study of the Caribbean diaspora found that 40% had invested in a start-up of a company, with 57% of these companies being in the Caribbean (MADE, 2016, p. 12).

A lack of skills, amongst other things, is responsible for the gap between potential diaspora investors and actual investors (MADE, 2016, p. 12). For example, a World Bank report on Sierra Leone found that between 45% and 63% of the diaspora surveyed were interested in investment, compared to 1% to 6% who had actually invested in bonds, equity, social impact and microenterprises (MADE, 2016, p. 13). AFFORD UK, through its business support centre in Sierra Leone, ABC, supports fast-growth small and medium sized enterprises that have the potential to create jobs locally (MADE, 2016, p. 14). National initiatives include the government of the Philippines BaLinkBayan online portal for diaspora engagement and the PinoyWise Filipino scheme, which supports the Filipino diaspora to start enterprises in the Philippines, save or invest (MADE, 2016, p. 15).

Maximising diaspora investment requires strong public-private partnerships, adequate access to finance and capital, business training and skills development, as well as regulatory and policy interventions on national and transnational levels (MADE, 2016, p. 18). Research with the African diaspora in New England, USA, argues that institutional frameworks that enable a productive use of remittances are crucial, including organisational capacity building, access to financial services, development of business skills and relevant technical support (CFLP, 2015, p. 2). Diaspora members also highlighted the lack of opportunities to connect the relevant organisations and networks on the sending and receiving sides (CFLP, 2015, p. 2).

4. Trends

Closing Spaces

Governments in numerous countries are restricting the space for civil society, particularly in the areas of advancing human rights or democratic principles (WEF, 2013, p. 7). Closing civil society spaces is not just taking place in southern countries, but in countries such as Russia, Hungary and Israel (Kreienkamp, 2017, p. 7). Poppe & Wolff (2017) argue that debates about civil society

³³ <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development-professionals-network/2013/nov/07/diaspora-bond-conference-if-campaign>

³⁴ <http://www.somalilandfocus.org.uk/>

³⁵ <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development-professionals-network/2013/nov/07/diaspora-bond-conference-if-campaign>

and closing spaces are part of a wider trend, 'the backlash against democracy promotion' and contestation of the contemporary world order³⁶. They also highlight how there can be a conflict between the promotion of human rights and democracy (which is the normative basis for many CSOs receiving support from global north governments and international organisations) and state claims to sovereignty, self-determination and non-interference (Poppe & Wolff, 2017). For example, in 2018, Uganda's President Museveni blamed civil society, foreign interference and the media for political protests³⁷.

CIVICUS' (2018, p. 4) *State of Civil Society* found that 109 out of 195 countries have closed, repressed or obstructed civic space³⁸. Open civic space is characterised by freedom of association, peaceful assembly and freedom of expression: civil society depends on these three key rights³⁹. CIVICUS (2018, p. 4) estimate that only 4% of the world's population live in civic space that can be classified as open; 14% in narrowed civic space; 37% in obstructed civic space; 17% in repressed civic space; and, 28% in closed civic space. In 2017, laws regulating the right to protest came into force or were proposed in Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Germany, Iraq, Norway, Paraguay, Russia and Tanzania; whilst, laws regulating free speech came into force or were proposed in Cote D'Ivoire, Fiji, Kazakhstan, Saudi Arabia, Thailand, Tunisia, Uruguay and Venezuela (CIVICUS, 2018, p. 8). Maina Kiai, the former UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights to Freedom of Peaceful Assembly and of Association, has argued that, in many places around the world, civic space is no longer shrinking but 'already gone' (Kreienkamp, 2017, p. 2).

CIVICUS (2018, p. 12) have linked closing civil society spaces to the rise of populism, repressive governments asserting national sovereignty and the rise of socially conservative forces. Additional drivers include the 'war on terror' following 9/11 (Kreienkamp, 2017, p. 2). Civil society has been operating in an environment of 'continuous decline' in global political and civil liberties for the 'past decade' and deteriorating media freedom around the world (Kreienkamp, 2017). The International Centre for Not-for-Profit Law argues that 64 restrictive new laws and regulations were adopted by governments worldwide in 2015-16 leaving global civic space severely narrowed (Kreienkamp, 2017, p. 3).

UCL (University College London) have developed a new cross-country database documenting restrictive laws and practices in 177 countries from 2000 to 2014, as part of a new project to identify when, why and how states seek to silence civil society (Kreienkamp, 2017, p. 3). This project suggests that restrictions against CSOs are pervasive and widespread, with certain regions at particular risk (Kreienkamp, 2017, p. 3). Findings include:

³⁶ The drivers of closing space for civil society are the subject of academic debate and include the war on terror/ fight against terrorism, the rise of populism and tensions exposed by mass social movements. For more information, see <https://www.openglobalrights.org/closing-space-for-civil-society/>. Closing space is occurring across all state types (democratic, authoritarian, hybrid, developed and developing, north and south).

³⁷ For more information see <https://www.dw.com/en/ugandas-museveni-blames-civil-society-for-political-unrest/a-45432927>

³⁸ CIVICUS is a global civil society alliance, established in 1993 and headquartered in Johannesburg with representation at the UN Headquarters in New York and the UN offices in Geneva. For more information see <https://www.civicus.org/index.php/who-we-are/about-civicus>

³⁹ CIVICUS recognise that many other factors (e.g. levels of funding, strength d public trust) affect civil society's success. However, CIVICUS civic space monitoring tool focus on the three key rights that form the basis for civil society. For more information see <https://monitor.civicus.org/whatis-civicspace/>

- States who commit severe human rights abuses have a strong incentive to silence civil society, especially if they have signed human rights treaties;
- Hybrid regimes (neither consolidated democracies or full autocracies) are more likely to impose restrictions;
- There is also some evidence that states are more likely to restrict CSOs when faced with domestic security threats e.g. terrorism (Kreienkamp, 2017, p. 6).

States deploy a range of formal and informal strategies to undermine the credibility, financial stability and legal protection of CSOs (Kreienkamp, 2017):

- Legislation regulating foreign funding including requirements for CSOs to report on foreign funding;
- De-legitimisation campaigns that result in reputational costs, additional bureaucratic and administrative hurdles (e.g. requirement to file all planned activities in advance with the government), the risks of fines and other sanctions in case of non-compliance with new reporting targets, difficulties to access and engage with target groups, authorities and alternative national funders, and psychological pressures for the individuals involved;
- Governments creating 'loyal voices' by establishing government –organised non-governmental organisations (GONGOs), for example, the Myanmar Women's Affairs Federation and Sudan's Human Rights Organisation⁴⁰.

VanDyck (2017) argues that the establishment of GONGOs to infiltrate and gather information on the human rights community is an example of the growing adversarial relationship between governments and human rights organisations (p. 2). In response, a significant number of human rights, humanitarian, training and grassroots organisations have become reluctant to engage and collaborate with governments (VanDyck, 2017, p. 2).

Increased surveillance

Both the media and academics have expressed concerns about authorities' increasing surveillance of civil society, particularly journalists and human rights campaigners. For example, the Citizen Lab at the University of Toronto argue that Pegasus spyware has been used to target civil society by spying on people through their mobile phones, including in Mexico⁴¹. Ahmed & Perloth (2017) have labelled Mexico one of the most hostile environments for journalists.

Since 2011, at least three Mexican federal agencies have purchased Pegasus spyware, which infiltrates smartphones to monitor calls, texts, emails, contacts and calendars, as well as being able to use the microphone and camera for surveillance (Ahmed & Perloth, 2017). It is alleged that these agencies have illegally used Pegasus software to target human rights lawyers, journalists and anti-corruption activists (Ahmed & Perloth, 2017). The Mexican government deny that it is behind the hacking of civil society actors' phones and the nature of the Pegasus software means that it is hard to determine exactly who is behind the specific hacking attempts (Ahmed & Perloth, 2017). Experts at Toronto University's Citizen Lab believe it was the Mexican

⁴⁰ <https://foreignpolicy.com/2009/10/13/what-is-a-gongo/>

⁴¹ <https://citizenlab.ca/2018/09/hide-and-see-tracking-nso-groups-pegasus-spyware-to-operations-in-45-countries/>

government as Pegasus software can only be used by the agency that purchased it (Ahmed & Perloth, 2017).

Increased violence

More than 1,000 human rights defenders were killed, harassed, detained or subjected to smear campaigns in 2016: more than 75% of those killed were in Latin America (Kreienkamp, 2017, p. 3). The rise in killings of environmental activists in Latin America has been linked to the expansion of extractive industries, the influx of associated multinational corporations and criminal enterprises, and a prevailing culture of effective state-sanctioned impunity (Kreienkamp, 2017, p. 8). In 2016, Honduran environmental and indigenous rights campaigner, Berta Caceres who was campaigning against the construction of the Agua Zarca hydroelectric dam, was murdered⁴². In the following two years, according to Amnesty International, those campaigning for justice for Caceres have been threatened. Eight people have been arrested in connection with the murder, some of whom have links to the company building the dam and others to the military.

Media restrictions

Governments are controlling the free flow of information in order to control, monitor or silence civil society (Kreienkamp, 2017, p. 8). This includes journalists and media outlets being pressured into self-censorship (e.g. by the risk of costly lawsuits or personal risk), government increasing control of digital technologies and social media problems (e.g. by spreading fake news), and shutting down the internet when facing intense resistance (Kreienkamp, 2017, p. 8). Reporters without Borders (2017) argue that media freedom globally is more under threat now than ever before, with a worsening situation in nearly two-thirds of the 180 countries it includes in its World Press Freedom Index⁴³. In 2017, Cameroon introduced a three-month internet block in its Anglophone regions; whilst Iran and Togo shut down the internet during mass protests (CIVICUS, 2018, p. 11). Viet Nam, jailed at least 25 online activists in 2017 (CIVICUS, 2018, p. 11).

Restrictions on funding

Targeting foreign funding is one of the most effective and commonly used strategies to curb civil society, often justified on the grounds of increasing transparency (Kreienkamp, 2017, p. 7):

- In India, at least 30 CSOs, including Greenpeace India have been refused a government license to receive foreign funding in 2016 because their activities were not deemed to be in the national interest;
- In Ethiopia, severe restrictions on foreign funding, introduced in 2009 resulted in 25% of local groups closing within three years.

Governments and policy-makers normally invoke the need to protect national security and sovereignty when adopting restrictions on foreign funding for domestic CSOs (Kreienkamp, 2017,

⁴² For more information see <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/campaigns/2018/03/legacy-of-honduran-activist-berta-caceres-lives-on/>

⁴³ <https://rsf.org/en/2017-press-freedom-index-ever-darker-world-map>

p. 5)⁴⁴. For example, when introducing a 2004 bill to ban foreign funding for CSOs Zimbabwe's President Mugabe stated: "*We cannot allow them to be conduits or instruments of foreign interference in our national affairs*" (quoted in Kreienkamp, 2017, p. 5). Academic research has suggested that governments are more likely to restrict foreign or foreign-supported CSOs when they are undergoing domestic political competition or challenges (Kreienkamp, 2017, p. 5).

Many governments, including Russia, Hungary and Israel are regulating or cutting their funding for civil society, this includes making funding dependent on governmental approval, implementing a cap, prohibiting funding by certain donors or for certain kinds of activities, making it mandatory to channel donor funding through government backs, or banning foreign funding altogether (Kreienkamp, 2017, p. 7).

Legal and regulatory measures used by governments to curtail international financing include:

- Requiring prior government approval for the receipt of international funding
- Enacting 'foreign agent' legislation to stigmatise internationally funded CSOs
- Caps on the amount of foreign funding a CSO can receive
- Requirement for foreign funding to be routed through government controlled entities
- Restricting activities that can be undertaken with foreign funding
- Prohibiting CSOs from receiving funding from specific donors
- Constraining international funding through the overly broad application of anti-money laundering and counterterrorism measures
- Taxing the receipt of international funding
- Imposing onerous reporting requirements on the receipt of international funding
- Using defamation, treason, and other laws to bring criminal charges against recipients of international funding (Rutzen, 2015, p. 31).

Strategies for resisting closing spaces

In Botswana and Kenya, LGBT rights groups have successfully challenged government refusals to allow them to register (Kreienkamp, 2017, p. 10). In 2014, UN Special Rapporteur, Maina Kiai launched a project to support strategic litigation in domestic and regional courts for cases related to the right of freedom of peaceful assembly and of association (Kreienkamp, 2017, p. 10). However, this like other strategies to resist closing spaces, has some limitations: litigation is costly, the likelihood of success is dependent on the independence of the judiciary, and if successful, states can refuse to follow court orders (Kreienkamp, 2017, p. 10).

Other strategies include:

- Network support (allows CSOs to engage in collective advocacy action);
- Diversifying funding;
- Forming links with international business;

⁴⁴ Restrictions on foreign funding are not just occurring in southern countries, but in Europe as well, including Russia. Hungary's Prime Minister has suggested foreign funded CSOs could threaten Hungary's sovereignty and national security (Kreienkamp, 2017, p. 5).

- Third-party states voicing concern over civil society restrictions and exerting pressure on governments;
- Development of early warning mechanisms, including a suggested EU ‘Shrinking Space Early Warning’ mechanism that would allow Member States to respond to new restrictive legislation before it is passed (Kreienkamp, 2017, p. 11).

CIVICUS (2018) argue that ‘the fightback is on’: there are signs that citizens are organising and mobilising in new and creative ways to defend civic freedoms (p. 4). They cite El Salvador and the Dominican Republic as examples. In El Salvador, following years of civil society advocacy, the government passed a law banning environmental and socially harmful gold-mining practises (CIVICUS, 2018, p. 16). In the Dominican Republic, the Green March Movement brought people from all sections of society together to protest corruption (CIVICUS, 2018, p. 16)⁴⁵.

Changing funding sources

International civil society leaders argue there has been a decline in funding available for advocacy, rights-based activities and causes that challenge the status quo (WEF, 2013, p. 7). As part of the restrictions on civil society, some governments have taken steps to limit access to national and foreign funding (WEF, 2013, p. 7). The WEF (2013) also argue that restrictions on civil society’s space has implications for the willingness of the private sector in some countries to engage in social responsibility programmes due to worries about these being seen as a threat to the state (p. 7).

Funding sources are changing for both domestic civil society organisations in developing countries and northern NGOs who operate in southern contexts. Traditional funding streams are shrinking along with modifications to donor criteria including diversification of funding sources, requirements for private sector partners and stringent requirements to demonstrate impact (WEF, 2013, p. 15). New funding sources include market philanthropists, social entrepreneurs, social investment products and crowd-sourcing (WEF, 2013, p. 15). Geopolitical and economic shifts including the expansion of Chinese foreign direct investment in Africa and the changing focus of donor countries from aid to trade with key emerging market economies are also shifting the axis of development (WEF, 2013, p. 15).

In the interviews for the WEF’s 2013 Report into the future of civil society, civil society leaders identified competition for resources and visibility as a key barrier to effectiveness (p. 16). For civil society based in the global south, dwindling donor funding and shifting priorities driven by foreign policy considerations pose a threat to their sustainability (VanDyck, 2017, p. 2). VanDyck (2017) argues that in light of this, civil society in the global south needs to shift its focus and strengthen its ability to mobilise resources from domestic constituencies and reduce excessive dependency on foreign donors (p. 5). Currently, the relationship between donors and civil society is ad hoc, short-term and on a project basis, consequently civil society groups can be seen as implementers of donors’ development or foreign policy agendas and donors do not feel an

⁴⁵ Examples of restricted civil society space in the region include Nicaragua. In 2007, the government introduced laws limiting funding to CSOs, banned INGO, and introduced laws to prevent organisations from becoming political parties. This has escalated into violent repression of citizen mobilisations. For more information see <http://www.icnl.org/research/monitor/nicaragua.html>

obligation to support them to become robust or sustainable beyond project timelines (VanDyck, 2017, p. 5).

Technology

Civil society groups are becoming more technologically literate, using social media platforms and new tools such as podcasts for awareness raising and fundraising and technological tools to improve the efficacy of their work (Jezard, 2018). For example, WWF (the Worldwide Fund for Nature) use aerial drone technology, animal tracking devices and infrared cameras in their work combatting illegal poaching of endangered species (Jezard, 2018). UNICEF's U-Report bot is a free SMS social monitoring tool: in 2015, working with government ministers in Liberia, it helped to uncover a scandal in which teachers were exploiting children by awarding grades and pass marks in return for sex (Jezard, 2018). In under 24 hours, 13,000 people had responded, counselling services identified and a support helpline established (Jezard, 2018). Technology, as outlined in section 1 of this report, has also

Faith groups

The WEF (2013) argue that there is increasing interest in and prominence of faith and religious culture in public life, accompanied by a growing interest in the role of faith groups (p. 11). Factors driving this interest are appreciation of the dynamism and the growth of faith in many parts of the world; the resources inherent within faith communities, e.g. human and social capital; governments extending new forms of participatory governance to include faith communities; and, the growing presence of religions online (WEF, 2013, p. 11). Faith groups play a number of roles in development including that of service provider: in some African countries, the faiths provide 70% of health services (WEF, 2013, p. 11). Faith groups also play an interesting role in the promotion of human rights: for example, in some cases arguing for protections for LGBTI people and in others adopting an anti-LGBTI people stance⁴⁶. The role of faith groups is extremely interesting and merits more attention than is possible in this report.

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⁴⁶ For more information see the topic Religion and Human Rights on the Open Global Rights forum: <https://www.openglobalrights.org/religion-and-human-rights/>

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Key websites

- The CIVICUS civil society monitor: <https://www.civicus.org/index.php/what-we-do/innovate/civicus-monitor>
- Open Global Rights: <https://www.openglobalrights.org/closing-space-for-civil-society/>

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